



MEMORANDUM

Date: 12/24/2015
To: Board of Park Commissioners
From: Tom Hauger, Department of Planning and Development,
Susanne Rockwell, Seattle Parks and Recreation
Subject: Seattle Comprehensive Plan and Parks Element

Requested Board Action

Review and comment on the proposed new 'Parks and Open Space Element' in the City's Comprehensive Plan. Members of the Planning Commission have been invited to join the Park Board for continued discussion on January 22, 2015.

Staff Recommendation:

Add a new Parks and Open Space Element into the Comprehensive Plan to provide long-term guidance about how the City will meet the open space needs of a growing population.

Policy Description and Background

The Comprehensive Plan is a policy document that guides how the City will accommodate the population and job growth that is expected to occur over the next 20 years (70,000 housing units and 115,000 jobs). The Comp Plan was first adopted in 1994. While the Plan has been amended in incremental ways every year, this is the second major update to the document. The Plan is organized into elements (topics) covering major areas of City activity and interest. Policies addressing parks and open space have been dispersed throughout various elements within the Plan, with many references in the Urban Villages Element, which describes the City's overall growth management strategy.

State law that governs the Comp Plan requires a Parks Element, with the proviso that the requirement apply only if state funding was provided to prepare the element. That funding has never been approved. However, we frequently hear from the public that the Plan needs to be more explicit about how the City will address open space needs that will accompany growth and increasing density in the urban centers and urban villages. Because open space is so important to the quality of life in an urban element, we are proposing to add a new Parks and Open Space Element to the Plan as part of the update.

Intent/content of Parks Element

Many of the Goals and Policies in the proposed Parks Element came directly from the Parks Legacy planning process, some came from the previous edition of Seattle's Comprehensive Plan; often times pulled from other elements. The goals and policies are divided into the following sections in the element:

- Distribution of Parks and Open Space

- Recreation
- Maintenance
- Regional and Special-Use Parks

Also, there will be a Race and Social Justice section in the Parks Element with a Parks-related equity vision statement and principles.

The Parks Element Appendix contains a very brief overview of park land per Parks Classification Policy, a tally of recreational facilities by type and aspirational acquisition goals for future capital needs.

Key Policy Issues:

1. The proposed Parks Element includes a table showing open space goals for the different types of urban villages. This chart is currently in the Plan’s appendix.

Are these still the right goals as we move forward to 2035?

Urban Center	Hub Urban Village	Residential Urban Village
1 acre of open space per 1,000 households and 1 acre per 10,000 employees	1 acre of open space per 1,000 households	1 acre of open space per 1,000 households
All locations in center within 1/8 mile of open space at least 10,000 square feet in area		All locations in center within 1/8 mile of open space at least 10,000 square feet in area
1 usable open space of at least 1 acre per 2,500 households; 1 indoor, multi-use recreation facility per urban center; 1 community garden per 2,500 households	1 usable open space of at least 1 acre; 1 indoor facility for public assembly; 1 community garden per 2,500 households	1 usable open space of at least 1 acre where residential density is 10 households per gross acre; 1 facility for indoor public assembly; 1 community garden per 2,500 households

Staff has identified a concern that the current standards for usable open space and breathing room provide helpful guidance but don’t provide a basis for determining the open space needs caused by particular development proposals. Those more detailed goals would be needed in order to implement incentive zoning based on private contributions to open space.

Breathing room goals state the amount of total open space that is desired (including privately maintained open spaces), but also counts large regional parks like Discovery which we are not going to be making more of.

2. Proposed policies call for encouraging developers to provide publicly accessible open space and for the City to use rights-of-way more creatively as methods of providing open space.

Is there more policy guidance to include in the Plan about this? Are there other ways to acquire and fund open space?

How can the City better align parks and open space investments with the urban village strategy?

Are there other aspects of open space that the policies should address?

Comp Plan Process

DPD has been conducting extensive outreach on the update to the Comp Plan since 2013, calling this effort Seattle 2035. While amendments that are necessary to meet the state law's requirements will be proposed for Council action in 2015, the most extensive amendments will go to Council for consideration in 2016. The overall schedule is:

January 2015 - publish 2015 annual amendments

February 2015 – Council public hearing on 2015 annual amendments

May 2015 – publish Draft EIS on Seattle 2035 *

June 2015 – Council action on 2015 annual amendments

July 2015 – publish Draft Seattle 2035 Plan

November 2015 – publish Final EIS and Mayor's Recommended Plan for Seattle 2035

March 2016 – Council action on Seattle 2035

* **Bold** indicates Seattle 2035 process, where the Parks Element would be considered

Additional Information

Tom Hauger, DPD

206.684.8380

tom.hauger@seattle.gov

References/Resources

Attached draft Parks and Open Space Element

Attached draft Parks and Open Space Element Appendix

Website

2035.seattle.gov