

Appendix E: Community aspirations

The strength, weakness, opportunity and threat (SWOT) assessment of both the external planning environment and the internal organization context presented a set of issues and opportunities for the Legacy Plan to address.

The following list of issues was identified through various sources of data collection including, among others, key stakeholders interviews, focus group meetings, Legacy Team input, document reviews and community surveys. The issues and opportunities are organized into 5 major groupings:

1. Land use and planned growth
2. Parks, open space and natural environment
3. Recreation Program and services
4. Maintenance
5. Management and finance

Land Use and Planned Growth

Issues

The population growth for Lakewood is targeted to reach 72,000 by 2030. Part of the growth is triggered by close to 5,000 additional military personnel bringing their families to Lakewood over the next five years. Further, the Joint Base Lewis-McChord (JBLM) will likely close some of its multipurpose fields to accommodate new growth. All of these intensifying demands will further burden the city's existing park system and recreation services. At the same time, the State is encouraging cities to create active and walkable communities within future growth and economic development areas.

Opportunities

Consider action strategies to:

- Integrate the Legacy Plan with the city's Comprehensive Plan Update process;
- Address the specific needs of the future demographics and the military population; and
- Complement the city-wide Non-Motorized Transportation Initiative through the creation of landscaped linear parks, urban plazas and community gardens.

Parks, Open Space and Natural Environment

Issues

While the current Master Plan adopts a ½-mile service radius for neighborhood parks, many of the new parks have not been classified and the

major physical barriers affecting local resident access to parks were not considered.

The Department recently prepared a Planning and Feasibility Study recommending a future development scenario for Fort Steilacoom Park. While the on-going operation and maintenance of the Park remains a challenge, the Study affirms the economic benefits which this major regional park can bring to the city.

Acquiring land for park development has not been a priority in the past due to the absence of dedicated funding. Besides recognizing the efficiencies of purchasing properties adjacent to existing park sites, the Park and Recreation Advisory Board has identified and considered "street ends" on which the city owns an easement interest based on the size, access and use potential of each site. However, no further actions were taken.

Opportunities

Consider action strategies to:

- Delineate park planning areas to take physical barriers into consideration;
- Define "open space" and propose an updated "park classification" in light of the emerging trends of connectivity and smart growth;
- Address physical barriers to ensure safe and convenient walking access to parks;
- Revisit park level of service based on the principle of "walking proximity" to address the needs of diverse neighborhoods;
- Review the role of street ends in the context of linear park development;
- Identify principles for future land acquisition to address service gaps and needs;
- Consider voter-approved measures to secure dedicated funding for land acquisition and park development; and
- Partner with other agencies to utilize open space areas for community use.

Recreation Programs and Services

Issues

In the past, the recreation needs of the diverse population segments have not been fully articulated. The recently-conducted community needs assessment has revealed valuable information for staff to consider when planning for future program offerings. The survey showed that one of the main barriers to program participation was the lack of interest in the programs provided. Other barriers included

the lack of information, the variety of programs offered and cost. It further revealed the lack of a coordinated and effective marketing strategy as well as the need for a scholarship program for underserved families.

The city has not systematically collected data for program planning and evaluation. Post-participation surveys have not been conducted to collect participant feedback on classes and activities. Further, the currently-adopted pricing policy and cost recovery targets were not consistently applied across all program areas when developing program fees.

Being a tenant at the county-owned Lakewood Community Center has posed some constraints on the utilization of the Senior Activity Center and the expansion of services. The center should be re-branded to attract older and active adults. A multi-purpose facility should be explored to more efficiently serve the recreation needs of all ages.

Opportunities

Consider action strategies to:

- Define Department's role and niche among alternative providers in response to recreation needs of the community;
- Apply the needs assessment survey findings to inform future program planning;
- Address program barriers;
- Consider the potential to further expand team sports;
- Introduce post-participation surveys to collect feedbacks from program users;
- Identify sustainable finances to fund parks and programs;
- Strengthen marketing strategies by developing a business plan for each program area;
- Consider the use of digital media to reach out to the young adults aged between 25 and 44;
- Develop a pricing philosophy and adopt a pricing pyramid to guide cost recovery of programs;
- Consider pay-to-play as 64% of survey respondents supported user fees;
- Introduce a scholarship program funding through sponsorships or other means to subsidize underserved families;
- Re-brand the Senior Activity Center and consider older adult programming within a multi-purpose community center setting to encourage inter-generation and family-wide programs.

Maintenance

Issues

The needs assessment survey revealed that some factors related to operation and maintenance were considered barriers to participation. About 30% of the respondents responded that there was a lack of restrooms, 25% felt better facilities existed elsewhere and 14% perceived facilities as unsafe.

In regards to Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance, two waterfront areas, located in Harry Todd Park and American Lake Park, were found inaccessible. Further, little work has been done to identify deferred maintenance needs.

Opportunities

Consider action strategies to:

- Develop park and facility maintenance level of service standards to reflect new park classification and function;
- Create a "depreciation account" to proactively take care of park assets;
- Address ADA issues through a transition plan update process and include ADA projects in both City's and the Legacy Plan's Capital Improvement Program; and
- Develop park design guidelines to include amenities and restrooms to reflect the new park classification.

Management and Finance

Issues

On the management side, nearly two-thirds of the community survey respondents expressed confidence in the leadership of the Department. Approximately 55% was satisfied with the management of the Department. However, only 34% found it easy to communicate with the Department.

In general, there is a lack of a performance management culture and policies/procedures within the Department. While Parks Division has developed standard operating procedures for park maintenance and community use, the Department does not have a comprehensive set of policies and procedures to guide the day-to-day business and operation. Recreation programs are not regularly evaluated, and performance tracking for benchmarking and evaluation is seldom practiced.

On the finance side, finding sustainable funding to operate the park and recreation system under the city operation remains a challenge. Consideration should be given to improve

revenue bases through sponsorships and cost-recovery improvements. There is an emerging trend to create an independent taxing authority to sustain finances. At this juncture, only a third of the survey respondents supported a Park District. Sixty percent of respondents agreed that the Department should pursue capital bonds park projects and improvements. Since there is a significant level of confidence in department management among the public, it is worthwhile to raise awareness among the public in order to pave the road for future voter-approved measures, such as an independent tax district or a capital bond campaign.

Opportunities

Consider action strategies to:

- Cultivate good relationship with the community, customers, partners and volunteers;

- Develop a partnership policy;
- Improve public relations, marketing and outreach strategies;
- Identify policies and procedures needed to improve the operation of the Department;
- Explore creative options to support park and recreation operation;
- Consider the public readiness and a public awareness campaign for a Park District;
- Develop and track performance indicators for service evaluation; and
- Nurture a performance management culture within the Department.

The matrix on the following page provides an alternative way to look at the issues and opportunities by grouping them into more specific areas of concerns.

	Area of Concern	Issue	Opportunity
1	Comprehensive Plan Update	The City will be updating the Comprehensive Plan to meet the State revised 2014 deadline. Currently the interface between the Comprehensive Plan and the current Parks and Recreation Plan is weak.	The development of a new Legacy Plan provides an opportunity to better integrate with the City's Comprehensive Plan Update process.
2	Park Planning Areas	The 2005 Parks and Recreation Master Plan mentioned the seven Planning Areas once indicated in the Comprehensive Plan, but did not apply them for any area analysis. According to the Planning Staff, these seven areas contained in the Plan are no longer used.	Delineating park planning areas using major physical barriers as boundaries could ensure safe and convenient walking access to neighborhood parks and recreation services.
3	Built Environment	The State is encouraging cities to create active communities and walkable/ bikable cities. How can the Legacy Plan respond to this emerging urban development trend?	The Council adopted the Non Motorized Transportation Plan in 2009 to support an active community. Develop parks and recreation program, strategies and policies which promote physical activity, such as the creation of pleasant outdoor and walking environment in urban growth centers by providing landscaped urban trails, plazas and community gardens.
4	Future Growth and Economic Development	The future of development of the Lakewood Station District, Tillicum Neighborhood and Woodbrook Business Park will generate population and economic growth. How can parks, open space and recreation programs support the future growth?	The Legacy Plan should address the needs of those living or working in planned growth areas. Park and recreation providers would play a role in supporting planned growth and economic development through improving the quality life of both residents and workers.
5	International District	The City is considering the feasibility of extending the International District near I-5 and South Tacoma Way. How can the City customize park design and recreation services to support this unique opportunity?	Create an urban linear park with a cultural and heritage theme to support the International District, if the Council pursues this initiative.

6	Population and Demographics	The County and its cities are currently fine-tuning the 2030 population, housing and employment projections to meet the allocation goals. The final projection numbers may be adjusted during the course of discussion. Since the 2010 Census data will not be ready in time for this Environmental Scan, the demographic data used for the Legacy Plan may have to rely on the decade-old Census data.	Adopt the new 2030 projection numbers as revised. The City could attract a younger population, as the military population grows, and more new immigrants should the International District become a reality. The Legacy Plan should address the future demographic composition. Staff is encouraged update the demographic profiles of the ten park planning areas when future American Community Survey data to become available.
7	Military Population	The growing military population living both on and off base at Joint Base Lewis-McChord (JBLM) has created a huge demand for park and recreation services. How can the Legacy Plan address their needs?	The possible closure of some recreation facilities within JBLM could create, on the one hand, more opportunities for the City to serve the military population; but on the other, impact more on existing park services.
8	Park and Facility Inventory	The City's park and facility inventory was collected in 2002. It has not been updated to reflect new park sites, improvements and current conditions.	Update park and facility inventory as part of the Environmental Scan.
9	Park Level of Service (LOS)	How park LOS should be approached requires further studies. The per capita LOS may not be relevant as neighborhoods become denser. The State Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) is currently reviewing park LOS for cities to consider.	Review and provide clear definitions and LOS for parks and open space.
10	Fort Steilacoom Park and Golf Course	On-going maintenance of the Park remains a challenge. The City is currently negotiating the Interlocal Agreement with Pierce County to review the maintenance and management arrangement of the site, and the potential addition of the golf course to the Agreement. The economic impact to the City as a designated regional park and attraction is yet to be determined. Toxic algae exposure was found in Waughop Lake causing some health concern. Cost to clean up the Lake is not yet determined.	Bolster City's jewel as an unique attraction with abundant historic and natural assets.
11	Waterfront Access and Street Ends	Access to waterfront areas for recreation purposes is of public interest. The PRAB has considered recommendations for each site based on its size, access	Review the issue in the context of linear urban park development.

		and use potential. No action has been taken to date by City Council.	
12	Open Space/ Park Acquisition	There is no park and open space acquisition plan or dedicated funding to address future park needs.	Acquire surplus schools and other properties to address service gaps and needs, and revisit park impact fees and other voter-approved measures to secure dedicated funding for land acquisition and park development.
13	Recreation Program Inventory	The City has not consistently and systematically collected program data for evaluation and planning purposes.	The City's new initiative to participate in ICMA's performance tracking and management provides the Department the imperative to collect data to align with ICMA's requirement.
14	Recreation Program LOS	The current Parks and Recreation Master Plan does not provide sufficient direction for recreation programming. The recreation needs of the diverse population segments were not fully articulated.	A city-wide community survey, scientifically conducted, could give us an understanding of the recreation needs of the diverse population segments. The Legacy Plan should identify levels of service for recreation programming.
15	Recreation Programming	There are service gaps that need to be addressed. There is a lack of coordinated and effective marketing strategies.	Explore partnership opportunities to support programming. Program barriers should be addressed.
16	Health and Chronic Diseases	According to Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department, our County has some of the highest obesity rate in the State. How can City's park and recreation programs proactively address the issue?	Prevent chronic diseases, such as obesity and diabetes, through health, active living and wellness programs.
17	Pricing Pyramid and Cost Recovery	The Department does not have an adopted pricing policy and has not fully articulated cost recovery targets for various types of programs and services.	Understanding the pricing philosophy and adopting a pricing pyramid could help staff develop programs with cost recovery targets in mind.
18	Senior Activity Center	Being a tenant inside the County-owned Lakewood Community Center has posed some constraints on the utilization of the senior activity center and the expansion of services.	Review the future of the senior activity center in relation to the rest of the Lakewood Community Center. Could the center be relocated elsewhere to form part of a multi-purpose center serving the entire community?
19	Sports Facilities	Future needs for sports facilities have to be determined.	Assess future needs in response to current use and trends.
20	Park Security	There are perceived safety concerns throughout the City and in our parks. Organized neighborhood watches have minimal success.	Assess public perceptions and issues of park safety through a scientific community survey.

21	Park Maintenance	Once the new park classification is developed, the maintenance level of service should be reviewed to ensure consistencies.	Develop park and facility maintenance level of service standards to reflect park use and function.
22	Deferred and Preventive Maintenance	Little work has been done to identify deferred maintenance needs and proactively take care of City assets. A Depreciation Account has not been created for park assets.	Taking care of what the City has will demonstrate to the public that the Department is a good steward of City's resources and assets.
23	Sustainable Funding	Finding sustainable funding to operate park and recreation services remains a challenge under City operation.	Explore options with City Council and the public to support park and recreation operation. Separating park and recreation services from the City operation could have new potentials for sustainable funding.
24	Policies and Procedures	While Parks Division has developed standard operating procedures for park maintenance, the Department, in general, does not have a comprehensive set of policies and procedures to guide the businesses and their operation.	The Legacy Plan should identify policies and procedures needed to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the Department.
25	American Disability Act (ADA) Compliance	The City had recently completed a thorough ADA facilities update with Department of Justice. Only two sites, Harry Todd waterfront and American Lake waterfront, were found inaccessible. Unless funding is available to proactively address these two sites, parks and facilities will comply with ADA requirements only when improvements and redevelopments occur.	Address ADA issues through a transition plan update process, and consider including ADA projects in City's Capital Improvement Program.
26	Performance Management	Performance tracking for benchmarking is not practiced.	The City is now moving towards the tracking of performance through ICMA Center of Performance Management. There is an opportunity for the Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department to develop and collect additional performance indicators that could affect City-wide performances.

Note: All issues above were identified through various sources, such as city-wide document reviews, Legacy Team member input, and interviews with members of the City Council, Legacy Team and key City staff.