



Memo

Date: May 16, 2017
To: Board of Park Commissioners
From: Susanne Rockwell
Subject: Draft 2017 Parks and Open Space Plan

Requested Board Action

This briefing paper provides a high-level overview of Seattle Parks and Recreation's (SPR) *draft 2017 Parks and Open Space Plan*, formerly referred to as the Development Plan and Gap Analysis, and follows the background briefing held on November 10, 2016.

No action from the Board is requested at the May 25, 2017 meeting; a Board recommendation is scheduled for the June 22, 2017 meeting, following a public hearing on June 8, 2017.

Project or Policy Description and Background

The *draft 2017 Parks and Open Space Plan* (the Plan) is a 6-year plan that documents SPR's facilities and lands, looks at Seattle's changing demographics and lays out a vision for the future. The Plan is required by the Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) to maintain the City's eligibility for state grants that will help realize outdoor recreation development and open space acquisition projects; as such the Plan needs approval by the Superintendent and must be adopted by the City Council.

This briefing paper presents an overview of key components of the draft Plan; the Goals and Policies, refinements in analysis, and key strategies moving forward.

An electronic copy of the *draft 2017 Parks and Open Space Plan* is posted on the project webpage: www.seattle.gov/parks/about-us/policies-and-plans/2017-parks-and-open-space-plan

Relevant Goals and Policies

The *draft 2017 Parks and Open Space Plan* contains goals and policies consistent with the Seattle 2035 Comprehensive Plan and takes these a step further by outlining why these goals are important, how they relate to the specific policies and identifies action steps and capital projects to implement those goals and policies.

The four strategic goals of the Plan are:

- Goal 1: *Provide spaces throughout the city for all people to play, learn, contemplate, and build community.*
- Goal 2: *Continue to provide opportunities for all people across Seattle to participate in a variety of recreational activities.*
- Goal 3: *Manage the City's park and recreation facilities to provide safe and welcoming places.*
- Goal 4: *Plan and maintain Seattle's parks and facilities to accommodate park users and visitors.*

In addition to the goals and policies, the plan includes:

- Needs analysis,
- Recreation trends,
- Walkability guidelines,
- Target goals for how SPR can deliver equitable access to facilities,
- A Long-Term Acquisition Strategy for the acquisition of parkland in the City's growing Urban Villages and Natural Areas,
- Highlights of capital projects that will be implemented over the next 6 years and that support the four strategic goals defined in the plan.

For the Plan to satisfy RCO's requirements, it must include a prioritized list of projects and/or programs (parks and open space acquisition, development, renovation and restoration projects), anticipated year of implementation, and a financing plan and/or fund source. These are included in detail in the Appendices section of the plan.

Key Issues

1. Citywide Guidelines and 2017 Level of Service

The Plan recommends a citywide "Level of Service" (LOS) that is needed to help provide recreational opportunities as we move forward. Since 2001, the City has not changed the Acceptable or the Desirable goals for open space. Supported by the passage of several parks levies containing robust acquisition funding, SPR has consistently exceeded the Acceptable goal of 3.3 acres per 1,000 residents.

The *2017 Parks and Open Space Plan* proposes a single standard for level of service, changing the Acceptable guideline of 3.33 acres per 1,000 residents to a new 8 acres per 1,000 residents "Level of Service". For the City to meet the new citywide LOS during the planning horizon, SPR will need to acquire approximately 13.5 acres within the next six-years (through the life of this Plan), and continue to acquire additional acres after that to acquire 40 acres by 2035.

There is no penalty for acquiring more than 40 acres, but if we fall below our citywide LOS then we are in violation of the GMA.

2. Long-Term Acquisition Strategy

SPR is proposing including walkability guidelines, to help shape a Long-Term Acquisition Strategy. Based on recent analysis, we know that 94% of the housing units in Seattle are within a 10-minute walk to a park and 77% of housing units within an Urban Village are within a 5-minute walk to a park. This is an extraordinary accomplishment. We also know that Seattle and its Urban Villages will continue to experience growth and become denser over time.

The analysis in this plan represents a bridge between the historical approach of quantitative measures (number acres per population) and the more contemporary qualitative analysis approach (amount of time to walk to a park – walkability) that the majority of large urban American cities are embracing.

Two walkability distances are proposed:

- 5-minute walkability guideline to be applied within the Urban Village boundary; and
- 10-minute walkability guideline to be applied outside of the Urban Village boundary

The recommendation for a different guideline for walkability within Urban Villages reflects the fact that Urban Villages are higher-density locations where most of the growth is expected to occur; thus, closer proximity (5-minute walkability) to park facilities is important.

Property acquisition is opportunity driven, but the gap areas identified in the analysis help define SPR's priorities and needs for future acquisition and development projects. The Long-Term Acquisition Strategy will focus on: 1.) the acquisition of parkland in the City's growing Urban Villages with identified gaps and that meet the criteria outlined in the plan, and 2.) the acquisition of Natural Areas and Greenbelts that meet the prioritization criteria outlined in the plan. Property in the City Center Urban Center Villages will not be prioritized for acquisition because of the escalating costs. Acquisitions will be prioritized based on the following criteria:

- Equity and health,
- Income and poverty,
- Density, and
- Opportunity

In addition to walkability, for SPR to plan equitably for future recreational facilities and programming, understanding the composition of neighborhoods, recreational desires and participation trends are key. The Plan quantifies and describes the facility and recreational programming needs of the city, and highlights two methodologies in keeping with the State guidelines:

- Recreation participation, and
- Community satisfaction.

These two methodologies are informed by the public survey conducted in 2016. Eighty percent of those who participated in the survey rated Seattle's parks and recreation system positively, with an A or B grade. SPR gets high marks for "meeting the needs of the neighborhood" and "maintenance and cleanliness", but lower marks for "safety". Homelessness, drugs, and illegal activities are the leading top-of-mind reasons for lower safety ratings.

Per the survey results, walking with or without a pet, jogging, visiting playgrounds, natural areas, beaches, neighborhood and community parks remain consistently the top tier activities for people across all ages enjoying our parks and open space. The use of athletic fields, community centers, pools and picnic shelters also show high participation levels.

The walkability mapping analysis has been refined to include the socioeconomic factors of race, poverty levels and health indices. Other opportunities for public enjoyment such as P-patch gardens, publicly accessible street ends and public school property are also included.

Budget

Capital improvement projects and acquisitions are funded through the CIP (Real Estate Excise Taxes-REET) and Seattle Park District funding. The acquisition budget in the Seattle Park District's current six-year financial plan is \$2 million annually, often leveraged with funding from King County's Conservation Futures Tax.

Project Schedule

May – October, 2016	Background analysis and development of walkability mapping
Nov 10, 2016	Initial briefing and roll out to the Board of Park Commissioners
Nov, 2016 – Jan, 2017	Public engagement – participating with Department of Neighborhood’s citywide public meetings, focus groups, other partners and City departments (ongoing)
Dec 8, 2016	Planning Commission briefing
January - May 2017	Analysis, refinements, and finalize plan
May 15 – 18, 2017	Public release of Draft Plan – sent electronically to Board of Park Commissioners and posted on the project webpage
May 18, 2017	Focus group #2 and Planning Commission briefing #2
May 22, 2017	SEPA posted
May 25, 2017	Board of Park Commissioners briefing #2
June 8, 2017	Board of Park Commissioners public hearing
June 15, 2017	Public comment period closes for Draft Plan and SEPA
June 22, 2017	Board of Park Commissioners discussion and recommendations
June 2017	Draft legislation
September 2017	City Council approval (Resolution)
October 2017	Submit to the State

Additional Information

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For Comments and Questions, please e-mail:
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An electronic copy of the draft 2017 Parks and Open Space Plan is available on the project webpage:
Project webpage: www.seattle.gov/parks/about-us/policies-and-plans/2017-parks-and-open-space-plan
Story Mapping link: http://www.seattle.gov/ArcGIS/SMSeries_GapAnalysisUpdate2017/index.html

The complete survey results are available here:
<https://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/ParksAndRecreation/PoliciesPlanning/SPRSurveySummaryReport.pdf>