IX. PARKS, RECREATION, & OPEN SPACE ELEMENT

VISION

The Vision Statement and Vision Goals provided in the Introduction to this Comprehensive Plan highlight the aspirations for outstanding recreational opportunities in the community, as well as preservation of natural features, including that the City:

- Establish a park and recreation system that meets the high standards of the community.
- Create a safe and interesting network of trails.
- Preserve trees and greenways by encouraging the preservation or development of large areas of greenery which provide a visual impact as opposed to creating small areas of unusable residue.

PRIMARY ISSUES

Achieving the vision outlined above will be a challenging task. The King County parks facilities inherited by the City upon incorporation represented a good start to building a park and recreation system for the City, but lacked the size, scope and quality desired by the citizens of Sammamish. The principal purpose of the Parks, Recreation & Open Space Element of the Comprehensive Plan is to identify the methods and means of achieving the community’s vision.

Virtually all cities, upon incorporation, start with some amount of parks facilities, services and resources—typically inherited from the County in which the new city is located. Those facilities, services and resources, in effect, represent the existing level of service (ELOS) that has been provided to the community and which will remain the LOS until such time as additional resources can be accumulated to provide enhanced or additional facilities and services.

In the sections that follow, references will be made to a parks “deficit”, referring to the gap between the park facilities and resources available at the time of incorporation and the enhanced or additional facilities and services envisioned by this Comprehensive Plan. It is the intent of this Plan to establish a framework for the future growth and development of a park system that meets the needs of our community in a realistic and constructive fashion. (Ord. O2006-205)

Existing Conditions

A Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Comprehensive Plan was finalized in 2004. Its goals and policies have been incorporated into this Element, and its capital facility project and financing components have been incorporated into the Utilities and Public Services/Capital Facilities Element. The Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Comprehensive Plan is incorporated by reference and included in Appendix C to the City’s approved Comprehensive Plan.

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1 The term “deficit”, as used in this Plan, is not to be confused with the term “deficiency” used in the state law authorizing collection of impact fees, including park impact fees. RCW 82.02.050 et seq. Under state law, impact fees may be collected and spent only for the public facilities defined in RCW 82.02.090 which are addressed by a capital facilities plan element of a comprehensive land use plan. RCW 82.02.050(4). Such fees may only be imposed for system improvements that are reasonably related to new development (RCW 82.02.050(3)(a)); and impact fees cannot be imposed to make up for any system improvement deficiencies. RCW 82.02.060(7).
As of January 2004, the City owned and operated 122 acres of developed park properties including: NE Sammamish Neighborhood Park, Bill Reams East Sammamish Park, Pine Lake Park, and Beaver Lake Park. A full list of City owned and/or maintained parks can be found in the Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Comprehensive Plan.

**Planned Facilities**

The City of Sammamish’s population is anticipated to increase over the horizon of the adopted Comprehensive Plan. Assessment of future park facilities needs is based generally upon three factors: the current inventory of parks and recreational facilities and its current capital value, projected population statistics, and the long term target established to meet recreation demand and needs. As the community grows, it will be crucial to ensure that development of parks and recreation facilities, at a minimum, keeps pace with growth (sustain ELOS) and, ideally, strives to create a richer, more vibrant system, than what existed at incorporation. Other short- and long-term development objectives set forth in the Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Comprehensive Plan include improving existing parks; acquiring parkland; and developing new community, neighborhood, and resource parks, and multi-use trails. Other recommended projects in the Parks Plan include greenway, trails, and open space corridors. (Ord. O2006-205)

Maintaining ELOS for existing and new residential development and implementing the short-term objectives discussed in the Parks Plan shall serve as a guide to the development of a 6-Year Capital Facilities Plan to be included in Capital Facilities Element of the City’s Comprehensive Plan. (Ord. O2005-192)

**GOALS**

The goal of this Element is to lay out the framework around which the City’s comprehensive park system is developed in an orderly and efficient manner. The oversight powers of the Sammamish Department of Parks & Recreation shall be guided by these policies, which are intended to serve the public's interest and protect public parks, trails, and open space assets. (Ord. O2006-205)

**POLICIES**

It is generally recognized that land acquisition for recreation purposes has a positive influence on the local economy and quality of life. Parks and recreation assets are of public interest and proven benefits in terms of social, economic and environmental qualities. As growth continues, land for parks and recreation purposes it becomes an increasingly limited and valuable resource, which must be conserved where possible.

One of the missions of the Department of Parks and Recreation is the establishment, management and maintenance of a comprehensive system of parks, open space land and greenways with recreation systems that facilitate the optimal use of existing and future recreational resources while protecting and enhancing public open within its jurisdiction. In order to consistently carry out its mission and serve the recreation needs of the people, the City must set forth policies, which are designed to aid development of these facilities. (Ord. O2006-205)

PRO-P 1.1 Parkland Acquisition Policy. It is the City’s intent to:
a. Develop, adopt and maintain procedures and priorities for selection, classification and acquisition of parklands and the use of such lands for recreation purposes. All lands designated for recreation purposes shall be suitable for the park classification and recreational activities intended or needed. (see Appendix C for detail)

b. Develop and maintain inter-local agreements for joint development, "right-of-use", land transfers, lease, exchange, dedication and surplus or easement land acquisition procedures. Undertake a working relationship with other public agencies and private entities to maximize opportunities for acquisition of land that qualifies to be included in the parks system.

c. Utilize the resources of national, state, regional and local conservation organizations, corporations, non-profit organizations and benevolent entities to identify and acquire environmentally sensitive land, urban wildlife habitat or open space/preservation areas within the City and its urban growth boundary or sphere of influence.

PRO-P 1.2 Park & Facility Improvement Policy. It is the intent of the City to:

a. Provide for the orderly and comprehensive planning of parklands and recreation resources through design standards, site planning criteria, and Master Plan procedures. Such procedures should respond to public need and requirements for park development, facilities and recreation services. Consideration should be given to use of joint school/park programs, development and the application of reasonable standards and conditions for such use,

b. Prepare a master plan to guide the development and use of all City-owned and/or operated parks. Each master plan shall be prepared in accordance with the provisions of the approved City of Sammamish Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan. In preparing each parks master plan the City shall:

1. Actively involve the community including but not limited to neighboring property owners, potential users, and professionals in the field of parks and recreation,

2. Not permit the construction of new housing in City parks,

3. Not permit the commercial development or activities unless a finding is made by the City Council that the proposed commercial use is in the public interest and compatible with the public use and enjoyment of the park.

c. Park design shall conform to local ordinances or recognized state and national standards for access, safety, health and protection of humans and domestic animal species. Park development shall be of high quality and aesthetically pleasing and sensitive to the opportunities and constraints of the natural, physical or architectural environment,

d. Encourage and support development of local neighborhood, volunteer and community-based programs for park improvements, including participation of civic clubs, non-profit organizations, and organized groups with a vested interest in recreation,
e. Provide barrier-free (ADA compliant) access, where readily achievable, by modifying existing facilities or when designing and/or constructing new recreation facilities and/or providing recreation services,

f. Provide amenities at parks and recreation open space facilities such as lighting, seating, drinking fountains, trash receptacles, bicycle racks, and shelters wherever possible and appropriate to extend hours of use and service quality.

g. Sustain existing levels of service (ELOS) while developing new facilities in an orderly fashion in accordance with an adopted Parks Capital Facilities Plan (CFP) that may be. (Ord. O2006-205)

PRO-P 1.3 Economic Performance & Finance Policy. It is the intent of the City to:

a. Identify and participate in growth impact-related public services fees and organize assessment methods such as benefit assessments in order to finance projects that are identified by the public as needed. Both public and private revenue sources will be employed to achieve a balance of equity and cost to the taxpayer through increased private participation in recreation service activity through enterprise opportunities,

b. Identify and secure alternative funding programs administered by state and federal agencies,

c. Establish maintenance user fees, charges and monetary policies within public/private agreements that provide recreation services at a reasonable cost to the public.

d. Establish and implement a park impact fee program for all new residential development. The fee shall be a one-time payment to the City for each new unit’s fair share of development costs for park facilities needed to maintain the existing level of service for new residential development. (Ord. O2006-205)

PRO-P 1.4 Support Policies. The following are a number of administrative actions that reinforce the basic policies of the Comprehensive Plan. The City should strive to:

a. Conserve Open Space Land for Natural, Cultural & Recreation Values:
   1. Coordinate and maintain procedures for identifying and managing open space, conservation or preservation lands through mechanisms such as zoning, donation, purchase of easements, management strategies, or establishment of open space resource conservation authorities or districts,
   2. Where appropriate for recreation purposes, transfer derelict land, surplus easements, tax delinquent land, surplus roadway/highway rights-of-way and other land not presently in productive use where such land can be used for land exchange, purchase or long-term leases for recreation or open space,
   3. Where appropriate, make maximum use of lands associated with public utilities, water supply reservoirs and drainage or irrigation districts to meet recreation needs,
4. Adopt improved regulations for new residential and commercial development which require either the dedication of park lands, provision of recreation facilities or payment of fees in-lieu of land to a parks and recreation trust fund,

5. Work intensively with a variety of public and private sector groups to encourage management services, donations or bargain sales and dedicated lands through equitable incentives and to identify, acquire and conserve or manage land for future park development or open space preservation.

b. Encourage Joint Use of Existing Public Resources.

1. Where appropriate, establish joint use of recreational facilities while ensuring recreation services to the entire community. Utilize school sites and public buildings for recreation and service programs through establishing joint purchase and/or use agreements,

2. Develop specific agreements and reciprocal no-fee policies, which encourage park use by school groups and school use by recreation user groups of all ages. Assist in providing services required to open up school facilities for recreational purposes and after-school programs,

3. Encourage joint-use for recreation wherever lands and facilities are suitable and committed to other private and public purposes, including City, county or state properties, utility rights-of-way, and properties belonging to institutions and private corporations,

4. Encourage use of local park and recreation facilities for a wider range of human service delivery (i.e., health information, personal consumer protection, nutrition, seniors, childcare, bookmobiles, play-mobiles, etc.).

c. Encourage Planning, Development and Full Use of Trails and Greenways.

1. Plan non-motorized trail systems for pedestrian and bicycle access to existing and new parks as an alternative to automobile access. Also, plan multi-use trail systems that link adjoining communities leading to rural or natural areas through regional trail linkages,

2. Develop specific trail plans to be used as guides in creating coordinated recreation and transportation systems for pedestrian and all non-motorized vehicles or forms of transportation,

3. Establish public awareness programs for the use, safety and maintenance of trails.

PRO-P 1.5 The City shall designate City owned and/or maintained parks and recreation facilities in accordance with the approved Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan.

REFERENCES