



STAFF REPORT

TO: Clark County Planning Commission
FROM: Gordy Euler, Program Manager II
DATE: August 4th, 2015
SUBJECT: Clark County Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan Recommendations

BACKGROUND:

The City of Vancouver and Clark County had previously run a parks department, called the Vancouver-Clark Parks Department. In 2014, the County created a parks department separate from the City of Vancouver. Vancouver-Clark Parks department no longer exists and the City of Vancouver runs its own parks department separate from the County. The Greater Clark Parks District is a division of Clark County Public Works. The County also created a Parks Advisory Board (PAB) last year.

The current parks plan is out of date because the Clark County Parks is now separate from the City of Vancouver Parks Department and a new plan had to be created to reflect the new entity the County created as a result.

The Growth Management Act requires local parks plans as a component of any county master plan (RCW 36.70A) and this parks plan will ultimately become a chapter of the 2016 Comprehensive Plan update.

Per GMA requirements, the plan has the following components:

- Inventory of parks, sports facilities, and trails-only county facilities;
- Needs assessment for parks, recreation, open space and trails;
- Public outreach effort: The county overtook an extensive public involvement effort for this plan and it is documented in the Public Demand chapter;
- Implementation recommendations, including funding strategies; and
- Parks Capital Facilities Plan- 6 & 20 year list of all county parks, trails, and planning projects

In addition, the state Recreation Conservation Office (RCO) requires a jurisdiction to have an adopted parks master plan to be able to apply for grant funding. The RCO grant applications are due March of 2016. These grants fund many types of parks efforts such as building trails, restoring habitat conditions, or funding to buy and renovate youth recreational facilities. The draft plan document is included in Exhibit 1 of Planning Commission packet.

PUBLIC OUTREACH:

Greater Clark Parks Department created a webpage where the documents are available for review, as well providing updates to the public regarding the progress of the parks master plan:

<http://www.clark.wa.gov/publicworks/parks/index.html>

Three open houses were held in March of this year and approximately 100 people attended those open houses. Stakeholder meetings were held with parks providers, the Neighborhood Association of Clark County, trail providers, and youth and adult sports organizations. An online survey was made available around the time of the open houses, and approximately 1,143 people filled out the online survey. Summaries from the open house and stakeholder interviews are found in chapter 3 and also in the appendices of the Parks, Recreation, and Open Space (PROS) plan.

All email comments from the open house are found in Appendix D of the master plan document. Since the draft plan was release, staff received a few more additional emails and those emails have been added and can be found in Exhibit 2 of the Planning Commission packet, which includes the comments from the Commission on Aging.

The Commission on Aging provided the following comments regarding the plan: The Clark County Aging Services Readiness Plan includes several recommendations regarding County Parks. They are as follows:

- Parks as meeting places: Develop creative ways to use parks as meeting places for community groups or neighborhood associations by installing shelters, gazebos and low lighting for neighborhood gatherings. The groups using the facilities could help maintain the parks.
- Expand programs to encourage development of more neighborhood pocket parks and community gardens: Smaller, flexible, close-to-home parks could include informal natural play areas, community gardens, restored creeks and landscaping with trees, shrubs and flowers.
- Provide safe, accessible public facilities such as commons, parks, especially near concentrations of older adult's homes.
- Construct interpretive heritage trails: The health benefits of walking are well established and extremely important in addressing not only health but social equity issues for seniors, in particular. Clark County is rich in local and regional history, but many residents are not familiar with it. Development of heritage trails would encourage walking and other activities while giving residents an innovative way to learn about the area. Existing or new trails, sidewalks and pathways could have exhibits and/or art interpreting the area's history.

The above comments align closely with the comments staff received from the public during public outreach and, in response, the policies and goals reflect these priorities; refer to page 8 of the PROS.

PROPOSED ACTION:

The proposal is for the Board of County Councilors to adopt the PAB recommended parks master plan by resolution. Adopting the parks plan by resolution will enable the Greater Clark Parks Department the ability to apply for RCO grants. When the Comprehensive Plan is updated June of 2016, the parks master plan will be adopted by ordinance as a chapter of the Comprehensive Plan.

RECOMMENDATION

Based upon the information and the findings presented in this report and in the supporting documents, staff recommends that the Planning Commission forward to the Board of Clark County Councilors a recommendation of **APPROVAL** of the recommendations of the Parks Advisory Board.

Attachments: Exhibit 1:	Clark County Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan
Exhibit 2:	Table of emails
Exhibit 3	Parks Advisory Board recommendation