Renew the Legacy... Fulfill the Vision

Renton Parks, Recreation, Open Space and Natural Resources Plan

Community Needs Assessment

May 2011

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I. Introduction

In September 2010, the City of Renton began developing a Long Range Parks, Recreation, Open Space and Natural Resources (PROSNR) Plan to integrate planning for community resources with a unified framework. This system-based approach would allow the City to develop successful policies, implementation strategies and an investment program to enhance parks, recreation, open space and natural resources as critical elements of a livable community. This Plan will create a 20-year vision for a sustainable, interconnected system of parks, recreation facilities, natural areas and trails, along with recreation programming that responds to community needs.

Purpose of this Document

The Community Needs Assessment provides the information to make informed decisions about future park and recreation needs in the City. The needs identified in this report will provide a basis for system-wide recommendations for improvements, including:

- Acquisition and development of new park sites;
- Redevelopment of existing parks and facilities;
- Potential for partnerships with other service providers; and
- Analysis of recreation programming.

This Assessment is the third of several discussion papers developed at key stages of the planning process, the first two being the *Planning Context Summary, March 2011* and the *Existing Conditions Summary, March 2011*.

The Assessment is customized for Renton and incorporates input from the Interdepartmental Team (IDT), Steering Committee, Parks Commission and Planning Commission discussions in February 2011, as well as preferences and priorities indicated by the public through the extensive community engagement process. A set of nine maps accompanies the analysis, illustrating service areas and gaps and four appendices supplement the text of the report.

The document provides key findings that are organized through the following sections:

- Community Involvement;
- Recreation Programs;
- Park and Natural Area Lands;
- Natural Resources;
- Recreation Facilities; and
- Summary and Next Steps.

II. Community Involvement

Extensive community involvement to gather feedback from residents and to represent the diverse interests of the community has been a component of understanding issues and identifying needs and priorities for Renton residents.

Overview

Feedback obtained through the community outreach events is used to interpret the demand for parks, facilities and programs. One of the key components of the community engagement process is the project website, a one-stop online portal for this effort, accessed through the City's website. The website will continue to be live throughout the planning process, and includes a library of all planning documents, a calendar of events and opportunities to provide feedback and comments. The most recent feature of the website is an interactive map allowing the public to view and comment on parks, recreation, open space and natural resource opportunities in Renton.

During the first phases of this planning effort, over 800 people have participated in the variety of public involvement opportunities offered to date. Table 1 provides a summary. The complete results of each activity can be found in individual summary reports available under separate cover.

Table 1: Community Involvement Participation as of March 17, 2011

Activity	Participants
Steering Committee	16
Focus Groups	63
Stakeholder Interviews	9
Community Questionnaire	661
Community Interactive Workshops (signed in)	60
Total	**805**

- *Steering Committee:* To date, the 16 member Steering Committee has met twice (October 2010 and February 2011) and will continue to meet during future phases of the planning process. The committee consists of a demographically diverse group, representing a range of interests and backgrounds. The purpose of the committee is to advise on the plan.

- *Focus Groups:* Three Focus Group meetings (Environmental, Organized Outdoor Active Recreation, and Recreation Service Providers) provided a more in-depth discussion of specific topics important to Renton. Held in late October and early November 2010, the meetings provided participants with a forum to discuss opportunities and perceived needs for Renton, as well as to provide feedback on specific interest areas. The Environmental Focus Group meeting was held at the Renton Community Center and consisted of 28 participants and City staff. The Organized Outdoor Active Recreation Focus Group meeting

was held at the Highlands Neighborhood Center and consisted of 16 participants plus City staff. The Recreation Service Providers Focus Group meeting was held at the Renton Community Center and consisted of 19 participants and City staff.

- *Stakeholder Interviews:* MIG interviewed stakeholders about their perception of parks, recreation and open space issues as well as key challenges facing the City. The interviews served to identify topics and ideas that should be explored in other public input opportunities and integrated into the planning analysis. These stakeholders were drawn from a list of interested parties based on their understanding of a particular issue or representation of a major interest. The planning team conducted the interviews during the month of October 2010 with nine stakeholders during five interviews. Organizations that took part in the interviews included:

  - RUFF – Renton Unleashed Furry Friends
  - Renton School District
  - Herons Forever
  - Renton Skatepark Advocate
  - Boeing

- *Community Questionnaire:* The questionnaire allowed community members to provide feedback on existing park facilities, desired activities, future park improvements, recreation facilities, programs, natural resources and services. MIG and the City of Renton administered the questionnaire online using the City's website (www.rentonwa.gov) and the project page linked under the title "Renew the Legacy…Fulfill the Vision." The questionnaire was available from the last week of October 2010 through the first week of December 2010, and was advertised in City publications, and through multiple electronic mail lists. It was also provided in three languages (English, Spanish and Vietnamese) on paper at community facilities. While questionnaire responses are not statistically valid, participation in Renton was higher than in similar communities. At the close of the questionnaire a total of 661 responses had been submitted.

- *Community Interactive Workshops:* At the early stages of the planning process, the City held two Interactive Community Workshops (October 27 th and November 4th, 2010). The workshops were designed to collect information from the public, publicize the community questionnaire and market the year-long planning process. The workshops were both informative and interactive, allowing participants to hear about the project and provide their input on the plan. The workshops were held at Cascade Elementary School and the Renton Community Center.

City Meetings and Coordination

The planning process has also drawn guidance from a broad group of City staff and the advisory commissions.

- *Interdepartmental Team:* The Interdepartmental Team meetings serve to promote a high degree of coordination between City departments, to gather feedback and identify key issues facing the city. The eighteen member team met twice during the first two phases of this planning process, in October 2010 and February 2011, and met to discuss the

Community Needs Assessment in March 2011. This group will continue to meet throughout the planning process.

- *Commission Meetings:* A joint meeting of the Parks Commission and Planning Commission allowed the planning team to update commissioners on key findings of the public involvement process. The meeting also provided commissioners the opportunity to discuss the planning process and provide input and comment on key findings. The meeting was held at City Hall, in February 2011.

- *Community Services Department Staff Meeting:* The Community Services Department Staff meeting provided an opportunity for an interim staff review of the preliminary service area and gap analysis findings. The meeting was held at City Hall, in March 2011.

- *Committee of the Whole (COW) Briefing:* The planning team provided an overview of the plan and presented preliminary findings from public involvement activities. Held on March 28, 2011 at City Hall, the meeting also gave committee members a chance to weigh in on project direction and provide comments related to park and recreation needs and issues.

Summary of Key Findings

MIG's planning team created summaries for each outreach activity and meeting and are available on the project website. Evaluation of ongoing public feedback will continue to occur in future phases of the planning process. These findings are categorized into four general topics: parks and access, parks and recreation facilities, natural resources and recreation programming.

Parks and Access

- *Filling geographic gaps in service.* According to public input, there are several service gaps in the existing system and not all residents have equal access to parks, recreation facilities and programs. Gaps include areas of the City that are underserved by nearby parks and recreation opportunities.

- *Increasing potential of parks.* There are a handful of parks that receive the majority of use in Renton, especially those parks with access to the water. At the same time, the public expressed interest in improving park maintenance to increase potential play time and upgrading facilities to make park use more flexible.

Parks and Recreation Facilities

- *Sustaining maintenance of facilities.* Residents feel that Renton's parks and recreation facilities are important assets. As such, adequate repair and maintenance will be important to extend their lifespan and residents place this as a high priority.

- *Reopening closed facilities.* There is a desire to reopen activity buildings as well as restrooms throughout the park system.

- *Building new facilities.* There is an expressed interest in several new park and recreation facilities: a new skateboarding facility, completion of trail connections, new restrooms in parks that lack them, a sports field complex, boating facility, environmental education center, off-leash dog park and an indoor aquatics facility.

- *Partnerships for improvements and maintenance.* There is interest in collaborative partnerships to sustain and make the best use of existing facilities as well as an overall willingness to pay additional fees for better sport fields.

Natural Resources

- *Improving management of natural resources.* Residents expressed interest in heightened management and maintenance of natural resources with special attention towards addressing invasive species.

- *Balancing access and protection.* Residents felt strongly about balancing public access to natural resource areas with the need to protect and conserve these important resources.

- *Recognizing salmon as an important resource*. Salmon is a major symbol of the community's identity and signifies a strong connection with the environment.

Recreational Programming

- *Bringing people together.* There is strong interest in events and social interaction to bring the community together.

- *Providing activities for all.* There is interest in programs, athletics and activities for all ages, and especially those targeted at youth.

- *Expanding recreational programming variety.* There is interest in new and expanded programs such as yoga, Pilates, Tai Chi, community gardening, and boating.

- *Increasing environmental education.* There is interest in environmental education and programming to increase awareness and education of the extensive natural resources in Renton.

- *Improved coordination and awareness.* The public expressed interest in increasing the amount of City recreational programming at local sites and creating a centralized location for scheduling. There is also interest in improved scheduling coordination among program providers and use of school district facilities, with more outreach to improve awareness of programs.

- *Adapting programs and outreach to a changing Renton.* There is interest in increasing opportunities for Renton's diverse population.

III. Recreation Programs

Recreation programming for the community is a major City service provided by the Community Services Department, Recreation Division. The department also collaborates with a variety of community partners including the Renton School District. In addition to the City's offerings, there are a number of neighboring public jurisdictions, and private and non-profit organizations that provide recreational programming serving the community.

This analysis outlines the range of existing and desired program types, identifies providers in the community and nearby areas, and applies a set of desired outcomes to identify service gaps. These gaps present opportunities for the City to improve and modify the program offerings. The next phase of the planning process will refine opportunities and set direction for future recreation programs.

Existing Recreation Programs

The Recreation Division has defined ten major recreation program areas, encompassing classes, programs and activities that either require registration or that the City tracks through admission.

Major Program Areas

- *Aquatics.* The Henry Moses Aquatic Center provides public swims, lap swimming, youth group swimming lessons (ages 9 months to 12 years), water walking, water aerobics and facility rentals during summer months.

- *Camps.* There are a variety of camps offered by the City including summer day camps, spring and winter art camps, tennis camps and other sports camps.

- *Crafts and Visual Arts.* This includes senior, adult, youth and pre-school art classes, as well as History Museum and Carco Theatre programs.

- *Health and Fitness.* This program area includes fitness, martial arts classes and drop-in exercise opportunities for seniors, adults and youth.

- *Outdoor Recreation.* A variety of outdoor programs, such as sailing, rowing, kayaking, cross-country skiing, snowboarding, snowshoeing, golfing and gardening provided for all youth, adults and seniors.

- *Performing Arts.* This area includes classes and recitals for dance, music and theatre/drama for all ages.

- *Special Events.* Special events include a variety of celebrations, festivals and activities that support community interaction, recreation, fitness and fun. These events are targeted to, and enjoyed by, all ages.

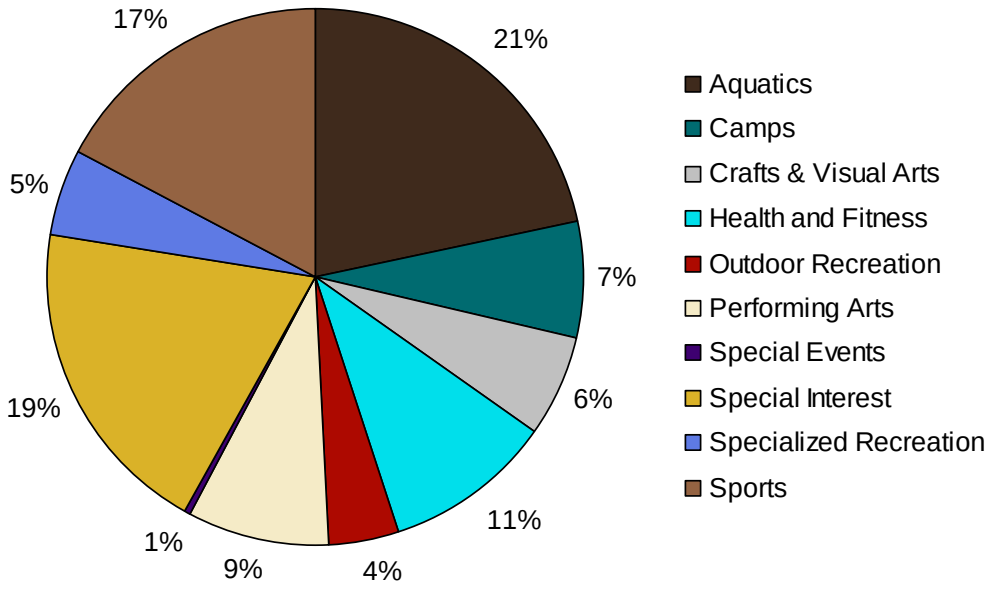
- *Special Interest.* This program area includes miscellaneous classes, especially for preschool children and seniors, and to a lesser degree for youth, teens and adults.

- *Specialized Recreation.* The Specialized Recreation program provides a variety of recreational opportunities, group leisure/social programs and adaptive programs for youth and adults with disabilities.

- *Sports.* This program area supports tennis (in partnership with Aces Tennis), youth athletics and adult athletics, including leagues and classes.

Renton tracks program data year to year, allowing for analysis of trends. Figure 1 illustrates the percentage of classes offered as recorded in the registration system for 2010. The figure shows that aquatics (283 courses), special interest (250) and sports based recreation programs (224) offered the most courses in 2010. Specialized recreation (70) and outdoor recreation (52) offer the fewest courses of Renton's programs. According to the data, there are also seven special events that require registration, and are discussed in greater detail later in this section.

Figure 1: Recreation Courses Offered, 2010

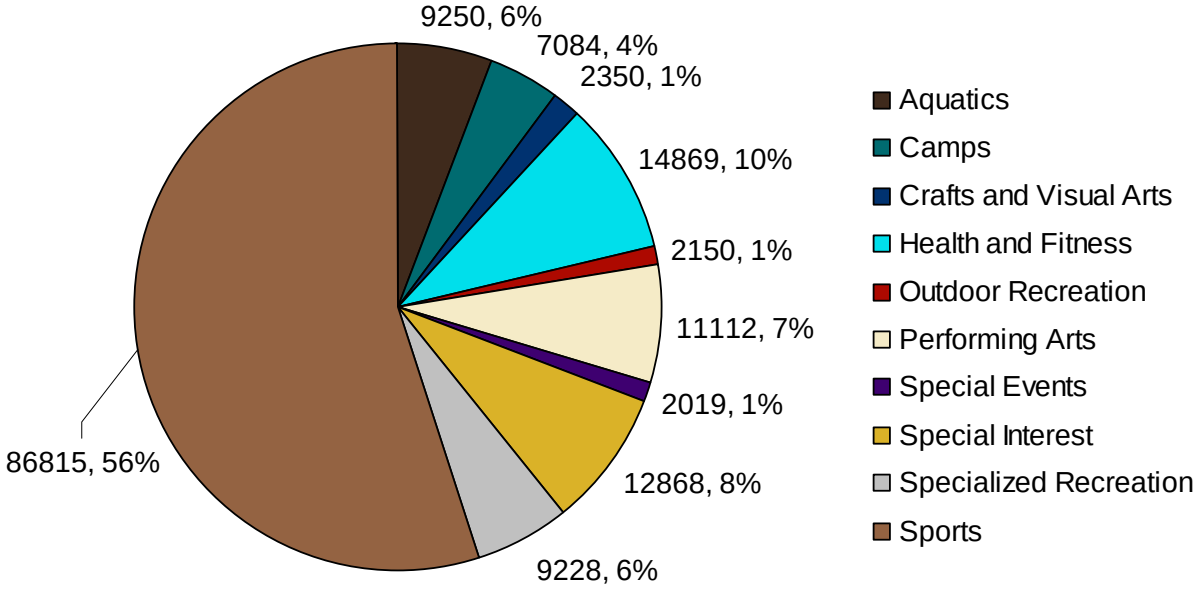


Program Participation

The discussion of program participation is based on program visits, which can provide a more accurate representation of program participation, as registration numbers vary and are not always tracked the same way.

Figure 2 illustrates the number and percentage of recreation program-based participant visits in 2010, which includes repeat classes, practices and games.[1] While activities and programs with a limited duration attract fewer participant days, others are held year-round and draw a larger share of total participant days. The figure shows that sports-based programs draw the largest share of visits, which may or may not correlate to the percentage of the population served. Although not reflected in Figure 2, special events attract a large number of visitors. Registration is not required for all events and participation visits are not completely captured. Special Events are discussed in greater detail later in this section.

Figure 2: Total Participant Visits, 2010



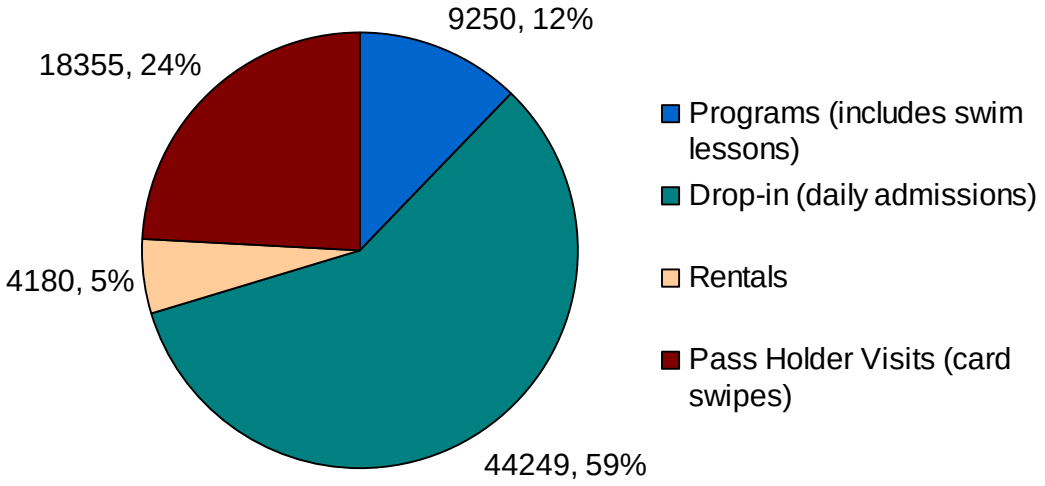
Delving further into participation, more detailed information is provided for the Henry Moses Aquatics Center, Sports Fields and Indoor Gyms.

[1] Some program areas, most notably health and fitness, offer a drop-in fee option which means that all participation is not captured in the available data. Special events category only includes registration for events that require registration, such as the K9 Dog Run, Community Garage Sale and Holiday Bazaar - it does not include all attendees at all special events.

Aquatics

The City's Henry Moses Aquatic Center provides a variety of swimming and aquatic programs and activities. Figure 3 reflects total number and percentage of visits to the Henry Moses Aquatic Center in 2010 and indicates that the majority of visits are drop-in (daily admissions).[2] In 2010, these visits accounted for 58% of all visits. Residents with a pass also accounted for a large share of total visits (24%), while facility rentals generated only 5% of visits. Aquatic programming and swim lessons generated 9,250 total visits, or 12% of the total. Visits made by pass holders and drop-in are for the same activity and are differentiated mainly to understand the method of payment.

Figure 3: Henry Moses Aquatic Center Visits, 2010



Renton holds a variety of city-wide special events throughout the year. These events can also require additional resources such as restrooms, parking management and clean-up that can become a draw on City funding and maintenance resources. Renton's special events are popular, with events such as Renton River Days attracting several thousand visitors. Events such as the Community Garage Sale, Hassle Free Holiday Bazaar and Fishing Derby, the major special events with a limited capacity, have generally filled all reservable spaces.[3]

- *Renton River Days.* The Renton River Days attracts approximately 35,000 annually, including 658 festival volunteers, 11,000 festival participants (ie. artists, sporting event entries, parade entry participants, etc.) and 50 separate individuals, organizations and companies helping to support the festival with contributions and sponsorships.

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[2] HMAC was open from June 19th, 2010 - September 6th, 2010. Total of 80 days. Average daily attendance = 950.4

[3] Community Garage Sale and Hassle Free Holiday Bazaar registration data includes number of reservable spaces for vendors only. Fishing Derby data includes number of registered individual participants.

- *Fourth of July.* For the eight consecutive year, the City of Renton has organized and produced a 4th of July community event at Gene Coulon Memorial Beach Park. The event draws around 20,000 annually at the park not including those viewing from the water, West Hill, Mercer Island, Newcastle, Kennydale and Highlands neighborhoods.

- *Renton Farmers Market at the Piazza.* Approximate attendance is 4,000/week for approximately 68,000 annual visits. Vendors' gross sales average $19,000/week or $323,000. According to surveys conducted in 2008 and 2009, approximately 60% of the visitors to the Renton Farmers Market visit other downtown Renton businesses before or after their trips to the market.

- *Community Garage Sale.* The Community Garage sale is held at the Renton Community Center. It is a large "swap meet" event where vendors register with us and pay for a space. Attendance is free. Overall attendance is not tracked. However, vendor registration is tracked and reaches capacity.

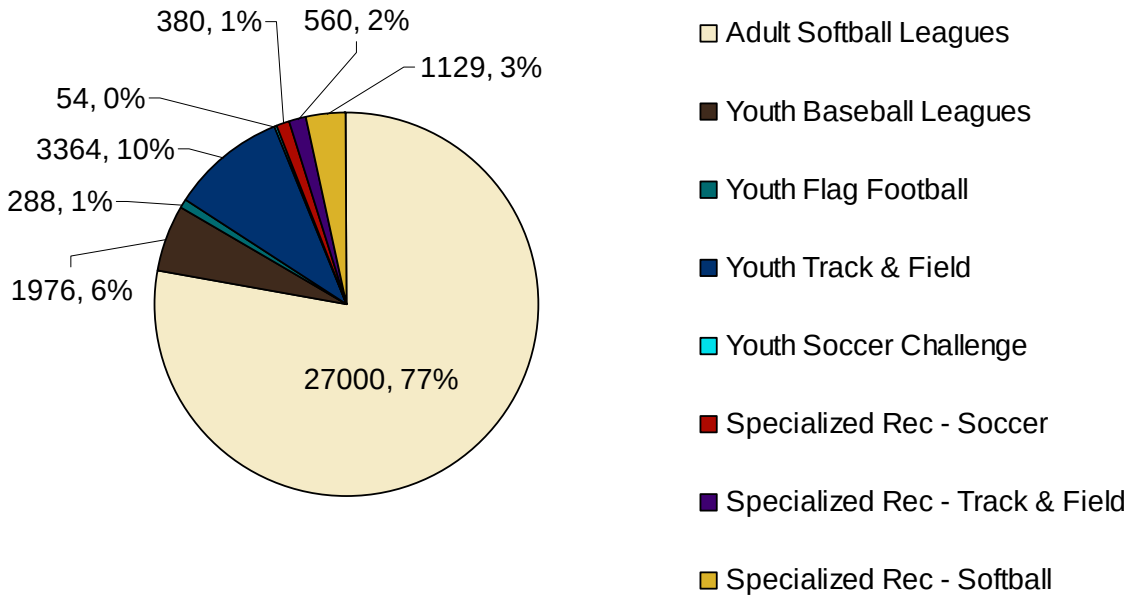
- *Hassle Free Holiday Bazaar.* The Hassle Free Holiday Bazaar allows vendors to register for spaces and sell arts & crafts. Attendance is free to the public, and is not tracked. Vendor registration is tracked and reaches capacity.

In addition to the larger Citywide events, more than 25 additional special events were hosted by the Recreation Division in 2010. The K9 Candy Cane Fun Run with 247 registered participants and Halloween Boo Carnival with 242 admissions are also well attended. The number of registered participants and available spaces indicate that Renton's special events are popular. Yet these numbers represent only part of event attendees. Special events such as the Community Garage Sale and Holiday Bazaar attract a significant number of un-tracked visitors.

Sports

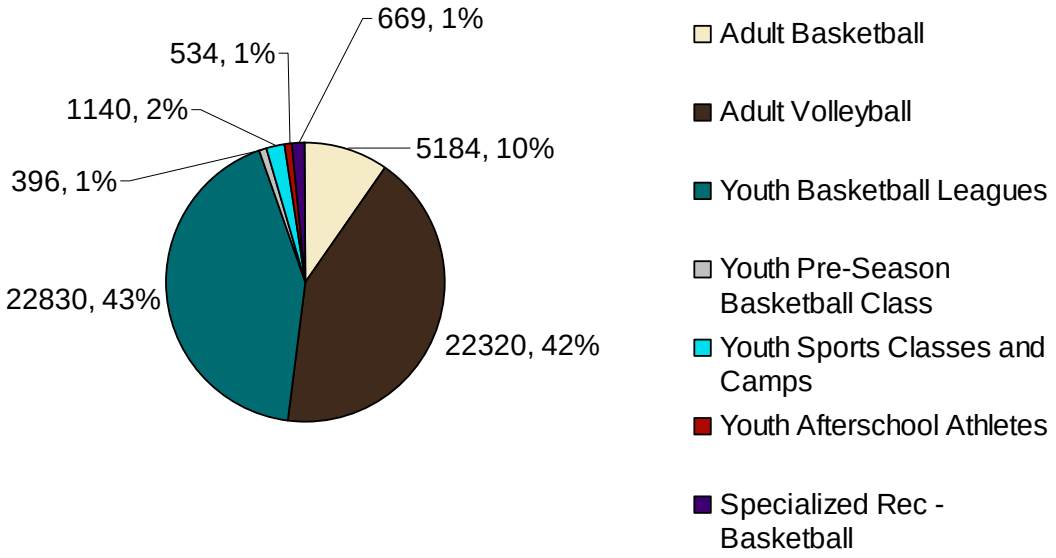
Visits to Renton's sports fields and indoor gyms represent a large portion of recreation visits. A closer look at program visit data indicates that some programs generate significantly more visitors than others.

Figure 4: Renton Programs Sports Field Based Recreation Programming Visits, 2010



- *Athletic Fields.* The majority of athletic field related sports programming by the City of Renton is held on City park fields where City programs get priority use. Fields located at Hazen High School, Renton High School and the Renton Memorial Stadium are also used. Figure 4 shows all recreation programming visits in Renton and does not include visits for other providers (such as community sports groups). In 2010, adult softball leagues account for the majority of athletic-related program visits. Figure 4 shows that youth track and field (10% of all programming visits) and youth baseball leagues (6%) also draw a larger percentage of users. Some programs such as the youth soccer challenge have a limited duration and therefore account for fewer visits. This chart shows the dominance of adult softball within the City of Renton offered programming. While this is somewhat balanced by the priority given to youth sports in renting additional field capacity, only field time not programmed by the City is available for rent in the first place.

Figure 5: Renton Indoor Gym Based Recreation Programming Visits, 2010



- *Indoor Gym.* In 2010, most indoor gym-related visits stemmed from adult volleyball and youth basketball programs. These programs are offered in Highlands Neighborhood Center, the Renton Community Center and North Highlands Neighborhood Center as well as several School District facilities. School District facilities are used exclusively for youth programming with adult programs making use of City of Renton gyms. Figure 5 shows that youth afterschool athletics and youth pre-season basketball class had the fewest visitors.

Other Recreation Providers

In addition to the City of Renton's recreation offerings, the community is served by a variety of public and private providers, including the nearby cities of Kent, Tukwila, Newcastle, Bellevue and Issaquah. Some of these communities also draw users from within Renton due to the type of program and/or proximity. King County Parks, King County Library System and Seattle Public Utilities are also accounted for due to their geographic overlap. Rounding out this analysis are the other non-profit and private service providers that create options for users or complement the programming offered by public agencies.

Table 2A: Renton Recreation Program Inventory Matrix summarizes two pieces of information across all of the providers examined. The first is the program area served by the particular provider (or type of provider). In the table, a circle is indicated for each program area either offered or facilitated by the provider. The second is the range of populations served by the offerings. The table also shows whether programs are serving Renton's diverse population.

Looking at the table, the cities of Bellevue, Issaquah, Kent and Tukwila are providing comprehensive programs. These providers mirror the range of programming options offered by Renton. Other public agencies, including King County, the King County Library System and Seattle Public Utilities have recreation offerings that are more focused. Still, some providers,

such as the YMCA, offer greater recreation variety offering programming in ten of the identified program areas.

Golf programming is a unique area due to the costly facilities required. Outside of the public agencies that own or operate golf facilities, programming is centered on private courses or driving ranges (most of which are open to the public). None of the other providers identified in Renton offer golf programs. The cities of Kent, Bellevue and Tukwila all have golf courses. Other program areas have many providers, offering a great deal of variety. Assuming that the different providers have found a niche within these general areas, there is no reason to think that multiple providers are duplicative. Examples of program types with many providers include:

- Camps;
- Health and fitness;
- Volunteer opportunities;
- Before and after school programs; and
- Drop in activities.

Table 2A also shows gaps in the provision of recreation programming. Some program areas are almost entirely dependant on public agencies to provide programs. Examples of program types with little to no opportunities offered by other providers include:

- Crafts and Visual Arts;
- Outdoor Recreation;
- Specialized Recreation
- Golf Programming;
- Environmental Programming/Education; and
- Gardening.

The type and extent to which recreation programming is available to different ages and demographic characteristics is another important factor. The right side of Table 2A indicates the populations served by the range of programming. Across the age splits, public agencies are nearly universally serving the preschool to high school aged youth, offering multiple classes across multiple program areas. Other providers programming across multiple areas are also covering the youth of the community. For other age groups, adults have somewhat fewer options with other providers which offer multiple types of programming.

Table 2B: Renton Recreation Programs and Demographic Characteristics shows how different residents in Renton are being served by recreation programs. According to the City of Renton recreation program registration data and staff input, there is a variety of programming for a range of different demographics characteristics and age groups. Program areas such as Aquatics, Performing Arts and Special Events provide opportunities for all residents. However, the majority of areas do not offer opportunities for all. Certain areas, such as camps, are oriented for younger residents and therefore are not intended to provide opportunities for populations, especially by age. The number of program areas that are aimed directly at youth highlights the variety offered to this population, while relatively few program areas specifically target participants from diverse cultures. Based on the table, school-age youth, adults and seniors have a variety of programming opportunities. Additionally, there are a variety of program areas that could be considered for expansion to additional populations, such as Crafts and Visual Arts, Sports Classes and Environmental Programming and Gardening. Expanding into additional

populations should not be an exercise of checking the boxes, but instead should be focused on where important services can be provided that advance the desired outcomes of City of Renton recreation programming.

Front Table 2A

Back Table 2A

Front Table 2B

Back Table 2B

Desired Outcomes

A successful recreation division requires flexibility to respond to changes in user demands. Assessment of the current programs requires a clear understanding of the competitive environment (the broad range of user choice in terms of providers and activities) and listening carefully to the community about programs they would most like to see offered. The ultimate decisions about specific offerings should be informed by a series of desired outcomes driven by the vision and mission of the City.

Determining programming needs includes an understanding of the outcomes for which the community is aiming. The most direct way to understand this is to examine the sum of the specific findings of the public input process.

The Community Questionnaire asked respondents to identify the functions and benefits of the park, recreation, open space and natural resources system that are most important to them. Thirty-four percent of respondents indicated that supporting health and fitness activities is an important social and community function. Other top responses to this question included providing activities and settings for youth and places for gatherings.

When asked specifically about types of programs that are most needed, or could be enhanced in Renton, seven responses stood out from the list of 11. These responses echo the top benefits and functions desired of the system and add environmental, and arts and culture programming to the mix. The responses in ranked order included:

1. Fitness and wellness programs;
2. Youth sports;
3. Aquatic programs/swimming;
4. Environmental programs;
5. Before and after school programs;
6. Adult sports; and
7. Arts and culture.

Comprehensive Plan Goal and Objectives

A major policy driving the desired outcomes for recreation programs stems from the City Comprehensive Plan Goal and Objectives for Parks, Recreation, Open Space and Trails. A summary of this goal and list of related objectives is provided in Appendix C: Comprehensive Plan Goal and Objectives. The stated goal in the current Comprehensive Plan for Parks, Recreation, Open Space and Trails is listed below.

Provide a high quality comprehensive park, recreation, open space, and trails system to meet the short and long-term needs of current and future Renton residents.

Under this goal a series of eight objectives elaborate on the City's intent with three objectives relating directly to recreation programming:

- **Objective P-D:** New park and recreational services shall support population growth concurrently with new development.

- **Objective P-G**: Provide opportunities for public participation in recreational services and programs that are creative, stimulating, educational, proactive and healthy and which reflect the needs and interests of the community.

- **Objective P-H:** Develop and expand public and private partnerships to maximize recreational opportunities.

Proposed Target Outcomes

Together with the public input results, the framework of the City's Comprehensive Plan and discussions with the Parks Commission, Planning Commission, Steering Committee and Interdepartmental Team, the following target outcomes are proposed for Renton's recreation programming:

- Encouraging people to try new things and develop new skills;
- Adding and enhancing healthy activities to residents lifestyles;
- Fostering a connection to the natural environment;
- Creating positive activities and fun environments for youth;
- Facilitating gatherings and bringing the community together;
- Promoting individual and community development and inter-connectedness;
- Providing a "safety net" for our most vulnerable populations by providing affordable options for essential programs; and
- Serving a changing Renton while adapting to new demographics and preferences.

Service Gaps

Applying these outcomes to the Recreation Program Inventory Matrix, a number of possibilities were identified for future Renton programs and the development of partnerships with other providers and target populations.

Focus Program Areas

Based on public input, the analysis of the competitive environment and the proposed target outcomes, the following program areas should to be added or enhanced within the mix of the City of Renton's offerings. Overall, a review of the target outcomes suggests that the City should serve a role providing opportunities in the following areas.

- Special Events
- Crafts and visual arts
- Gardening (classes)
- Environmental education
- Outdoor recreation (ie. boating, snow sports classes and events)
- Volunteer opportunities

Program areas with opportunities to develop partnerships with other providers in expanding or complementing City of Renton programming are identified below.

- Sports and School District partnership
- Emergency preparedness and first aid
- Environmental education
- Performing arts

These additional program or program development needs do not immediately supersede the existing range of programming offered by the City. Following this Needs Assessment will be the development of Decision Making Tools and discussions centered on applying priorities and financial realities to the needs identified in this analysis.

Focus Populations

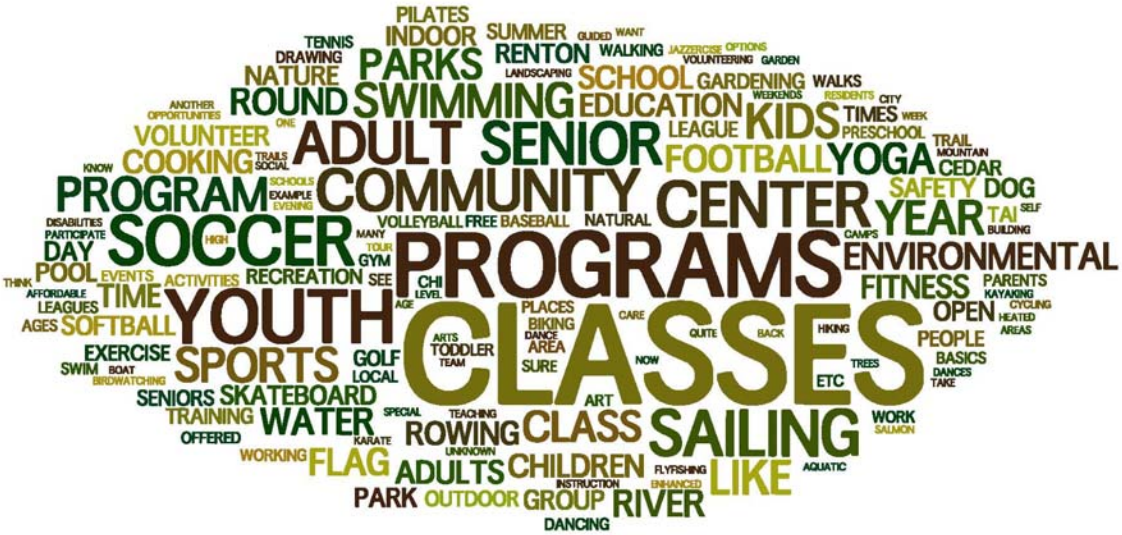
Both the specialized recreation program area and the people with disabilities population are primarily served by the public agencies. As illustrated in Table 2B, people from diverse cultures are not a focus of many providers. While programming offerings are open to all, language and cultural differences can create unintentional hurdles. Based on existing programming, the majority of program area gaps are related to five population groups.

- Children and Youth (through age 14). Program areas lacking for this group include Health and Fitness, Outdoor Recreation, Specialized Recreation and Gardening.
- High School Age (15-18). Program areas lacking for this group include Crafts and Visual Arts, Outdoor Recreation, Environmental Programming and Gardening.
- People with Disabilities. Program areas lacking for this group include Camps, Sports Classes, Environmental Programming, Gardening and Family Support Services.

- People from Diverse Cultures. Program areas lacking for this group include Outdoor Recreation, Performing Arts, Specialized Recreation, Sports Classes, Environmental Programming, Gardening, Youth Services, Family Support Services and Senior Support Services.

A word cloud of the complete responses to this question is presented below. This graphic representation of the data sizes the words based on the frequency of use in the data set.

Figure 6: Open-ended Response Word Cloud



IV. Park and Natural Area Lands

The assessment of park and natural area lands is based on an examination of level of service (LOS) and park service areas.

Park Land Quantitative Analysis

The Existing Conditions Summary includes a discussion of the level of service (LOS); expressed in acres per thousand. One of the key uses of ratio based standards in analysis is the simple calculation of land needs based on population. This analysis has its limitations and should not be the sole basis of park land need. However, performing this calculation can be an important consideration in adjusting or reaffirming a population based standard. Appendix B provides an assessment of Renton's standards, based on the state's Recreation Conservation Office (RCO) guidelines. Further refinements to Renton's standards will be completed during the draft plan stage.

Park Classifications

As noted in the Existing Conditions Summary, the City's park system is composed of various types of parks, each providing unique recreation and environmental opportunities. While park sites function differently, they collectively meet a variety of community and natural resources needs. The Renton parks and recreation system is currently broken down into six different categories. The following definitions are drawn from the Existing Conditions Summary:

- *Neighborhood Parks.* Neighborhood parks are small park areas (usually 2-10 acres in size) utilized for passive use and unstructured play. They often contain an open space for field sports, a children's playground, sports courts and a picnic area. Neighborhood parks provide close-to-home recreation opportunities for nearby residents, who typically live within walking and bicycling distance (1/2 mile) of the park. Some larger neighborhood parks incorporate open space, such as heavily wooded areas, which reduces the amount of unprogrammed active use acreage at the site.

- *Community Parks.* Community parks are traditionally larger sites that can accommodate organized play and contain a wider range of facilities. They usually have programmable sports fields or other major use facilities as the central focus of the park. In many cases, they will also serve the neighborhood park function. Community parks generally average 10-25 acres in size with a substantial portion of them devoted to active use.

- *Regional Parks.* Regional parks are large park areas that serve populations beyond the community. They may serve a single purpose or offer a wide range of facilities and activities. In many cases they also contain large areas of undeveloped open space. Many regional parks are acquired because of unique features found or developed on the site.

- *Special Use Areas.* Specialized parks and facilities include areas that generally restrict public access to certain times of the day or to specific recreational activities.

- *Natural Areas.* This type of park area is defined as general natural areas, and other undeveloped open spaces that include streams, ravines, easements, steep hillsides or wetlands. Often they are acquired to protect an environmentally sensitive area or

wildlife habitats. In other cases, they may be heavily wooded areas that contribute to the tree canopy and scenic views across Renton. Sometimes trail systems are found in these areas.

- *Corridors.* A sixth category of park captures narrow swaths of land that serve as connections between parks or to other destinations. A corridor site can be the location of a trail or can provide a habitat linkage between two larger areas. These sites do not typically include many park amenities.

There are also several small parks in the system that are around an acre in size. The City of Renton has included these parks in the Neighborhood Park category in past planning efforts. It is important to recognize that the small size and limited ability to accommodate activities can result in overstating the distribution of park service across the community. This analysis begins to identify some of the elements of park service that do not fit within these sites.

Table 3 summarizes park acreage by classification. There are approximately 1,200 acres of parks, open spaces and corridors.

Table 3: Park Land by Classification, City of Renton

Park Classification	Developed Park Sites*		Undeveloped Sites/ Open Space		Total	
	# of Sites	Acreage	# of Sites	Acreage	Total Acreage	% of System
Neighborhood Park	18	92.8	4	52.0	144.9	12.0%
Community Park	6	105.3	1**	24.1	129.3	10.8%
Regional Park	1	51.3	-	-	51.3	4.3%
Special Use Park	7	196.2	-	-	196.2	16.3%
Natural Areas	-	-	10	668.1	668.1	55.6%
Corridors	1	12.9	-	-	12.9	1.0%
Total	33	458.5	15	744.2	1,202.7	100%

* Some developed park sites include Natural Areas and/or undeveloped areas.

**Reflects the undeveloped flat area of the NARCO Property.

Comparable Communities

An evaluation of comparable communities' park systems illustrates trends in park and recreation services and helps identify a baseline for assessing system gaps in the City of Renton. Table 4: Comparable Park System Matrix provides a summary of park systems and standards for the cities of Bellevue, WA, Hillsboro, OR and Kent, WA. All are comparable in terms of scale of services provided and community profile. In addition, Bellevue and Hillsboro are both CAPRA-certified, as is Renton. Of the four comparable communities Renton ranks towards the middle of comparable totals of park land.

Table 4: Comparable Park System Matrix

	Renton, WA	Bellevue, WA	Hillsboro, OR	Kent, WA
Population[1]	86,230	122,900	90,000	88,380
Total Existing Park Acreage[2]	1,203	2,673	808	1,434[3]
Existing % Natural Areas[4]	54%	37%	40%[5]	60%
Park LOS Guidelines				
Neighborhood Parks	1.2 acres/1,000	Not specified	Not specified	0.92 acres/1,000
Community Parks	2.5 acres/1,000	Not specified	Not specified	1.27 acres/1,000
Open Space/ Natural Areas	12.7 acres/1,000	Not specified	Not specified	9.2 acres/1,000
Total Parkland LOS	18.58 acres/1,000	Not specified	10 acres/1,000	15.24 acres/1,000
Park Service Area	½-mile from neighborhood parks; 1-2 miles from community parks	1/3-mile of a park or trail access point	½-mile from neighborhood parks; 2 miles from community parks	Not specified
Facility LOS Guidelines				
Sports Fields	1 baseball field/2,250; 1 soccer field/3,000	Not specified	1 baseball field/1,600 1 soccer field/1,000	Not specified
Origins, Destinations and Parking	Not specified	Not specified	Parking should be provided at community and nature parks	Required for community parks
Programmable Space	Not specified	1 community recreation center/25,000	1 neighborhood recreation center for each town center	Not specified
Trails	0.2 mile/1,000	Walking Trails: 1.1 miles/1,000 Biking Trails: 0.7 miles/1,000	Not specified	Not specified

[1] Based on park plan. [2] Based on existing inventory. Numbers show total acreage maintained by city. [3] Includes owned and leased land. [4] Based on percentage of total park acreage that is open space and/or natural resource acreage. [5] Includes greenways and open space areas.
Sources: Park and facility LOS based on Park, Recreation and Open Space Implementation Plan (2003). Bellevue Parks & Open Space System Plan (2010); Hillsboro Parks & Trails Master Plan and Natural Resource Analysis (2009); City of Kent Park & Open Space Plan (2010).

Park Land Level of Service

Level of Service (LOS) is the ratio of park land acres to residents, expressed in acres per thousand. The LOS calculations assists in determining the need for additional acreage for regional, neighborhood and community parks, natural areas, and special use parks now and in the future.

In order to estimate future park land need population projections are used. The current population estimate used in this assessment is 86,230 residents, with future populations projected out to the six-year update cycle and the 20-year planning horizon (Table 5).

By multiplying the adopted LOS standard to the future population and then subtracting the City's current park acreage, an estimate for additional park land acreage can be derived. Table 6 summarizes the potential park land need based on the adopted LOS standards and anticipated population growth.

Table 5: Key Population Figures[4] Used In Analysis, City of Renton

Year	Population
2010	86,230
2017	97,950
2030	124,106

Table 6: Standard-Based Land Needs

Park Classifiation	Adopted Standard*	Current Acres	Current LOS	Current Need	Need 2017	Need 2030
Neighborhood	1.2 ac.	144.8 ac.	1.7 ac.	-	-	4 ac.
Community	2.5 ac.	129.3 ac.	1.5 ac.	86 ac.	116 ac.	181 ac.
Regional	1.08 ac.	51.3 ac.	0.6 ac.	42 ac.	55 ac.	ac.
Special Use	0.8 ac.	196.2 ac.	2.0 ac.	-	-	-
Natural Area	12.7 ac.	668.1 ac.	6.8 ac.	427ac.	576 ac.	908 ac.
Linear **	0.3 ac.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Corridor **	None Adopted	12.9 ac	0.1 ac.	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total Park Land	18.58 ac.	1,202.7 ac.	13.95 ac.			

* LOS expressed as number of acres per 1,000 persons.
** The City has eliminated the use of the Linear Park category. Land formerly included in the Linear Parks category has been reclassified so that the system-wide totals are comparable. As part of this PROSNR planning process, Corridors have been defined as an additional type of park land. As a result there is not an adopted LOS of service standard for comparison.

Based on the adopted LOS standards, there is a surplus of neighborhood park land until the year 2030; current surplus is 41 acres and the surplus for 2017 is 27 acres. The same is true for special use park land with a current surplus of 127 acres, which will be 118 acres by 2017 and 97 acres by 2030. Surpluses in park land can indicate a need to revisit the LOS standards.

[4] Source: 2010 population based on Renton Demographics Report, City of Renton, Community and Economic Development Department (2010). 2017-2030 population based on 2000-2010 average annual growth rate.

Access to Parks and Natural Areas

Many communities are moving away from adopting standards for individual park types and are focusing on the geographic distribution of park lands, facilities and services. Several important factors influence park access—how people get to parks and recreation facilities. The access analysis examines gaps in access (locations lacking access within a specified service area distance) by examining potential barriers, for pedestrians and cyclists. By examining the gaps in services, opportunities for redevelopment of existing facilities or development of new facilities can be evaluated. The following factors used in this access analysis are:

- *Service Area:* People are willing to travel greater distances for amenities that are more unique and larger in scale. The park land and facility access analysis measures the service area along established transportation networks: roadways and trails for pedestrians and bicyclists, and roadways for automobiles[5]. In contrast, a traditional service analysis is based on the concept that all residents can travel a straight-line path to the nearest park, equally accessible from every direction.
- *Transportation Modes:* People travel to and from parks in a variety of ways. Pedestrians are willing to walk between 1/4 and 1/2 mile to reach a park destination; bicyclists are willing to travel approximately 1/2 - 1 mile to reach a destination. For the purposes of analysis 1/4 and 1/2 mile is used to represent pedestrians and cyclists. Automobile travel distance is variable and for the purposes of this analysis has been set at a range of 1/4 to 2 miles.
- *Service Barriers:* For all park users not using an automobile, a variety of physical, natural and perceptual barriers can limit access to parks. Roadways can provide access to parks, but busy roads can also hinder crossing to park sites, especially when considering safety for young park users and those with mobility concerns. Barriers for pedestrians include interstates and highways. Therefore, this study presumes that pedestrians are unlikely to cross these highways to get to parks unless there is a designated over or underpass.

For the purposes of analysis, observations about access to parks and natural areas are discussed by community planning area. Figure 7 depicts Renton's ten community planning areas.

[5] City street centerline and trails data in GIS was used to model the roadway and trails for pedestrian use. Ideally these streets would have sidewalks and/or bike lanes, but these facilities do not exist throughout the entire Renton transportation system.

Figure 7: Renton Community Planning Areas

Access to Developed Parks

Most cities strive for a park system that provides access to basic recreation amenities within a 1/2 mile of home or work. This is similar to Renton's past plan with 1/2 mile service areas to neighborhood parks. The 1/2 mile service area reach provides close-to-home opportunities to playgrounds, sport courts (basketball and tennis) and natural areas

Map 1: Developed Park Access depict 1/4 to 1/2 service areas from all of Renton's developed parks. This map illustrates the pedestrian service area to basic recreation amenities. As illustrated by the map, some community planning areas contain multiple parks in close proximity and other areas are under served by developed parks. The analysis in this document primarily assesses City of Renton parks, however parks provided by other jurisdictions have been included where development or future intent to develop was identified by City staff.

Observations by Community Planning Area

- Talbot, Benson and East Plateau plan areas are lacking developed park sites within a 1/4 to 1/2 mile service area.
- Portions of East Plateau are potentially served by the undeveloped Maplewood Community Park.
- City Center has overlapping service areas provided by Tonkin Park, Jones Park and Liberty Park and is well served by developed parks.
- Cedar River is well served, except in the eastern portion of the planning area.
- Valley is primarily commercial and industrial uses, and developed park access is not available in this vicinity, but the area has multiple opportunities to access open spaces.
- West Hill is served in the southeast area by Earlington Park.

Front Map 1

Back Map 1

Access to Natural Areas

Map 2: Natural Area Access illustrates areas of Renton that have access to natural areas within the service areas of 1/4 mile to 1/2 mile. Map 2 depicts service areas from these key resources, including sites such as Lake Youngs just outside the city limits[6], and other sites such as Renton Park that are within the city.

Observations by Community Planning Area

- The Talbot planning area has access to natural areas in the northern portion of the area, but Springbrook Watershed in the southern portion of the planning area is not accessible to the public.
- The Valley is well served with access to natural areas.
- Benson is lacking access to natural areas in the central part of this planning area.
- The East Plateau is not served by any Renton natural areas, but may have access to some natural areas provided by other jurisdictions.
- Highland's and Kennydale's access to natural areas is concentrated around the Honey Creek and May Creek Greenways.
- City Center's access to natural area parks is focused along the southeast boundary of the planning area. The northern portion of the planning area is occupied by Boeing and developed park land, but the west and southwest portion of the area may need increased access to natural area opportunities.
- Cedar River is mostly occupied by developed park land, but access to natural areas is limited in the eastern portion of the planning area.

Access to Local Parks by Planned Density

Zoning for higher density of people and uses indicates a need for parks that have the capacity to serve a large number of people. The idea is that the higher the planned density, the more there will be demand on facilities. Map 3a: Local Parks and Zoning illustrates Renton's current generalized zoning plan and the location of community and neighborhood park sites. Map 3b: Local Park Access by High Density Zoning depicts a 1/4 mile service area of local parks overlaid on areas zoned high density residential[7] and commercial uses that draw a high concentration of people to the area. Higher density commercial zones also permit residential development and the combination of attractive commercial and local residents can compound the number of potential park users and are designed to be primarily walkable. Map 3c: Local Park Access by Low Density Zoning depicts 1/4 mile and 1/2 mile service areas in contrast to low density residential [8] and commercial uses that do not draw as high a volume of people to the area.

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[6] Public access or development status of property maintained by other jurisdictions was not specified in the GIS data used for analysis.

[7] Residential zoning categories: R-10 and higher

[8] Residential zoning categories: R-1, R-4 and R-8

Observations by Community Planning Area

- Commercial and industrial land uses are concentrated in the City Center and Valley planning areas, which are planned for high density uses.
- Low density residential is the predominate land use for most of the planning area outside of City Center and Valley, with smaller pockets of commercial distributed among all of the planning areas along with higher density residential.
- Most high density residential zoned areas are underserved by local parks within a 1/4 mile service area.
- Talbot's high density areas are partially serviced by local parks within 1/4 and 1/2 mile. Gaps exist in the low density residential area in the southern portion of the planning area.
- Cedar River's eastern boundary which has been previously noted as lacking access to park and open spaces is zoned high density residential.
- Benson is underserved by local parks within a 1/4 mile service area of its high density residential area. And its southern low density planning area is underserved by local parks within a 1/4 and 1/2 mile service area.
- East Plateau has no local parks serving its high to low density areas.
- Highlands has a mix of access within a 1/4 and 1/2 mile of high density residential areas. The western boundary of the planning area is served by local parks, but the southern and eastern portions of this planning area are partially underserved.
- Highlands's, Kennydale's, and City Center's low density areas are well served by local parks.
- The area of West Hill within the city limits lacks park facilities in the high density residential area, but has park land in the southern area of low density residential area.

Front Map 2

Back Map 2

Front Map 3a

Back Map 3a

Front Map 3b

Back Map 3b

Front Map 3c

Back Map 3c

V. Natural Resources

Renton's natural areas and natural resource lands serve needs for residents such as hiking, wildlife viewing, and visual open space. In addition to preserving habitat, they provide opportunities for a close to home nearby nature experience within an urban environment. These lands provide important ecosystem service functions, including reducing stormwater management costs, protecting streams and aquatic habitats, facilitating aquifer recharge for Renton's drinking water, storing carbon, cleaning air, and moderating the local climate. Most of the over 1,200 acres of park and natural areas in Renton is forested. These forests include both riparian and upland stands, mostly dominated by deciduous trees. The most common natural habitat type in Renton natural areas is second growth maple-fir-western hemlock forest, for approximately 600 acres.

Landscape Ecology and Natural Areas

The ecological value of a natural area depends on several variables. An analysis of Renton's natural resource condition and needs is based on several factors:

- Habitat Size
- Habitat Quality
- Habitat Type
- Water Quality
- Habitat Connectivity
- Habitat Barriers
- Habitat Clusters

Habitat Size: Larger habitats provide greater opportunities for diversity, and more complete food webs for wildlife; they are better buffered from surrounding land uses. In urban settings, habitats larger than 30 acres are relatively rare. Renton parks and natural areas with greater than 30 acres of natural habitat include:

- Maplewood Golf Course: about 100 acres of natural habitat, mostly along the northern perimeter;
- Black River Riparian Forest: about 94 acres of riparian woodland, old field, wetland and open water habitats;
- Cedar River Natural Area: Over 250 acres of mostly contiguous forest;
- Panther Creek Wetlands: Nearly 50 acres of riparian and wetland habitats;
- Renton Wetlands: Over 100 acres of mixed wetland and riparian habitats; and
- Springbrook Watershed: Over 50 acres of riparian forest.

Habitat Quality: Less disturbed, more intact, more mature habitats with low presence of invasive species are high value ecosystems. The only systematic inventory of Renton park natural areas was a tree survey completed in 2007. This survey noted that the number of trees per acre in natural areas is lower than in many Western Washington forests, probably as a result of past logging without replanting.

The extent of invasive species is a major indicator of ecosystem health. There appears to be a dominance of invasive species over much of Renton's park natural areas. A visual survey of some of these areas indicates that all of them appear to have at least some invasive species, including knotweed, blackberry, ivy and holly. The Cedar River natural area appears to be in the highest quality condition. The May Creek greenway area appears to be among those in poor condition, along with Black River Riparian Forest. Overall, the total area and quality of forest has declined from the original mature, mostly coniferous forest that existed at the turn of 20th century. Remnant forests are now mixed or are dominated by deciduous trees as a result of the conifers having been harvested. Renton's natural area forests are generally young age (probably less than 70 years on average).

Habitat Type: Rare or unique habitats, such as bogs, fens, and shorelines, have higher biological value than more common habitats, such as upland second growth forest. In Renton, lowland riparian woodlands are locally rare (within the Seattle urban area) and of high value. According to information from the USGS, Renton has over 170 acres of lowland riparian woodland, mostly found in Black River, May Creek, Panther Creek and the Renton Wetlands. Upland second growth forest, the most common habitat type in Renton's park system at approximately 600 acres, is not a rare or unique habitat. It is, however, highly valued for aesthetic, habitat, and ecosystem service functions, including stormwater and erosion control, wildlife habitat and its visually "natural" character. The highest concentrations of upland forest in Renton are found in Cedar River and May Creek greenways. These include stands dominated by hardwoods, conifers, or of mixed compositions. According to the 2007 Renton Tree Survey, hardwood trees are much more common than conifers, with big leaf maple being the dominant tree species.

Water Quality: Generally, wetlands and natural habitats in close proximity to streams are of high value in maintaining good water quality. Most of the natural areas in Renton's parks are along or near stream corridors and most or all of these corridors have salmon habitat. Some upland forest areas are also important for aquifer recharge (depending on underlying geology) and all help reduce storm water runoff, saving public funds spent on channelizing and other infrastructure.

Habitat Connectivity: Habitats that are near to or directly connected with other habitats have higher ecosystem value than isolated habitats. This is especially true when habitats ultimately connect to much larger "source" habitats, such as the Cascade Range. Both the Cedar River and the Green River are connected to source habitats in the Cascades. Soos Creek connects southeast to Lake Youngs Park.

Habitat Barriers: Urban neighborhoods, industrial areas, and major highways all interrupt habitats and can prevent wildlife from reaching dispersed habitat. Renton has significant habitat barriers. Of these, I-405 is the most significant, cutting off May Creek and the Cedar River from Lake Washington. The Maple Valley Highway (SR 169) and SR 167 separate large habitats on either side.

Habitat Clusters: There are four main clusters of habitats in Renton: Cedar River, May Creek/Honey Creek, Panther Creek and the Green River. In some locations these clusters likely function together, allowing wildlife to use habitats that are near one other. All of these clusters can be characterized ecologically as discontinuous habitat corridors that are linear in shape.

Cedar River and May Creek/Honey Creek appear to contain the most intact, largest and best connected habitats within the city.

- Green River Corridor. This cluster includes the Black River Riparian Forest, Springbrook Wetlands, the P-1 and the P-9 channels. Green River habitats are disrupted by major transportation corridors, and bordered by highly developed industrial land uses. The Green River is subject to flooding, and as a consequence there are a number of undeveloped lowland properties that provide additional habitat in this area.

- Panther Creek Corridor. This is a narrow, partly disconnected series of riparian and wetland habitats that are parallel to the east side of Highway 167. It includes Panther Creek Wetlands, the Edlund Property and the Cleveland/Richardson property in the south. There is some tenuous connectivity between the Panther creek and Green River corridors just south of I-405.

- Cedar River-Soos Creek Corridors. Cedar River greenway bisects Renton and serves as the major east-west greenway. It includes the Cedar River Natural Area, eight developed parks, a trail and a golf course. Soos Creek runs north to south and has tenuous links to the Cedar River through privately owned natural areas.

- May Creek Corridor. This is on the north end of the city, and includes the May and Honey Creek greenways. It is tied into Cougar Mountain Park and is part of the Mountain to Sound Greenway system. It has limited habitat connectivity to Lake Washington.

- Utility corridors may provide linkages for wildlife by connecting rural and urban habitats.

- The lake shore in Renton is highly developed, but does offer some patches of functional habitat.

Potential Policy Direction and Challenges

All urban natural areas in the Pacific Northwest face similar management challenges, in that they contain degraded ecosystems that are relatively small and fragmented. Invasive species often outnumber native ones, and these areas can be subject to dumping, encroachments, vandalism and homeless camping. Many, if not most, urban natural areas were left undeveloped because they are very steep, unstable, wet or subject to flooding. This means that access is often difficult.

Management and Maintenance

Current park natural area management can be characterized as “low input stewardship.” Park staff perform regular inspections, especially in places that have had past issues. Such as the Cedar River Natural Area and Black River Riparian Forest, which have a history of homeless camping. Inspections are both complaint driven and randomly timed. Invasive species are managed on a project by project basis and completed primarily by volunteers coordinated through the City. At the golf course, staff performs invasive plant control. Blackberry, ivy, knotweed and purple loosestrife are noted as primary invasive species of concern. Other agency partners, including King County, also do some invasive species control within City limits. Tree canopies over and near trails are monitored for safety. Hard surface trails are maintained by

park staff, while soft surface trails are typically managed by community volunteers. Currently, there is no program or regular effort to enhance wildlife habitats or to restore ecosystems.

Urban natural areas, including those found in Renton, tend to be smaller, more fragmented and subjected to edge impacts, younger in age, and subjected to more stresses as compared with natural areas found in more rural or wild places. Forests located well within the Cascade Mountains, for example, are within a much larger habitat matrix, are older in age, less disturbed, and have far fewer invasive species. Invasive species, particularly English ivy, thrive in unmaintained urban woodlands. Over time, ivy can smother tree canopies, particularly deciduous trees. This is a high risk for Renton, as most of Renton's trees are deciduous.[9] Ivy has a negative impact on established trees and results in their eventual decline, even causing death by toppling due to the extra weight. Long term neglect can lead to development of "ivy deserts" if it covers the forest floor and prevents tree seedlings from re-establishing.

Resources to manage natural areas are often limited as urban park managers focus declining maintenance budgets on the more developed and highly used parks. However, Renton has a City Forester with a current focus on trees and public safety. In addition to the City Forester, staff levels, focus, and expertise should be evaluated to determine whether resources can be shifted to natural area management in the future, or whether additional resources are required.

Inventories and Goals Proactive stewardship begins with inventories and goal setting. Inventories inform park managers about what they have at a level of detail that facilitates management decisions. A typical inventory divides habitat areas within a given park or natural area into "stands" or "cells" that have common characteristics. Important characteristics include: dominant over story trees, dominant understory vegetation, percent cover of invasive species and identification of problems or potential problems, such as soil erosion. The inventory allows managers to evaluate the condition of stands and rank them by condition, from good to poor. Good condition stands are mostly free of invasive species and are inexpensive to maintain. Renton's 2007 tree inventory, while a good start, does not provide stand level detail.

Natural area management should include short and long term planning. In the short term, the goal may be to prevent deterioration by inhibiting the spread of invasive species, correcting erosion problems (particularly along trails) and planting trees to establish desirable species. Longer term planning establishes "Desired Future Conditions" (DFCs) at the stand level. Development of park natural area management plans in Renton would help establish goals and measurable objectives, along with costs, that could be used to improve the overall management over time. For example, if a natural area consists of stands of alder trees with a high level of invasive species, the long term goal might be a mixed forest (deciduous and coniferous) with invasive species reduced to 10% cover or less. The short term goal might be simply to get ivy away from the trees so that they do not topple over, thus preventing deterioration.

An "action plan" linking long and short term goals prioritizes natural area work. One useful approach is to "protect the best"; or identify all the highest functioning sites and secure those first. Then, if resources permit, the agency can work in the medium quality sites to improve

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[9] Note: While Renton's forests are mostly classified as conifer forest types, they are dominated by deciduous trees due to past disturbances

them over time. If and when resources permit, the agency can then turn attention to poor condition sites and begin restoration there. This approach also allows park managers to take advantage of periodic “pulses” of funding or labor availability, such as the recent federal stimulus funding.

VI. Recreation Facilities

Renton's recreation facilities offer a variety of indoor and outdoor opportunities. As the analysis in this section demonstrates, access to these facilities is not consistent throughout the city. This section includes:

- A description of recreation trends;
- A level of service analysis for sport fields;
- A demand analysis for other types of facilities; and
- A review of trail options to enhance connectivity.

Recreation Trends

Local and statewide trends can help predict recreation needs. While public involvement findings illustrate local trends, a review of statewide recreation trends provides a reference for popular recreation activities as they relate to Renton.

Washington State Recreation Conservation Office (RCO)

In June 2008, RCO released the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP). The report provides a review of trends in recreation both past and present. Included in the report is data showing peak per capita participation. Table 7 on the following page provides a list of the top ten most popular recreation activities in the State of Washington in terms of participation.

Statewide Trends

- Walking and hiking have continued to be popular activities in Washington. Walking with and without a pet are also popular seasonally.
- Based on the SCORP, bicycle riding is popular in terms of participation, has slightly declined between 2002 and 2007.
- Nature based activities such as photography and gardening have continued to be popular activities at the state level, and flower or vegetable gardening is popular in terms of seasonal activities.
- Swimming is popular in the state when looking at seasonal averages.
- Indoor activities are popular at the state level such as indoor classes, events and social events.
- Team and individual sports are popular at the statewide level, as are picnicking and sightseeing.
- In terms of participation frequency, walking is the most popular activity, followed by observing/photographing nature, jogging or running, playground recreation and bicycling.

Table 7: Statewide Recreation Participation Trends

Rank	Recreation Participation * (2002)	Recreation Participation* (2007)	Highest Peak Season Participation* (2006)	Highest Frequency** (2006)
1	Walking/hiking	Walking/hiking	Picnic, barbecue or cookout	Walking w/o pet
2	Team/individual sports	Team/individual sports	Walking without a pet	Observing/ photographing wildlife or nature
3	Nature (photography/ gardening)	Nature (photography/ gardening)	Swimming or wading at a beach	Walking with a pet
4	Sightseeing	Picnicking	Sightseeing	Jogging or running
5	Bicycle riding	Indoor activities (classes/events)	Flower or vegetable gardening	Playground Recreation
6	Indoor activities (classes/events)	Water activities	Swimming at a pool	Bicycling
7	Picnicking	Sightseeing	Walking with a pet	Flower or vegetable gardening
8	Water activities	Bicycle riding	Playground recreation	Aerobics or fitness activities at indoor facility
9	Snow/ice activities	ORV use	Bicycling	Picnic, barbecue, or cookout
10	Fishing	Snow/ice activities	Social event (indoor/community center)	Sightseeing

Source: Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Planning report, Washington State Recreation Conservation Office (2008)

*Based upon percent of population participating

**Based upon the number of times the activity is performed

Sport Field Needs

As identified in Appendix A, there are 60 sport fields in Renton's parks and schools, located at 11 park sites and 22 schools. The school sites add considerably to the City's inventory and sports groups rely on these fields for practice and games. Along with community feedback and recreation trends, the three primary methods of determining sport field needs are determining existing level of service, field service area, and field scale and need for competitive, recreation or neighborhood fields. Map 4: Sports Field Access shows the location and 1/4 mile to 1/2 mile service areas from each site with a sport field.

Level of Service Analysis

Like park land, sport fields can also be assessed by level of service, expressed as number of residents per field. Based a population estimate of 86,230 residents, Table 8 shows Renton's

existing sport field level of service.[10] The table also shows the ratio for Hillsboro, OR and their adopted guidelines.

The 2003 parks plan established levels of service for Renton sport fields. These standards established a service level for baseball/softball fields but not for multi-use fields. As noted in Table 8, most of the City's fields are designed as multi-purpose; typically a rectangular field with one or more backstops and infields at corners. These fields offer the possibility of sharing the same space between different user groups, used for baseball or softball in one season and soccer or rugby in another. However, field sports are now being played in multiple seasons or even year-round. This means that multiple leagues are competing for the same facility in the case of multi-use fields.

Table 8: Existing Sport fields Level of Service (LOS) for Renton and Comparable Communities

	Field LOS (# of facilities/1,000)			
Facility Type	City of Renton Existing	City and Schools Existing	City of Renton Adopted Guideline	Hillsboro, OR
Baseball/Softball	1/21,588	1/6,633	1/2,250	1/1,600
Soccer Fields	1/86,230	1/10,779	1/3,000	1/1,000
Multi-Purpose Fields	1/7,839	1/2,211	-	-

Based on the existing City facilities, the City is well below the adopted guidelines. When combining City facilities with school district fields, the service levels are closer to the adopted standards. However, access to and the quality of some city and school district fields overstates the functionality of these fields.

When Renton is compared to assessed to two other comparable communities Kent and Bellevue, WA neither of these comparable community has a level of service guideline for sport fields. The City of Hillsboro established a sports field LOS guideline of one baseball/softball field per 1,600 residents and one soccer field per 1,000 residents. Renton's adopted guideline is nearly double that of this comparable. It's important to note that the state's RCO guidelines for park and facility level of service have changed. Like parks, the guidelines recommend that jurisdictions develop their own guidelines and standards for recreation facility levels of service.

Field Scale and Need

Along with field type, the sport fields in Renton also function at different scales. Currently, Renton's 60 fields are well used for different field sports, but at different levels of intensity. According to sports league input, field use in Renton generally takes place on fields that are not designed to accommodate the level of intensity that is occurring.

For future planning, three scales of sports fields should be designated based on size, quality and type of programming.

[10] Based on a 2010 population of 86,230 (City Center Community Plan 2010).

- *Competitive:* Competitive fields are heavily scheduled and tightly controlled for designed uses. These fields are reserved and used solely for organized and programmed games and events and feature lighting for extended play. Examples of competitive fields include the Renton Stadium (owned and operated by the Renton School District) and the stadium field at Liberty Park.
- *Recreation:* Recreation fields are primarily reserved for scheduled games and activities during peak times. These generally occur after school hours for sports play by the City, School District or community sports leagues. At this scale, recreation scale fields can be used for informal field use. Examples of recreation fields include the multi-purpose field at Cedar River Park and the diamond shaped field at Highlands Park and Neighborhood Center.
- *Neighborhood:* Neighborhood fields have minimal or no scheduling for sports play. These fields are not designed nor maintained for formal game play and not ideal for programming sports and games. Examples of neighborhood fields include the multi-purpose fields at Heritage Park and Tiffany Park.

Table 9 summarizes existing sports fields, showing the total number of individual fields owned by the City of Renton and school district, organized by field scale. As noted previously, the table also shows that much of the City's sport field needs have the ability to be met by the school district. Because many of the school fields are not designed for higher intensity use, overuse has resulted in poor field condition. In addition, school programming and scheduling of its own fields does not necessarily guarantee public use of these fields. Renton's fields have also experienced overuse due to the need to reduce maintenance to decrease costs, and the in the inability to develop new fields due to a lack of capital funding

Table 9: City of Renton Sport Fields by Scale

	Field Type Totals			
Field Scale	Diamond	Rectangular	Multi-Purpose	Total Fields
City of Renton				
Competitive	2	-	-	2
Recreation	2	1	5	8
Neighborhood	-	-	6	6
Subtotal	**4**	**1**	**11**	**16**
School District				
Competitive	3	3	2	8
Recreation	4	2	14	20
Neighborhood	2	2	12	16
Subtotal	**9**	**7**	**28**	**44**
Total	**13**	**8**	**39**	**60**

Currently, the fields that receive the majority of use by sports groups include Ron Regis Park, Liberty Park and Philip Arnold Park. However, schools receive the most use for practice and games, with many teams using these sites for multiple practice and game times throughout the week. While the City prioritizes use and rental of sports fields for youth groups, City programming of fields takes precedence and is dominated by adult sports. According to sports groups, teams and leagues are looking for a higher quality field and many sports are playing a year-round schedule, which limits the usefulness of multi-purpose fields. Expanding the availability of quality fields with improvements such as lighting and improved playing surfaces would help meet current needs. Based on these considerations, there is a need to expand the availability of quality sports fields.

Some of this need could be met by improving existing recreation scale fields. Recreation scale fields can be located in neighborhood or community parks. Based on individual site conditions, certain fields can be redesigned and maintained at a level that can accommodate a greater level of field use and sports programming than is occurring currently. This is especially the case for School District fields. Competitive scale fields should only be located in community or special use parks where there are adequate support amenities such as parking and restrooms to accommodate heavy use.

The City of Renton and the Renton School District collaborate on the use of field at Renton High School, and have the potential to improve on the partnership for capital investment and operations. Similar to the partnership between the nearby City of Bellevue and the Bellevue School District, the City of Renton and Renton School District can share in the acquisition, development, programming and maintenance of park sites and recreation facilities.

Service Area and Need

In addition to an analysis of field quantities by population, the planning team looked at the distribution of sports fields geographically. To date, past planning efforts have not addressed the geographic distribution of sports fields. Map 4 depicts 1/4 mile and 1/2 mile service areas around City of Renton and School District sports fields.

Map 4 illustrates that there are multiple areas with overlapping service as well as areas without nearby access to sport fields.

Observations by Community Planning Area

- A large portion of the Kennydale, Highlands, City Center and Benson are served by sports fields within a 1/4 mile service area.
- The southern reaches of the City in the Valley, Talbot and Benson plan areas there are fewer fields.
- The East Plateau plan area lacks access to fields in the eastern reaches of its residentially zoned area and potential annexation area. Other potential annexation areas lacking sports fields are West Hill and Fairwood.
- The Valley plan area has no sports field but, the zoning of this area is mostly industrial and commercial. As such, the need for nearby sport fields in this area is limited due to a lack of residents. The industrial character of this may be suitable for a sports complex.

- In the City Center plan area, underserved areas are also mostly zoned industrial and the two existing sport fields in this area meet the needs of nearby field facilities for residents in this location.
- Overlapping service areas exist in Highlands, Benson, Talbot and City Center. The overlap in Highlands is adjacent to high density residential zoned areas, in Benson and Talbot the overlap serves low density residential, and in the City Center the overlap serves high density commercial and residential.

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Front Map 4

Back Map 4

Front Map 4a

Back Map 4a

Front Map 4b

Back Map 4b

Sport Fields Needs Summary

There are a variety of methods used to determine sport field needs. This includes an analysis of community input, statewide recreation trends, level of service, access area and field scale.

- Statewide trends and public input at the local level show support for organized field sports such as baseball/softball and soccer.
- Looking at field scale, there is a need for more competitive scale facilities. This may be accommodated by converting existing community scale facilities in suitable parks.
- There is a need for more or improved recreation scale sports fields. Recreation scale sports fields can be accommodated by converting existing neighborhood scale facilities in suitable parks.
- An analysis of the service area shows that most areas of Renton are well served by sport fields, with the exception of portions of the East Plateau, Benson and Talbot plan areas and the potential annexations areas with Fairwood, East Plateau and West Hill. An evaluation of public input and recreation trends indicates a need for new sports fields within new parks, as well as a sports field complex at a suitable site.
- Based on the City's existing relationship with local schools, there is opportunity to increase use of school facilities through development of a strong interlocal agreement.
- Overlapping sports field service areas occur in the Highlands, Kennydale, City Center and Benson plan areas.

Playgrounds

There are 20 parks in Renton that provide play equipment and playgrounds. Almost all neighborhood parks feature playgrounds; three are available in community parks and a large playground in Gene Coulon Memorial Beach regional park. Elementary schools in the Renton School District add an additional 14 sites to the inventory, for a total of 34 playgrounds. Map 5: Playground Access, shows Renton's playgrounds by the pedestrian scale service area at a 1/4 to 1/2 mile.

Service Area and Need

Based on the service area shown in Map 5, Renton's playgrounds are generally well distributed throughout the City. However, there are several areas lacking nearby access to playgrounds.

- Based on recreation trends, playing at playgrounds is a popular activity statewide. It is also considered by most people to be a basic park activity.
- The Benson and East Plateau planning areas benefit from access to School District playgrounds, however this access must be qualified because the public is not allowed on site while school is in session. Both of these areas also have substantial gaps between facilities.
- Based on the location of existing playgrounds, the planning areas of Fairwood, Talbot and Valley all lack nearby access to playgrounds. The Valley planning is primarily commercial/industrial and may not require service in most areas.
- New playgrounds added to future neighborhood and community parks, such as Cleveland/Richardson property and Edlund property in the Talbot planning area, can help spread access to playgrounds.

- New playgrounds and nature play areas, where play equipment is integrated into natural settings, can also be considered for Renton's natural areas to expand access to play and opportunities to experience nature.

Community Gathering and Family Activities

A number of sites in Renton offer rentable space for community gathering and family activities. This includes picnic shelters, activity centers, neighborhood centers, the Renton Community Center and the Maplewood Golf Course club house. Map 6: Picnic Shelters and Rentable Space Access, shows parks with picnic shelters, rentable facilities or both by the pedestrian scale service area at a 1/4 to 1/2 mile.

Service Area and Need

Based on the service analysis illustrated by Map 6, Renton's picnic shelters and rentable spaces are unevenly distributed throughout the City, with several gaps in service.

- According to recreation trend data, activities that require rentable space such as picnicking and barbequing are increasing in popularity.
- According to City reservation data, the shelters at Gene Coulon Memorial Beach Park maintain a higher level of use both on weekends and through the week.
- Other City picnic shelters have been trending upwards both for the number of bookings and participants.
- There are areas that do not have local access to picnic shelters and rentable space. There is a need for an additional picnic shelter and rentable space facility, especially in the East Plateau, Benson, Talbot, Valley, West Hill and Fairwood plan areas.
- Most of the rentable space (indoor spaces that are available year-round) is concentrated north of the Maple Valley Highway and in central Renton. As the system expands, indoor rentable space should be added in the Benson or Talbot areas.

Indoor Programmable Spaces

Many of the same park sites that offer rentable space also provide indoor recreation programming space. Map 7: Programmable Space Access, shows existing programmable space service areas for sites with indoor facilities available for City programming. This includes sites with activity centers, neighborhood centers, the Renton Community Center, the Renton History Museum, the Library Building (currently operated by King County Libraries) and the Senior Activity Center. Most of the park locations also provide outdoor programmable spaces available that are not depicted on the map. The map also differentiates between neighborhood scale programmable space (within a neighborhood park) and community scale programmable space (within a community, regional or special use park).

Comparables

Renton currently has three community scale programmable spaces and eight neighborhood scale programmable spaces (Map 7), representing a total existing programmable space level of service of one facility per 7,839 residents. This includes a community scale level of service of one facility per 28,743 residents and a neighborhood scale level of service of one facility per 10,779 residents. Based on comparable communities, Renton is below comparable standards. As

identified in Table 4, the City of Bellevue requires one community recreation center per 25,000 residents while the City of Hillsboro requires one neighborhood center for each "town center" identified in their comprehensive plan. Renton has no such town center designation.

Service Area and Need

Based on the service analysis illustrated by Map 7, there are many areas underserved by programmable spaces.

- Portions of West Hill, Kennydale, Highlands, Benson, Talbot and Valley plan areas lack programmable space within a 1/4 to 1/2 mile walking distance. East Plateau and Fairwood are entirely underserved by programmable space.
- In the City Center, programmable space sites overlap.[11] These sites fulfill the needs at both a neighborhood and community scale. Based on public input and recreation trends, there is a need for additional programmable space similar to the scale of the Renton Community Center.
- Based on comparable communities, Renton's programmable space level of service is slightly lower. To meet comparable community standards, Renton would need to provide one additional community-scale facility and at least two additional neighborhood scale facilities; one in East Plateau and in Fairwood. To reach a 2 mile community-scale access coverage, two larger facilities would need to be added. One in the East Plateau and one in Benson or Talbot.
- Ultimately, the need for smaller scale centers with programmable space should be driven by the related need in recreation programming.

[11] Renton History Museum, Senior Activity Center, Main Library Building and Renton Community Center.

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Front Map 5

Back Map 5

Front Map 6

Back Map 6

Front Map 7

Back Map 7

Specialized Facilities

A review of specialized facility needs is based on an assessment of existing facilities and a review of recreation trends and public input. Due to the nature of these facilities, their geographic distribution is not necessarily as important as their quality and existing capacity.

Swimming Pools/Aquatic Facilities

Swimming and water access is important to Renton residents, and is one of the most popular seasonal activities according to statewide trends. Only two sites - Kennydale Beach Park and Gene Coulon Beach Park - provide seasonal guarded public access to outdoor beach swimming and water play in Lake Washington. Cedar River Park houses Renton's only aquatic facility, the Henry Moses Aquatic Center. Additional indoor pools are located at two area high schools and are programmed by the school district for use by the public when not programmed for school use. Indoor aquatic facilities are desirable in the Pacific Northwest when weather prohibits the use of Renton's seasonal outdoor swimming facilities. Based on public feedback and an analysis of recreation trends, indoor swimming options should be sustained in Renton. Currently, the high school pools meet indoor swimming needs. However, their future is uncertain due to the age of the facilities and required maintenance and school district funding to sustain these facilities.

Skate Parks/Skate Spots

Skateboarding is a fast-growing sport and modern skate features can support not only skateboarders. Based on public involvement feedback and an analysis of recreation trends, the sport is popular locally and is increasing in terms of participation. Renton developed a community-scale skate park at Liberty Park. Based on the existing site's reported use, there is likely demand for more than one skate park location of a different caliber and scale. In addition to the larger scale skate parks, skate spots (small scale features designed for low cost opportunities to practice skateboarding) should be considered for integration into parks throughout the system to meet demand.

Boating Facilities

Motorized and non-motorized boating are popular activities in Renton and public involvement feedback indicates a continued and enhanced need for boating related programming. Gene Coulon Memorial Beach Park and Cedar River Trail Park are highly valued for their access to the water for boating. For motorized boating, the only facility in Renton is the eight-lane boat launch at Coulon Park providing access to Lake Washington. The facility provides 123 stalls to support boat trailer parking and is over capacity on warm summer days. Non-motorized boat access is available at Coulon Park, Cedar River Trail Park and Maplewood Roadside Park. Demand for water access is high all around Lake Washington and Renton has worked to make the most of the waterfront with public access.

Programming partners have made it possible to enjoy rowing, canoeing, kayaking, motorized boating and sailing on Renton's waterways. However, some facilities have not received adequate maintenance and demand is high with limited space. Enhancing storage and support facilities, particularly for the sailing club and rowing club would enhance the park experience for users of these services and casual park users.

Dog Parks

Based on statewide trends, walking with a pet is one of the top ranked seasonal activities in terms of participation. Public feedback also indicated the need for a well designed and permanent dog park. Currently, the NARCO Property has been serving as the site of a temporary dog park developed by a local advocacy group (RUFF) in partnership with the City. This facility is the only formal dog park in Renton and is heavily used. To meet existing demand, at least one large permanent off-leash area should be provided. Renton should consider establishing at least one other off-leash area, focusing on areas with high or increasing residential density.

Outdoor Courts

Based on recreation trends, tennis is the only court sport that is popular statewide. Renton has outdoor courts for basketball, tennis and volleyball. These are located at sites throughout the park system. No particular guideline is recommended. However, the City should provide a diversity of outdoor courts dispersed throughout the park system. Outdoor courts should be considered for inclusion at neighborhood and community parks. The addition of lights or an overhead cover could expand day and seasonal usability.

Playgrounds

According to recreation trends, use of playgrounds is one of the most popular seasonal activities in terms of participation. Renton has playground equipment at approximately 75% of neighborhood parks and just less than half of its community parks. At the local level, most neighborhood parks should include children's play areas. As parks are developed and park facilities are considered for repair and restoration, a wider variety of play structures and features should be considered for inclusion in park sites. To diversify the playground opportunities within Renton, nature play and other creative play opportunities should be considered where appropriate.

Community Gardens

Based on statewide trends and community feedback, community gardens are growing in popularity, as many individuals are now looking to support a more sustainable lifestyle with opportunities to grow healthy and affordable food close-to-home. Currently, Renton has developed one medium to large community garden site near the Senior Activity Center. Throughout the public process, the idea has surfaced multiple times to spread this activity out to additional smaller sites closer to where people live. The City should provide areas for community gardens in areas near higher density residential areas. Garden sites can potentially be located at existing neighborhood parks, community parks and schools or at small stand-alone locations.

Interpretive Facilities

One of the key findings from the public outreach process is the need for interpretive facilities in Renton's parks, open spaces and natural areas. Renton residents have expressed a need for expanding interpretation related to arts and culture, history and environmental education within existing and new parks and recreation facilities. As activities such as walking/hiking, being in nature, picnicking and sightseeing are all increasing in popularity, interpretive facilities such as signage and an interpretive center can accommodate these needs.

Trails

Trails and related activities are popular among local residents and are growing in participation statewide. Trail connections are an important element in the parks plan as they provide additional connections and access to Renton's park system. One of the intentions of the Parks, Recreation, Open Space and Natural Resources planning process is to coordinate with existing plans and policies as they relate to the park and natural resource system.

The City of Renton recently adopted the Trails and Bicycle Master Plan in May 2009. The plan reflects the desire to create an interconnected pedestrian, water and non-motorized transportation network to accommodate recreation and commuter uses. As the parks planning process moves forward, the planning team will consider key recommendations and findings addressed in the trails plan. Key priorities and recommendations identified in the plan address the trail needs of Renton residents. These include:

- Addressing barriers facing bicycle and pedestrian travel such as steep topography and limited crossing points due to major roadways;
- Addressing the lack of connectivity between downtown and the river valley and surrounding neighborhoods;
- Improving the Two Rivers Trail, Springbrook Trail, May Creek Trail and Panther Creek Trail; and
- Improving safety, accessibility, continuity, connectivity and concurrency.

VII. Policy Directions and Next Steps

The identification of community needs provides a strong foundation for building the future park, recreation and natural area system. The provision of park and recreation services requires a range of facilities and services to ensure the needs of Renton residents are being met. The intent of this document is to frame policy choices and questions and to begin developing the framework for future parks, recreation opportunities and natural areas.

Recreation Programs

Trends in recreation participation indicate the need for expanded programs and facilities.

- Renton's primary role in providing programming should be based on skills development. This includes an emphasis on activities that promote healthy lifestyles, provide opportunities for all ages and cultures, and that offer a connection to the natural environment while at the same time promoting individual and community development.

- The City should develop partnerships with other providers in expanding or complementing City programs.

- The ultimate decisions about specific offerings should be informed by a series of desired outcomes driven by the vision and mission of the City.

- The balance of adult and youth field sport programming should be explained and, if deemed necessary, adjusted based on the programming objectives.

Park and Natural Area Lands

Renton residents desire a park system that provides a variety of recreation experiences across the park system. However, the existing system is unequally distributed across the City.

- *Access to Developed Parks.* Renton should provide a 1/4 to 1/2 mile service area for neighborhood and community parks. Currently, some areas of the City, such as the East Plateau, Benson and Talbot plan areas, lack developed park sites within 1/4 mile service area.

- *Access to Natural Areas.* There are an abundance of natural areas along the periphery of Renton. New sites should be acquired based on habitat considerations related to connectivity and natural area condition.

- *Access to Local Parks by Planned Density.* Lower density areas within Highlands, Kennydale and City Center are well served by local parks. Yet, most high density residential zoned areas are underserved by local parks within a 1/4 mile service area.

Natural Resources

Renton's natural areas are important for recreation but primarily serve important natural system functions.

- Current park natural area management can be characterized as "low input stewardship." Proactive stewardship of Renton's natural areas should begin with inventories that identify important site characteristics for maintenance needs. Inventories can also be used to identify the potential economic related benefits associated with these resources.

- Natural area management should be based on short and long term planning, which includes prevention of invasive species, desired future conditions planning and an action plan linking goals and priorities. Long term planning will require individual management plans for each of Renton's ten Open Space parks.

- The City should continue to seek acquisition and/or protection of new natural area lands. Identification of new lands should be based on opportunity areas which exhibit desirable natural area characteristics or have potential to improve the system of natural areas.

- City-owned natural areas are managed by different departments and some sites are under different ownership. Future management and maintenance of these areas will require coordination to ensure efficient and strategic use of resources. Public use of lands not under the City's ownership will also require increased communication and partnerships with these land owners.

Recreation Facilities

Renton's recreation facilities offer a variety of indoor and outdoor opportunities. However access to these facilities is not consistent throughout the City.

Sports Fields

- An analysis of the service area shows that most areas of Renton are well served by sport fields, with the exception of portions of the East Plateau, Benson and Talbot plan areas and the potential annexations areas with Fairwood, East Plateau and West Hill. An evaluation of public input and recreation trends indicates a need for new sports fields within new parks, as well as a sports field complex at a suitable site.
- Looking at field scale, there is a need for more competitive scale facilities. This may be accommodated by converting existing community scale facilities in suitable parks.
- There is a need for more or improved recreation scale sports fields. Recreation scale sports fields can be accommodated by converting existing neighborhood scale facilities in suitable parks.
- Based on the existing City facilities, the City is well below its adopted guidelines. When combining City facilities with school district fields, the service levels are closer to the adopted standards. However, access to and the quality of some city and school district fields overstates the functionality of these fields.

- Based on the City's existing relationship with local schools, there is opportunity to increase use of school facilities through development of an interlocal agreement that addresses the maintenance requirements of school fields.
- To meet exiting sports field guidelines, an additional 25 diamond shaped fields and 21 rectangular fields would need to be added based on the current population. While the conversion of some multi-purpose fields may offset a small percentage of this need, the City may need to reduce its existing level of service standards to a level that is more attainable.

Playgrounds

- Based on recreation trends, playing at playgrounds is a popular activity statewide.
- Based on the location of existing playgrounds, the planning areas of Fairwood, East Plateau Talbot and Valley all lack nearby access to playgrounds.
- New playgrounds added to neighborhood and community parks, such as the Cleveland/Richardson property and Edlund property in the Talbot planning area, can help meet the need for more playgrounds in underserved areas.
- New playgrounds and nature play areas, where play equipment is integrated into natural settings, can also be added to Renton's natural areas where appropriate.

Community Gathering and Family Activities

- According to recreation trend data, activities that require rentable space such as picnicking and barbequing are increasing in popularity.
- According to City reservation data, the shelters at Gene Coulon Memorial Beach Park maintain a higher level of use both on weekends and through the week.
- Other City picnic shelters have been trending upwards both for the number of bookings and participants.
- There are areas that do not have local access to picnic shelters and rentable space. There is a need for an additional picnic shelter and rentable space facility, especially in southern Renton.

Indoor Programmable Space

- Portions of West Hill, Kennydale, Highlands, Benson, Talbot and Valley plan areas lack programmable space within a 1/4 to 1/2 mile walking distance and East Plateau and Fairwood are entirely underserved by programmable space.
- In the City Center programmable space sites overlap. These sites fulfill the needs at both a neighborhood and community scale.
- Based on public input and recreation trends, there is a need for additional programmable space similar to the scale of the Renton Center.
- Based on comparable communities, Renton's programmable space level of service is slightly lower. To meet comparable community standards, Renton would need to provide one

additional community-scale facility and at least two additional neighborhood scale facilities; one in East Plateau and in Fairwood.

- Ultimately, the need for smaller scale centers with programmable space should be driven by the related need in recreation programming.

Specialized Facilities

Due to the nature of these facilities, the geographic distribution of specialized facilities is not necessarily as important as their quality and existing capacity.

- *Swimming Pools/Aquatic Facilities*. Indoor swimming options should be sustained in Renton. Currently, existing pools are aging and require increased maintenance and operation dollars to keep these facilities in a condition that meets existing demand. School pools provide most of the indoor swimming opportunities, yet these facilities are especially prone to limited funding.

- *Skate Parks/Skate Spots.* There is likely demand for more than one skate park location of a different caliber and scale. In addition to the larger scale skate parks, skate spots should be considered for integration into parks throughout the system to meet demand.

- *Boating Facilities.* Some facilities have not received adequate maintenance and demand is high with limited space. Enhancing storage and support facilities, particularly for the sailing club and rowing club would enhance the park experience for users of these services and casual park users.

- *Dog Parks.* At least one large and/or several smaller permanent off-leash area should be provided. Renton should consider focusing on areas with high or increasing residential density.

- *Outdoor Courts.* The City should provide a diversity of outdoor courts dispersed throughout the park system. Outdoor courts should be considered for inclusion at neighborhood and community parks. The addition of lights or an overhead cover could expand day and seasonal usability.

- *Playgrounds.* To diversify the playground opportunities within Renton, nature play and other creative play opportunities should be considered where appropriate.

- *Community Gardens.* The City should provide space for community gardens in areas near higher density residential development. Garden sites can potentially be located at existing neighborhood parks, community parks and schools or at small stand-alone locations.

- *Interpretive Facilities.* The City should provide interpretive facilities such as signage and educational kiosks and a potential interpretive center showcasing Renton's Natural resources throughout the park system.

Trails

The planning team will further trail related goals and priorities as identified by the City's Trails and Bicycle Master Plan.

Next Steps

This analysis is intended to be broad reaching and identifies a large number of potential directions for improving Renton residents' park, recreation, open space and natural resources system. Following the review and revision of the Community Needs Assessment, the identified needs will be further refined into a list that includes both capital and non-capital projects. The development of a draft Parks, Recreation, Open Space and Natural Resources Plan will include creating a series of decision making tools to assist the community and City staff in prioritizing this project list and identifying the necessary resources to implement the highest priority projects.