

# Comprehensive Plan

Pierce County, Washington



**Honor the Past ▶ Look Ahead**

**Ordinance Number: 2015-40**  
**As Amended by**  
**Ordinance Number: 2016-34s**  
**Effective Date: June 30, 2016**

---

# Chapter 11: PARKS AND RECREATION ELEMENT

---

## CONTENTS

<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>11-2</b>
<b>Park System .....</b>	<b>11-2</b>
Prioritization of Facilities and Projects .....	11-3
Location Criteria.....	11-4
Development Standards .....	11-4
Stewardship .....	11-5
Funding .....	11-5
Regional Coordination .....	11-6
Education and Outreach .....	11-6
<b>Trails.....</b>	<b>11-7</b>
Design.....	11-7
Facilities and Services .....	11-7
Maintenance.....	11-8
Regional Connectivity .....	11-8
<b>Water Access .....</b>	<b>11-9</b>
<b>Recreation Programming .....</b>	<b>11-9</b>
<b>Open Space.....</b>	<b>11-10</b>

## INTRODUCTION

The values of Pierce County residents and their aspirations for the future are guiding forces in this Park, Recreation, and Open Space Element. This element defines the vision, goals, and objectives that illustrate the preferred future for the parks, open spaces, trails, facilities, and programs provided by Pierce County Parks and Recreation (PCParks).

For consistency and clarity, the term ‘park system’ will be used throughout this document to refer to all parks, open spaces, trails, facilities, and recreation programs managed by PCParks.

A vision is an aspirational description of what an organization would like to achieve or accomplish in the future. It is intended to serve as a clear guide for choosing current and future courses of action. The Pierce County Vision for parks, recreation, and open space is:

Create livable communities by providing opportunities for people to:

- ✓ Connect with Nature
- ✓ Live Healthy Lifestyles
- ✓ Share Vibrant Community Spaces
- ✓ Learn about Sustainable Practices

## PARK SYSTEM

- GOAL PR-1** Provide a regional park system that supports opportunities for active and passive recreation, promotes healthy lifestyles, and conserves and enhances significant environmental or historical resources.
- PR-1.1** Assume direct responsibility for the development, operation, and maintenance of facilities that have regional benefits and align with PC Parks’ vision and primary role as a regional service provider.
- PR-1.1.1** Support countywide sports, recreation programs, and special events through the provision of facilities.
- PR-1.1.2** Support objectives in adopted Community Plans that align with the role of a regional park provider and meet identified countywide needs.
- PR-1.2** Plan for the annexation or incorporation of unincorporated Urban Growth Areas.
- PR-1.2.1** Land-bank sites for local parks identified in Community Plans if capital funding is designated for that purpose.
- PR-1.2.2** Land-bank sites should only be developed in partnership with a local jurisdiction as part of an agreement to transfer the site to the local jurisdiction.
- PR-1.2.3** Establish a list of *transitional properties* that are not part of the regional system and may be transferred to other jurisdictions.

**“Transitional properties” (PR-1.2.3):** Those properties that are better served by a local jurisdiction.

- PR-1.2.4** Actively seek opportunities to transfer local parks to jurisdictions associated with potential annexation areas.
- PR-1.3** Ensure the park system is integrated with and complements other park and recreation service providers in Pierce County.
  - PR-1.3.1** Forge partnerships for park development with local jurisdictions or park districts when regional facilities are consistent with meeting the needs of city and county residents.
  - PR-1.3.2** Develop where appropriate a select number of regional facilities that are oriented to the highest competitive playing standard for multi-agency use.
  - PR-1.3.3** Focus development of new ball fields on field complexes developed in partnership with a school district or other service provider.
- PR-1.4** Ensure land acquisitions, donated property and land-banked sites are consistent with the vision set forth in this Plan.
- PR-1.5** Ensure an equitable distribution of park facilities across the County.
- PR-1.6** Develop new facilities only if on-going operation and maintenance funding is provided at a level necessary to safely operate and maintain the facility at adopted levels of service.
- PR-1.7** Implement a whole system management approach to improving and maintaining the park system through integration of long term sustainability; promoting flexibility of uses and activities; ensuring equity across the system; providing a variety of activities; ensuring adequate support facilities; and, designing with cost effective methods and partnerships.
- GOAL PR-2** Promote active, healthy lifestyles through the development of park system facilities and programs that reduce obesity and enhance the health of County residents.
  - PR-2.1** Ensure facilities and programs are available for all people regardless of ability, age, race, ethnicity, or income.
  - PR-2.2** Ensure healthy food and snacks choices when provided at events and within park facilities.
  - PR-2.3** Prohibit the use of tobacco within the park system.
  - PR-2.4** Work toward an interconnected system of parks and trails in the urban area that safely connects to schools, civic facilities, shopping, and recreational facilities.

## PRIORITIZATION OF FACILITIES AND PROJECTS

- GOAL PR-3** Prioritize the use of park capital facility funding sources.
  - PR-3.1** Capital projects should be prioritized based on:
    - PR-3.1.1** First maintain the system by preserving the quality and capacity of the existing facilities.

- PR-3.1.1.1** Capital replacement decisions should be based on safety, loss of function, regulatory upgrades, end of useful life and a balance of cost benefit.
- PR-3.1.2** Second, increase the capacity at existing park sites by upgrading or adding new facilities to flexibility for multiple uses or increase public use.
- PR-3.1.3** Third, increase system capacity by developing new park facilities at new park sites.
- PR-3.2** Prioritize development of new park sites based on:
  - PR-3.2.1** Demonstrated need.
  - PR-3.2.2** Population served.
  - PR-3.2.3** Ability to implement programming which advances PCParks vision.
  - PR-3.2.4** Improves equity of service.

## LOCATION CRITERIA

- GOAL PR-4** PCParks sites will be located in consideration of the following:
  - PR-4.1** Readily accessible via public roads or where roads can be reasonably extended to access the site.
  - PR-4.2** Located close to prospective users.
  - PR-4.3** Within the Urban Areas of the County, sewer, potable water and other utilities should be available within reasonable distance from the site.
  - PR-4.4** Sites should be suitable for the type of recreation proposed.

## DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

- GOAL PR-5** Develop facilities that exemplify sustainable practices, connect to surrounding neighborhoods, universally accessible, safe, and cost effective to maintain.
  - PR-5.1** Provide attractive, vibrant community facilities and spaces that promote opportunities for citizens to learn about sustainable practices.
  - PR-5.2** Incorporate sustainability practices into the development, management, and maintenance of the park system.
  - PR-5.3** Development of facilities should contribute to community identity.
  - PR-5.4** Provide facilities that are accessible for all populations and are adaptable to changing recreational, demographic, and economic trends.
  - PR-5.5** Provide park system properties that are connected to the surrounding communities through safe pedestrian and bicycle routes.

- PR-5.6** Incorporate scenic viewpoints.
- PR-5.7** Buffer facilities from incompatible uses.
- PR-5.8** Develop and manage the park system to maximize opportunities for recreation, public access, and participation without high cost capital investments.
- PR-5.9** Design recreation facilities with the flexibility and capacity to support increased programming, respond to changing needs, and provide year-round opportunities.
- PR-5.10** Develop and implement unified standards to minimize future design and maintenance costs and to promote an identifiable image for the park system.
- PR-5.11** Use Master Plans to guide park development and ensure public support. Plans should identify types of uses and development, public access, stewardship, and restoration.
  - PR-5.11.1** Ensure capital projects are consistent with the Master Plan in type of use and intensity.

## STEWARDSHIP

- GOAL PR-6** Manage the park system in a sustainable and environmentally beneficial manner that contributes to a healthy, livable community, and a rich natural park experience.
  - PR-6.1** Stewardship management plans should be prepared for all park system properties.
    - PR-6.1.1** Management of park properties and open space lands should be based on the purpose for which they were acquired and consider the regional context of ecosystems and adjacent land uses.
    - PR-6.1.2** Management of individual open space lands should follow good stewardship practices that protect and preserve natural and cultural resources.
  - PR-6.2** Develop minimum park standards that would allow public access to undeveloped properties on a limited basis.

## FUNDING

- GOAL PR-7** Develop secure funding strategies to adequately build, maintain, operate, and promote the park, recreation, and open space system.
  - PR-7.1** Develop partnerships with public and private agencies to increase park and recreation benefits for County citizens.
  - PR-7.2** Establish protocol for accepting donations for the park system.
  - PR-7.3** Periodically evaluate park impact fees and other revenue sources to meet increased system demands due to growth.
  - PR-7.4** Implement asset management system to support cost effective long term maintenance of the park system.

- PR-7.4.1** Implement and fund maintenance protocols that maximize the life of park assets.
- PR-7.4.2** Invest in preventative maintenance and upgrades to the park system to maximize long-term benefits.
- PR-7.5** Ensure operation and maintenance costs are included when acquiring, developing, or renovating parks facilities and open space lands.
- PR-7.5.1** Adjust the operating budget accordingly to maintain clean, safe, and inviting parks.

## REGIONAL COORDINATION

- GOAL PR-8** Serve as a regional coordinator, leading the effort to forge partnerships and foster opportunities for countywide collaboration for parks, open space, trails, water access, programs, and services.
- PR-8.1** Provide leadership in the joint planning and provision of programs with other park and recreation providers to meet County recreation needs.
- PR-8.2** Coordinate with other park agencies and districts to provide a range and supply of formal recreation facilities and programs in Pierce County.
- PR-8.3** Lead efforts to coordinate and partner with county departments, cities and other agencies to define, identify, retain, and conserve open space lands and recreational opportunities.
- PR-8.4** Provide technical assistance to local jurisdictions for the conservation, development, operation and maintenance of parks and recreational facilities of interest to local communities.

## EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

- GOAL PR-9** Engage Pierce County residents in the planning, stewardship, and programming of the park system.
- PR-9.1** Provide effective community outreach and marketing to increase public awareness and support of recreation services.
- PR-9.2** Promote Pierce County as a recreation and tourist destination by increasing name recognition and marketing the region’s system of open spaces, park facilities and activities.
- PR-9.3** Increase public awareness of the County amenities, location, and value of the park system.
- PR-9.4** Enhance customer service by making information and registration more accessible to the community.

**PR-9.5** Promote volunteerism to enhance community ownership and stewardship of the County’s park system.

**PR-9.6** Provide opportunities for public input in park planning and design decisions.

## TRAILS

**GOAL PR-10** Provide a connected system of trails that link communities to parks, open spaces, public facilities, and areas of interest and provide nonmotorized transportation and recreation opportunities.

**PR-10.1** Create healthy communities by promoting active lifestyles, reducing reliance on the automobile and offering opportunities for recreation through the trail system.

**PR-10.2** Accommodate nonmotorized transportation modes safely and comfortably.

**PR-10.3** Improve transportation by completing the regional interconnected trail system and encouraging its use for commuting.

## DESIGN

**GOAL PR-11** Develop regional trail routes, crossings and trail facilities that are accessible to all.

**PR-11.1** Reduce accessibility barriers and provide safe crossing of streets and other transportation routes.

**PR-11.2** Ensure safety of all users through the provision of well maintained, visible, and well signed trail corridors with adequate emergency access.

**GOAL PR-12** Incorporate design techniques that offer a variety of experiences while minimizing impacts to the natural environment and neighboring uses.

**GOAL PR-13** Provide access for equestrian use in the rural area on routes that serve public stables or other equestrian pathways and do not limit other transportation uses in the corridor.

**GOAL PR-14** Develop planting standards that prohibit vegetation from negatively impacting the long term maintenance of the trail network.

### Design should take into consideration (PR-11.1):

- Visibility
- Pavement markings
- Signage
- Intersection angle
- Pavement texture
- Use of color
- Lighting

### If deemed necessary, use techniques such as (PR-11.2):

- Emergency call boxes
- Geographic positioning identifiers (GPS)
- Lighting
- Security vehicle access
- Landscaping

## FACILITIES AND SERVICES

**GOAL PR-15** Provide facilities and trail support services to accommodate the needs of trail users.

**PR-15.1** Provide rest stations, restrooms, seating, picnic tables, water fountains, bike racks and recycling/trash receptacles at reasonable distances.

**PR-15.2** Site trailheads in areas that allow for shared parking and infrastructure with other community facilities or major destination points such as libraries, schools, community centers, and shopping complexes.

**PR-15.3** Provide for wildlife or scenic viewing opportunities where appropriate.

## MAINTENANCE

**GOAL PR-16** Provide trail maintenance that is responsive, cost effective and resourceful for the long term success of the regional trails system.

## REGIONAL CONNECTIVITY

**GOAL PR-17** Provide and enhance connectivity to important County and regional destinations, between multiple jurisdictions, and to neighboring counties.

**PR-17.1** Create connections between key community destinations.

**PR-17.2** Connect to trails in neighboring counties and to trails in local jurisdictions.

**PR-17.3** Work with Federal, State, and local agencies to identify and procure public property to further the regional trail system.

**GOAL PR-18** Coordinate with cities and local communities, federal agencies, tribes, park districts, user groups, and neighboring counties to develop a successful regional trail system.

**PR-18.1** Coordinate and cooperate with surrounding jurisdictions and providers to create a seamless regional trail system.

**PR-18.2** Encourage special purpose districts, cities, towns, ports, tribes, and community plan areas to provide trail connections and provide access to the regional trail system.

**PR-18.3** Encourage developers and private land owners to provide trail connections through developments to the regional trails system.

**PR-18.4** Promote public/private partnerships in development, implementation, operation, and maintenance trail projects.

### Community destinations include (PR-17.1):

- Regional and county park sites
- Schools
- Employment centers
- Transit centers
- Significant natural areas
- Landmarks

### Methods may include (17.3):

- Land dedication
- Purchase
- Use of vacated rail lines (rail-banking) and other rights-of-way
- Donation of land
- Public easements
- Use agreements

## WATER ACCESS

- GOAL PR-19** Provide public waterfront access through the provision of public piers, swimming beaches, motorized and nonmotorized boat launches, public boat moorage, and water viewpoints.
- PR-19.1** Cooperate with other agencies to acquire and preserve shoreline access.
  - PR-19.2** Enhance the existing system of water trails to support recreation opportunities for nonmotorized watercraft users.
  - PR-19.3** Provide access to shorelines in a manner that is aesthetically compatible with the adjacent properties and sensitive to ecological function.
  - PR-19.4** Provide for increased shoreline and water access in concert with increased demand from growth and development.
  - PR-19.5** Promote appropriate water access to help inspire appreciation and stewardship of aquatic resources and habitat.
  - PR-19.6** Support the development of the Kitsap Peninsula Water Trails Management Plan in collaboration with jurisdictions in Kitsap and Mason Counties.
  - PR-19.7** Explore implementation of the Kitsap Peninsula Water Trails Management Plan as applicable to facilities in Pierce County.

## RECREATION PROGRAMMING

- GOAL PR-20** Provide recreation programs that serve regional needs and encourage greater participation in areas not served by other providers.
- PR-20.1** Focus on core program areas that support PCParks' vision of encouraging active, healthy lifestyles, connecting people to nature, supporting vibrant communities, and providing opportunities to learn about sustainability practices.
    - PR-20.1.1** Provide or collaborate with multidisciplinary health partners in developing programs that support improved physical activity, health, and well-being.
    - PR-20.1.2** Provide environmental programming that accommodates direct exposure to nature as a means of contributing to physical and emotional health.
    - PR-20.1.3** Educate the public about how they may achieve health and wellness.
  - PR-20.2** Provide innovative, facility-based special events to provide social and cultural recreation opportunities.
  - PR-20.3** Tailor programs and services to the demographics and needs of the community.
  - PR-20.4** Identify and reduce physical and financial barriers to participation.
  - PR-20.5** Ensure equitable programming for all regardless of age, abilities, race, ethnicity, or income.

## OPEN SPACE

- GOAL PR-21** Provide a system of open space experiences and corridors to support livable communities, offer relief from the built environment, allow people to connect with nature and ensure the long-term health of the natural environment and citizens.
- PR-21.1** Provide leadership for the planning, coordination and conservation of open space corridors that include unique environmental systems and scenic vistas on a countywide basis.
  - PR-21.2** Incorporate natural areas and unique ecological features into the park system to protect threatened species, conserve significant resources and habitat, and retain migration corridors that are unique and important to local wildlife.
  - PR-21.3** Provide open space corridors within the unincorporated Urban Growth Area (UGA) to protect wildlife corridors, provide open spaces for people to enjoy and to create buffers between communities.
  - PR-21.4** Coordinate and support open space identification, acquisition, and management with other County departments and agencies to look for opportunities to leverage resources and reduce expenditures.
  - PR-21.5** Protect property valued for plant, fish, and wildlife habitat rarity, diversity, or connectivity.
    - PR-21.5.1** Preserve opportunities for people to observe and enjoy fish and wildlife.
    - PR-21.5.2** Prioritize acquisition of habitats that are considered unique in the Puget Trough or West Cascade ecoregion, are identified biodiversity management areas, contain listed species, or provide habitat connection to these areas.
    - PR-21.5.3** Prioritize the acquisition of habitat that completes an interconnected network of corridors or spaces.
  - PR-21.6** Acquire habitat that is supported by multiple county goals in adopted county or inter-jurisdictional plans.
  - PR-21.7** Develop partnerships with public agencies and jurisdictions, private organizations and businesses for implementation of habitat conservation across the county.
  - PR-21.8** Manage, restore, and maintain publicly owned habitat and open space lands.
    - PR-21.8.1** Develop and implement stewardship management plans for open space properties.

*For other Open Space policies see the [Open Space Element](#)*