



Memo

Date: June 6, 2017
To: Seattle City Council
From: Jesús Aguirre, Superintendent
Subject: Draft 2017 Parks and Open Space Plan

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.

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 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 achieve the 40 additional acres needed 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 Growth Management Act (GMA).

2. Long-Term Acquisition Strategy

SPR is proposing including walkability guidelines, to help shape the 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 basis for the recommendation for a different guideline for walkability within Urban Villages is that since Urban Villages are higher-density locations where most of the growth is expected to occur, closer proximity (5-minute walkability) and access 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. With \$2 million available annually for acquisition in Park District funding, the Long-Term Acquisition Strategy is twofold and will focus on:

- 1.) Acquisition of parkland in the City's growing Urban Villages with identified gaps and that meet the criteria outlined in the plan, and
- 2.) 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
- 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.

Eighty percent (80%) of those who participated in SPR's 2016 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.

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	Board of Park Commissioners - briefing #1 and public roll out
Nov 2016 – May 2017	Public Engagement – participation with DON’s Citywide Public meetings, focus groups, other partners and City departments (ongoing)
Dec 8, 2016	Planning Commission – briefing #1
January - May 2017	Analysis, refinements, and finalize Plan
May 16, 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 12, 2017	Full Council briefing
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
July 20, 2017	City Council Parks, Seattle Center, Libraries and Waterfront (PSCLW) Committee meeting – summary of public comments and Councilmember input
August 3, 2017	PSCLW Committee meeting – discussion of changes and potential vote
September 7, 2017	PSCLW Committee meeting – discussion and final vote
September 11, 2017	Full Council meeting – final approval by full council
October 2017	Submit 2017 Parks and Open Space Plan to the State
November 2017	2011 Development Plan expires

Additional Information

Susanne Rockwell, Project Manager
susanne.rockwell@seattle.gov or 206.684.7133

For Comments and Questions, please e-mail:
2017OpenSpace@seattle.gov

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

SPR’s 2016 survey results are available here:
<https://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/ParksAndRecreation/PoliciesPlanning/SPRSurveySummaryReport.pdf>