

## INTRODUCTION

One of the primary goals of the plan update was to reflect the needs of Olympia’s residents. Only through public involvement could we know its needs.


Throughout the planning process, the community was invited to help shape the future of their parks, arts, and recreation programs. Members of the community contributed their expertise and shared their opinions through a community survey, interviews, public workshop meetings, and plan steering committee meetings.

The public involvement process began with the formation of a Plan Steering Committee composed of representatives from the Parks & Recreation Advisory Committee; the Arts Commission; Parks, Arts & Recreation Department; and a staff liaison to the City Council.

The Plan Steering Committee identified representatives of special interest groups who should be interviewed regarding major issues for parks, recreation and cultural services in Olympia. The issues identified in the interviews guided the development of a survey instrument for the community survey that was conducted in May 2000. A public workshop in August 2000 gave residents who were not surveyed an opportunity to contribute to the planning process.

Major findings that emerged from this process provided direction for the plan in a number of areas. Some of the key recommendations developed from this process included:

- The City should assume a primary role in coordinating and supporting the arts.
- The City should form partnerships and coordinate efforts with private sector organizations and other public agencies to eliminate duplication and increase diversity in programs and services.
- Partnerships and joint use agreements should be developed with the Olympia School District and other public agencies to provide needed recreation facilities.
- Programs and special events should be sponsored by the City to contribute to Olympia’s sense of community, bringing people of different generations, abilities and ethnicity together.
- Olympia’s remaining open spaces should be protected for public use and enjoyment.



*“It takes a whole  
community to raise a  
child.”*

-African Proverb

## SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP INTERVIEWS

Because of the continuing demand for additional programs, services and facilities, representatives of special interest groups were asked their opinions on the quality of parks, arts, and recreation facilities and programs in Olympia. In addition, they were asked how the city should meet the needs of the community now and in the future, and to suggest ways for funding improvements. The following groups were contacted:

- Arts and Crafts Instructors
- Arts Network of Washington State
- Arts Olympia
- Community Youth Services
- East West Greenway
- Gymnastics Instructors
- Northeast Neighborhood Association
- Olympia Downtown Association
- Olympia Master Builders
- South Sound Sailing Club
- Southwest Neighborhood Association
- Southwest Soccer Association
- Sowers Chiropractic
- Thurston County Softball Association
- Washington Center for the Performing Arts

Those interviewed were generally positive about the services currently provided by the Parks, Arts & Recreation Department. Their suggestions for the future are summarized below and addressed parks and facilities, recreation services, arts, and funding.

### ***Parks and Facilities***

- Provide facilities that promote wellness and healthy lifestyles.
- Provide facilities that support positive activities for youth and teens.
- Provide facilities that support nature study.
- Improve access to parks, open spaces, recreation and arts facilities through an interconnected system of sidewalks, pathways and trails for pedestrians and bicyclists.

- Expand partnerships between the City and the Olympia School District for joint use of facilities.
- Acquire additional land for parks, trails, and open space.
- Enhance access to Capitol Lake and Puget Sound.

### ***Recreation Programs and Services***

- Provide programs that promote wellness and healthy lifestyles.
- Provide positive activities for youth
- Promote lifelong learning through special interest classes.
- Facilitate assimilation of people from other cultures
- Sponsor special events and activities that bring people of different generations, abilities, and ethnicity
- Sponsor special events that define Olympia
- Form partnerships and coordinate efforts with non-profit and private sector organizations to eliminate duplication and increase diversity in programs available in Olympia

### ***Cultural Facilities and Services***

- Provide facilities that support arts in Olympia.
- Increase the visibility of the public art in Olympia.
- Provide opportunities for creative expression to all residents of Olympia.
- Expand and develop new community partnerships.
- Expand arts programs and develop a program and criteria for granting funds to arts organizations.

### ***Funding***

- Develop partnerships with neighboring parks and recreation departments.
- Consider a regional approach to funding large facilities such as athletic fields, swimming pools and an arts center.
- Structure fees so that adult programs are self-supporting. Invest City resources in programs and services for the elderly, people with disabilities, teens, and people with low incomes.
- Pursue foundation grants and gifts from private sector.
- Develop a re-granting program for local arts and cultural groups.

### **SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE!**



Leisure pursuits should be accessible to all. People of all different backgrounds come together at special events held throughout the year. The City collaborates with business sponsors and community groups to bring forth valuable leisure opportunities at no cost to participants.

The annual Ethnic Celebration showcases the differences that make our community a wonderful place to live. Families enjoy music and dance on stage, browse the craft vendors, sample foods from other cultures and participate in hands on activities. This coming together of cultures is the largest special event organized by the Olympia Parks, Arts & Recreation Department.

## COMMUNITY SURVEY

In May 2000, JC Draggoo & Associates conducted a survey of public attitudes, interests, and participation characteristics. More than 600 questionnaires were distributed to 204 randomly selected households in Olympia's urban growth area. Each member of the selected household aged ten and over was asked to complete a questionnaire.

The return rate for this survey was about 5% less than for the similar survey completed in 1990. Ten years ago, the highest response rates were by people ages 25 to 34 (20.0%) and 35 to 44 (23.0%). The same generation, now in the age ranges 35 to 44 (21.3%) and 45 to 54 (22.2%), were again the most responsive. More females than males completed questionnaires (57% female, 43% male).

The survey results are summarized as follows:



*Watercolor for Youth Participant*

### **General**

Respondents were asked to rate facilities and programs offered by the City of Olympia on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being poor and 5 being excellent. The average score for all types of programs and facilities managed by the City Department of Parks, Arts & Recreation ranked between 3.5 and 3.8.

However, the highest percentage of respondents gave scores of above average or excellent (4 or 5) to:

- parks (66.7%);
- recreation programs and classes (60.7%);
- trails (59.9%);
- the Olympia Center (55.7%);
- arts activities and programs (54.5%); and
- public art in the community (49.3%).

*Percival Landing Park  
has the highest  
visitation rate at an  
average of 2.29 visits  
per capita.*

When respondents were asked what types of public improvements would make neighborhoods more livable, the most frequently mentioned improvements were sidewalks and walking facilities.

### ***Parks and Facilities***

Priest Point Park is visited at least once a year by the highest percentage of respondents (34.8%). Percival Landing Park has the highest visitation rate at an average of 2.29 visits per capita. Watershed Park, Yauger Park, LBA Park, and Heritage Park are also quite popular. The most frequently cited reasons for a particular park being a favorite were “close to home” and “scenic value.” Percival Landing Park, the Capitol campus, and Priest Point Park are the top three public spaces that residents take visitors to see.

When asked what type of additional park area is most needed in Olympia, participants most frequently answered:

- waterfront parks and greenways (19.7%);
- natural open space (17.0%); and
- neighborhood parks (16.1%).

The top four improvements most needed in existing city parks include:

- increase development (adding restrooms, picnic areas, basketball courts, playground equipment, swimming pools, etc.);
- upgrade existing facilities;
- improve maintenance; and
- add site improvements such as trees, landscaping, drinking fountains, etc.

The construction of an indoor swimming pool was seen by the largest percentage of respondents as the highest priority major project.

### ***Recreation Programs and Services***

Approximately 40% of the survey respondents have participated in a recreation or arts program offered by the City of Olympia during the past 12 months.

The highest participation in recreation programs is by people in the age groups of 25 to 34 (50%), 55 to 64 (48.6%), and 10 to 14 (47.6%). For those who do not participate in recreation programs offered by the City, the primary reason is membership in a private club.

The most needed recreation programs, according to survey respondents, are:

- organized sports;
- swimming activities; and
- instruction.

Almost 30% of respondents were unaware of recreation programs and classes offered by the City.

### ***Cultural Facilities and Services***

Survey residents identified a variety of functions that an art facility might perform. Only 9% said that an art center was not needed. The survey also revealed that 43% of the respondents travel outside the City to participate or attend arts events and activities.

### ***Management***

Participants were asked how the City of Olympia should manage its park system for the next five years. The top three priorities were:

- Improve or upgrade existing park sites (33.3%);
- Buy land for future park use (25.3%); and
- Develop new park and recreation facilities on undeveloped sites (23.6%).

In contrast, in the 1990 survey, 32.5% of responses favored buying land for future park use.

*The construction of an indoor swimming pool was seen by the largest percentage of respondents as the highest priority major project.*

Most respondents believe that neighborhood needs should be met through a combination of neighborhood parks and nearby open space areas.

### **Funding**

A majority of respondents would consider supporting a bond measure, depending upon the facilities proposed, that would result in an average tax increase of up to \$50 annually. On a citywide basis this tax rate (\$0.38/\$1,000 assessed valuation) would pay for a \$12 million bond over a 20-year period.

### **COMMUNITY WORKSHOP**

The Parks, Arts & Recreation Department hosted a public workshop on August 9, 2000 at the Olympia Center. The purpose of the meeting was to solicit input from citizens who were not contacted through the community survey.

Interest stations were set up around the room for small-group discussions. A staff member, advisory committee member, or a citizen was assigned to each station to act as technical advisor and facilitator. Participants were asked to take part in a discussion about one of several topics. At the conclusion of the discussions, each small group made a brief report to the larger group. Summaries of the discussions are provided below.

*Most respondents believe that neighborhood needs should be met through a combination of neighborhood parks and nearby open space areas.*



*Olympia Skate Court Dedication - April 11, 2000*

### ***Park Facilities***

Participants expressed support for facilities provided and maintained by the Parks, Arts & Recreation Department. They mentioned a number of elements they particularly appreciate including the skate court, street tree plantings and planter strips and islands, sidewalks and pathways for pedestrians and bicyclists, and the Farmers Market.

Suggestions for additional facilities included:

- lighted all-weather soccer field
- covered playground facility for children
- disc golf course
- par course
- indoor tennis courts
- off-leash dog areas
- waterfront trails
- indoor swimming pool
- water play for children

### ***Open Space, Habitat, and Natural Areas***

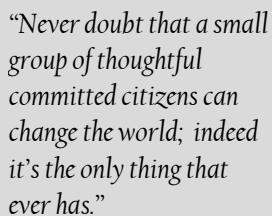
Workshop participants talked about the contribution of open space in providing relief from the urban environment, and the importance of having open spaces throughout the city so they are easily accessible by all residents. They advocated developing a connected system of open spaces to act as corridors for wildlife and for people. A number of strategies were suggested including requiring land donations from developers, acquiring easements through land that is not buildable, and outright purchase.

### ***Walking Facilities***

Participants stated they value trails and sidewalks for fitness opportunities. They would like to see a system of multi-purpose trails that connect neighborhoods and parks within Olympia. They expressed support for the street standard that includes sidewalks and on-street bike lanes, and suggested exploring how the parks and transportation divisions could work hand in hand in their construction. Participants also expressed support for building connections to trails in neighboring jurisdictions, creating a regional trail system.

### ***Recreation Programs and Services***

Participants reported that the City of Olympia does a good job with its limited resources. Facilities seem well organized, and



*“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world; indeed it’s the only thing that ever has.”*

-Margaret Mead

staff members are cooperative and available. They mentioned several programs that work well including the volunteer programs, programs in Yauger Park, and Celebrate Olympia. They suggested developing intergenerational programs that include such things as gardening, cooking, outdoor adventures, computer training, pool tournaments, and arts and crafts. Participants also suggested increasing publicity through the City's website, mailings, and park kiosks.

### **Arts Programs and Services**

Participants stated that they are pleased with the high quality of programs and services currently offered by the City and that arts are an important part of the quality of life. They encouraged the City to consider doing more to be an informational clearinghouse for community arts information and to provide grants to arts organizations. There was strong support for the development of an art center.

### **Funding**

Each discussion group was asked to suggest ideas for funding improvements to facilities and programs. Their suggestions included:

- solicit individual contributions;
- develop a parks foundation or trust;
- establish an endowment;
- seek private sponsorship of special events and programs;
- expand user fees;
- consider the formation of local improvement districts (LID);
- investigate levying a City tax on cars;
- seek grants from state and federal agencies, and from private foundations;
- encourage volunteerism to help staff programs and maintain facilities;
- reduce maintenance costs through capital improvements;
- develop partnerships with the school district, the Port, other public agencies, and public and private recreation providers;
- consider a 1% assessment on real estate transactions; and
- investigate securing a portion of hotel/motel tax.

### **THE ONLY TOWN TO MAKE DUMP TRUCKS DANCE!**



The beauty of experiencing temporary art...is that it remains in your memory forever.

In October of 1991, the City of Olympia went beyond the conventional by producing a choreographed, 20-minute "ballet" of City vehicles. City employees, volunteers and a dancer paused in their busy routine to share the pride they feel for their professions.

They created a once in a lifetime magic moment, a memorable booster for all, a proud city sharing its creative diversity.

For those who were there, the City vehicle continues to be a reminder of the finely tuned skills that, for a time, were transformed through the collaboration of dancer, dump truck, ballet and backhoe, drawing from a wealth of artistic expression to mark in time...an image of community.

***Other***

Several issues were raised that require cooperation with or action by other city, county or state agencies. These included:

- develop standards to protect views from public spaces;
- preserve views of the Capitol Dome, the Olympic Mountains, and the waterfront;
- develop design standards that are specific to waterfront and downtown parks;
- ban personal watercraft and gas powered boats on Capitol Lake; and
- regulate boat grey water and black water.

**PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

The Plan Steering Committee met eight times during the planning process. Much of their work focused on grappling with specific planning issues, reviewing possible actions, and developing recommendations. The recommendations of the Plan Steering Committee are summarized below.



*"The Kiss" by Richard Beyer*

## ***Parks, Open Spaces, Trails, and Specialized Recreation Facilities***

### **Downtown**

- Build a series of downtown plazas that provide open space and places for sculpture and other arts amenities.
- Require high-density residential developments to provide mini-parks within their own projects.

### **Waterfront**

- Be as aggressive as possible in acquiring both freshwater and saltwater access.
- Be prepared to deal with restrictions on access to the saltwater shoreline as a result of salmon habitat protection measures.

### **Sports Fields**

- Calculate the need for sports fields on current team use (games and practices per week per team).
- Calculate overall need on the demand created by the city's population.
- Meet the need created by Olympia residents first; expect other cities and the County to assume their proportional share of field development.
- Locate fields in sport complexes to concentrate noise, lights, and traffic.
- Develop and maintain a three tiered sport field system utilizing:
  - school fields for practice;
  - city fields for league games; and
  - sports field complexes for league play and tournaments.
- Continue providing fields and basic maintenance for youth fields,
- Continue providing fields, all maintenance, and management of the fields for adult league play.

### **Aquatics**

- Develop an indoor aquatic complex containing a variety of pool configurations including a zero-depth leisure pool, water playground, water slides and other related facilities.
- Investigate a partnership other agencies for funding and management of an aquatic facility.

## Open Space

- Preserve open spaces that include:
  - regulated lands;
  - greenway corridors;
  - steep hillsides; and
  - City-owned habitat areas.
- Combine spaces into long lineal patterns to create a sense of open space, seclusion, habitat preservation, and places for trail systems.
- Acquire access easements for trails through land that is privately owned or owned by other public agencies.
- Use of open space will be dictated by the sensitivity of the land. In general, open space will be open to passive use.

## Walking Facilities

- Develop a walking plan for the city in cooperation with the Transportation Division of the Public Works Department.
- Develop a primary trail system that will connect parks and schools with the rest of the community.
- Utilize the open space system to route trail corridors whenever possible.
- Link the trail system to nearby neighborhoods with connecting sidewalks and trails.

## Recreation Programs, Services and Facilities

- Explore ways to provide additional indoor recreation space so programs can be expanded.
- Work with the School District to better use school gyms and other facilities.
- Continue with the teen program now offered at the Olympia Center.
- Continue to use the Community Center as the primary location for youth services.

## Arts Programs and Facilities

- One of the City's roles should be to coordinate and support the efforts of other arts groups.
- Partner with other departments to incorporate art into the construction of city infrastructure.
- Seek to increase the operating budget for the arts.
- Study the feasibility of developing an arts facility.

## Management

- Maintain the neighborhood park concept by building on the open space system. When a neighborhood park can be located adjacent to protected open space, the neighborhood park can be as small as one to two acres.
- Determine whether dogs are appropriate in parks and open spaces on a case-by-case basis.

## Funding

- In order to meet current need and acquire land while it is still available, institute an aggressive funding program that utilizes a variety of sources including a tax supported bond measure.
- Permit concessions in parks.

## SUMMARY OF PUBLIC INPUT FINDINGS

From the four primary sources of public input (special interest group interview, community survey, community workshops, and plan steering committee meetings), the issues were quite consistent. These are summarized below.

- Need for parks and facilities to meet future populations.
- Need to work cooperatively with the school district to provide facilities and organized sports.
- Acquire land while it is still available.
- Provide programs that promote wellness and healthy lifestyles.
- Provide facilities that support the arts.
- Need interest and strong support for an indoor pool continues.
- Walking and other trail-related activities are of major interest to Olympia residents.



*Volunteers In Parks*