

Chapter Four:

Plan

Recommendations

Chapter Four: Plan Recommendations

This chapter contains the vision, goals and recommendations critical to meet the recreational needs of the community that the Washington Park District serves. The recommendations are grouped into four separate categories:

- Districtwide Strategies
- Recreation Programs
- Existing Parks, Trails, and Facilities
- New Parks, Trails, and Facilities

Each category has individual recommendations with an open box. In order to maintain this document as a “working list” staff should check recommendations off of the list as they are completed.

Planning Process

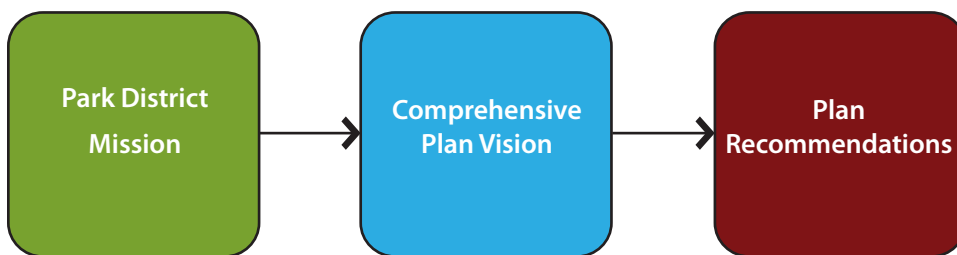
The Washington Park District’s Mission Statement, the goals established for this project, the findings of the research and analysis phase, as well as the public input provided in the Needs Assessment Phase, had direct input in establishing the Comprehensive Plan Vision. From the vision that was established for this plan, the alternative strategies and ultimately the plan recommendations were developed.

Park District Mission Statement

To provide quality recreational programs, facilities and parks that meet the leisure needs and improve the quality of life for the residents of Washington.

Comprehensive Plan Vision

The Washington Park District will improve the system of parks, facilities, and programs responding to the needs identified by the Board, staff and residents. This system will provide unique recreation experiences and enhanced quality of life for all ages and abilities in the community.



Planning Process Diagram





Hiking trail at Meadow Valley Park

Districtwide Strategies

Districtwide Goals

- Support and advance community partnerships.
- Improve the overall public understanding of the offerings, strengths, and success of the Park District.
- Balance resources available and supplement where possible.

Districtwide Recommendations

- Maintain and enhance existing partnerships and work to develop additional partnerships with both the private and public sector to support the goals of the plan, considering:
 - ⇒ City of Washington
 - ⇒ Five Points Washington
 - ⇒ Golf course and driving range
 - ⇒ Community Theater
 - ⇒ HISRA, including Special Recreation Association
 - ⇒ Naming rights, donors and amenity sponsorships (bricks, benches, trees, etc.)
- Create an avenue for volunteers, such as:
 - ⇒ Community Watch Group / Service/Volunteer Group
 - ⇒ Trail/park maintenance (similar to Peoria's CORE program)
- Consider a specific ADA transition plan for buildings and parks.
- Consider a green initiative aimed at reducing operational costs.
- Continue to develop a Public Relations strategy to disseminate positive and clear information about the Park District to the public including:
 - ⇒ Improve website to allow for content updating by staff
 - ⇒ Use e-mail and social media to communicate to population served
 - ⇒ Develop a self promotion/marketing plan to make community aware of offerings
- Seek additional capital and operational resources through the following:
 - ⇒ Research and establish a sponsorship program for naming rights (trees, benches, etc.)
 - ⇒ Maximize use of WPD Foundation for appropriate project purposes
 - ⇒ Establish a proactive and consistent grant funding plan (OSLAD, IDNR Trails, IEPA, etc.)
- Establish written policies with the City of Washington to:
 - ⇒ Document past agreements
 - ⇒ Individual agreements with each school district for use of facilities.
 - ⇒ Formally provide input on new private development
 - ⇒ Solidify a land/cash donation ordinance/procedure
 - ⇒ Document use/maintenance agreements for trails

Recreation Program Strategies

Programming was not a primary focus of the plan, so an in-depth analysis is not provided within. Although not exhaustive, these programming recommendations are derived from park and facility related recommendations that emerged from the needs assessment.

From the stakeholder input, we found the current program offering provided an appropriate level of activity diversity and the programs require only minor improvement. This suggests that in addition to continuous improvement with the existing programs, smaller more targeted program offerings could be provided to expand participation. Additional programming opportunities lie with the refinement/expansion of physical facility improvements as well. The following items emerged specifically from the process.

Program Goals

- Continue to provide and advance a diverse offering of programs for all ages and abilities. Consider a renewed emphasis on teen programming.
- Increase programming alongside park and facility development.
- Focus on revenue generating events to balance core programs.

Program Recommendations

- Continue to develop new revenue generating programs and events including:
 - ⇒ Mid-tier sports tournaments
 - ⇒ Runs/Races
 - ⇒ Festivals/Celebrations
 - ⇒ Technology
 - ⇒ School/school support related
- Continue to promote activities in conjunction with new facility improvements.
 - ⇒ Summer concerts
- Continue to develop a mechanism for user program evaluation that provides timely feedback
- Evaluate travel level competition teams and identify areas of programming where WPD can serve gaps.
- Collaborate with school districts for extracurricular education and intramural athletics programming.
- Consider enhancing program opportunities within the following categories:



The Recreation Facility

Existing Parks, Trails, and Facilities Strategies

The following recommendations are directly related to the level of service and service area analysis in Chapter 2 and the issues and considerations described in Chapter 3. The Existing Parks and Facilities Map supports these recommendations.

Existing Parks, Trails, and Facilities Goals

- Improve the existing parks through increased maintenance, repairs, replacements, and the addition of new amenities.
- Improve the Recreation Facility.
- Balance the items above with resources available, actively seeking project partners to accelerate opportunities.

Existing Parks, Trails, and Facilities Recommendations

- ❑ Implement the master plan to improve the Recreation facility focusing on:
 - ⇒ Improving restrooms.
 - ⇒ Adding an additional indoor gymnasium/basketball court space.
 - ⇒ Expand tumbling space.
 - ⇒ Reference The Centre in Elgin as a model when making indoor improvements.
 - ⇒ Re-purpose stage area.
 - ⇒ Add kitchenette
- ❑ Create a systematic approach targeting repair and replacement of neighborhood park amenities, including access to them and the creation of a unique environment for each. See individual park recommendations on park inventory sheets for the following:
 - ⇒ Shelters
 - ⇒ Site Furniture
 - ⇒ Pathways
 - ⇒ Play Environment
 - ⇒ Grills
- ❑ Improve park maintenance resources.
 - ⇒ Develop a management plan for owned natural areas addressing fire department coordination.
 - ⇒ Establish a life-cycle replacement plan for all park facilities and amenities.
 - ⇒ Reduce or remove ornamental plantings to a level that is maintainable.

PARKS IN ORDER BY MOST VISITED

1. Washington Park
2. Harry LaHood Park
3. Recreation Facility Park
4. Fitness Trail
5. Oak Ridge Park
6. Westgate Park/Pool
7. Bowen Lake Park
8. Meadow Valley Park
9. Candlewood Park
10. Weaver Park
11. Birchwood Park
12. Sweitzer Park
13. Grant Park

- ❑ Create a master plan to improve Meadow Valley Park considering:
 - ⇒ Expanded hiking trail network
 - ⇒ Add accessible pathways
 - ⇒ Interpretive features and wayfinding
 - ⇒ Natural area management and enhancement
 - ⇒ Nature based play environments
- ❑ Refine the master plan for pool improvements including:
 - ⇒ Develop “current” pool amenities following recent trends
 - ⇒ Expand parking
- ❑ Prepare an action plan for tackling management challenges at Bowen Park including:
 - ⇒ Remedy algae bloom issue
 - ⇒ Stabilize erosion
 - ⇒ Repair/replace fishing dock
 - ⇒ Manage native plantings
 - ⇒ Interpretive signs
- ❑ Based on Facilities Need Analysis, seek to meet State standards through adding playgrounds, baseball fields, horseshoe pits, skate parks, spray grounds and fishing opportunities, as confirmed by the public input process.
- ❑ Balance needs, trends, funding requirements, and public relations when proposing the generally unsupported elements listed below:
 - ⇒ Consider outdoor full court basketball facility (lighted)
 - ⇒ Consider construction of an indoor artificial turf field
 - ⇒ Consider adding features that improve fishing opportunities
 - ⇒ Consider a mountain bike park
 - ⇒ Consider implementing a skate park
 - ⇒ Consider pickleball courts
 - ⇒ Restrooms



Washington Park



New Parks, Trails, and Facilities Strategies

The following recommendations are directly related to the level of service and service area analysis in Chapter 2 and the issues and considerations described in Chapter 3.

New Parks, Trails, and Facilities Goals

- Increase and improve trail access throughout the community.
- Acquire property where deficiencies exist and when willing seller or donor opportunities present themselves.

New Parks, Trails, and Facilities Recommendations

- Continue to implement new trail links to connect park and school sites through land acquisition and/or securing easements and use-agreements and improve user wayfinding.
 - ⇒ Add wayfinding signs and mile markers
 - ⇒ Add interpretive signage
 - ⇒ Add/Improve trailheads
 - ⇒ Add/Improve vehicular crossings
 - ⇒ Name and identify the system and it's components
- Acquire Oak Ridge Park or secure long term lease for land.
- Specifically target the following trail links to incorporate into the existing system:
 - ⇒ Cruger Road between Dallas Road and Cummings Lane
 - ⇒ Dallas Road between Westminster Drive and Cruger Road
 - ⇒ Main Street from Cruger Road to Bowen Park
 - ⇒ Extend Trail to Meadow Valley Park
 - ⇒ Freedom Parkway, pending development needs
- Consider acquiring 5-10 acre neighborhood parks within or near planning areas 1, 2, 7, 10 and/or 11 totaling 25 or more acres of new neighborhood park space.
 - ⇒ Planning area 11 appeared as a priority during Needs Assessment.
 - ⇒ Avoid undevelopable land.
- Consider acquiring 5-10 acre neighborhood parks in planning areas 3, 14, and 15 if/when residential development expands to the southeast.
- Develop new hiking trails within the Park District's natural areas.
- Explore land-trade or sale of Future Park.

