

Parks, Arts, Recreation and Historic Preservation



Celebrating the earth at Procession of the Species

Great parks, a vibrant arts community, diverse recreation and education programs and a strong sense of historic identity all play a role in enriching our lives and strengthening our connections to our community. This chapter addresses how we will support Olympia's parks, arts, recreation and historic resources needs.

Public gathering places, whether they are a small pocket park, a historic site, or a large community playfield satisfy the human need to gather with others in the community. One only has to walk to a neighborhood park, search for a new skill to learn, stroll around a historic neighborhood, or attend a celebration in the heart of Olympia to "Experience It!"

The City, community groups, volunteers, and businesses all play a vital role in shaping parks, arts, recreation and historic preservation. These facilities and programs improve people's quality of life, promote active lifestyles, create a sense of place and history and contribute to the local economy.

Parks, Arts and Recreation Programs and Facilities

Parks and recreation programs are at the very core of supporting healthy lives. Healthy individuals and families in turn sustain a healthy community. A healthy community offers opportunities to exercise and reduce stress, as well as programs that support personal growth and emotional well-being. The following goals and policies are applicable to all parks, arts and recreation programs and facilities.

Some types of recreational amenities are regional in nature and a regional approach to their implementation can be effective. In developing this plan, the City conducted an evaluation of intergovernmental coordination opportunities to provide regional approaches for meeting park and recreational demand. Facilities that could lend themselves to a regional approach include community park sites (particularly if they are located near a shared border between Olympia and Lacey or Tumwater), an Art Center site, regional trails, and recreational programming. Other potential regional facilities, though not included in this plan, could include an ice skating rink or a swimming pool. The City will explore opportunities to partner with neighboring jurisdictions on projects that lend themselves to a regional approach as they get closer to implementation.

CHANGE:

The goals and policies here are based heavily on the goals and policies adopted in the 2010 Parks, Arts and Recreation Plan. The few cases of substantive changes from those goals and policies are noted.

GC1

Unique facilities, public art, events, and recreational programming encourage social interaction, foster community building, and enhance the visual character and livability of Olympia.

PC1.1 Provide extraordinary parks and community events that bring tourism to Olympia, attract private investment, and increase property values.

PC1.2 Promote City parks, arts, and recreation programs and facilities so they are fully utilized.

PC1.3 Be responsive to emerging community needs for programs, facilities, and community events.

GC2

The City leverages its investments in parks, arts and recreation programs and facilities.

PC2.1 Seek partnerships, sponsorships, grants, and private donations for park and facility acquisition, development, operation, programming, and events.

PC2.2 Use creative problem-solving and cost-effective approaches to development, operations, and programming.

PC2.3 Continue the Joint Use Agreement between the City and the Olympia School District to provide recreation facilities and programming to meet the needs of the community.

PC2.4 Seek opportunities to increase revenues generated by park facilities and concessions.

PC2.5 Search for opportunities for mixed-use facilities and public/private partnerships.

Parks Provide Opportunities to be Active

CHANGE:

The current Parks, Arts and Recreation chapter of the Comprehensive Plan has a great deal of information that is also found in the Parks, Arts and Recreation Plan. Examples include the existing and proposed park inventory, the proposed facility map, and level of service standards. Rather than including this information here, this chapter gives a broad overview outlining the vision, goals and policies, and refers the reader to the PAR Plan for more details. This accomplishes the following:

- Makes the Comprehensive Plan more concise and readable.
- Makes updates of inventories and standards easier.
- Avoids discrepancies between information that has been updated in one place but not elsewhere.

Olympia provides a wealth of parks and recreation experiences; from hiking the trails in Watershed Park, to keeping cool in the Heritage Park Fountain, to strolling the urban waterfront at Percival Landing to getting married in the Rose Garden at Priest Point. Although there are 52 parks and open spaces in Olympia 40 of which are directly managed by the City, there are still unmet needs. The City of Olympia manages 40 of these while other jurisdictions manage 12. For a complete inventory of all existing park, recreation and open space lands in Olympia see the Parks, Arts and Recreation Plan.

[See Existing Olympia Parks and Open Spaces map](#) 

During the next 20 years, Olympia faces a number of challenges for meeting park and open space needs:

- **Acquiring Funding for Large Capital Projects.** Completion of Percival Landing, the acquisition and development of a 40-acre community park, and the completion of West Bay Park are all multi-million dollar projects. Current funding sources are not adequate to meet these needs
- **Acquiring Land for New Parks.** As our population increases we will need more park and open space to maintain the same level of service standards, yet there will be less land and fewer large parcels available
- **Maintaining an Aging Infrastructure.** As Olympia's park infrastructure ages, it becomes more important yet more expensive to provide routine and major maintenance

Level of Service Standards Measure Progress towards Meeting Park Land Needs

Every six years the City facilitates an extensive public process to update the Parks, Arts and Recreation Plan. During this process, the public expresses its desired parks, arts and recreation needs, which are used to update Olympia's park level of service standards. Level of service standards, (referred to as "Target Outcome Ratios" in the Parks, Arts and Recreation Plan) are the ratio of developed parkland per 1,000 residents. This is how the City evaluates whether we need to acquire more parkland or build more recreation facilities. The Capital Facilities Plan identifies the means by which the City finances new park acquisition and development. Parkland acquisition and development is funded by a variety of sources including the 2 percent private utility tax, park impact fees, SEPA mitigation fees, grants and donations. While most of the park projects proposed in the Parks, Arts and Recreation Plan have identified funding sources, some do not. The following sections outline the needs assessment for all three park categories.

Neighborhood Parks Provide Recreation Opportunities

Neighborhood Parks are a combination playground and open area designed primarily for non-supervised, non-organized recreational activities. They are generally small. The typical Neighborhood Park might include a children's playground, a picnic shelter, a restroom, and open grass areas for passive and active use. Amenities may also include trails, tennis courts, basketball courts, skate courts, public art, community gardens and off-leash dog areas. Since each Neighborhood Park has unique amenities, residents travel throughout the City to experience a variety of them. The service area for Neighborhood Parks is thus the entire City and its Urban Growth Area.



Playing at Lions Park, one of Olympia's neighborhood parks.

There are currently 23 Neighborhood Parks in Olympia totaling 69 acres. As Olympia's population grows, some of our Neighborhood Parks are nearing capacity. To address this, the City estimates that it needs to acquire three additional Neighborhood Park sites totaling approximately 11 acres within 10 years. This is also consistent with the goal expressed in the Parks, Arts and Recreation Plan of having a neighborhood park one-half to one mile of all residences.

For more information on the Neighborhood Park standard see the [Parks, Arts and Recreation Plan](#).

Community Parks

Community Parks are designed specifically to serve a large portion of the community. There are two types of Community Parks: athletic fields and sites with special uses. Athletic field space can range from a single field at a park to a multiple-field complexes. Large athletic field complexes provide the most cost effective facilities and efficient scheduling and maintenance. They are designed for organized activities and sports, although individual and family activities are also encouraged. Athletic field complexes bring a large portion of the community together, and as a result, they require more support facilities, including parking, restrooms, picnic shelters, etc. Olympia's three existing athletic field complexes are LBA Park, Yauger Park and Steven's Field. Combined, these parks total 75 acres.

Community Parks may have a special use orientation, i.e., a waterfront focus, a garden focus, a water feature, etc. Some examples include Heritage Park Fountain, Yashiro Japanese Garden and Percival Landing.



The Harbor House at Percival Landing.

Olympia meets its athletic field demand through a combination of City parks and school fields. However, even with this partnership there is an unmet need for additional rectangular fields. Soccer groups have been turned away or have had to rely on neighboring jurisdictions due to lack of capacity. Athletic fields have also been so over-used that they cannot recover which is leading to long-term deterioration. (While the City will continue its efforts to acquire large parcels for future athletic field complexes, it recognizes that with very few large undeveloped parcels available, it may be necessary to meet the future athletic field need with single fields at multiple parks.)

In addition to athletic fields, Community Parks can provide special, community-wide amenities such as disc golf, off-leash dog areas, BMX, freshwater swim beaches, waterfront access, community gardens, etc. Based on community needs, Olympia will also need to add additional Community Park acreage to provide for these desired recreational amenities.

The Community Park level of service standard is determined by analyzing athletic field and non-athletic field community needs separately. The City estimates that it needs two additional athletic field oriented community parks totaling 63 acres and 7 special-use oriented community parks totaling 29 acres to meet the demand for Community Parks within 10 years. For more information on the Community Park standard see the [Parks, Arts and Recreation Plan](#).

Open Space Gives People Access to Nature

Open Space is defined as primarily undeveloped land that is set aside to provide people access to nature and to protect the natural character of Olympia's landscape. It may include trails; wetlands; wetland buffers; stream or river corridors and aquatic habitat; forested or upland wildlife areas; ravines, bluffs, or other geologically hazardous areas; prairies/meadows; and undeveloped areas within existing parks. Trail development to allow passive recreation such as nature observation and hiking is encouraged in these areas, except in cases where wildlife conservation is the primary function. Parking and trailhead facilities such as restrooms, information kiosks and environmental education facilities are also appropriate. (Note that the term "Open Space" as used in this chapter has a more specific meaning than as used in the Natural Environment Chapter pursuant to RCW 36.70A.160).



Moxlie Creek in Watershed Park.

Olympia already has a substantial inventory of Open Space acreage. Priest Point Park, Grass Lake Refuge, and Watershed Park alone comprise over 630 acres. While this may be sufficient for the existing population, to keep up with projected population growth and retain the current standard would require acquiring approximately 140 more acres to the inventory every 10 years. We are doubly restrained by both available land parcels and available funding to meet this goal. Yet, open space has a very high value to Olympia residents. At public workshops related to parks planning, when people were asked, “What parks, arts or recreation experience do you value most?” the number one response was “nature.” For more information on the Open Space LOS see the [Parks, Arts and Recreation Plan](#). While the future standard for Open Space will be lower than the current standard, the City estimates that due to population growth 4 Open Space development projects totaling 111 acres are needed to meet the community needs within 10 years. For more information on the Open Space standard see the [Parks, Arts and Recreation Plan](#).

The level of service standards outlined above and the following goals and policies will guide Olympia’s park system towards achieving its vision over the next 20 years.

Goals and Policies

GC3

A sustainable park system meets community recreation needs and Level of Service standards.

PC3.1 Provide parks in close proximity to all residents.

PC3.2 Ensure that Olympia’s park system includes opportunities for experiencing nature, solitude, and an escape from the fast pace of urban life.

PC3.3 Preserve and enhance scenic views and significant historic sites within Olympia’s park system.

PC3.4 Identify and acquire future park and open space sites in the Urban Growth Area.

PC3.5 Beautify entry corridors to our City and our neighborhoods. Give priority to street beautification downtown and along Urban Corridors.

PC3.6 Continue to collect park impact fees within the Olympia City Limits and SEPA-based mitigation fees in the Olympia Urban Growth Area so new development pays its fair share to the park and open space system based on its proportionate share of impact. Work with Thurston County to devise an alternative system for funding parks and open space in the unincorporated Urban Growth Area.

PC3.7 During development review, if consistent with park level of service standards or other needs, encourage developers to dedicate land for future parks, open space, and recreation facilities.

PC3.8 Develop parks or plazas near Urban Corridors.

GC4

An urban trails system interconnects parks, schools, neighborhoods, open spaces, historical settings, neighboring jurisdictions' trails systems, important public facilities, and employment centers via both on and off-street trails.

PC4.1 Coordinate with adjacent jurisdictions and State agencies to build an interconnected regional trail network and coordinated trail signage program that is consistent with the Thurston Regional Trails Plan.

PC4.2 Use existing rail, utility and unopened street rights-of-way, valleys, streams, and other corridors for urban trails.

PC4.3 Preserve unimproved public rights-of-way for important open space, greenway linkages, and trails.

PC4.4 Encourage walking and bicycling for recreation and transportation purposes by linking parks to walking routes.

PC4.5 When located in areas where future trails are shown on the adopted map, ensure that new development provides appropriate pieces of the trail system using impact fees, the SEPA process, trail Right-of-Way dedication, or other means.

CHANGE:

The following waterfront-related goal and policies are a combination of existing Comp Plan policies (made more concise), PAR Plan policies, and a proposed Comp Plan amendment made by Friends of the Waterfront.


GC5

A lively public waterfront contributes to a vibrant Olympia.

PC5.1 Complete Percival Landing reconstruction and West Bay Park construction.

PC5.2 Encourage creation of a public shoreline trail as property north of West Bay Park is developed.

PC5.3 Develop a West Bay trail alignment that follows the shoreline.

PC5.4 Designate waterfront trails and important waterfront destinations as the “Olympia Waterfront Route” as outlined in the [Thurston Regional Trails Plan](#) .

CHANGE:

New policy.

PC5.5 Consider acquisition of saltwater shoreline property to create public access on a case-by-case basis.

PC5.6 Preserve street rights-of-way which extend to shore lands and provide signage to preserve and promote public access.

GC6

Olympia’s parks, arts and recreation system investments are protected.

PC6.1 Continue to implement and refine the City-wide Asset Management Program, OPARD’s Condition Assessment and Major Maintenance Plan Program, and Public Art Management Program to ensure that facilities remain functional, safe and attain their design life.

PC6.2 Secure a sustainable funding source in order to maintain City landscape medians, roundabouts, entry corridors, street trees, City buildings, and other landscaped areas in street rights-of-way.

PC6.3 Protect the City’s investment from damage by vandalism, encampments, and other misuse in a manner that preserves the intended purpose.

PC6.4 Consider, where appropriate, a regional approach to funding major recreational facilities, for instance swimming pools, regional trails, an arts center and tournament-level athletic fields.

PC6.5 Ensure adequate park maintenance and operation funding before new facilities are developed.

Arts and Events Create Community

Olympia is now home to nearly 2,500 individual artists and almost 100 arts organizations and venues. Resident artists are active in music, literature, performance, and visual arts. They consist of emerging artists to those that are nationally known. Olympia hosts award-winning theater, groundbreaking independent rock music performances, the Procession of the Species, and a strong visual arts community that ranges from informal artists to those with nationwide gallery representation.



Procession of the Species.

During the next 20 years, Olympia will face two challenges:

- **Creating an Arts Center.** This has been identified as a need since 1989. This center should provide exhibition space, working studios, and rehearsal space
- **Retaining Artists.** Olympia enjoys a creative, vibrant community that is closely tied to the arts. As social and economic factors such as cost of living, affordable housing, stable economy, and availability of government jobs changes, it may be harder to retain artists. The following goals and policies will guide Olympia's arts and events toward achieving its vision over the next 20 years

Goals and Policies

GC7

Permanent and temporary public art is located in parks, sidewalks, roundabouts, public buildings, alleys and other public spaces.

PC7.1 Include diverse works of art.

PC7.2 Ensure opportunities and participation by local, regional and national artists.

PC7.3 Use public art to create unique community places and visible landmarks.

PC7.4 Incorporate public art into commonplace public works such as sidewalks, bridges, parking meters, and tree grates, etc.

CHANGE:

New policy.

PC7.5 Use public art to tell the story of Olympia.

PC7.6 Encourage community participation at all levels of the public art process.

PC7.7 Provide ongoing maintenance to the public art collection so it retains its value.

CHANGE:

New policy.

PC7.8 Install art in vacant storefronts.

CHANGE:

New policy.

PC7.9 Encourage neighborhood art studios.

CHANGE:

New policy.

PC7.10 Support art installations that produce solar or wind generated energy.

GC8

Arts in Olympia is supported.

CHANGE:

New policy.

PC8.1 Pursue a community arts center.

CHANGE:

New policy.

PC8.2 Pursue affordable housing and studio space for artists.

PC8.3 Encourage broad arts participation in the community.

PC8.4 Provide opportunities for the public to learn about and engage in the art-making process.

PC8.5 Provide opportunities that highlight the talent of local artists.

PC8.6 Provide technical support to art organizations.

CHANGE:

New policy.

PC8.7 Formalize a theater and entertainment district.

PC8.8 Create a range of opportunities for the public to interact with art; from small workshops to large community events.

Recreation Fosters Health and Wellness

The City's recreation programs promote physical and mental well-being, bring citizens together in a positive, supportive, and fun atmosphere, and create memorable experiences for individuals and families. The City offers traditional programs such as sports leagues, youth camps and clinics, and special interest classes. The City also responds to emerging recreational needs. Examples include Ultimate Frisbee league, high-energy dance classes and community gardens. In 2010 approximately 400 teams participated in City sports leagues, over 4,000 citizens took a leisure recreation class, and over 1,500 youth participated in camp programs. In addition to enhancing participant's sense of wellness, people who participate in these programs also gain a sense of belonging to the community.



Olympia Parks, Arts and Recreation's "Kids Love Soccer" Program.

Olympia's recreation programs face the following challenges:

- **Activating our Community.** Our sedentary lifestyles are contributing to health problems. The City must find places and programs that can compete with the ease and simplicity of TV and computers for people's time and attention
- **Connecting with Nature.** Our electronic toys and indoor jobs mean that as a society we are less connected to nature. If our residents are not connected to nature it will become increasingly difficult for them to understand or embrace environmental stewardship
- **An aging population.** Between 2010 and 2030, the population of seniors in Olympia is projected to double. Today's seniors are more active and may be more interested in seeking out unique experience than seniors of this generation or a generation ago. Olympia's recreation programs need to embrace this growth

The following goals and policies will shape how Olympia's recreation program evolves over the next 20 years.

Goals and Policies

GC9

Olympians enjoy lifelong happiness and wellness.

PC9.1 Provide opportunities that promote a mentally and physically active lifestyle and healthy food choices.

PC9.2 Provide programs and facilities that stimulate creative and competitive play for all ages.

PC9.3 Provide programs, facilities, and community events that support diverse self-expression.

PC9.4 Provide opportunities for bringing balance, relaxation, and lifelong learning into one's life.

GC10**Families recreate together.**

PC10.1 Enhance recreation opportunities for the Olympia area's physically and mentally disabled populations.

PC10.2 Provide recreational opportunities for all family structures.

PC10.3 Work towards providing recreation programs are affordable and available to all citizens.

PC10.4 Provide parks and programs to serve people of diverse ages, abilities, and interests.

PC10.5 Develop and implement intergenerational activities and programs and design park facilities to accommodate intergenerational activities.

PC10.6 Provide families convenient, safe, active, outdoor recreation experiences.

Historic Preservation Provides a Sense of Place



Olympia's oldest residence, the Bigelow House.

Historic preservation means protecting buildings and districts and celebrating the people and events that shaped our City. Our historic buildings and districts give us a sense of place, and neighborhoods their character. And, we conserve natural resources by keeping historic buildings properly maintained and in continual use.

However, the value of historic preservation goes beyond buildings. Artifacts, photographs, structures, sites and stories of our collective past were entrusted to us and so must we preserve them for the future.

The Olympia Heritage Commission advises the City Council on matters of historic preservation and assists owners of historic buildings in caring for their property. Private property owners shoulder much of the responsibility of protecting historic buildings. They need continued support from the City to ensure that our greatest assets are preserved for the community to enjoy today and always.

The City offers [online resources](#) that highlight [our rich history](#) and describe the role of preservation in environmental, economic and social sustainability.



Many of our older homes are a source of pride for young families, just as they have been for generations.

Goals and Policies

GC11

Historic resources are a key element in the overall design of the City.

CHANGE:

New view protection language.

PC11.1 Protect historic vistas from the Capitol Campus to Budd Inlet and the Olympic mountains and from Budd Inlet to the southwest side of the Capitol Campus.

PC11.2 Safeguard and promote sites, buildings, districts, structures and objects which reflect significant

elements of the City's history.

PC11.3 Encourage infill development that is compatible with historic buildings and neighborhood character.

PC11.4 Establish zoning that is compatible with, and conducive to, continued preservation of historic neighborhoods and properties.

PC11.5 Protect the few remaining large trees in downtown, such as those in Sylvester Park and along Legion Way.

PC11.6 Identify, protect and maintain existing trees with historic significance or other value to the whole community, as well as to specific neighborhoods.

PC11.7 Identify, protect and maintain historic landscapes with significance to the community or specific neighborhoods including species or placement of trees and other plants.

[[GC12]] The City's beauty and historic identity fosters civic and neighborhood pride.

PC12.1 Assist older neighborhoods and districts in discovering their social and economic origins and in appreciating their historic features.

PC12.2 Preserve those elements which are unique to Olympia or which exemplify its past development periods.

PC12.3 Encourage new developments to try to complement historic structures by use of compatible mass, scale, materials, setting, setback, etc.

[PC12.4]] Recognize the contributions of minorities, workers, women and other cultures to Olympia's history.

GC13

Programs effectively identify, recognize, and encourage the preservation and continued use of historic buildings, districts, structures and sites which give physical evidence of the City's history and development periods.

PC13.1 Facilitate the preservation of historic identity and important historic resources through the Olympia Heritage Commission, the Heritage Register and the historic marker program.

PC13.2 Provide incentives and assistance for preservation, restoration, redevelopment and use of historic buildings, districts, neighborhoods, streets, structures, objects and sites.

PC13.3 Promote and provide for the early identification and resolution of conflicts between the preservation of historic resources and competing land uses.

PC13.4 Encourage preservation of intact historic structures and discourage partial demolitions or retention of merely a facade.

PC13.5 Support public or non-profit acquisition of the most important historic resources to ensure their preservation.

PC13.6 Work with the state archeologist to protect archeological resources.

PC13.7 Coordinate historic preservation programs with those of adjacent governments, particularly programs of public information about the area's history and development.

GC14

Historic preservation objectives are integrated into the City's decision processes.

PC14.1 Protect historic and archaeological sites.

PC14.2 Support collaboration between the Heritage Commission and other advisory committees and departments to promote mutual goals.

PC14.3 Recognize the value of historic preservation as part of the effort to maintain affordable housing stock.

PC14.4 Promote economic vitality through historic preservation.

GC15

Downtown's historic character and significant historic buildings, structures, and sites are preserved and enhanced.


PC15.1 Encourage historic preservation in the Downtown to provide focal points of historic interest, to provide a blending of outstanding older structures with newer development, to maintain the economic vitality of the Historic District, and to enhance the richness and diversity of Olympia.

PC15.2 Minimize damage to significant historic features or character during rehabilitation projects.

PC15.3 Design new buildings or renovations to be compatible and harmonious with the established pattern, alignment, size and shape of existing buildings.

PC15.4 Incorporate historic buildings into redevelopment projects and restore historic facades.

For More Information

- The [Parks, Arts and Recreation Plan](#) contains a detailed list of proposed projects and programs for the next 10 years
- Olympia's [Capital Facilities Plan](#) shows how park projects will be funded during a six year period
- For a complete list of all of Olympia's parks and trails, see [parks and trails](#)
- For a comprehensive look at regional trail planning, see the [Thurston Regional Trails Plan](#) 
- Arts and music resource guides can be found at [Arts Resources](#)
- Information on the City's Public Art Collection can be found at [Public Art](#)
- In 2007, the Art's Commission participated in an [Arts Center Feasibility Study](#)
- To learn more about the City of Olympia's recreational programs and classes, see [recreation](#)
- Information about [Olympia's rich history](#)

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The City of Olympia is committed to the non-discriminatory treatment of all persons in employment and the delivery of services and resources.

Olympia Area Parks and Trails

-  Chehalis Western Trail
-  City Owned Parks
-  Other Jurisdiction Parks
-  Urban Growth Area
-  City Limits



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Miles

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