

CITY OF ELLENSBURG

PARKS, RECREATION, OPEN SPACE, AND SUSTAINABLE FUNDING PLAN

Public Draft - February 2026





Unity Park



PARKS, RECREATION, OPEN SPACE, AND SUSTAINABLE FUNDING PLAN

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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THE ELLENSBURG COMMUNITY

We would also like to acknowledge the participation of the many individual community members that provided valuable input in creating the PROS Plan.

CONSULTANT TEAM



www.migcom.com

In association with
Community Attributes Inc. (CAI).



Irene Rinehart Riverfront Park

LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The City of Ellensburg is located on the historic home of the K'ti'tas and Pshwánapam bands of Indigenous people. Today, these bands are part of the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation, a federally-recognized Native Nation constituted under the Treaty with the Yakamas of 1855. The Indigenous stewards of this land practiced a subsistence lifestyle through fishing, hunting, and gathering since time immemorial and remain committed stewards of this land, cherishing it, protecting it and using it, as instructed by their elders through generations, and actively practicing the traditions and culture as neighbors in the Ellensburg community.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	VIII
--------------------------	------

1 INTRODUCTION	
Purpose of the Plan	3
Planning Process Overview	4
Concurrent or Recent Planning and Projects	5
Document Organization	5

2 EXISTING PARK AND RECREATION SYSTEM	
Planning Context	10
Parkland	12
Recreation Facilities	18
Recreation Programs and Events	21

3 DEMOGRAPHICS, COMMUNITY PRIORITIES, & TRENDS	
Community Composition	26
Community Priorities	29
Park and Recreation Trends.....	34

4 PARK SYSTEM NEEDS	
Parkland Needs	40
Outdoor Facility Needs	44
Major Facility and Aquatic Needs	46
Trail Needs	47
Proposed Level of Service and Key Needs	48

5 RECOMMENDATIONS

Mission and Goals	52
Systemwide Objectives	54
Site Recommendations Summary.....	63

6 IMPLEMENTATION

Capital Improvement Plan	70
Annual Maintenance and Stewardship Costs.....	72
Annual Facility Operations, Events, and Programming Costs.....	74
Project Prioritization Criteria	75
Six-Year Action Plan	77
Next Steps.....	90

APPENDICES

A. Park and Facility Inventory	A-1
B. Site Recommendations.....	B-1
C. Capital Improvement Plan.....	C-1

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

Table 2-1: Parkland Inventory 12

Table 2-2: Recreation Program Snapshot 21

Table 4-1: NRPA Park Metric Parkland Level of Service Comparison 41

Table 4-2: Parkland Standards and Needs..... 48

Table 5-1: Projects by Park Classification 65

Table 6-1: Planning Level Capital Costs by Park Classification..... 71

Table 6-2: Annual Maintenance and Stewardship Cost Summary 72

Table 6-3: Six-Year Priority Projects (Tiers 1 and 2) 79

Table 6-4: Six-Year Action Plan for Tier 1 Projects..... 81

Table 6-5: Six-Year Action Plan for Tier 2 Projects..... 84

Table 6-6: Six-Year Priority Project Summary 90

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1-1: Planning Process 4

Figure 2-1: Regional Context 10

Figure 2-2: Recreation Facility Snapshot 18

Figure 3-1: Ellensburg Demographics 27

Figure 3-2: Regional Map 28

Figure 3-3: Ranked Priorities for Trail or Pathway Types 31

Figure 3-4: How much should the City invest in the system?..... 32

Figure 3-5: Willingness for Tax Measure..... 33

Figure 3-6: Ranked Top Priorities for Investment 33

Figure 3-7: State and Regional Trends 35

Figure 4-1: Level of Service Snapshot 41

Figure 4-2: NRPA Park Metric Recreation Facility Level of Service Comparison..... 44

LIST OF MAPS

Map 2-1: Existing Park and Recreation System 14

Map 4-1: Park and Trail Needs 43

Map 5-1: Proposed Park and Recreation System 66

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Ellensburg's Parks, Recreation, Open Space, and Sustainable Funding Plan (PROS Plan) establishes a strategic framework and funding strategy for the future acquisition, maintenance, development, renovation and restoration of Ellensburg's parks, recreation facilities, natural open spaces, trail corridors, programs, and services over the next 10 years. Developed over eight months, the PROS Plan:

- Updates the City's park and facility inventory and analyzes the existing system;
- Identifies system needs based on technical analysis and bilingual community outreach;
- Develops updated goals and systemwide objectives;
- Creates site-specific recommendations for existing and proposed parks, trail corridors, and facilities;
- Develops an action plan for implementation of the site recommendations along with funding strategies and tools; and
- Prepares the PROS Plan for community review, refinement, and adoption.

PLANNING PROCESS



COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

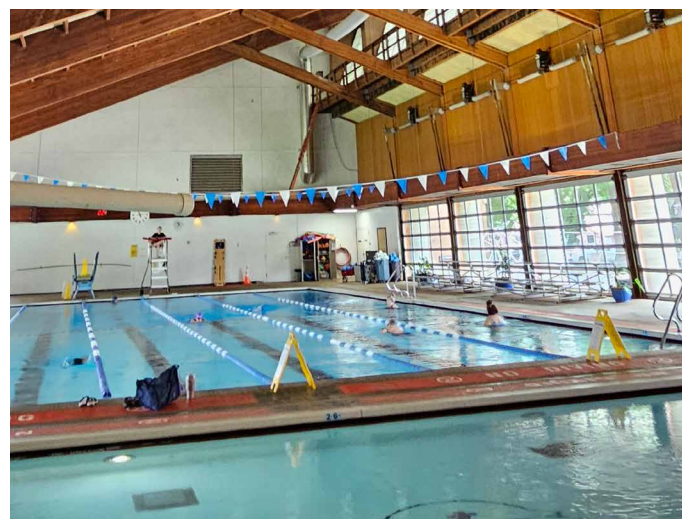
Community priorities for the PROS Plan were identified through an engagement process that encouraged City leaders, City staff, and community members to actively participate and share their ideas for the future of Ellensburg's park and recreation system. Ranging from facilitated small group meetings to online questionnaires, as well as meetings with the Park and Recreation Commission and pop-up activities at numerous community events, the engagement approach strived to gather and reflect the diverse ideas, needs, and aspirations of the Ellensburg community.

Key community priorities identified through the PROS Plan process include:

- More **youth-oriented programming and amenities**;
- Repairs and improvements to the **Kittitas Valley Memorial Pool & Fitness Center** to meet current needs;
- More **water-based activities**, particularly a splashpad;
- More **indoor recreation opportunities** along with sports and fitness options;
- Systemwide improvements to **safety, cleanliness, and maintenance** as well as the condition of **aging amenities and facilities**;
- More **loop trails and soft surface paths**; and
- **Greater investment** in the system to improve recreation opportunities, including a tax measure to support investment.



Touch-A-Truck at Rotary Park



Kittitas Valley Memorial Pool & Fitness Center

“We love this town, but we feel that the parks are lacking here for our children and all kiddos who live here. Kids deserve a place to have fun and also stay cool in the high temps. Or at least update some of these old parks, especially making one ADA friendly.”

—Community Questionnaire Response



Irene Rinehart Riverfront Park

PARKS AND RECREATION SYSTEM

The City of Ellensburg’s park system covers over 350 acres across 22 sites, including parks, trail corridors, natural open space, and special use parks/facilities. Each site provides unique experiences for residents and visitors, supporting Ellensburg’s identity and high quality of life.

PARK SYSTEM GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

A technical analysis of Ellensburg’s community composition, park access, service levels, park and recreation trends, and future needs was conducted to better understand the spatial distribution, amount, and types of park and recreation opportunities needed now and in the future. These findings were paired with community engagement results to inform the goals and systemwide objectives that guided the development of the PROS Plan’s recommendations.

PARKLAND INVENTORY

Park Type	#	Acres
Regional Parks	2 sites	216.0 acres
Community Parks	6 sites	33.1 acres
Special Use Parks /Facilities	7 sites	24.5 acres
Pocket Parks	4 sites	1.2 acre
Trail Corridor	2 sites	2.5 acres
Natural Open Space	1 site	73.2 acres
TOTAL	22	350.6



Unity Park



Veterans Memorial Park

MISSION

The City of Ellensburg Parks & Recreation Department strives to enhance the lives of community residents and visitors of all ages by providing a wide range of quality leisure experiences in our parks, recreation facilities, programs, and services. Through our efforts we will advance the health and wellness of individuals and families, foster greater community spirit, protect and enhance our natural resources and environment, contribute to the vitality of the local economy, and promote a high quality of life in Ellensburg.

GOALS

GOAL 1: PARKS

Provide a variety of parks reflecting unique community needs.

GOAL 2: PARK AMENITIES AND FACILITIES

Provide high quality, accessible, and diverse amenities and facilities.

GOAL 3: INDOOR FACILITIES

Offer enriching year-round recreation options.

GOAL 4: TRAILS

Connect and expand trails for recreation, park access, and mobility.

GOAL 5: PROGRAMS / SERVICES

Facilitate programs, social gatherings, and events.

GOAL 6: MAINTENANCE

Strategically maintain and manage assets.

GOAL 7: NATURAL RESOURCES

Protect and connect residents to the natural environment.

GOAL 8: PARTNERSHIPS

Support and expand local collaboration.

GOAL 9: SUSTAINABLE FUNDING

Ensure fiscal opportunity and resilience.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Ellensburg's parks each have unique characteristics, needs, and opportunities for enhancement. The PROS Plan identifies a series of site recommendations that seek to capitalize on those opportunities, help provide unique park experiences, and fill community needs.

The PROS Plan's 136 recommendations are summarized below by project type, including Acquisition, Development, Renovation, and Restoration. Development projects are the largest category due to the high volume of projects associated with concurrent or recent planning and projects (e.g. Rotary Park and Reed Park) and the proposed new parks and trail corridors. Additionally, 87.5% of the development projects are proposed to enhance existing parks and facilities with the majority focused on regional and community parks. Beyond these projects, renovation projects are the largest category, aligning with the community's top priority of reinvesting in existing parks and facilities.

IMPLEMENTATION

Achieving the level of service desired by the community will require a strategic and phased approach to acquire, develop, renovate, and restore Ellensburg's parks, trail corridors, and natural open space.

Approximately \$117.7 million would be needed to implement all capital projects recommended in the PROS Plan. These costs represent more than the City can afford to implement over the next ten years. For this reason, the PROS Plan presents a six-year Action Plan and sustainable funding strategy for implementation.

RECOMMENDATIONS SUMMARY

7

**ACQUISITION
PROJECTS**

81

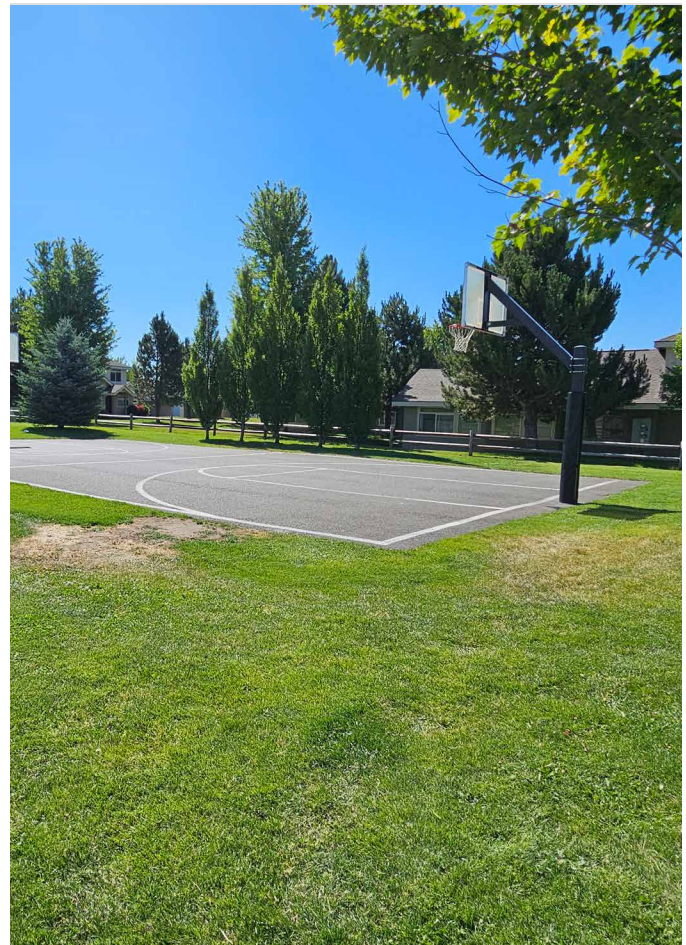
**DEVELOPMENT
PROJECTS**

44

**RENOVATION
PROJECTS**

4

**RESTORATION
PROJECTS**



North Alder Street Park

SIX-YEAR ACTION PLAN (SUSTAINABLE FUNDING PLAN)

The six-year Action Plan and matching funding strategy identify priority projects based on anticipated funding levels over the next six years. The City does not currently have the resources to implement some of the projects that are most important to residents. If various funding sources can be increased, the City will be able to accomplish more.

For this reason, Action Plan projects are divided into two tiers:

- **Tier #1 Priority Projects:** This list represents the highest priorities to complete if the City is relying on current funding sources and typical funding levels.
- **Tier #2 Priority Projects:** This list identifies the next group of key projects to implement, if new potential funding sources are obtained.

Both tiers of projects are generally matched with funding sources to determine an appropriate funding strategy for implementation over the next six years. The City of Ellensburg has historically relied on two primary regular funding sources to implement parks capital projects: impact fees and real estate excise taxes (REET 2). In addition to these sources, the City also has insurance monies to spend on projects related to the replacement of the Ellensburg Racquet and Recreation Center that was destroyed in a fire in 2022. As shown in the funding plan in Chapter 6, these typical funding sources may be sufficient to fund most Tier 1 projects.

Additional funding, and a greater variety of funding sources, will be necessary to fund the capital costs of Tier 2 priority projects, any deficits for Tier 1 priority projects, and any additional projects that arise over the next six years. Additional potential funding sources include increased impact fees for capacity enhancing Tier 2 projects, grants, partnerships, formation of a Public Facilities District (PFD) between the City and Kittitas County, bonds, unrestricted revenues from the General Fund, and formation of a parks district either alone or in coordination with Kittitas County. To fund these projects, the City and community would need to approve potential funding sources, such as increased impact fees to support new park, amenity, and trail development, as well as the formation of a PFD to support capital projects and operations for the Fieldhouse and other major facilities, such as an aquatics center. In addition, voters may elect to support a bond measure or formation of a parks district. Grants, donations, and partnerships would be pursued as well to support key projects.

The table on the following pages lists the six-year priority projects, their estimated capital costs, and potential capital funding sources. In addition to these costs, the City will require greater operations funding to maintain, operate, and program parks, trails, and new facilities as these are developed. Unless additional funding is obtained (i.e., supported by voters, community partners, and City leaders), implementing both Tier 1 and Tier 2 projects will take more than six years.

SIX-YEAR PRIORITY PROJECTS (TIERS 1 AND 2)

TIER 1: Priorities Based on Typical Funding Sources		
Park/Project	Capital Cost Assumption	Anticipated Funding Source
Irene Rinehart Riverfront Park		
Add nature-themed playground	\$150,000	Impact Fees, REET 2
Improve trails and replace pedestrian bridges	\$75,000	Insurance Funds
Rotary Park		
Build Rotary Park Fieldhouse and front/side parking	n/a*	Impact Fees, REET 2
Add landscaping around Fieldhouse and connecting sidewalks	\$250,000	Insurance Funds
Kiwanis Park		
Replace playground with new inclusive, universal play area	\$900,000	Impact Fees, REET 2
Lions Mountain View Park		
Replace play equipment	\$375,000	REET 2
North Alder Street Park		
Add a sprayground	\$305,000	Impact Fees
Veterans Memorial Park		
Repair Kittitas Valley Memorial Pool & Fitness Center roof	\$500,000	REET 2
Complete facility maintenance and repairs - HVAC	\$150,000	REET 2
Evaluate adaptive reuse analysis of existing building	\$150,000	REET 2
Plan and design a new indoor aquatic facility (location TBD)	\$150,000	REET 2
West Ellensburg Park		
Replace playground/play equipment	\$150,000	REET 2
North Central Community Park (New)		
Acquire 4-6 acres of parkland	\$500,000	Impact Fees
TIER 1 TOTAL	\$3,655,000	

SIX-YEAR PRIORITY PROJECTS (TIERS 1 AND 2) (Continued)

TIER 2: Additional Priorities Based on Potential Funding Sources		
Park/Project	Capital Cost Assumption	Anticipated Funding Source
Kiwanis Park		
Add skate park	\$545,000	Increased Impact Fees
McElroy Park		
Upgrade to permanent restroom	\$450,000	Bonds, Park District, Grants, Partnerships
Skate Park		
Create a site master plan	\$37,500	Bonds, Park District, Grants, Partnerships
Redevelop a portion of the site for park use**	\$165,000	
Veterans Memorial Park		
Replace playground	\$375,000	Bonds, Park District, Grants, Partnerships
North Central Community Park (New)		
Develop site master plan	\$150,000	Increased Impact Fees
Develop community park	\$3,750,000	
PR 1 Railroad Tracks to Palouse to Cascades Trail (New)		
Acquire 3.89 acres of land for trail corridor	\$389,000	Increased Impact Fees
PR 2 Northern Loop/PTC Connection (New)		
Acquire 11.01 acres of land for trail corridor	\$1,101,000	Increased Impact Fees
TIER 2 TOTAL	\$6,962,500	

* No capital cost is shown for the Fieldhouse development, since it will be built by a developer and leased to City for operations.

**Approximately 25% of the existing site will be redeveloped for park use. The remaining portion will be transferred to another City department for redevelopment as downtown parking (not costed here).

MOVING FORWARD

The PROS Plan provides a community driven decision-making framework and overarching guidance for the acquisition, maintenance, renovation, and restoration of Ellensburg's park and recreation system over the next 10 years and beyond. This Plan is the result of collaboration between City staff, elected leaders, community partners, and local residents coming together to shape the future of Ellensburg's parks, natural open spaces, and recreation opportunities. Moving forward, City leaders, staff, partners, and voters will begin the critical work of determining the community's willingness to pay for the enhanced parks, facilities, programs and services that residents desire.



McElroy Park

NEXT STEPS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

1. **Update Ellensburg's impact fee methodology and rates. This will provide funding for many Tier 1 and Tier 2 projects, including new parks, new trails, and additional amenities in parks.**
2. **Apply for grant funding for key Tier 2 projects.**
3. **Develop the Fieldhouse and seek voter approval for a Public Facilities District to fund its maintenance, operations, and programming.**
4. **Collaborate with partners and leverage donations for other community-supported projects.**
5. **Improve the Kittitas Valley Memorial Pool & Fitness Center and continue to collect public input as the City evaluates next steps to build a new aquatic facility.**
6. **Use the PROS Plan to guide additional improvements over the next six years and beyond.**



Irene Rinehart Riverfront Park



Irene Rinehart Riverfront Park



CHAPTER 01

INTRODUCTION

01 INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the Parks, Recreation, Open Space, and Sustainable Funding Plan (PROS Plan) by defining its purpose, describing the planning process, identifying concurrent or recent planning efforts and projects, and providing an overview of the chapters and appendices.

The City of Ellensburg has a vibrant and unique park system where “The Bull” statue, music festivals, and beautiful flower planters greet visitors to Downtown’s Unity Park. A wind phone in the garden-like Wippel Park makes it possible to call loved ones who have passed. A historic caboose at Kleinberg Park reminds visitors of the original rail gateway to the city. The regional sports hub at Rotary Park attracts children and families with its 18 ballfields, playgrounds, and other facilities. Visitors enjoy many sunny days at Irene Rinehart Riverfront Park, where they can picnic, play, paddle, and cool off in the lakes and Yakima River.

These and other parks, natural open spaces, and recreation opportunities are essential to Ellensburg’s vibrant and healthy community, as well as its small-town charm. They connect people to nature and to each other, promote environmental and climate resilience, support physical and mental wellbeing, communicate a sense of place and local history, and stimulate the local economy. City leadership and community members recognize the vital importance of parks and

recreation opportunities for Ellensburg’s future and have a shared vision to maintain, enhance, and invest in these assets moving forward.



Irene Rinehart Riverfront Park



Unity Park

PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

The PROS Plan establishes a strategic framework and funding strategy for the future acquisition, maintenance, development, renovation and restoration of Ellensburg's parks, recreation facilities, natural open spaces, trail corridors, programs, and services over the next 10 years. Informed by numerous outreach efforts, the PROS Plan reflects the needs, aspirations, and priorities of the Ellensburg community to improve and activate the existing system and develop new parks and facilities. The Plan's updated goals and systemwide objectives promote the community's priorities, while providing the City with flexibility to make informed decisions and respond to evolving community realities over the planning horizon. These goals and objectives support the City's 20-year Comprehensive Plan and drive the PROS Plan's recommendations and prioritized six-year Action Plan, while also

ensuring compliance with Washington's Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) to ensure eligibility for Land and Water Conservation Fund grants. Implementing the PROS Plan will ensure that residents and visitors have access to high-quality recreation opportunities that promote health, wellness, social connection, financial sustainability, and environmental stewardship for years to come.

PLANNING PROCESS OVERVIEW

The PROS Plan planning process commenced in Summer 2025 and was organized around four phases that combined community outreach with data-driven technical analysis to identify community needs and inform key directions and projects.

As noted in Figure 1-1, the planning process included:

- Updating the City’s park and facility inventory and analyzing the existing system;
- Identifying system needs based on technical analysis and bilingual community outreach;
- Developing updated goals and systemwide objectives;
- Creating site-specific recommendations for existing and proposed parks, trail corridors, and facilities;
- Developing an action plan for implementation of the site recommendations along with funding strategies and tools; and
- Preparing the PROS Plan for community review, refinement, and adoption.

FIGURE 1-1: PLANNING PROCESS



CONCURRENT OR RECENT PLANNING AND PROJECTS

The PROS Plan builds on findings from several previous plans, planning efforts, and studies such as the prior Parks and Recreation System Comprehensive Plan Update (2016 Plan) and numerous park concept plans that were developed since 2016. It is also informed by three other concurrent or recent City efforts and projects. Coordination and consultation with these efforts is described below.

CITY OF ELLENSBURG PARKS & RECREATION SYSTEM COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

In 2016, the City of Ellensburg adopted the Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Plan (2016 Plan). The 2016 Plan establishes a framework for the management and development of Ellensburg's recreation services, parks, trails, and natural open spaces. Since adoption of the 2016 Plan, major accomplishments have included the development of Unity Park downtown and the Reed Park Master Plan, as well as improvements at numerous City parks including Irene Rinehart Riverfront Park, Wippel Park, West Ellensburg Park, Veterans Memorial Park, and Rotary Park. The PROS Plan builds on the successes of the 2016 Plan, while integrating new community ideas and priorities for Ellensburg's park and recreation system.



ELLENSBURG 2046

Hometown Heart — Bright Future

CITY OF ELLENSBURG COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

The City of Ellensburg is in the process of updating its Comprehensive Plan to guide the City through 2037. A Comprehensive Plan is a road map for both short-and long-term strategic policy, decision-making, and investments relating to housing and development, jobs, transportation, parks, environmental resources, climate resiliency, and other important topics that impact daily life. The updated Comprehensive Plan will establish 20-year population and employment growth targets and incorporate new State legislative requirements related to housing, transportation, and climate. The PROS Plan is consistent with those new growth estimates. PROS Plan recommendations for proposed parks to serve future growth were also coordinated with the Comprehensive Plan Update. The PROS Plan will be adopted by reference to the Comprehensive Plan, and its goals and policies will guide Citywide planning for the park and recreation system.

North Alder Street Park



ELLENSBURG FIELDHOUSE DESIGN CONCEPT AND STUDY

In 2024, the City of Ellensburg commissioned a site study and the development of a design concept for the Ellensburg Fieldhouse (Fieldhouse). Proposed for construction in the southeast corner of Rotary Park, the Fieldhouse would replace the Ellensburg Racquet & Recreation Center that was destroyed in a fire in winter 2022. The preliminary Fieldhouse design featured an indoor turf field, walking/running track, basketball courts with striping for pickleball, volleyball courts, batting cages, pitching lanes, a multipurpose room, and business offices. In February 2025, a Market and Operation Plan was developed to further consider the Fieldhouse market, service area, potential programs, staffing, and operational funding needs. During the PROS Plan process, the City released an RFP to select a developer to build the Fieldhouse, which will be leased and operated by the City. The actual amenities and timing for construction are still to be determined and will be dependent on available funding.

REED PARK MASTER PLAN

The Reed Park Master Plan, adopted in 2024, was developed to address longstanding community concerns about pedestrian safety, park behavior, and driving behaviors of those entering, exiting, and using Reed Park. It identifies planned improvements for circulation, parking, and neighborhood compatibility. Completed shortly before the PROS Plan process was launched, this Master Plan included extensive community involvement. The site plan proposed creating a separated pathway throughout the park, maintaining the total number of parking stalls at the park and American Legion, preserving the overlook viewpoint, creating a stormwater drainage system to protect the slope, and providing other park infrastructure improvements. The Master Plan recommendations have been incorporated as approved into the PROS Plan.

Reed Park (Mountains to Sound Greenway)



DOCUMENT ORGANIZATION

The PROS Plan is organized into six chapters with additional supportive documentation in three appendices.

- **Chapter 1:** Introduction introduces the PROS Plan, planning process, concurrent and recent planning efforts and projects, and document organization.
- **Chapter 2:** Existing Park and Recreation System provides an overview of Ellensburg's planning context, park classification system, recreation facilities, key amenities, and recreation programs and services.
- **Chapter 3:** Demographics, Community Priorities, and Trends describes the Ellensburg community, highlights key public outreach priorities, and summarizes local, statewide, and national park and recreation trends.
- **Chapter 4:** Park System Needs identifies key needs and opportunities for parks, facilities, trails, and major facilities in Ellensburg.
- **Chapter 5:** Recommendations details the Department's mission, goals, and recommendations for existing and proposed parks and facilities.
- **Chapter 6:** Implementation provides an overview of the Capital Improvement Plan and costs, describes project prioritization criteria, and introduces a six-year Action Plan and corresponding funding strategies.

APPENDICES


Appendices provide additional detailed background information.

- **Appendix A:** Park and Facility Inventory summarizes the City's parks and recreation assets.
- **Appendix B:** Site Recommendations provides comprehensive recommendations for existing parks and facilities as well as proposed new parks and trail corridors.
- **Appendix C:** Capital Improvement Plan presents the planning level cost estimates, site maintenance costs, and cost assumptions associated with the site recommendations.



Touch-A-Truck at Rotary Park





CHAPTER 02

EXISTING PARK & RECREATION SYSTEM

02 EXISTING PARK & RECREATION SYSTEM

This chapter provides an overview of Ellensburg's park classification system, recreation facilities, key amenities, and recreation programs and services.

The City of Ellensburg's park and recreation system provides a diverse mix of park and recreation opportunities that serve a wide range of interests and ensure that Ellensburg residents and visitors can prioritize well-being, active lifestyles, and connections with the natural environment as well as other people. This chapter describes the parks, trails, natural open space, recreation facilities, programs, and Downtown beautification supported by the Parks & Recreation Department.

PLANNING CONTEXT

The City of Ellensburg is located in the center of Washington state in Kittitas County. As the largest city in Kittitas County, Ellensburg is the largest provider of recreation opportunities to nearby communities and residents, particularly those in Lower Kittitas County. Located at the junction of Interstate 82 and Interstate 90, and along the Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail, Ellensburg serves as a popular destination for visitors from throughout the State. The Yakima River flows along the western edge of the city, adjacent to Irene Rinehart Riverfront Park, Ellensburg's largest park. The river is a significant natural amenity and provides various river recreation opportunities that are emblematic of Ellensburg's identity and culture, attracting residents from across the city and region. The river experiences periodic flooding, impacting recreation assets at Irene Rinehart Riverfront Park.

FIGURE 2-1: REGIONAL CONTEXT



Ellensburg is located on the land of the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation (Yakama Nation), a federally-recognized Native Nation constituted under the Treaty with the Yakamas of 1855. The Yakama Nation has called the surrounding region home since time immemorial and remain committed stewards to this day.

Today, Ellensburg is known for its sunny, dry, and windy climate resulting from the Cascade Mountain Range that looms to the west. Ellensburg has earned the longest Tree City USA distinction of any city in the State of Washington resulting in an attractive and well-maintained tree canopy throughout many of the City's parks. Ellensburg also prides itself upon its integration of old and new visible through its historic downtown, unique neighborhoods, and the Central Washington University (CWU) campus. The City's parks also help communicate this story, such as the bronze statue of Washoe the chimpanzee at Friendship Park in Downtown Ellensburg, the first non-human to acquire a human language skill (sign language), or Unity Park that was competed in 2025 and provides a new, flexible gathering space which will bring the community together for years to come.

CWU is a foundational element of the City of Ellensburg. Located to the north of Ellensburg's historic downtown, the 380-acre campus is home to over 10,000 students as of 2025, offering over 135 undergraduate majors and numerous graduate programs. CWU offers a vibrant campus life facilitated by its active student population, park like campus, and numerous recreation amenities.



*Historic Downtown Ellensburg
(Source: State of Washington Tourism)*



Washoe Statue, Friendship Park



*Central Washington University
(Source: CWU)*

PARKLAND

Ellensburg residents have access to several different types of parks that offer a diverse range of recreation activities and opportunities. The City of Ellensburg's park system covers over 350 acres across 22 sites. As shown in Table 2-1, more than half of this acreage is undeveloped or natural open space, protecting natural greenspace in Ellensburg while also providing vacant parkland for future development. Sites range from older parks, such as West Ellensburg Park and Lions Mountain View Park, with facilities that may be nearing or past the end of their lifecycles to relatively new parks, such as Unity Park and North Alder Street Park, that offer more diverse recreation options.

Map 2-1 shows the location of Ellensburg's parks and recreation facilities. A complete Parks and Recreation Facility Inventory can be found in Appendix A and detailed profiles of each park along with site recommendations can be found in Appendix B.

TABLE 2-1: PARKLAND INVENTORY

Park Type	Total Sites	Developed Acreage	Undeveloped Acreage	Total Acreage
Regional Parks	2 sites	123.0 acres	93.0 acres	216.0 acres
Community Parks	6 sites	33.1 acres	0.0 acres	33.1 acres
Special Use Parks /Facilities	7 sites	7.5 acres	17.1 acres	24.5 acres
Pocket Parks	4 sites	1.2 acres	0.0 acres	1.2 acre
Trail Corridor	2 sites	2.5 acres	0.0 acres	2.5 acres
Natural Open Space	1 site	3.5 acres	69.7 acres	73.2 acres
TOTAL	22 sites	170.9 acres	179.7 acres	350.6 acres



Irene Rinehart Riverfront Park

GENERAL TERMS

The PROS Plan describes the park system using the following terms:

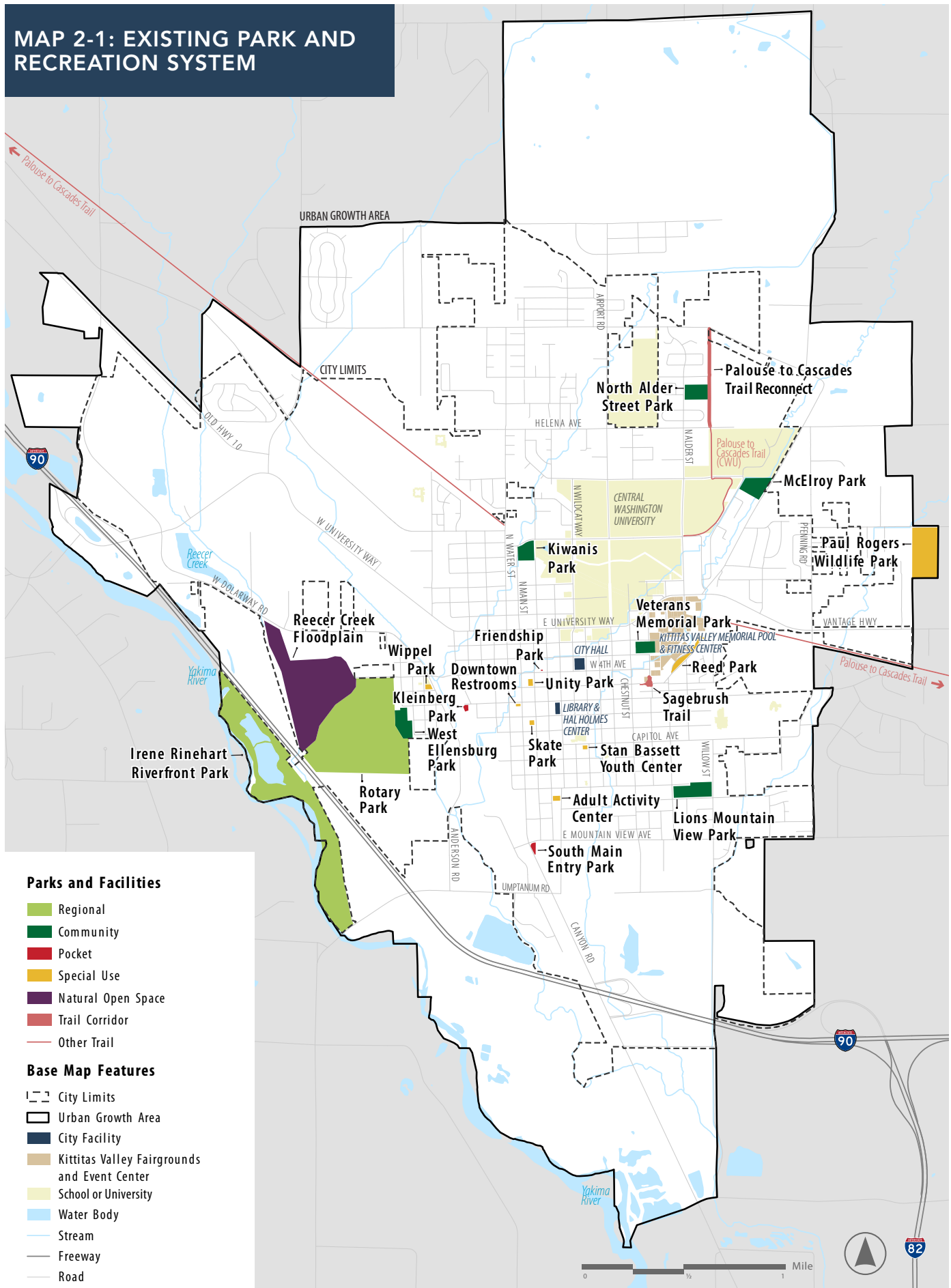
Parkland (or Parks) describe City sites (including land, corridors, and buildings) that are managed to support recreation, social gathering, trail use, and/or greenspace.

Major Facilities are City facilities that require operations, staffing, and programming for use. They are called major facilities, because of their greater costs for development, maintenance, and operations. The Parks & Recreation Department owns and operates three major facilities, including the Adult Activity Center, Stan Bassett Youth Center, and the Kittitas Valley Memorial Pool & Fitness Center.

Other Park Facilities include all other developed elements that provide recreation opportunities in parks. Examples include playgrounds, sports fields, sports courts, picnic shelters, dog parks, skate parks, and community gardens.

Park Amenities are support features that facilitate the comfort, functionality, and use of parks. These include elements such as restrooms, parking lots, benches, tables, barbecue grills, lighting, bike racks, drinking fountains, art, and signage.

MAP 2-1: EXISTING PARK AND RECREATION SYSTEM



PARK CLASSIFICATIONS

The PROS Plan introduces a new park classification system to categorize City parks and facilities and distinguish them by their function. Classifications consider the purpose or intent of the site, factoring in characteristics such as size, use, service area, and available amenities and facilities. The classification informs decisions about the right amount of development, types of facilities, and levels of park maintenance and programming based on the intent for each park site. Ellensburg has the following six unique park classifications.

REGIONAL PARKS

2 SITES | 216.0 ACRES

Irene Rinehart Riverfront Park and Rotary Park

Regional Parks are large, multi-use sites that typically serve as destinations for events, programs, and activities, attracting visitors from across the entire city and beyond. Typically, 75 to 100 acres in size, these sites provide developed recreation spaces, specialized facilities, and natural areas. Designed for large groups, intensive use, and longer visits, these parks include permanent restrooms, seating, and similar support amenities to sustain longer visits for park users.



Rotary Park

COMMUNITY PARKS

6 SITES | 33.1 ACRES

North Alder Street Park, Veterans Memorial Park

Community Parks are smaller, multi-use parks with a mix of active and passive recreation opportunities for sports, play, and social gathering that serve surrounding neighborhoods and the entire community. Ranging from two to eight acres in size, these sites typically support both drop-in use and community programming, providing permanent or seasonal restrooms, seating, and similar support amenities to support these uses. These parks may also connect people to natural features or areas.



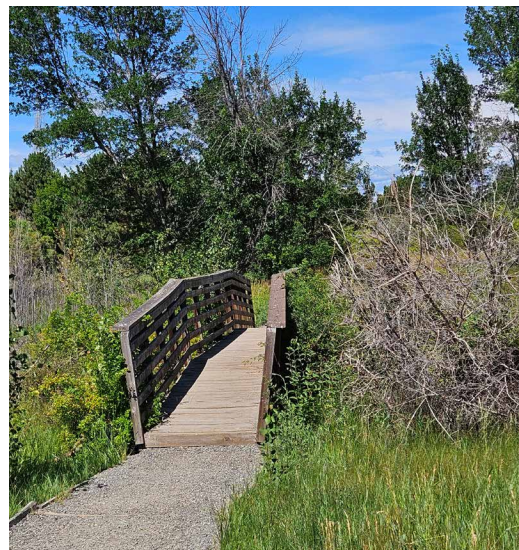
North Alder Street Park

SPECIAL USE PARKS/FACILITIES

7 SITES | 24.5 ACRES

Paul Rogers Wildlife Park, Stan Bassett Youth Center, Unity Park

Special Use Parks/Facilities are stand-alone or single-purpose sites that provide unique indoor or outdoor recreation options or specialized recreation facilities for the entire community. The size, capacity, and features vary depending on the purpose and function of the site.



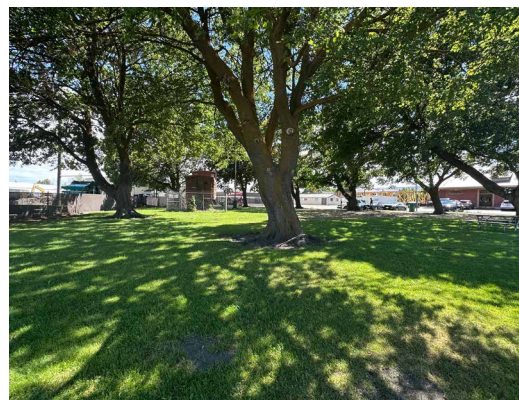
Paul Rogers Wildlife Park

POCKET PARKS

4 SITES | 1.2 ACRES

Friendship Park, Kleinberg Park

Pocket Parks are small sites that are typically less than half an acre in size and support beautification, seating, or family-sized picnicking and community identity.



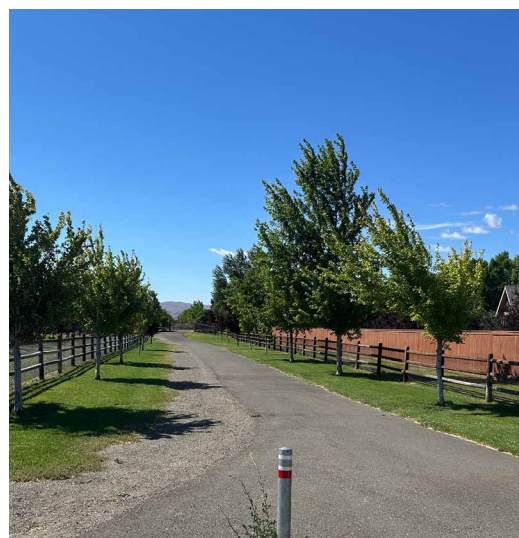
Kleinberg Park

TRAIL CORRIDORS

2 SITES | 2.5 ACRES

Palouse to Cascades Trail Reconnect and Sagebrush Trail

Trail Corridors are linear corridors intended to support trail use. These corridors include acreage within and maintained by the City of Ellensburg, even though they may be part of a regional corridor that is maintained by other jurisdictions or extends beyond the city limits. These corridors typically include multi-use paths that support recreation, park access, connectivity, and safe active transportation.



Palouse to Cascades Trail Reconnect

NATURAL OPEN SPACE

1 SITE | 73.2 ACRES

Reecer Creek Floodplain

Natural Open Spaces are largely undeveloped sites and are intended to preserve the natural landscape and ecological functions of the site. These areas may include limited improvements such as multi-use trails, restrooms, interpretive signage, parking, and minimal site furnishings. Development is kept to a minimum to maintain the site's natural character and support passive recreation such as walking, wildlife observation, and environmental education.



Reecer Creek Floodplain



RECREATION FACILITIES

PARK AMENITIES AND FACILITIES

Ellensburg’s parks offer a diverse range of facilities supporting play and gathering, sports/athletics, outdoor recreation, specialized uses, and connections to nature. Parks also include amenities such as seating areas, picnic tables, wind breaks, and restrooms supporting park functionality and user comfort.

Numerous parks also include park access paths, as well as hard or soft-surfaced trails. Nearly six miles of trails are included within the City’s parks and natural open space areas. Some support active transportation and connections to key destinations, while others support recreation (e.g., walking, dog walking, scootering, biking) and nature interpretation.

In addition to these trails, the Parks & Recreation Department supports walking and biking by promoting five walking/biking loops. Started during the COVID-19 pandemic, these loops have identified routes that rely on a mix of trail corridors, trails in parks, sidewalks, and other connections. These trails are acknowledged as an important community resource (see Appendix A, Table A-2).

Figure 2-2 summarizes key facilities in Ellensburg’s park and recreation system. A complete inventory of existing recreation facilities and amenities is found in Appendix A.

FIGURE 2-2: RECREATION FACILITY SNAPSHOT



* Rectangular sports fields include soccer, football, lacrosse, rugby, or multi-use fields.

**Includes two full courts and four half courts.

MAJOR FACILITIES

In addition to other types of facilities, the City of Ellensburg provides three major recreation facilities that provide community programs and services. The Adult Activity Center provides a variety of drop-in recreation and life-enrichment activities for adults over 50, such as health and wellness classes, social events, and guided trips. The Stan Bassett Youth Center (SBYC) offers after-school and summer activities for 3rd-8th graders ranging from STEM classes to summer trips to nearby attractions and events. Lastly, the Kittitas Valley Memorial Pool & Fitness Center provides community aquatics programs such as swimming lessons and exercise classes. Plans are also underway to construct a fourth major recreation facility, the Ellensburg Fieldhouse, at Rotary Park. The Fieldhouse is proposed to include a diverse range of indoor, active recreation opportunities that are currently lacking in Ellensburg and the broader surrounding area.



Adult Activity Center

OTHER LANDS MAINTAINED BY THE DEPARTMENT

Ellensburg's Parks & Recreation Department maintains several beautification areas that include downtown planters, street rights of way or triangles, and building grounds. While these sites are not inventoried, they do require staff time and resources in addition to the acreage that is maintained as parkland. One example is the Craig's Hill Triangles (0.29 acres) near the Kittitas Valley Fairgrounds and Event Center. While some are referred to as parks, they are not counted as parkland and are not managed to support recreation or leisure activities.



SBYC

FACILITIES PROVIDED BY OTHERS

In addition to the recreation facilities provided by the Parks & Recreation Department, Ellensburg includes additional recreation opportunities that serve students, local residents, and in some cases, visitors from beyond the city.

- **Ellensburg School District:** While the primary purpose of school sites is for education and youth development, the Ellensburg School District provides athletic fields, sports courts, and playgrounds that are available for public use generally outside of school hours.
- **Central Washington University (CWU):** Opened in 1893, the CWU campus is within walking distance of downtown and features athletic fields, tennis courts, a recreation complex with weight rooms and gymnasiums, a rope challenge course, a 50' indoor climbing wall, a Japanese garden, and an indoor auditorium among other facilities. CWU maintains and manages a key section of the PTCT that runs through campus. Until 2025, CWU provided an indoor pool open to the public. It was closed due to funding constraints.
- **Public Works Bike Boulevards and Trails:** The City's Public Works Department maintains an on-street bike boulevard that connects to the Kittitas Valley Fairgrounds and Event Center, along with other on-street bike lanes. Public Works is also responsible for several off-street trail segments located within street rights of way, such as the portion of the Circle the City Loop Trail along Willow Street and East Mountain View Avenue.
- **Kittitas County:** The Kittitas Valley Fairgrounds and Event Center is located in eastern Ellensburg, adjacent to Veterans Memorial Park. The site is home to the Kittitas County Fair and the Ellensburg Rodeo and supports other year-round events that bring visitors from all over the state and country. The site hosts additional local events and programs such as the Washington State University 4-H Youth Development program and Master Gardener program, Ellensburg Rodeo Royal Court and Rodeo Posse, Community Thanksgiving, Kittitas County Friends of Fair events, and much more.
- **Washington State Parks Palouse to Cascades Trail (PTCT):** In addition to the City and CWU trails noted above, another portion of the PTCT is maintained and managed by the State of Washington runs along the historic Chicago-Milwaukee-St. Paul-Pacific Railroad corridor to the Water Street Trailhead in north-central Ellensburg and then restarts at the Kittitas County Fairgrounds. The State Park trail extends beyond the city limits connecting to nearby cities and numerous other State parks. In entirety, the PTCT runs 251-miles in sections from Cedar Falls near North Bend east to the Idaho border.



*Kittitas Valley Fairgrounds and Event Center
(Source: State of Washington Tourism)*

RECREATION PROGRAMS AND EVENTS

The City of Ellensburg Parks & Recreation Department's Aquatics and Community Programs Division offers a variety of year-round recreation programs, services, and special events to promote physical activity and social connections for people of all ages. The City provides or facilitates a wide range of programs and events in five service areas as listed in Table 2-2.

TABLE 2-2: RECREATION PROGRAM SNAPSHOT

Service Area	Category	Activities Offered
Adults & Adults 50+	Arts, Crafts, & Classes	Needle Crafters, Woodcarving, Free Therapeutic Coloring, Craft 'N' Creation, Pottery Painting, Card Making, Writers Roundtable
	Education & Enrichment	Coffee with the Coordinator, Active Aging Fair
	Fellowship	Bridge, Pinochle, Table Pool, Lunch & Movie, Luncheons, AAC Senior Lounge, Darts, Shuffleboard, Coffee and Conversation, Piece of the Puzzle, Table Tennis, Kings in the Corner, Mexican Train, Bingo
	Fitness & Health	SAIL Exercise, Yoga, Dental Cleaning Services, Chair Volleyball, Tai Ji Quan, Hand Massage, Foot Care, Line Dancing, Badminton
	Special Events	Senior Prom, Independence Day, Holiday Parties, Informative Guest Speakers
	Technology	Technology Help
	Trips	Skagit Valley Tulip Festival, Leavenworth, Ohme Gardens, Snoqualmie Falls Casino, Wild Horse Wind Farm, Aquarium, Zoo, Hutterite Colony, Museums, Theater Performances, Holiday Light Tours
Aquatics & Fitness	Fitness	Dive-In Movies, Waterfit, In-house Water Exercise, Indoor Triathlon, Ellensburg Area Swim Team (EAST), Ellensburg Masters (EAST), Lap Swim, Fitness Center
	Swimming	Swim Lessons, Family Swim, Recreation Swim, American Red Cross Lifeguard Training (GT) and Water Safety Instructor (WSI), Facility and Table Rentals, April Pool's Day, Spooky Swim, Shark Week, Pre-School Swim, Summer Kick-off Celebration, Private Swim Lessons

TABLE 2-2: RECREATION PROGRAM SNAPSHOT (Continued)

Service Area	Category	Activities Offered
Athletics/Sports	Instruction	Tiny Tots Soccer, T-ball and Multi-Sport Camps, Volunteer Youth Coaches, Mini Volley Camps
	Leagues & Open Play	Youth Basketball Leagues, Youth Volleyball, Adult 3 on 3 Basketball Leagues, Adult Volleyball Leagues, Youth Running Club; Open Gyms: Adult Volleyball, Family Rec, Adult Basketball
General Recreation & Special Events	Community Programs and Events	Youth Gladiator Dash, Touch-A-Truck, Friday Movies at Unity Park, Summer Concerts in the Park, Junior Rodeo Parade, Missoula Children's Theatre, Annual Community Thanksgiving Dinner, Eggstravaganza Flashlight Egg Hunt, Daddy-Daughter Dinner Dance, Dog Biscuit Hunt, Adopt-A-Downtown Garden, Wippel Community Garden, Pumpkin Flotilla
Youth	Outings/Trips	Summer Trips Hikes (Leavenworth, Hidden Lake, Umptanum Falls, etc.), Swimming Trips (Vantage, Carey Lake, etc.)
	Pre-Teen and Teen	After School Drop-In, Summer Daily Drop-In, Nutrition Classes, Homework Club



Touch-A-Truck at Rotary Park



North Alder Street Park

CHAPTER 03

DEMOGRAPHICS, COMMUNITY PRIORITIES, & TRENDS

03 DEMOGRAPHICS, COMMUNITY PRIORITIES, & TRENDS

This chapter describes the Ellensburg community, highlights key public outreach priorities, and summarizes local, statewide, and national park and recreation trends.

Ellensburg is a growing community with a park and recreation system that must serve long-term and new residents, university students who live here part of the year, park visitors from Upper and Lower Kittitas County, and tourists from Seattle and the surrounding region. As a result, there are different priorities and expectations for the park system, as well as evolving trends that affect park and program participation and use. This chapter describes those factors as the City strives to provide unique parks, facilities, trails, natural open space, events and programs that reflect the needs of this complex and evolving community.

COMMUNITY COMPOSITION

Ellensburg is a thriving community of approximately 21,260 residents (as of 2025).¹ These residents live in approximately 9,200 households (averaging 2.3 people per household). The community is about 25% non-white, which is more diverse than Kittitas County but less diverse than Washington as a whole. About 5.7% of Ellensburg residents speak Spanish and 14.7% speak English less than “very well.”

The local median age is 26.7, which is about 10 years younger than the county and the state. Despite this, younger and older populations are growing in Ellensburg, while adults 18-64 years old are decreasing. Ellensburg is lower income than the county and the state, with 21% of residents in Ellensburg living below the poverty line and a median household income of \$49,888. Both the younger average age and lower incomes may be attributed to the presence of CWU students, who make up nearly half of the population.

GROWTH

A growing population indicates a greater demand for park and recreation resources. By 2045, Ellensburg is projected to have a 19.6% increase in population, or 25,417 total residents. This is a moderate growth rate of about 1% per year, and a similar growth rate to Kittitas County and the State of Washington. Future residential growth is anticipated primarily in the north, northwest, and southeast parts of the city as well as dispersed throughout the city through infill and redevelopment.

¹ Washington State Office of Financial Management
2025 Population Estimates.



Recreation Event in Ellensburg

FIGURE 3-1: ELLENSBURG DEMOGRAPHICS



21,260
Population (2025 estimate)



25,417
2045 Population Estimate (19.6% increase)



9,242
Housing Units



24.9%
Non-White Population
More diverse than Kittitas County (20.2%)
and less diverse than the State (35.7%)



21%
Live Below Poverty Line
More living in poverty than Kittitas County (14.3%)
and the State (9.9%)

* Washington State Office of Financial Management 2025 Population Estimates, 2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

OTHER PARK USERS

Given Ellensburg's context as the County seat, high visitation, and presence of CWU, several other groups are also enjoying the City's parks and recreation opportunities.

CWU STUDENT POPULATION

In the 2024-2025 academic year, CWU accounted for an enrollment of approximately 10,527 students (49.5% of Ellensburg's population). While the 380-acre campus offers various indoor and outdoor recreation facilities, the student population also increases demand for City facilities, especially during the school year. During the summer, however, many CWU students return home, which decreases the demand for recreation services by young adults during that time.

LOWER KITTITAS COUNTY RESIDENTS

Additionally, many Lower Kittitas County residents (non-City residents) are users of Ellensburg's park and recreation system as the largest recreation provider in the County. As of 2025, Kittitas County has a population of an additional 27,690 residents beyond Ellensburg's 21,260 residents. This is noteworthy as County residents do not pay taxes that support Ellensburg's park and recreation system, but they do pay higher fees to use the Kittitas Valley Memorial Pool & Fitness Center.

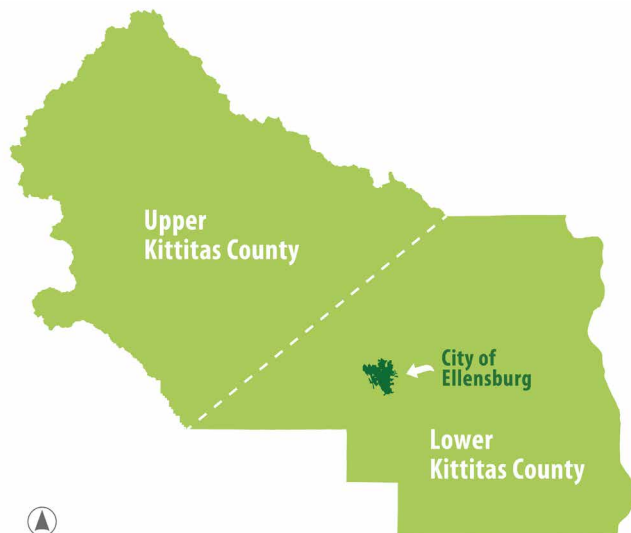
² Population projections for 2045 are based on Office of Financial Management existing population estimates and Kittitas County growth rates.

³ Washington State Office of Financial Management 2025 Population Estimates.

VISITORS AND TOURISM

Visitors also play a strong role in the local economy, spending \$187.1 million in Ellensburg in 2024. According to the 2025 Kittitas County Tourism Strategic Plan, most visitors come from the Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue market to Ellensburg for events and outdoor recreation and visit most between July and December. Some key recreational draws for visitors to the area include the Palouse to Cascades Trail, the Yakima River, the Rodeo Grounds, and the historic downtown.

FIGURE 3-2: REGIONAL MAP



Ellensburg Water Tower
(Source: State of Washington Tourism)

COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

Residents, visitors, key stakeholders, and City leaders were invited to share their insights about parks and recreation needs to ensure the PROS Plan reflects the unique priorities and preferences of the community. The Plan was influenced by the collective voices and wisdom of the community, while also recognizing the value and power of diverse individual voices so that the park and recreation system offers something for everyone.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT OVERVIEW

STAFF AND ADVISORY GUIDANCE

Throughout the PROS Plan process, City staff and the Parks and Recreation Commission (PRAC) provided guidance and feedback on key decision points and deliverables. Four PRAC meetings between July 2025 and March 2026 included presentations regarding park system opportunities and challenges; engagement findings and community needs; recommendations and funding priorities; and the Draft PROS Plan.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

A variety of tactics were used to engage with the public to understand community values and needs for the parks and recreation system. Events included:

- **Pop-Up Events:** City staff facilitated three pop-up events to ask about needed improvements, top investment priorities, interest in additional investments and funding sources. Approximately 147 people participated across the pop-up events, held at the Farmer's Market, Hal Holmes Center Comprehensive Plan Open House, and Bite of the Burg.

- **Key Leader Interviews:** The Project Team conducted six interviews with representatives from Downtown, athletics, the swimming community, Rotary Club, and City Council to understand their perspectives on the issues and priorities that should be addressed in the PROS Plan. These included questions surrounding values, pressing needs, big opportunities, funding priorities, additional partnerships or funding sources, better serving different demographic groups, and conducting other community engagement.
- **Bilingual Community Needs Questionnaire (Community Questionnaire):** The City released an online survey in English and Spanish for six weeks in August – September 2025 and received 1,125 total responses. Approximately 80% of respondents were Ellensburg residents and an additional 19% were lower Kittitas County residents. The survey asked participants to rank top needs and priorities for investment, as well as to describe their park visitation, use, satisfaction levels, desired facilities, desired improvements, and support for funding measures.

To capture as many voices as possible as well as more young adult perspectives, both the Pop-Up Events and the Community Questionnaire were extended into September to collect feedback from CWU students returning to campus for the Fall term.

KEY THEMES

Key themes from the community engagement process were gathered to help inform the projects and recommendations within the PROS Plan. Key themes include:

YOUTH ORIENTED PROGRAMMING AND AMENITIES

Increased opportunities for children and teens, including more **youth-oriented programming and amenities**, were a clear priority across PROS Plan outreach efforts. The Community Questionnaire revealed that taking children to play or involving their children in programs was the top reason respondents visit parks and recreation facilities although respondents and pop-up event attendees both expressed a desire for more youth-oriented programming and amenities. Some specific ideas include more unique play features such as water play or nature play opportunities, updated playgrounds, more swings, an inclusive destination playground, a new skatepark or bike skills course, and more community events with youth or family options.

KITTITAS VALLEY MEMORIAL POOL & FITNESS CENTER


The **Kittitas Valley Memorial Pool & Fitness Center** is a well-loved and highly visited facility, but it needs **many repairs and improvements** to meet current needs. Both City and non-City Community Questionnaire respondents and pop-up event attendees ranked improvements to the Memorial Pool & Fitness Center or a new swimming pool within their top two priorities for features of facilities to be improved or added.

WATER PLAY OPPORTUNITIES

Community members also desire more water-based activities, particularly a **splashpad**. Both City and non-City Community Questionnaire respondents listed a new splashpad within their top two priorities for features of facilities to be improved or added to Ellensburg's park and recreation system. This desire was echoed throughout all PROS Plan outreach activities.


INDOOR RECREATION, SPORTS, AND FITNESS OPTIONS

Exercise options are a top priority, although **more indoor recreation opportunities** along with **sports and fitness options** are needed.



"There's nothing for young kids to do outside in the summer to cool off. A splash pad (or pads) would be amazing!"

—Community Questionnaire Response



"We would love a focus on indoor recreation for our very long and cold winters. We have so much beautiful natural recreation in the valley, but very few options to keep families active in the winter."

—Community Questionnaire Response

SAFETY, CLEANLINESS, AND MAINTENANCE

A **safe, clean, and well-maintained** system is a top priority, but many residents are **not currently satisfied with the age and condition** of park amenities and facilities, such as restrooms, picnic shelters, and playgrounds.

OPPORTUNITIES TO EXPERIENCE NATURE

Opportunities to **experience nature** are highly valued but they are **not a top priority** for future investment.

“The playgrounds desperately need to be updated! As a parent with two small children, we use the parks regularly and they are all showing their age.”

—Community Questionnaire Response

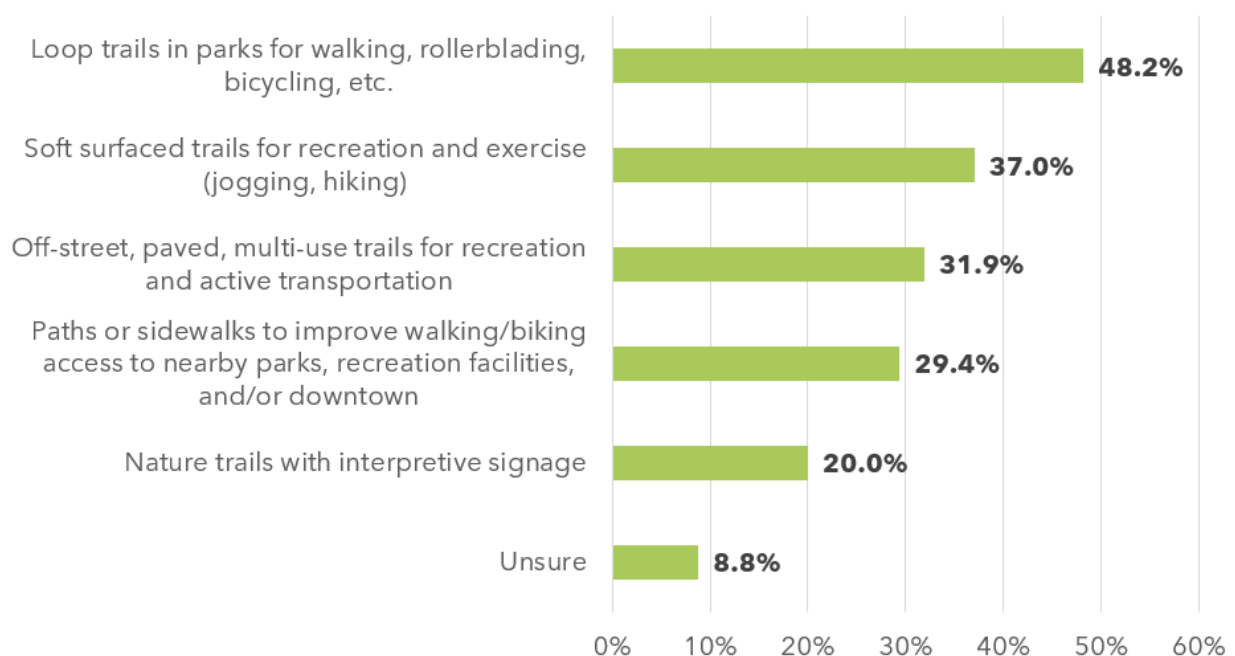
“We love this town, but we feel that the parks are lacking here for our children and all kiddos who live here. Kids deserve a place to have fun and also stay cool in the high temps. Or at least update some of these old parks, especially making one ADA friendly.”

—Community Questionnaire Response

TRAILS AND PATHS

Trails and paths are well used in Ellensburg and there is a desire for **more loop trails and soft surface paths** (Figure 3-3), but they are **not a top priority** for future investment although 47% of resident Community Questionnaire respondents think more trails or pathways are needed.

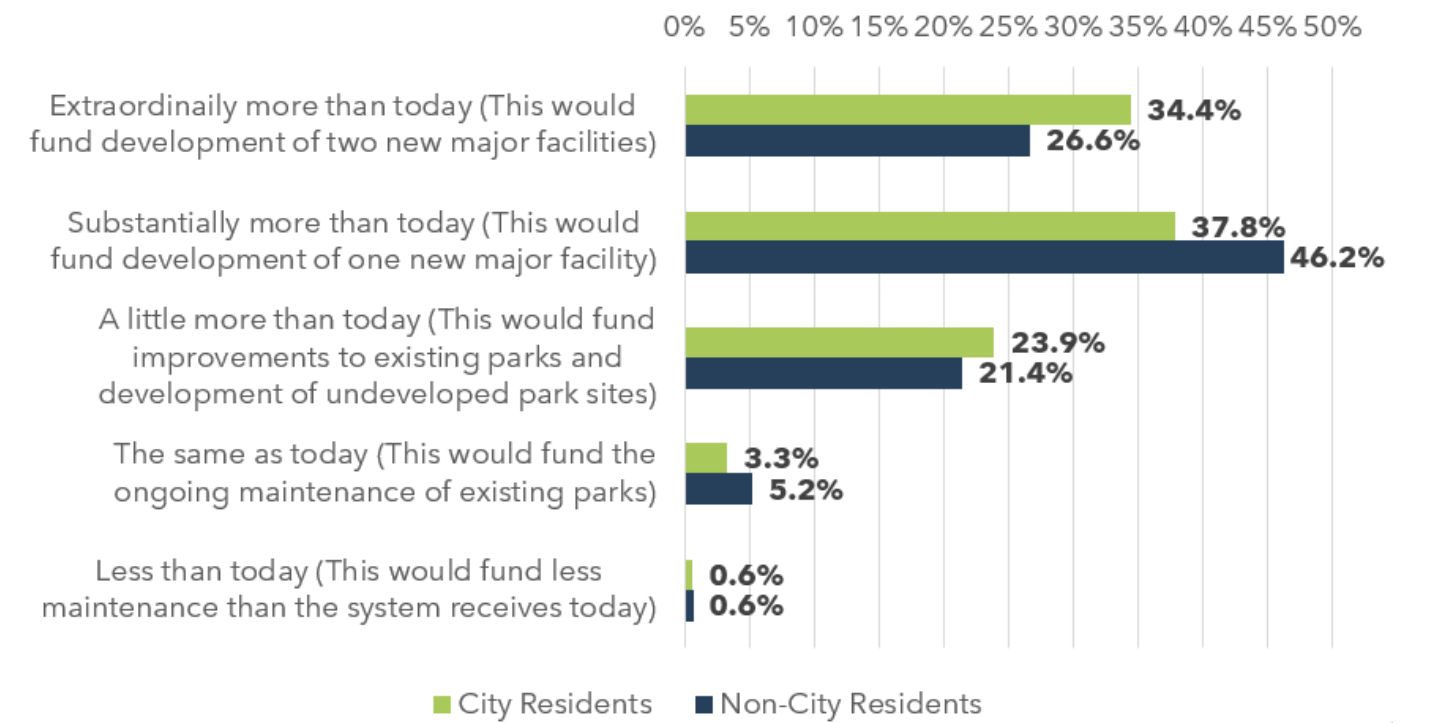
FIGURE 3-3: COMMUNITY QUESTIONNAIRE RANKED PRIORITIES FOR TRAIL OR PATHWAY TYPES



INCREASED INVESTMENT

Greater investment in the system to improve recreation opportunities for all is a **top priority across residents and non-residents** (Figure 3-4). The majority of City and non-City Community Questionnaire respondents would **support a tax measure** to support investment (Figure 3-5). Figure 3-6 shows the community’s ranked priorities for investment across the Community Questionnaire and pop-up events.

FIGURE 3-4: COMMUNITY QUESTIONNAIRE – How much should the city invest in the system?



Downtown Ellensburg

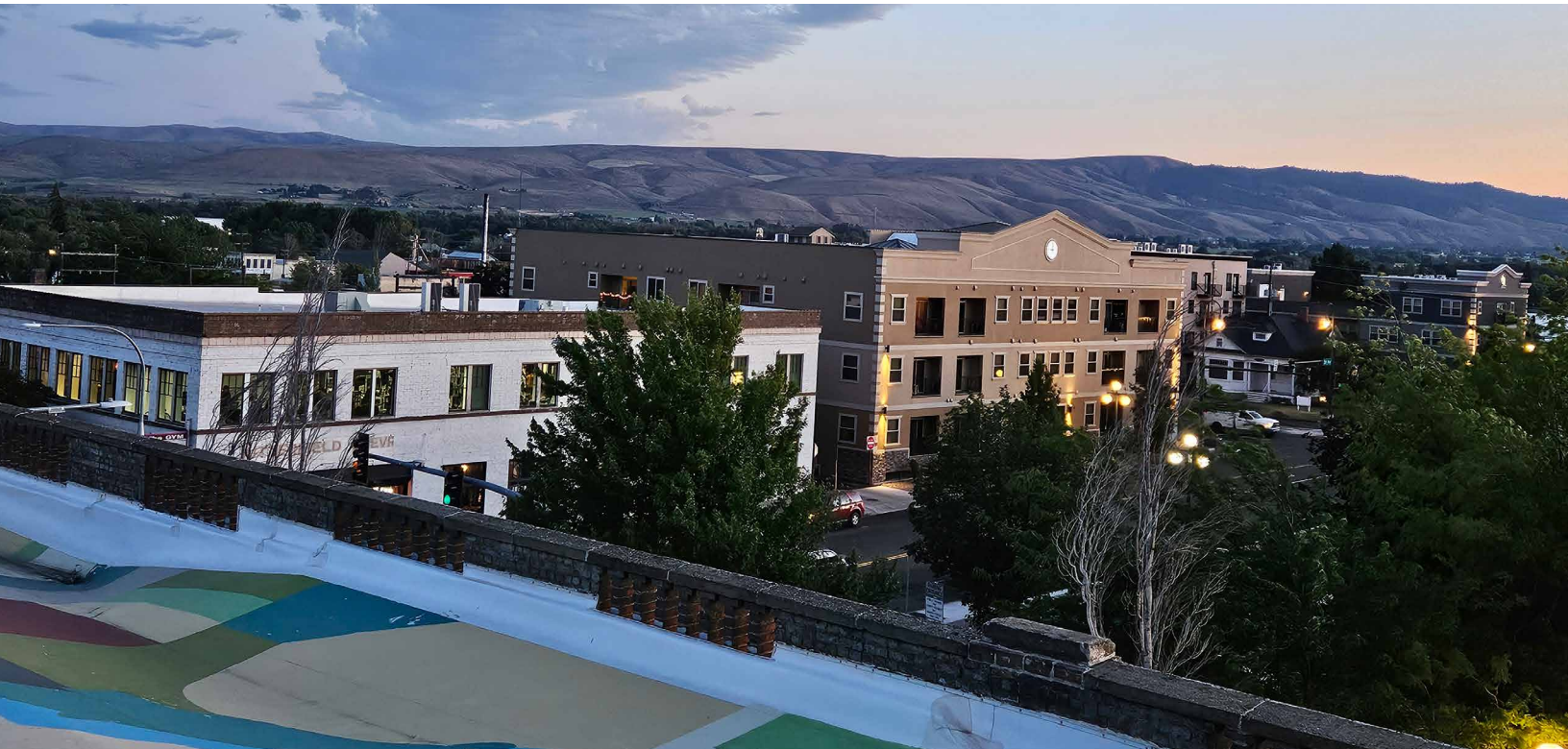


FIGURE 3-5: COMMUNITY QUESTIONNAIRE - Depending on the tax rate and types of projects proposed, would you be willing to vote in favor of a tax measure to improve the park system?

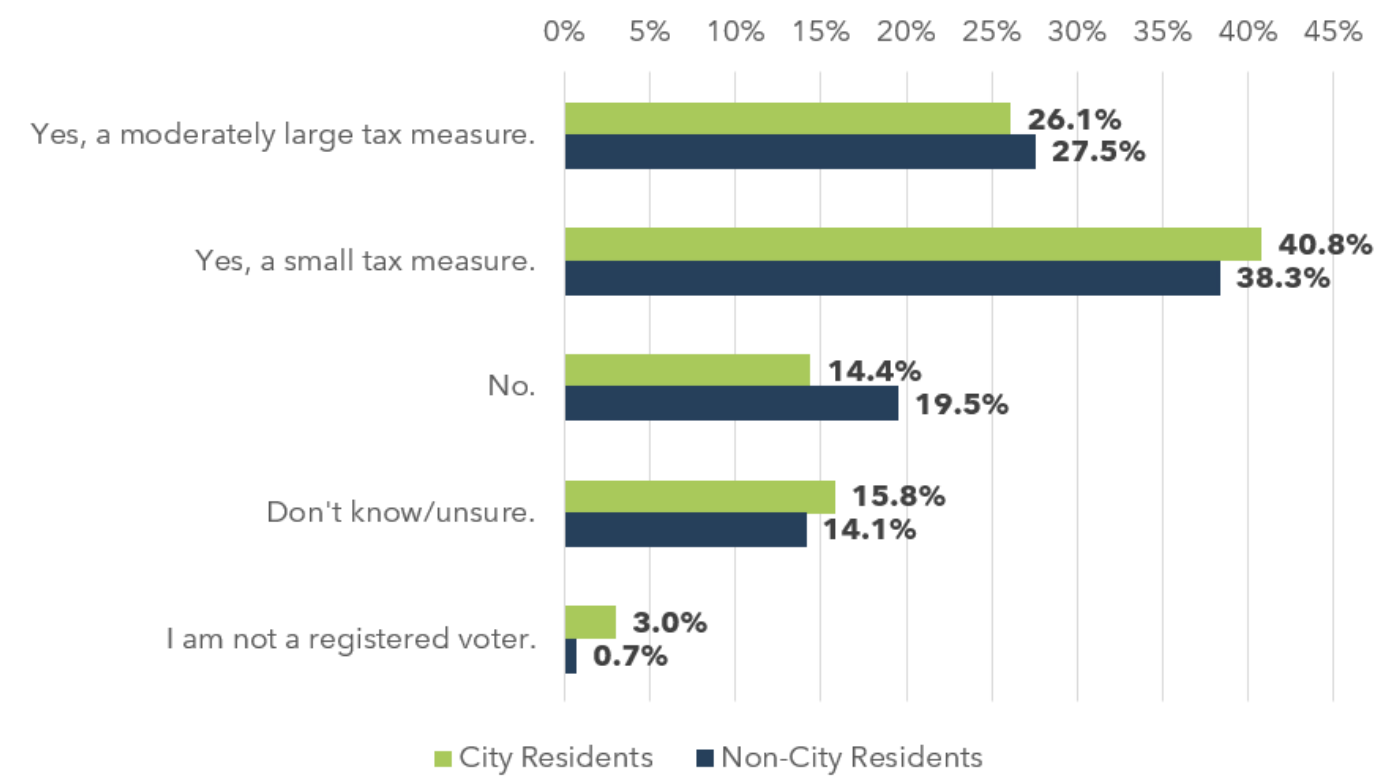


FIGURE 3-6: RANKED TOP PRIORITIES FOR INVESTMENT (Out of 10)

Park Type	Questionnaire Ranking (Non-Residents)	Questionnaire Ranking (Residents)	Pop-Up Ranking (All Responses)
Replace/Renovate Kittitas Valley Memorial Pool	1	1	1
Repair/Replace Older Park Features	2	2	2
Build a New Fieldhouse	3	3	5
Add Variety to Existing Parks	4	4	4
Offer More Programs/Events	5	5	6
Invest in Sports/Parks Downtown	6	8	9
Build More Trails and Pathways	7	7	3

PARK AND RECREATION TRENDS

Understanding market and participation trends in the State of Washington, region, and City of Ellensburg can provide interesting insights into what changing needs may arise in Ellensburg as the population grows into the future. While this Plan presents a 10-year Capital Improvement Plan and a six-year Action Plan, understanding trends and potential needs for the next 10-20 years will help the City anticipate future needs.

SPORTS AND LEISURE MARKET POTENTIAL

ESRI Business Analyst releases an annual index to measure market potential for various activities across categories. This data is based on national averages and applied to Ellensburg and other local communities based on the community's demographics, including college students. This is not participation or survey data, but rather an indication of potential spending and interests in the community. These findings in combination with PROS Plan outreach findings help create a more complete understanding of opportunities for Ellensburg's park and recreation system.

The National Average Market Potential Index (MPI) is set at 100. Therefore, an Ellensburg MPI score greater than 100 indicates a higher demand than the national average, and a score less than 100 indicates a lower demand than the national average. Ellensburg scores over the national average in 63 of 66 categories, indicating a high community interest in sports, fitness, and outdoor recreation. Regarding facilities and activities provided by the Parks & Recreation Department, there is strong market potential for:

- **Sports programs and facilities** such as volleyball, basketball, soccer, and tennis
- **Trails and paths** for jogging/running and roller skating
- **Outdoor recreation facilities** for frisbee, skateboarding, and ping pong
- **Indoor fitness programs and equipment** such as boxing, martial arts, CrossFit, weightlifting, yoga, and Zumba
- **Expanded access to the Yakima River** for activities like fly fishing and paddleboarding
- **Outdoor recreation-inspired play equipment** to reflect regional activities like rock climbing, whitewater rafting, and downhill skiing



*Ellensburg Sprint Triathlon,
Irene Rinehart Riverfront Park (Source: Daily Record)*

STATEWIDE AND REGIONAL TRENDS

The Washington Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) documents annual trends for recreation participation for the State by region. In 2023, these trends indicate potential increasing demand for wildlife viewing, walking, and paddle sports (amongst others as shown in the graphic below) that could be provided within Ellensburg’s park and recreation system.

FIGURE 3-7: STATE AND REGIONAL TRENDS

TOP FOUR STATEWIDE PARTICIPATION TRENDS (2017-2023)



TOP FOUR ACTIVITIES IN NORTH CASCADES REGION (2017-2023)



Paul Rogers Wildlife Park



TOURISM AND VISITATION OPPORTUNITIES

The Kittitas County Tourism Strategic Plan (2025-2035) identifies local strengths and key opportunities to strategically increase tourism and visitor spending in Kittitas County to benefit local communities. The county's local strengths include several directly related to Ellensburg and parks and recreation, such as outdoor recreation, sport tourism, events, CWU, and a four-season destination. Key opportunities related to parks and recreation include:

- **Enhancing trail connectivity & outdoor access**
- **Developing sport tourism infrastructure** (sports fields, recreation centers, multi-use event venues)
- **Strategic marketing and visitor education** to highlight year-round recreation opportunities
- **Reinvestment in community infrastructure** (trailheads, signage, public transit options, and downtown revitalization efforts)



Yakima River Canyon
(Source: State of Washington Tourism)



Rotary Park




Downtown Ellensburg



*Downtown Ellensburg
(Source: State of Washington Tourism)*



Paul Rogers Wildlife Park



CHAPTER 04

PARK SYSTEM NEEDS

04 PARK SYSTEM NEEDS

This chapter identifies key needs and opportunities for parks, facilities, trails, and major facilities in Ellensburg.

The Ellensburg community desires a great parks system that incorporates parkland, trails, recreation facilities, programs, and events. However, the investment needed to provide everything desired is cost prohibitive. The City sought input from the public, key stakeholders, and partners to identify ways to improve, enhance, and invest in parks, recreation facilities, trails, programs, and events.

Guided by community priorities, the PROS Plan identifies needs for future investments in new and renovated parks and facilities. As part of the PROS Plan development process, a technical analysis was conducted of Ellensburg's parkland, facilities, trails, maintenance, and funding needs to help cross-check outreach findings with a data-driven analysis.

PARKLAND NEEDS

Parkland Level of Service (LOS) standards measure the amount of parkland available to a community relative to its population size. It helps us answer the question, "Is existing parkland enough?" It is expressed as a ratio of acres of parkland per 1,000 residents, with a higher LOS meaning more parkland per resident.

Reed Park



Currently, Ellensburg has 350.6 acres of total parkland and a population of 21,260, resulting in a current LOS of 16.5 acres per 1,000 people. Approximately half of this acreage is developed for recreation uses, and the other half is either undeveloped (e.g., Rotary Park) or protects natural open space (e.g., Reecer Creek Floodplain, Paul Rogers Wildlife Park, and sections of Irene Rinehart Riverfront Park). While the park system is rich in parkland, there are opportunities to enhance parkland to support a greater variety of recreation opportunities.

As stated in Chapter 3, Ellensburg is projected to have a 19.6% increase in population by 2045, or 25,417 total residents. Without additional parkland, and with more residents sharing the use of existing parks, Ellensburg’s LOS would decrease to 13.7 acres per 1,000 people in 2045. If the City adds new parks to meet needs for new residential areas, the City would need to provide an LOS of approximately 15.5 acres per 1,000 residents. **Ellensburg’s existing and future parkland LOS is higher than similarly sized cities as shown in Table 4-1.**

FIGURE 4-1: LEVEL OF SERVICE SNAPSHOT

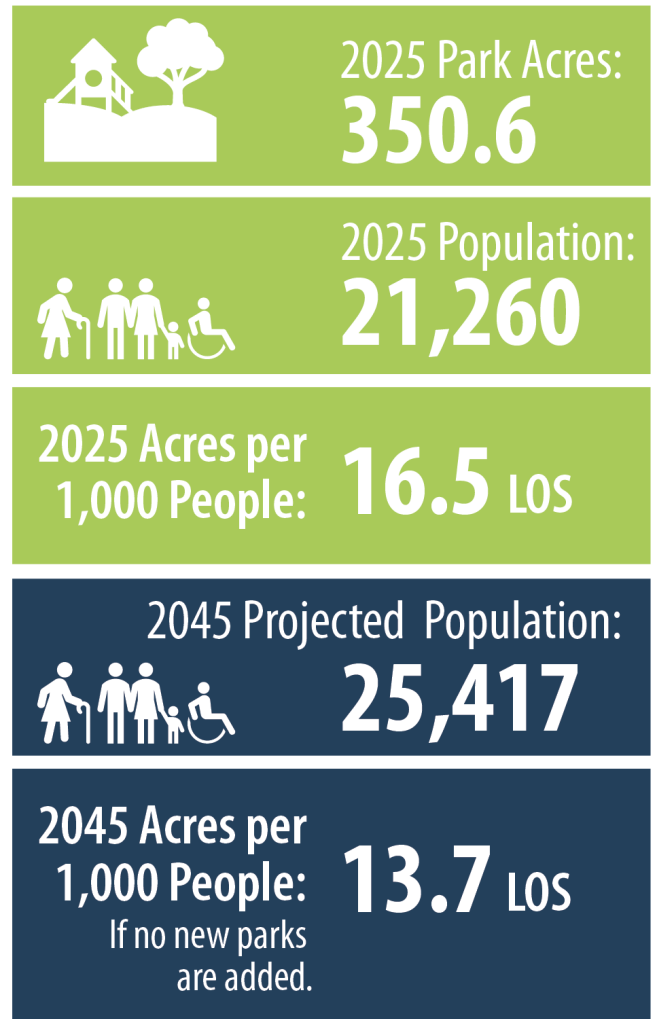


TABLE 4-1: NRPA PARK METRIC PARKLAND LEVEL OF SERVICE COMPARISON (Ellensburg 2025, 2045, and National Agencies with a Population from 20,000 to 49,999)

NRPA Park Metric Category	National Agencies (Population 20,000 to 49,999)	Ellensburg Current LOS (2025)	Ellensburg Future LOS with No New Parks Added (2045)	Ellensburg Future LOS with New Parks to Serve Growth (2045)
Lower Quartile	5.7	16.5	13.7	15.5
Median	10.9			
Upper Quartile	17.5			



North Alder Street Park

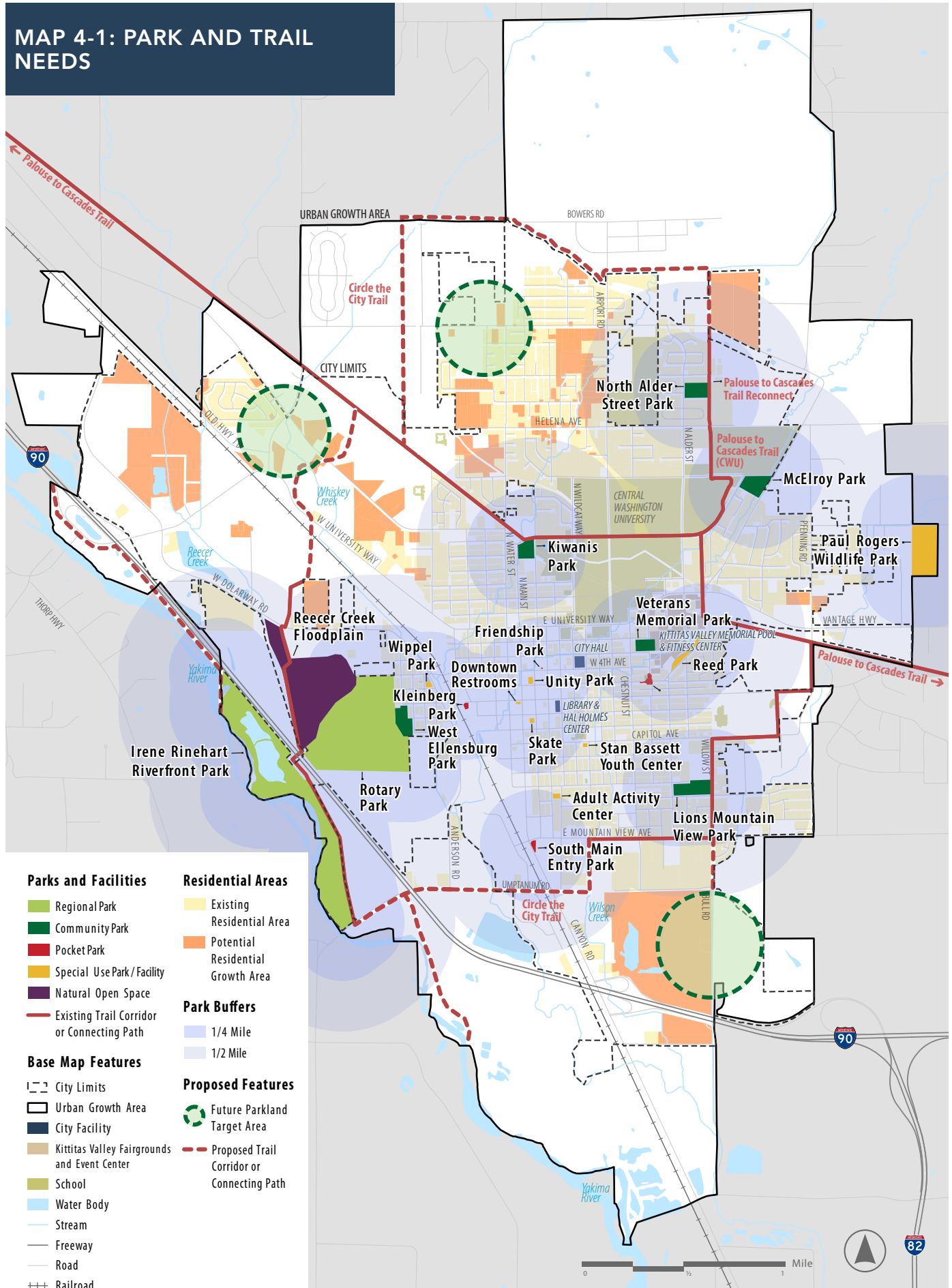
While LOS is one important metric, several other metrics are used to identify needs for parkland. One of these is park access, which is measured based on the distance that residents must travel to get to parks. Two of the nation's leading resources on parks and recreation—the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) and the Trust for Public Land (TPL)—suggest the need for parks within a 10-minute walk (or ½ mile) of all residents. This distance is the maximum distance most people will walk to a park. To evaluate park access, the Project Team created half-mile and quarter-mile buffers around the City's existing parks (park buffers) to identify both existing and future residential areas that currently or will lack a park with a five- to 10-minute walk.⁴ Map 4-1 shows these park buffers and residential areas.

⁴ The park buffers demonstrate park access "as the crow flies" and do not factor in local street networks, pedestrian infrastructure, or barriers to safe access such as topographical features, highways, or a lack of safe pedestrian crossings.

As shown in Map 4-1, Ellensburg has well-distributed parks that are accessible from various neighborhoods. Ellensburg also has a very flat topography and no major highways or roadway in town which makes walking or biking to parks much easier and safer than in many other communities. When considering future residential growth areas, however, Ellensburg will have three gaps in parkland access in the northwest, north central, and southeast parts of the city. This means that with new growth, at least three new parks will be needed.

Map Disclaimer: All park and trail needs identified on Map 4-1 are conceptual in nature and for illustrative purposes only. These do not reflect specific sites or routes; they are intended to show the general vicinity where new parks or trails may be considered in the future. If these projects move forward, further site planning will consider land ownership, current land uses, the road network, site topography, environmental constraints, parcel size, and similar site characteristics, as well as the feasibility of acquisition options.

MAP 4-1: PARK AND TRAIL NEEDS



OUTDOOR FACILITY NEEDS

In addition to the provision of park acreage in general, it is also important to provide the right amount, types, variety, and quality or condition of recreational facilities to meet community needs. Ellensburg’s parks include a variety of outdoor facilities such as sports fields and courts, play features, picnic areas, fitness equipment, and nature access. As of 2025, the City provides more facilities per resident than the average of communities of a similar size, except for playgrounds (1-2 short) and splashpads (1 short) (see Figure 4-2). The City also does not currently provide any tennis courts, and although eight courts are provided by CWU. This comparison of the City’s facility level of service suggests a current deficiency in these amenities, which will worsen as the population grows.

Based on engagement findings, the community desires more diverse parks and recreation opportunities such as a **splashpad**, enhanced **aquatic opportunities**, and **indoor recreation space**. More easily **accessible tennis and pickleball courts** or multi-use courts are desired. In alignment with community feedback, more facilities for kids and teens may be needed, such as **water and nature play opportunities**, more **swings** for various ages, a **universal, and all-inclusive destination playground**, and **bike pump track**. As summarized in Chapter 3, there is also high market demand for **skateboarding and water-based activities**, such as paddleboarding and fishing, creating a need for a more modern skatepark and lake/river access points.

FIGURE 4-2: NRPA PARK METRIC RECREATION FACILITY LEVEL OF SERVICE COMPARISON (Ellensburg and National Agencies with a Population from 20,000 to 49,999, 2025)

Recreation Facility	Facility Level of Service in Comparison to Similar Sized National Agencies (Population 20,000-49,999)
Playgrounds	-
Community Gardens	+
Basketball Courts	+
Volleyball Courts	+
Diamond fields	=
Skate Park	+
Dog Parks	+
Rectangular Fields	+
Splashpads	-
Swimming Pools	+
Pickleball Courts	+
Disc Golf Course	+

In addition to new facilities, the community expressed a strong desire to **repair and improve the City's older park features and amenities**. Ellensburg has several older playgrounds, including ones past the typical lifespan for play equipment. There is a need for **playground replacements** at West Ellensburg Park, Veterans Memorial Park, Lions Mountain View Park, and Kiwanis Park. Of these, Kiwanis Park is centrally located and has space to provide a universal, all-inclusive play area, which is desired by the community. Upon renovation, other play areas could incorporate smaller accessible features (such as swings) with improved access paths and surfacing. Beyond playgrounds, numerous comfort amenities were highlighted for updates such as seating, picnic tables, and restrooms. Additionally, various parks and facilities will need **ADA accessibility improvements** upon renovation to ensure the system is accessible to all ages and abilities.

There are also multiple sites in Ellensburg's park system that present opportunities for new park and facility development to address community needs. Recent master planning processes completed for Rotary Park and Reed Park include a broad variety of new facilities and amenities. The priority for Rotary Park should be to improve the area around the new fieldhouse as it is built to support facility access and programming. As funding allows, the additional sports fields and courts, new play areas, picnic shelters, restrooms, and other facilities should fill in the undeveloped parkland. Reed Park's Master Plan should be implemented as funding allows relative to other priorities in the CIP (see Chapter 6). Lastly, the undeveloped northern entry of the Reecer Creek Floodplain needs added amenities such as parking and signage to better function as a trailhead.



Kiwanis Park



Lions Mountain View Park



Rotary Park

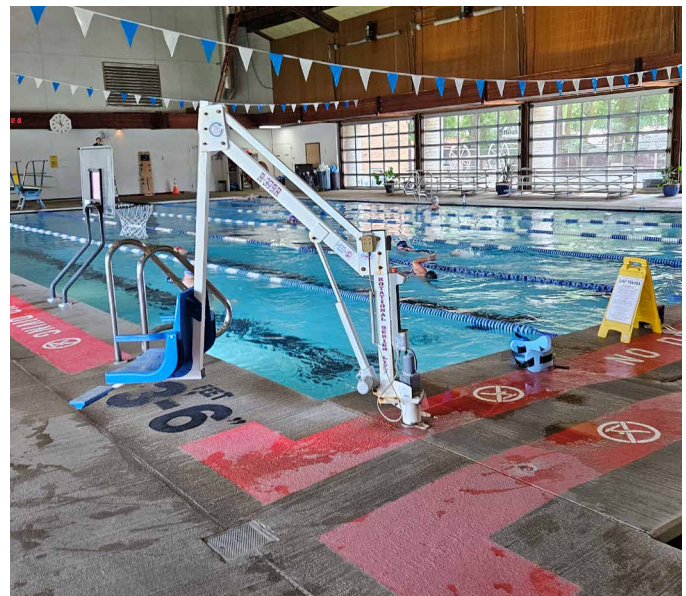
MAJOR FACILITY AND AQUATIC NEEDS

Ellensburg currently has three major facilities—the Kittitas Valley Memorial Pool & Fitness Center, the Adult Activity Center, and the Stan Bassett Youth Center (SBYC). A fourth facility, the Ellensburg Racquet & Recreation Center, was lost to arson in 2022. As such, a need to replace this facility has been at the forefront of the community's minds. A new fieldhouse is needed to support sports, programs, and social gatherings for a broad cross-section of the community. City Council recognizes this need and is actively pursuing a developer partnership to construct a new fieldhouse at Rotary Park.

The older Kittitas Valley Memorial Pool & Fitness Center is loved by the public. With the closure of the pool at CWU, even more pressure exists on the City's pool to support users of different age groups, programs, and events—including recreational and competitive swimming. The facility currently has structural and mechanical issues, capacity constraints, aging amenities, and limited fitness space. A new, modern, expanded aquatic center is needed to serve the public, but residents want the City to maintain and provide critical repairs to the facility until a new facility is possible, to ensure no gap in service.

The Adult Activity Center and SBYC support a variety of passive activities and gatherings targeted at older adults and teens. These facilities are aging and will need reinvestment in the future, but no major improvements are needed now. As the new fieldhouse is developed, the needs for these facilities should be revisited, considered possible community-based organization partnerships and/or consolidation with the fieldhouse or a new pool facility.

Overall, Ellensburg has fewer major facilities when compared to other similar sized cities, according to NRPA's Park Metrics Data. This is largely because the City has no existing full-service recreation and community centers since the prior one burnt down. Although Ellensburg is unique with some gaps addressed by CWU's recreation facilities, this data combined with community feedback across PROS Plan engagement efforts suggests that additional major recreation facilities are needed. Two new facilities - the fieldhouse and expanded aquatic center - will generally address this deficiency.



Kittitas Valley Memorial Pool & Fitness Center

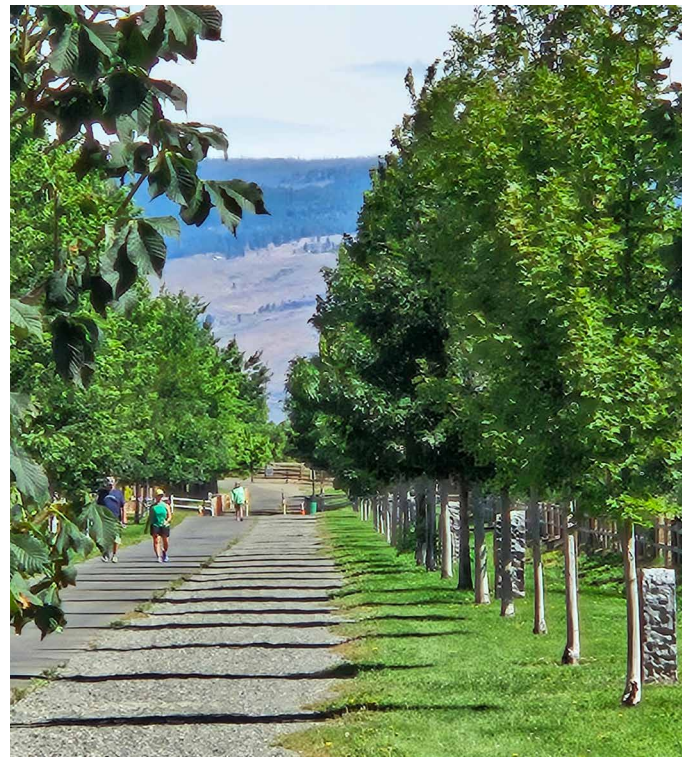
TRAIL NEEDS

Trails are a popular facility for people of all ages and abilities in Ellensburg. The Palouse to Cascades Trail (PTCT) crosses through a portion of the city and serves as a major recreational amenity, but additional trail connections are needed to better connect the PTCT through the city, as well as to provide a loop trail around the city. There is also an opportunity to extend trail access along the Yakima River to take advantage of this significant natural amenity.

The City's current Active Transportation Plan recommends a Circle the City Loop (CTC) trail project that is approximately 13.1 miles long, including both trail corridors and segments within public rights-of-way. Some segments of this are already built, others overlap with the PTCT connection, and others will require land acquisition and development by the Public Works and Parks & Recreation Departments. Specifically focusing on trails that would need to be maintained by the Parks & Recreation Department, Map 4-1 illustrates nearly 7 miles of trails of new trail corridors and connecting paths that would support the PTCT connections, CTC loop trail, and trails along the Yakima River. Together these trails are needed to support trail-related recreation, active transportation, access to potential new and existing parks, and connections to regional and Statewide trails.⁵

⁵ While this PROS Plan identifies off-street trail needs in relation to parks and recreation opportunities, Ellensburg's Comprehensive Plan is currently being updated and will include a more in-depth trails and transportation analysis to identify needs for bikeways and on-street pedestrian and bicycle paths.

In addition to the multi-use trail connections described above, additional (or improved) trails and trailheads will be needed in Ellensburg's parks to support recreation and fitness opportunities. Loop trails are needed in Community Parks or Regional Parks to support walking, dog-walking, biking, and wheeled uses for strollers, scooters, skateboards, etc. The need for loop trails was already noted in the previous site master plans for Rotary Park and West Ellensburg Park.



Palouse to Cascades Trail Reconnect



Touch-A-Truck Bike Rodeo at Rotary Park

PROPOSED LEVEL OF SERVICE AND KEY NEEDS

While the potential needs for the park system over the next 10-20 years may be vast, it is important to consider key needs in the context of providing the right level of service for the park system. As shown in Table 4-2, proposed levels of service and additional acreage needs were determined by balancing needs for park development, facilities, and trails. Priorities have been placed on additional acreage for three new Community Parks (primarily to serve new residents as development occurs) and additional acreage in trail

corridors to increase the community's trail network. To meet the market demand for skateboarding, the City may need to provide a new, more modern skatepark in a new location, which would allow the redevelopment of the existing Ellensburg Skatepark site for Downtown parking and a smaller Special Use park. Because of the extent of facility needs – including the fieldhouse, aquatic facility, and more diverse park facilities--needs for additional acreage for other park types is noted.

TABLE 4-2: PARKLAND STANDARDS AND NEEDS

Park Type	Existing LOS	Proposed Level of Service Standard (Acres/1,000 Residents)	2035 Additional Acreage Needed	2045 Additional Acreage Need	New Park Acreage Needs
Regional Parks	10.16	8.50	0.00	0.00	None
Community Parks	1.56	2.00	13.31	17.73	Three new parks of 4-8 acres each
Special Use Parks / Facilities	1.15	0.95	0.00	-0.39*	Potential consolidation of facilities
Pocket Parks	0.06	0.05	0.00	0.00	None
Trail Corridor	0.12	1.10	23.02	25.46	Additional trails, 25.32 acres (6.96 miles)
Natural Open Space	3.44	2.90	0.00	0.47	Potential small acreage increases over long term
TOTAL	16.49	15.50	36.33	43.27	

2035 and 2045 population projections based on Office of Financial Management existing population estimates and Kittitas County growth rates.

*Note: If renovated as planned, a portion of the existing Skatepark site downtown may be be redeveloped as City parking resulting in a slight reduction in park acreage.



Rotary Park



Stan Bassett Youth Center

CHAPTER 05

RECOMMENDATIONS

05 RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter details the Department's mission, goals, and recommendations for existing and proposed parks and facilities.

The PROS Plan's mission and goals, systemwide objectives, and site recommendations provide a consolidated path forward driven by community feedback and technical analysis for Ellensburg's park and recreation system. Together, these recommendations will have a long-term impact on how the City of Ellensburg manages, develops, renovates, and restores its parks, facilities, natural open space, programs, and recreation services for years to come.

MISSION AND GOALS

The Parks & Recreation Department's mission, goals, and objectives are intended to guide the maintenance, development, enhancement, activation, and funding of the park and recreation system over the next ten years and beyond.

The City of Ellensburg engaged residents, stakeholders, Parks & Recreation Commission members, and City leaders in discussions and outreach activities to help define these goals and objectives, which balance the community's desire to enhance recreation experiences with the wise use of City funding and resources. The goals and objectives provide a policy framework for the PROS Plan, while also informing the

City's Comprehensive Plan, which provides land use and policy direction for the next 20 years.

PARKS & RECREATION DEPARTMENT MISSION

The Mission of the Park & Recreation Department defines its purpose, business, and essential services:

The City of Ellensburg Parks & Recreation Department strives to enhance the lives of community residents and visitors of all ages by providing a wide range of quality leisure experiences in our parks, recreation facilities, programs, and services. Through our efforts we will advance the health and wellness of individuals and families, foster greater community spirit, protect and enhance our natural resources and environment, contribute to the vitality of the local economy, and promote a high quality of life in Ellensburg.

GOALS

The following nine goals will guide the Department in carrying out its mission and providing quality parks, recreation facilities, trails, and open space.

1 PARKS
PROVIDE A VARIETY OF PARKS REFLECTING UNIQUE COMMUNITY NEEDS.

2 PARK AMENITIES AND FACILITIES
PROVIDE HIGH QUALITY, ACCESSIBLE, AND DIVERSE AMENITIES AND FACILITIES.

3 INDOOR FACILITIES
OFFER ENRICHING YEAR-ROUND RECREATION OPTIONS.

4 TRAILS
CONNECT AND EXPAND TRAILS FOR RECREATION, PARK ACCESS, AND MOBILITY.

5 PROGRAMS/SERVICES
FACILITATE PROGRAMS, SOCIAL GATHERINGS, AND EVENTS.

6 MAINTENANCE
STRATEGICALLY MAINTAIN AND MANAGE ASSETS.

7 NATURAL RESOURCES
PROTECT AND CONNECT RESIDENTS TO THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT.

8 PARTNERSHIPS
SUPPORT AND EXPAND LOCAL COLLABORATION.

9 SUSTAINABLE FUNDING
ENSURE FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY AND RESILIENCE.

SYSTEMWIDE OBJECTIVES

Objectives describe the specific and measurable outcomes that contribute to achieving our goals.

PARKS

GOAL 1: PROVIDE A VARIETY OF PARKS REFLECTING UNIQUE COMMUNITY NEEDS

- 1.1. Provide a mix of developed parks (regional, community, pocket, and special use parks), along with trail corridors and natural open space to provide a comprehensive and varied park system.

1.2. Strive to provide a park system that supports the needs of all ages, abilities, economic and cultural backgrounds as well as the interests of City residents, Kittitas County residents, and visitors.

1.3. Acquire park land to provide a minimum of 15.5 acres of park land per 1,000 residents as the community continues to grow. This includes developed parks, trail corridors, and open space managed by the Parks & Recreation Department. Diversify park level of service by classification (see sidebar).

1.4. Design community parks to serve nearby neighbors within walking and biking distance (approximately ½ - ¾ mile), while also providing unique amenities and facilities that attract people from across Ellensburg.

1.5. Add community parks near new residential areas to provide play space, gathering space, and green space centralized to offset new growth.
- 1.6. Explore opportunities to increase recreation and greenspace in central Ellensburg and downtown to support the growing infill of residents in these areas.

1.7. Enhance Ellensburg’s parks, public spaces, downtown, and buildings with locally created public art and interpretive elements that highlight the local and regional heritage, tribal traditions, and natural, cultural, and historical resources.

1.8. Prioritize “fun” and community gatherings/events in public parks to support the City’s character, including opportunities to play, recreate, gather, and participate in community events.

PROPOSED LEVEL OF SERVICE STANDARDS BY PARK CLASSIFICATION

Acres of park land per 1,000 residents:

- Regional Parks: 8.5
- Community Parks: 2.0
- Special Use Parks and Facilities: 0.95
- Pocket Parks: .05
- Trail Corridors: 1.1
- Natural Open Spaces: 2.9

PARK AMENITIES AND FACILITIES

GOAL 2: PROVIDE HIGH QUALITY, ACCESSIBLE, AND DIVERSE AMENITIES AND FACILITIES.

- 2.1. Upgrade/modernize aging amenities in parks, especially those that are outdated, or in otherwise poor condition.
- 2.2. Provide a variety of recreation facilities to diversify park experiences and support active and passive uses as well as unique variations of typical park features.
- 2.3. Expand amenities in parks oriented towards youth, young adults, and families.
- 2.4. Increase opportunities for water-based activities such as aquatics, swimming, splashpads, and other water play.
- 2.5. Provide support amenities in parks, such as shade, seating, signage, and restrooms, to provide comfortable, user-friendly park experiences.
- 2.6. Develop athletic facilities that meet the highest quality competitive playing standards and requirements for all age groups, skill levels, and recreational interests to promote tournaments in Ellensburg. Support these tournament-quality fields and courts with suitable practice and drop-in recreational sports facilities.
- 2.7. Pursue accessibility improvements and designs to remove barriers to facilities compliant with ADA accessibility standards. Use universal design principles to provide inclusive parks and play areas.



Shaded Seating at Unity Park



Baseball Field at Rotary Park

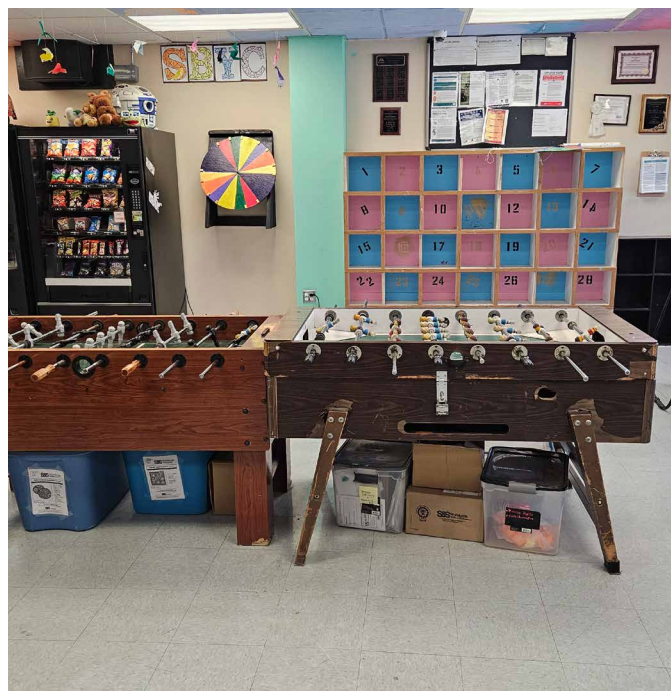


West Ellensburg Park

INDOOR FACILITIES

GOAL 3: OFFER ENRICHING YEAR-ROUND RECREATION OPTIONS.

- 3.1. Prior to the new construction or large-scale renovations of existing major indoor facilities, develop a business plan and operations pro forma identifying the target market, staffing needs, maintenance and operational costs, potential revenues, cost recovery targets, and management structure. This planning should inform the facilities design and operations.
- 3.2. Develop an indoor fieldhouse to provide a community gathering space and support multiple sports, fitness, health, and wellness opportunities for all ages (including youth and seniors) throughout the year.
- 3.3. Conduct a building and pool assessment to understand the structural, mechanical, and operational longevity of the Kittitas Valley Memorial Pool & Fitness Center. Then, either as a building renovation/expansion, or as a new facility, improve the pool facility to better serve the community and continue to support competitive and recreational swimming, water safety and learn-to-swim programs, pool events and swimming meets, water fitness (e.g., aerobics and lap swimming), and indoor/outdoor lounging opportunities.
- 3.4. Pursue partner or joint funding agreements with Kittitas County on all indoor facilities that are designed, developed, and operated to attract residents from lower Kittitas County.
- 3.5. Consider consolidation of indoor facilities for more efficient operations and/or partnering with community organization or non-profits to assist with operations.



Stan Bassett Youth Center



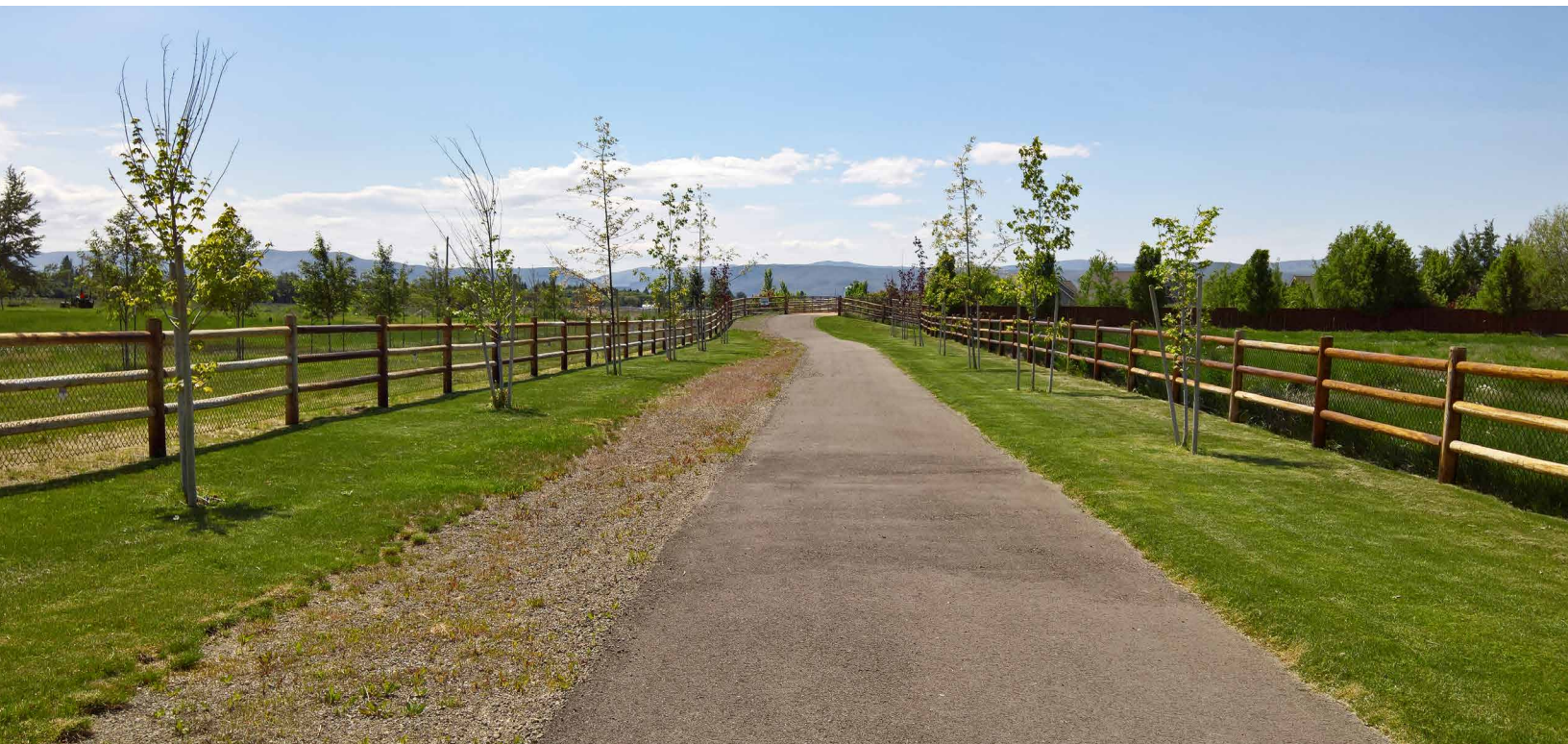
Kittitas Valley Memorial Pool & Fitness Center

TRAILS

GOAL 4: CONNECT AND EXPAND TRAILS FOR RECREATION, PARK ACCESS, AND MOBILITY.

- 4.1. Develop a network of regional and community trails, augmented by other shared-use paths and loop trails in parks, to support walking, biking, dog-walking, and other non-motorized wheeled uses.
- 4.2. Provide loop trails in parks to support fitness and recreation for all ages. Provide hard and soft-surfaced trails to ensure ADA accessibility, while also supporting a variety of trail experiences.
- 4.3. In coordination with the City's Active Transportation Plan, link neighborhoods to parks and indoor facilities through safe and comfortable complete streets and off-street trails where possible.
- 4.4. Complete the Palouse-Cascades trail via the planned bypass and/or clearly marked and enhanced on-street connections.
- 4.5. Integrate the routing of proposed trail segments into the land use permitting process; require development projects along designated routes to incorporate trails as part of the project
- 4.6. Develop new parks or enhance existing parks along the trail network to provide trailheads at key intervals. Furnish trails and trailheads with supportive amenities such as interpretive and wayfinding signage, seating, lighting, emergency call boxes, drinking fountains, and waste receptacles. Provide restrooms where these also support park use.

Palouse to Cascades Trail Reconnect



PROGRAMS/SERVICES

GOAL 5: FACILITATE PROGRAMS, SOCIAL GATHERINGS, AND EVENTS.

- 5.1. Provide and promote a variety of events, programs and activities for residents and visitors to create inclusive, multi-generational, family-friendly recreation, sports and art experiences for all ages, interests, abilities, incomes, and cultures.
- 5.2. Support youth development, lifelong learning, and senior services through recreational programs that serve all ages the broadest needs of the population.
- 5.3. Host or facilitate sports and aquatics instruction and participatory programs for all ages, skill levels, and income levels in the community
- 5.4. Focus large programs and events at the City's regional parks and downtown, while offering community and neighborhood activities and programs in community parks across the city.
- 5.5. Balance the City's desire to offer programs at little or no cost with cost recovery goals to enhance the quality of life for all income levels while also supporting the operations of safe, well-maintained facilities.
- 5.6. Ensure the City has sufficient resources available to support increased program staffing, facility management, materials, and equipment when major recreation facilities are developed or expanded.
- 5.7. Maximize programming opportunities at Unity Park through a combination of City-sponsored activities and local community organizations.
- 5.8. Increase recreational programming by entering into professional service contracts with community members to teach classes and/or programs.

Unity Park



MAINTENANCE

GOAL 6: STRATEGICALLY MAINTAIN AND MANAGE ASSETS.

- 6.1. Adhere to a regular schedule of preventative and responsive routine maintenance and renewal/replacement efforts to ensure parks and facilities are safe, clean, and in good condition and to protect public investment over time.
- 6.2. Establish a tiered maintenance approach to ensure sustainable maintenance of all parks and facilities. Ensure that sites and facilities with greater use, more programming, rentals/reservations, and high visibility receive more maintenance resources.
- 6.3. Design and develop facilities that are low maintenance to reduce overall facility maintenance and operation requirements and costs.
- 6.4. Where appropriate, use low maintenance landscaping, materials, settings, or other value engineering considerations that reduce maintenance, stewardship, and security requirements and retain natural conditions and experiences.
- 6.5. Where appropriate, use programs such as adopt-a-park programs, volunteer programs, neighborhood park watches, police patrols, and other programs that will increase regular maintenance and safety/security.
- 6.6. Continue efforts related to beautification of Downtown Ellensburg as a source of community pride, tourism, and economic development.
- 6.7. Ensure the City has sufficient resources available to support increased maintenance staffing, facility operations, supplies, and equipment when new parks are added and major recreation facilities are developed or expanded.



Dry Desert Zone at Wippel Park Pollinator Garden

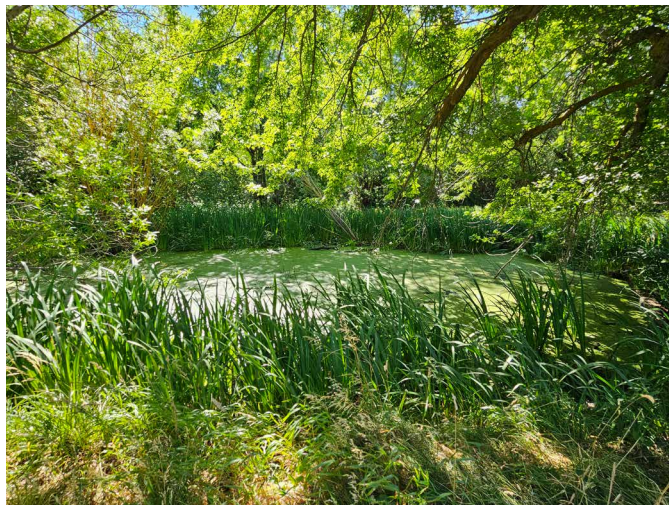


Maintenance at McElroy Park

NATURAL RESOURCES

GOAL 7: PROTECT AND CONNECT RESIDENTS TO THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT.

- 7.1. Allocate resources to better maintain, steward, and in some cases restore natural areas, wetlands, and riparian areas in City parks to improve site safety, habitat value, and ecological function.
- 7.2. Preserve and protect existing significant environmental features such as wetlands and critical wildlife habitat in conjunction with the City's Community Development Department to implementing the Comprehensive Plan's guidance for preserving and protecting natural resources.
- 7.3. Enhance open spaces and natural areas with recreation elements, signage, trails, and interpretive facilities for the enjoyment and health of community members, where this development will not damage sensitive habitat
- 7.4. Enhance access to and use of open spaces and natural areas while balancing resource management needs.
- 7.5. Expand the tree canopy and shade in City parks and the historic downtown district to maintain Ellensburg's designation as a "Tree City USA."
- 7.6. Develop facilities that improve water access to lakes and the Yakima River for activities such as swimming, paddleboarding, and non-motorized boating.



McElroy Park



Reecer Creek Floodplain



Kiwanis Park

PARTNERSHIPS

GOAL 8: SUPPORT AND EXPAND LOCAL COLLABORATION.

- 8.1. Partner with Kittitas County, Central Washington University, the Ellensburg School District and other nearby school districts, and local organizations to fund, implement, and maintain parks and facilities.
- 8.2. Continue partnerships and agreements like a joint-use agreement with the school district to allow public access to play areas and sports fields.
- 8.3. Explore partnerships with local health care providers and businesses to develop, fund, and promote park, recreation, and wellness activities, programs, and amenities.
- 8.4. Collaborate with regional tourism partners to promote Ellensburg's events, parks, trails, and facilities.
- 8.5. Explore and/or continue mechanisms to support joint funding on projects desired by or benefiting multiple partners such as a City funding match program, a parks and recreation foundation, sponsorship program, scholarship program, and/or other donation/funding.
- 8.6. Coordinate with other public and private organizations, and private developers, to provide a wide range of facilities and programming within Ellensburg and to avoid the duplication of services.
- 8.7. Pursue creative development and financing partnerships for major facility and capital projects, such as development of the fieldhouse, to increase implementation feasibility and expedite timelines, with the ultimate goal of City ownership of such facilities.

Central Washington University (Source: CWU)



SUSTAINABLE FUNDING

GOAL 9: ENSURE FISCAL OPPORTUNITY AND RESILIENCE.

- 9.1. Expand investment in the parks and recreation system through diversified funding sources to support the acquisition, development, renovation, maintenance, and programming of City parks and facilities.
- 9.2. Identify dedicated revenues for park and facility maintenance and operations, including additional staffing and resources when new sites and indoor facilities are added.
- 9.3. Explore feasibility, potential boundary, and voter support for a Public Facilities District and possibly a regional Metropolitan Parks District as a new funding source to support parks and recreation used by County and City residents.
- 9.4. Pursue joint ventures and ongoing partnership agreements with Kittitas County to fund facilities and operations on an ongoing that serve a population broader than the City of Ellensburg and to support shared interests.
- 9.5. Update impact fee methodology and rates, to adhere with State regulations, with an escalator, and better fund new park and recreation facility development to attract and serve new residents.
- 9.6. Offer revenue-generating recreation programs and incorporate rental and concession facilities into parks to enhance the visitor experience, produce revenue, support site maintenance and subsidize other programs and services.
- 9.7. Establish a fee philosophy and cost recovery targets for different types of Parks & Recreation Department programs and services that factors in the level of individualized or community benefit provided. Continue to charge residents and non-resident rates. In lieu of full subsidies for all participants in specific types of activities, consider providing discounts, scholarships, and volunteer credits to residents and non-residents most in need to ensure affordability
- 9.8. Apply for grants through State, Federal, and other agencies to serve as supplemental financing for capital projects, while ensuring staffing, maintenance, and operations funding is available from other sources.



Irene Rinehart Riverfront Park

SITE RECOMMENDATIONS SUMMARY

Ellensburg's parks each have unique characteristics, needs, and opportunities for enhancement. The PROS Plan identifies a series of site recommendations that seek to capitalize on those opportunities, help provide unique park experiences, and fill community needs. The recommendations are presented in Appendix B, organized by existing parks by classification and proposed new parks as well as proposed new trails and connecting paths.

The recommendations were developed based on the findings from a site assessment conducted in Phase 1 of the planning process, along with findings from the needs assessment, community input, and the evaluation of previous site master plans to see which recommendations should be carried forward. These site recommendations were vetted by the Parks and Recreation Commission to inform the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) and six-year Action Plan.

The PROS Plan's 136 recommendations are summarized below by project type, including Acquisition, Development, Renovation, and Restoration. Development projects are the largest category due to the high volume of projects associated with concurrent or recent planning and projects (e.g. Rotary Park and Reed Park) and the proposed new parks and trail corridors. Additionally, 87.5% of the development projects are proposed to enhance existing parks and facilities with the majority focused on regional and community parks. Beyond these projects, renovation projects are the largest category, aligning with the community's top priority of reinvesting in existing parks and facilities. Map 5-1 illustrates the locations of existing and proposed parks, trails, and connecting paths.

7

ACQUISITION PROJECTS

ACQUISITION

Land acquisition entails **purchasing land or easements to build new parks and trails**. Land is needed for three new parks and four new trail corridors. The three new parks may range from 4-8 acres each, totaling between 12-24 acres total. The four new trail corridors are assumed to be 30 feet wide and total 25.3 acres of land required for 6.9 miles of trail.

81

DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

DEVELOPMENT

Development projects involve **construction or work resulting in new elements**, including structures, facilities, and/or materials to enhance outdoor recreation resources. These projects span nearly every park in the system. Example of development projects include new signage, playgrounds, restrooms, parking lots, sports fields/courts, buildings, trails, and picnic areas. Nearly 35% of the development projects (28 projects) are at Rotary Park to implement the site's master plan. Additionally, over 20% of development projects (17 projects) are located at the seven new proposed park sites and trail corridors.

44

RENOVATION PROJECTS

RENOVATION

Renovation projects include activities intended to improve a site or structure to **increase its useful service life**. This does not include activities to maintain the facility for its expected useful life. Renovation projects are included for every Regional and Community Park, as well as five other parks. Examples of renovation projects include repairing damaged pavement, replacing picnic facilities, replacing play features, adding field lighting, and accessibility updates.

4

RESTORATION PROJECTS

RESTORATION

Restoration projects entail **bringing a site back to its natural function or improving the ecological functionality** of a site. These projects are included at Irene Rinehart Riverfront Park and most of the Community Parks. Examples of restoration projects include restoring shorelines and riparian corridors, enhancing natural areas, updating landscaping, and planting trees.

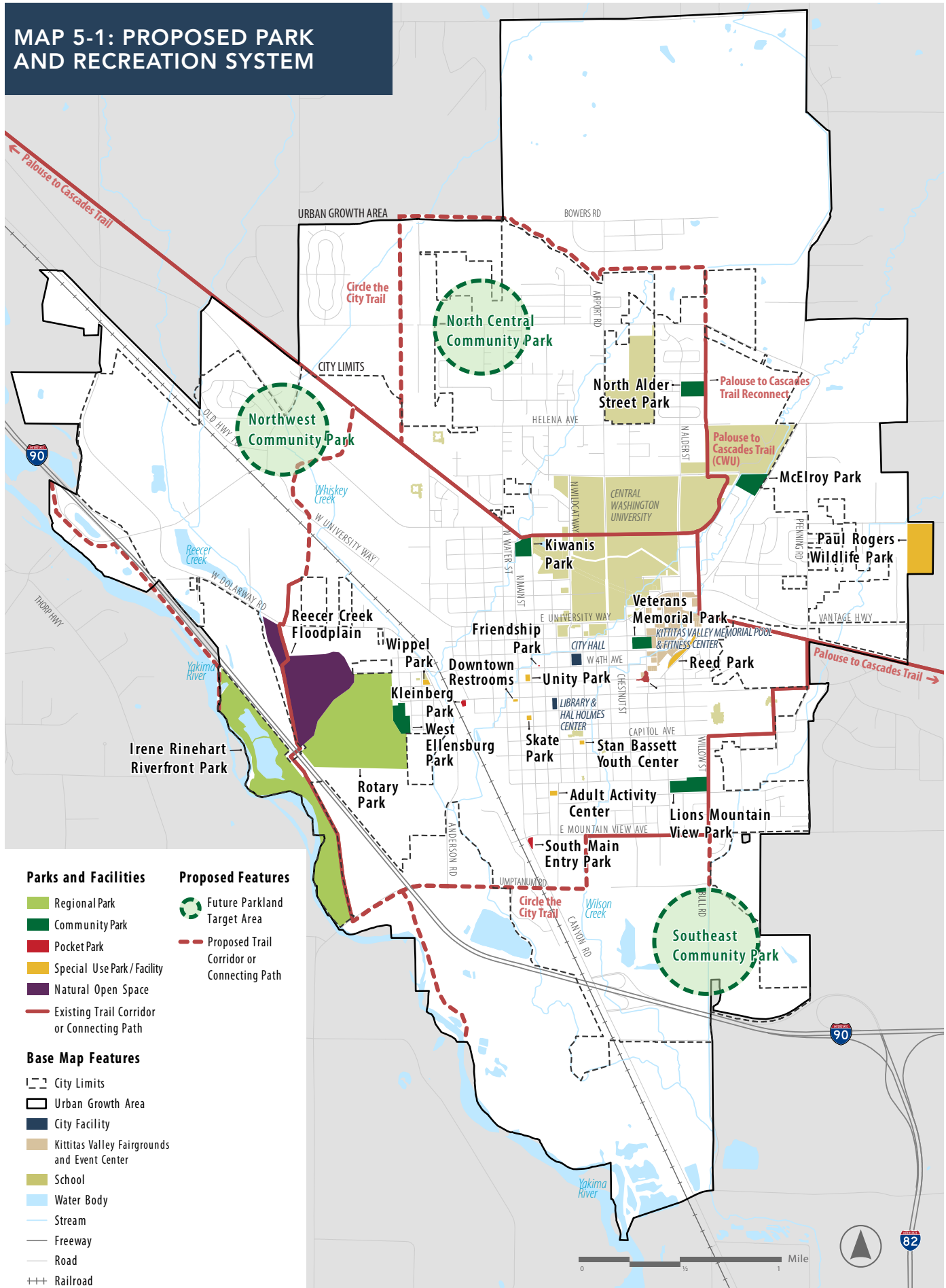
TABLE 5-1: PROJECTS BY PARK CLASSIFICATION


Park Type	# of Sites	Total Capital Projects
Regional Parks	2	48
Community Parks	6	42
Special Use Parks /Facilities	7	15
Pocket Parks	4	8
Trail Corridor	2	3
Natural Open Space	2	3
Existing Parks Subtotal	23	119 Projects
Proposed New Community Parks	3	9
Proposed New Trail Corridors	4	8
Proposed Facilities Subtotal	7	17
Existing and Proposed Total	30	136

Veterans Memorial Park



MAP 5-1: PROPOSED PARK AND RECREATION SYSTEM





Map Disclaimer: All park and trail needs identified on Map 5-1 on the previous page are conceptual in nature and for illustrative purposes only. These do not reflect specific sites or routes; they are intended to show the general vicinity where new parks or trails may be considered in the future. If these projects move forward, further site planning will consider land ownership, current land uses, the road network, site topography, environmental constraints, parcel size, and similar site characteristics, as well as the feasibility of acquisition options.



Paul Rogers Wildlife Park



CHAPTER 06

IMPLEMENTATION

06 IMPLEMENTATION

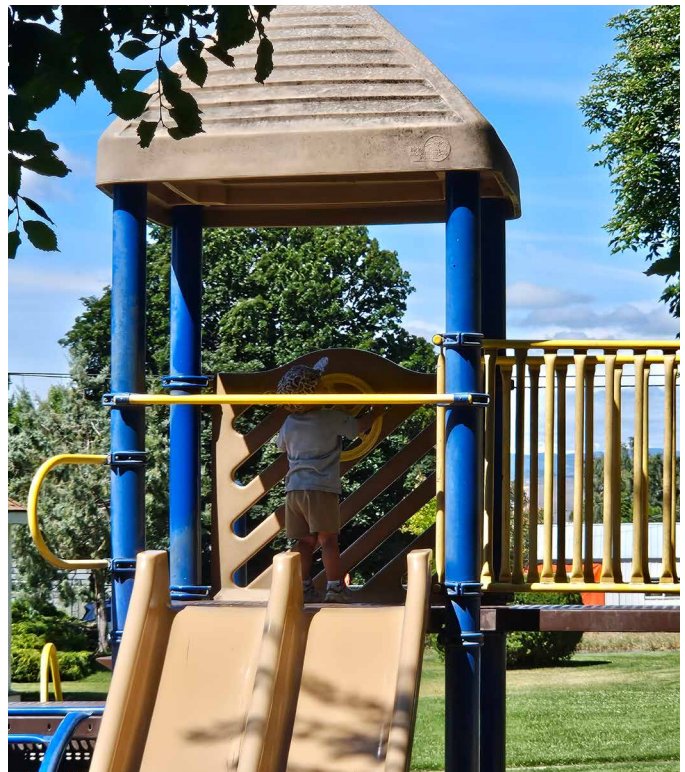
This chapter describes how the PROS Plan will be implemented. It summarizes proposed capital projects and costs, identifies a set of project prioritization criteria to guide future decision-making, presents a six-year Action Plan and Sustainable Funding Plan, and details long term implementation strategies.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The PROS Plan presents a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) that identifies capital costs for implementing all recommended projects. Appendix C presents the entire CIP, along with the cost assumptions used to identify these planning-level costs for each existing and proposed site.

Approximately \$117.7 million will be needed to implement all capital projects recommended in the PROS Plan (Table 6-1). Capital costs represent one-time costs to acquire, develop, build, replace, or renovate park infrastructure and features. Most costs are associated with renovations or enhancements to existing parks and facilities (\$88.6 million), while approximately \$29.2 million will be needed for the acquisition and development of new parks to serve future residential growth and new trail corridors to better connect the community and expand access to nature.

These costs represent more than the City can afford to implement over the next ten years. These planning level costs are not true construction costs, which would be determined through more detailed construction documentation. However, they are identified here to support annual capital improvement planning, budgeting, and grant applications.



Lions Mountain View Park



Kleinberg Park

TABLE 6-1: PLANNING LEVEL CAPITAL COSTS BY PARK CLASSIFICATION FOR EXISTING AND NEW PARKS AND TRAILS

Category	Total Planning Level Costs*
Regional Parks**	\$47,677,500
Community Parks***	\$34,973,550
Special Use Parks /Facilities	\$3,389,600
Pocket Parks	\$775,250
Trail Corridor	\$18,000
Natural Open Space	\$1,730,000
Subtotal Existing Parks	\$89,171,400
Proposed New Parks	\$15,750,000
Proposed New Trails	\$13,409,000
Subtotal Proposed Parks & Trails	\$29,159,000
TOTAL:	\$117,722,900

*These estimates reflect planning level capital cost assumptions in 2025 dollars not accounting for inflation. Actual costs will vary depending on site realities, the scale and quality of facilities and changing market prices for materials and labor. Actual cost estimates should be determined through site master planning and design at the time of development.

**Costs do not include the fieldhouse, which the City would operate through a lease agreement.

***Community Park costs include \$25 million for new aquatics facility.

ANNUAL MAINTENANCE AND STEWARDSHIP COSTS

Once built, all parks, facilities, and trails require routine and preventative maintenance to care for City assets. In addition to identifying capital costs, the PROS Plan identifies maintenance costs based on three different levels of maintenance. Parks with higher levels of use, such as regional parks and those with specialized facilities and/or programming, will require an enhanced level of maintenance. In addition, sites with natural open space need specialized stewardship for natural resources in addition to maintenance for more developed areas. All other developed park areas and trail corridors need a standard level of maintenance to support community use.

If all CIP projects are implemented, the City may need approximately \$3 million annually to maintain the envisioned park and recreation system, inclusive of existing facilities as well as proposed new parks and trail corridors. Table 6-2 notes the annual estimated site maintenance and stewardship costs for existing parks and facilities, as well as proposed sites. Appendix C provides additional information on these costs per site. These costs focus on maintenance and do not include costs for facility operations, programming, or events, which would be additional operations costs.



McElroy Park

TABLE 6-2: ANNUAL MAINTENANCE AND STEWARDSHIP COST SUMMARY FOR EXISTING AND PROPOSED PARKS

Site Type	Average Annual Estimated Maintenance and Stewardship Costs			Total Annual Estimated Maintenance and Stewardship Costs
	Standard Developed	Enhanced Developed	Undeveloped/ Natural Open Space	
Existing Parks and Facilities	\$428,346	\$1,838,475	\$313,557	\$2,580,378
Proposed New Parks and Facilities	\$389,700	\$0	\$0	\$389,700
TOTAL	\$818,046	\$1,838,475	\$313,557	\$2,970,078

HOW ARE THESE COSTS IDENTIFIED?

Planning level costs are assigned for capital costs and annual maintenance and stewardship costs by site.

- **Capital Costs** represent one-time costs to acquire, develop, build, replace, or renovate park infrastructure and features.
- **Maintenance and Stewardship Costs** represent annual recurring costs for routine and preventative maintenance, irrigation, and services such as the inspection and stewardship of facilities, amenities, natural resources, and landscaped areas.

Capital cost assumptions are based on general order-of-magnitude planning-level expenses. Costs are typically assigned per facility or by unit (e.g., per acre of park or per mile of trail) to account for differences in site size. These estimates reflect planning level construction cost assumptions in 2025 dollars and do not account for future inflation. Design details and construction realities such as site conditions, supply chain issues, material and labor shortages, and similar factors may affect actual costs. Actual costs should be determined through site master planning and design at the time of development. The costs do not include environmental compliance documentation, community engagement, design, permitting, installation, or staff hours to manage site planning, design, construction, and implementation. Those elements could escalate park development costs by approximately 20-25 percent.

Maintenance and stewardship cost assumptions are based on Ellensburg's 2024 park and trail maintenance expenditures, divided into three tiers: standard park maintenance, enhanced park maintenance (125% of standard park maintenance costs), and natural resource stewardship (25% of standard park maintenance costs). Each tier is intended to address a standard level of routine and preventative maintenance, operations, maintenance staffing, materials/equipment, and services. Actual maintenance costs per site may vary.

ANNUAL FACILITY OPERATIONS, EVENTS, AND PROGRAMMING COSTS

The City of Ellensburg currently operates three major recreation facilities that provide community programs and services: the Adult Activity Center, Stan Bassett Youth Center, and Kittitas Valley Memorial Pool & Fitness Center. In addition, it facilitates events and programs at other sites, such as Unity Park and Rotary Park. This type of operations and programming is often budgeted in conjunction with site maintenance and operations (irrigation, electrical, inspections, facility preparation and cleaning, etc.). However, it can be useful to consider recreation operations separately from maintenance (operations) and stewardship.

Between 2019 and 2024, recreation operations expenditures ranged from a low of \$1.17 million in 2020 (during the Covid pandemic) to \$1.85 million in 2024. While some of these costs were offset by facility use fees and charges for services (e.g., admission, rentals, program fees, etc.), the City's cost recovery rate has ranged from 9.6% to 22.4% in that same timeframe. Additional funding is needed to support these types of programs, activities, and facility operations.

Additional funding for recreation operations will also be needed as activities are expanded and new facilities are added. In 2025, the Ellensburg Fieldhouse Market and Operations Plan determined that the new Fieldhouse may require approximately \$745,000 to \$1,072,000 annually to operate, although 42% to 65% of those costs may be offset through increased facility and program revenues if these greater cost recovery targets can be achieved. Costs will vary depending on factors such as the mix of amenities, facilities, staffing, and programming offered.

Together, the financial data suggests that the City of Ellensburg may need approximately \$2 million to \$2.5 million each year for recreation operations and programming, after the Fieldhouse is added (and dependent on decisions about the continued operations of existing facilities in the next six years).

To build the Fieldhouse, the City is exploring options to have a developer build the facility at Rotary Park and lease the facility to the City under a long-term agreement for operations. The costs noted above do not include annual lease payments.

Recreation Event in Ellensburg



PROJECT PRIORITIZATION CRITERIA

The CIP includes more projects than the City of Ellensburg anticipates being able to support, given current funding, staffing, and resources. Based on community feedback and input from City staff and the Parks & Recreation Commission, projects in the CIP were categorized into four different implementation timeframes based on urgency, facility age and lifecycles, community priorities and needs.

- Short-Term Priority Tier #1 (0-6 Years);
- Short-Term Priority Tier #2 (0-6 Years);
- Medium-Term (7-10 Years); and
- Long-Term (11+ Years).

This phasing is intended to provide general guidance for implementation as capital and operations funds become available. Project priorities may shift over time, based on park and facility damage or aging, and depending on partnerships, grants, voter approval of funding mechanisms, and the availability of restricted funding resources that will influence implementation.

The PROS Plan represents a snapshot in time and cannot anticipate all projects that may be needed over the planning horizon. New unforeseen ideas, community needs, and projects will certainly arise in the future. To assist the City focus on priority projects as it identifies implementation schedules, the PROS Plan introduces the following evaluation process to help prioritize capital projects.

Using clear and understandable criteria helps the City make transparent decisions about which projects to move forward first. The criteria also integrate community priorities identified through the PROS Plan's engagement process, ensuring future decision-making accounts for community needs and reflects the PROS Plan's goals and objectives.

The three-step evaluation process outlined on the following pages is designed to help staff analyze the proposed project or initiative. Projects that satisfy multiple criteria, promote PROS Plan goals, align with community priorities, and support system realities should be prioritized.



Irene Rinehart Riverfront Park



Unity Park

STEP 1: ALIGNMENT WITH PLAN GOALS

Which of the PROS Plan's goals does the project promote?

- **Parks:** Does the project provide a variety of parks reflecting unique community needs?
- **Park Amenities and Facilities:** Does the project provide high quality, accessible, and diverse amenities and facilities?
- **Indoor Facilities:** Does the project support enriching year-round recreation options?
- **Trails:** Does the project connect and expand trails for recreation, park access, and mobility?
- **Programs/Services:** Does the project facilitate programs, sports, social gatherings, or events?
- **Maintenance:** Does the project strategically maintain and manage assets or reduce maintenance costs?
- **Natural Resources:** Does the project restore natural resources or connect residents to the natural environment?
- **Partnerships:** Does the project involve or expand local collaboration?
- **Sustainable Funding:** Does the project use resources wisely and support ongoing asset management?

STEP 2: ALIGNMENT WITH KEY COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

Which of these community priorities does the project support?

- **Aquatic Opportunities:** Does the project support new, replaced, or improved aquatic or water-based opportunities?
- **Indoor Recreation:** Does the project support new or improved indoor recreation opportunities along with any associated indoor/outdoor improvements to support facility programming, access, and use?
- **Trails and Pathways:** Does the project support physical access to, between, or within parks and facilities or better connect neighborhoods and key destinations? **Family-Friendly Options:** Does the project support family-friendly park facilities or recreation opportunities?
- **Reinvestment in the Existing System:** Does the project repair or replace older park features?

STEP 3: ALIGNMENT WITH PARK SYSTEM REALITIES

Does the project align with any of these system realities? Is there funding available?

- **Urgent Need:** Does the project support an urgent need such as a safety issue, regulatory requirement, grant deadline, or an acquisition opportunity?
- **In Process:** Is the project already planned or underway (e.g., identified in the City's CIP or includes completed site planning, feasibility studies, or permitting)? Has funding already been identified?
- **Alignment with Other City Initiatives:** Does the project coincide with other City initiatives or goals such as serving new growth areas, completing the Circle the City loop trail, enhancing downtown, or increasing tourism and economic impacts?
- **Financially Sustainable:** Has capital and ongoing operations funding been identified for the project? Does the project reduce costs, increase revenues, or increase maintenance and operational efficiencies? Does the project leverage available resources, such as existing staffing or volunteers, equipment, facilities, City-owned or partner sites, funding, grants or donations, and/or partner contributions?
- **Greatest Impact:** Does the project serve a large number of residents, address needs at a popular site, or address a citywide or other high demand need?

SIX-YEAR ACTION PLAN (SUSTAINABLE FUNDING PLAN)

For RCO compliance, the PROS Plan presents a six-year Action Plan and matching funding strategy, identifying priority projects based on anticipated funding levels over the next six years. The City does not currently have the resources to implement some of the projects that are most important to residents. If various funding sources can be increased, the City will be able to accomplish more.

For this reason, Action Plan projects are divided into two tiers:

- **Tier #1 Priority Projects:** This list represents the highest priorities to complete if the City is relying on current funding sources and typical funding levels.
- **Tier #2 Priority Projects:** This list identifies the next group of key projects to implement, if new potential funding sources are obtained.

Both tiers of projects are generally matched with funding sources to determine an appropriate funding strategy for implementation over the next six years. Table 6-3 lists these priority projects and their total estimated costs.

TABLE 6-3: SIX-YEAR PRIORITY PROJECTS (TIERS 1 AND 2)

TIER 1: Priorities Based on Typical Funding Sources	
Park/Project	Capital Cost Assumption
Irene Rinehart Riverfront Park	
Add nature-themed playground	\$150,000
Improve trails and replace pedestrian bridges	\$75,000
Rotary Park	
Build Rotary Park Fieldhouse and front/side parking	n/a*
Add landscaping around Fieldhouse and connecting sidewalks	\$250,000
Kiwanis Park	
Replace playground with new inclusive, universal play area	\$900,000
Lions Mountain View Park	
Replace play equipment	\$375,000
North Alder Street Park	
Add a sprayground	\$305,000
Veterans Memorial Park	
Repair roof	\$500,000
Complete facility maintenance and repairs - HVAC on one side	\$150,000
Evaluate adaptive reuse analysis of existing building	\$150,000
Plan and design a new indoor aquatic facility (location TBD)	\$150,000
West Ellensburg Park	
Replace playground/play equipment	\$150,000
North Central Community Park (New)	
Acquire 4-6 acres of parkland	\$500,000
TIER 1 TOTAL	\$3,655,000

TABLE 6-3: SIX-YEAR PRIORITY PROJECTS (TIERS 1 AND 2) (Continued)

TIER 2: Additional Priorities Based on Potential Funding Sources	
Park/Project	Capital Cost Assumption
Kiwanis Park	
Add skate park	\$545,000
McElroy Park	
Upgrade to permanent restroom	\$450,000
Skate Park	
Create a site master plan	\$37,500
Redevelop a portion of the site for park use**	\$165,000
Veterans Memorial Park	
Replace playground	\$375,000
North Central Community Park (New)	
Develop site master plan	\$150,000
Develop community park	\$3,750,000
PR 1 Railroad Tracks to Palouse to Cascades Trail (New)	
Acquire 3.89 acres of land for trail corridor	\$389,000
PR 2 Northern Loop/PTC Connection (New)	
Acquire 11.01 acres of land for trail corridor	\$1,101,000
TIER 2 TOTAL	\$6,962,500

* No capital cost is shown for the Fieldhouse development, since it will be built by a developer and leased to City for operations.

**Approximately 25% of the existing site will be redeveloped for park use. The remaining portion will be transferred to another City department for redevelopment as downtown parking (not costed here).

SIX-YEAR CAPITAL FUNDING

The City of Ellensburg has historically relied on two primary regular funding sources to implement parks capital projects: impact fees and real estate excise taxes (REET 2). In addition to these sources, the City also has insurance monies to spend on projects related to the replacement of the Ellensburg Racquet and Recreation Center that was destroyed in a fire in 2022. Sustainable capital funding that relies on existing funding sources (at typical funding levels) may be available to fund Tier 1 priority projects.

- **Impact Fees:** Impact fees are charged to new residential development and must be used for capital projects that serve the needs of growth. Projects such as land acquisition and new park improvements are fully eligible to be funded by impact fees, while other projects such as improvements to existing parks and trails may be partially eligible for the portion of projects that increase capacity of the parks system. (Impact fees cannot be used for maintenance, operations, programming, or the replacement of an existing facility.) If Ellensburg's impact fees rates, fee generation, and pace of new residential development remain consistent with historic trends, park impact fees may provide more than one million dollars in capital funding over six years.

- **REET 2:** REET 2 funds are generated through a 0.25% tax on real estate sales. Assuming real estate sales remain consistent with historic trends, REET 2 funds are estimated to generate more than \$2.1 million over six years. REET 2 funds may be used for a broader range of capital projects than impact fees. REET 2 funds may be used to fund projects that are not impact fee eligible or the portion of costs that are not impact fee eligible.
- **Insurance Funds:** The City has \$7 million in insurance monies, which are intended to support the development and operations of the new Fieldhouse at Rotary Park. If a developer builds this facility, the City anticipates using this funding to help cover the costs of leasing and operating the facility, including addressing staffing expenses, operations, and maintenance. However, some funding may be used to support City capital projects around the Fieldhouse to support access or indoor/outdoor uses. Tier 1 priority capital projects include \$250,000 for adding landscaping around the Fieldhouse and connecting sidewalks. The remaining \$6.75 million in insurance funds would more likely be used for Fieldhouse operations and maintenance. (See Maintenance and Operations Funding).

Table 6-4 shows how these three funding sources will provide sustainable revenues to implement most, but not all, of the Tier 1 priority projects in the six-year Action Plan. Total project costs for Tier 1 priority projects are nearly \$3.7 million in capital costs.

TABLE 6-4: SIX-YEAR ACTION PLAN FOR TIER 1 PROJECTS

Park/Project	Percentage Considered Capacity Enhancement	Typical Funding Sources		
		Impact Fees	REET 2	Fieldhouse Insurance Funds
Irene Rinehart Riverfront Park				
Add nature-themed playground	100%	\$150,000		
Improve trails and replace pedestrian bridges	25%	\$18,750	\$56,250	
Rotary Park				
Build Rotary Park Fieldhouse and front/side parking (1)	100%			
Add landscaping around Fieldhouse and connecting sidewalks	100%			\$250,000
Kiwanis Park				
Replace playground with new inclusive, universal play area	10%	\$90,000	\$810,000	
Lions Mountain View Park				
Replace play equipment	0%		\$375,000	
North Alder Street Park				
Add a sprayground	100%	\$305,000		
Veterans Memorial Park				
Repair roof	0%		\$500,000	
Complete facility maintenance and repairs - HVAC on one side	0%		\$150,000	
Evaluate adaptive reuse analysis of existing building	0%		\$150,000	
Plan and design a new indoor aquatic facility (location TBD) (2)	100%		\$150,000	

TABLE 6-4: SIX-YEAR ACTION PLAN FOR TIER 1 PROJECTS (Continued)

Park/Project	Percentage Considered Capacity Enhancement	Typical Funding Sources		
		Impact Fees	REET 2	Fieldhouse Insurance Funds
West Ellensburg Park				
Replace playground/play equipment	0%		\$150,000	
North Central Community Park				
Acquire 4-6 acres of parkland	100%	\$500,000		
Subtotal - Tier 1 Priorities		\$1,063,750	\$2,341,250	\$250,000
Forecasted Resources		\$1,028,000	\$2,146,800	\$7,000,000
Surplus/Deficit		(\$35,750)	(\$194,450)	\$6,750,000

(1) No capital funding is shown for Fieldhouse construction, since it will be built by a developer and leased to City for operations.

(2) The adaptive reuse analysis of existing building and plan and design for new indoor aquatic facility at Veterans Memorial Park would be eligible for PFD funding, if adopted quickly. If the PFD revenues were used to fund these two projects, REET 2 revenues would show a surplus available to cover the deficit in projects for which impact fees are identified as the available revenue resource.

Of these project costs, \$1.06 million are capacity enhancing or impact fee eligible. The collection of impact fees is dependent on new growth. Even if this growth occurs at levels that are consistent with previous average expenditures, there may be insufficient impact fee revenues to fully fund eligible projects. REET 2 funds also may be insufficient. Together, an additional \$230,200 may be needed. This overage could be offset if voters approve a Public Facilities District before the projects associated with the Kittitas Valley Memorial Pool & Fitness Center move forward.

POTENTIAL CAPITAL FUNDING

Additional funding, and a greater variety of funding sources, will be necessary to fund the capital costs of Tier 2 priority projects, any deficits for Tier 1 priority projects, and any additional projects that arise over the next six years. Tier 2 priority project costs total \$6.96 million, of which more than \$5 million are capacity enhancing or impact fee eligible (Table 6-5 on the next page). To implement Tier 2 projects, the City should consider the additional potential funding sources, which may include but are not limited to the following funding sources.

INCREASED IMPACT FEES

The City of Ellensburg must update their impact fee rates to comply with Washington State Law in coordination with updates to the Comprehensive Plan. With this update, the City has the opportunity to update their rate study and adopt increased impact fee rates based on the current parks system, population growth rates, and needs to serve growth. RCW 82.02.050 (5)(a) requires that impact fees be used for public facilities included in their capital facilities plan. Including the range of projects that are eligible for impact fees provides the City with flexibility to use any collected increased impact fees on projects that serve the needs of growth. The City may also adopt an annual inflation adjustment to ensure that park impact fees keep pace with inflation.

At current rates, the City's impact fees will not cover these Tier 2 projects. Further evaluation is warranted to determine what portion of these projects may be covered by increased impact fees, or whether additional funding sources will be needed.

GRANTS

State and federal government grant funding is another resource that the City of Ellensburg may leverage to support capital costs for parks. Grants are a limited resource due to typical requirements for matching funds, application requirements that use limited staff resources, and are restricted in use to the project for which an application was submitted. However, grant funding can be a suitable resource for selected projects.

Grant funds are opportunity-based, meaning past successes in obtaining grants are not necessarily the best measure for the amounts or types of funding that may be received in the future. Based on an evaluation of grant expenditures from 2019-2024, grants revenues for capital projects have covered approximately \$21,000 over six years.

PARTNERSHIPS

The City of Ellensburg has successfully leveraged partnerships to fund a variety of projects in the past. These types of opportunities may be leveraged to fund more projects than existing funding resources allow. The City will continue to collaborate with local partners and businesses – typically to move forward with smaller projects or portions of larger projects.

TABLE 6-5: SIX-YEAR ACTION PLAN FOR TIER 2 PROJECTS

Park/Project	Percentage Considered Capacity Enhancement	Potential Funding Sources		
		Increased Impact Fees	PFD	Bonds, Park District, Grants, Partnerships
Kiwanis Park				
Add skate park	10%	\$54,500		\$490,500
McElroy Park				
Upgrade to permanent restroom	0%			\$450,000
Skate Park				
Create a site master plan	0%			\$150,000
Redevelop site	0%			\$660,000
Veterans Memorial Park				
Replace playground	0%			\$375,000
North Central Community Park (New)				
Develop site master plan	100%	\$150,000		
Develop community park	100%	\$3,750,000		
PR 1 Railroad Tracks to Palouse to Cascades Trail (New)				
Acquire 3.89 acres of land for trail corridor	100%	\$389,000		

TABLE 6-5: SIX-YEAR ACTION PLAN FOR TIER 2 PROJECTS (Continued)

Park/Project	Percentage Considered Capacity Enhancement	Potential Funding Sources		
		Increased Impact Fees	PFD	Bonds, Park District, Grants, Partnerships
PR 2 Northern Loop/PTC Connection (New)				
Acquire 11.01 acres of land for trail corridor	100%	\$1,101,000		
Subtotal - Tier 2 Priorities		\$5,444,500	\$0	\$2,125,500
Forecasted Resources		(TBD)	\$8,000,000	(TBD)

Note: No Tier 2 capital projects are eligible for PFD funding. PFD funds must be spent on projects associated with recreation facilities that cost more than \$10 million. However, two projects identified in Tier 1 are eligible for PFD funds. The remaining PFD funding is intended to support Fieldhouse operations and maintenance.

PUBLIC FACILITIES DISTRICT

Kittitas County and the City of Ellensburg are exploring options to form a Public Facilities District (PFD) to cover the costs of development, improvements, and operations of regional facilities that cost at least \$10 million and serve a regional population. This PFD is envisioned as a County-wide district to support three major facilities, one in north Kittitas County and two in Ellensburg. It would require approval by voters across the County. Cities or counties may transfer eligible properties to the PFD, and a PFD may enter into agreements with a city, county, or state entity for the “design, financing, acquisition, development, construction, reconstruction, lease, remodeling, alternation, maintenance, equipping, reequipping, repair, operation, or management of one or more facilities of the parties” according to RCW 36.100.010 (8). If voters approve the PFD, the City of Ellensburg estimates that their share of anticipated PFD funding may total approximately \$2 million annually, contributing a maximum of \$8 million over the next six years, assuming the district is formed and begins collecting taxes in 2027 or 2028.

PFDs have authority to levy a variety of taxes, including sales taxes up to 0.2%, the funding option under consideration by Kittitas County and the City of Ellensburg. PFDs also have the option to levy admission taxes, parking taxes, general obligation bonds, and user charges and fees. All taxes authorized by a PFD require approval by a majority of voters in the district. Since 2011, four of nine ballot measures for PFD sales taxes have passed throughout the State of Washington.

While no Tier 2 projects would be eligible to use PFD funds, two projects in Tier 1 would be if these were not completed prior to PFD formation. However, PFD funds could support other expenditures related to the Fieldhouse or a new aquatic facility, which could free up other funding resources for different types of projects.

BONDS

Unlimited tax general obligation bonds are an important resource to support capital improvements. These funding measures require 60% voter approval. Bonds are designed to generate property taxes sufficient to repay the amount of debt required for the specific capital purpose for which they were passed. The City of Ellensburg may consider a bond to fund a specific package of projects. Further public polling may be needed to evaluate public support for a bond measure, including potential taxing rates and the mix of projects.

GENERAL FUND

Unrestricted revenues from the General Fund may be used for both capital and operations. However, the City of Ellensburg typically uses General Fund dollars to support maintenance, facility operations, programming, and events. The City may opt to use General Fund revenues for priority parks capital investment; however, other sources should be considered first.

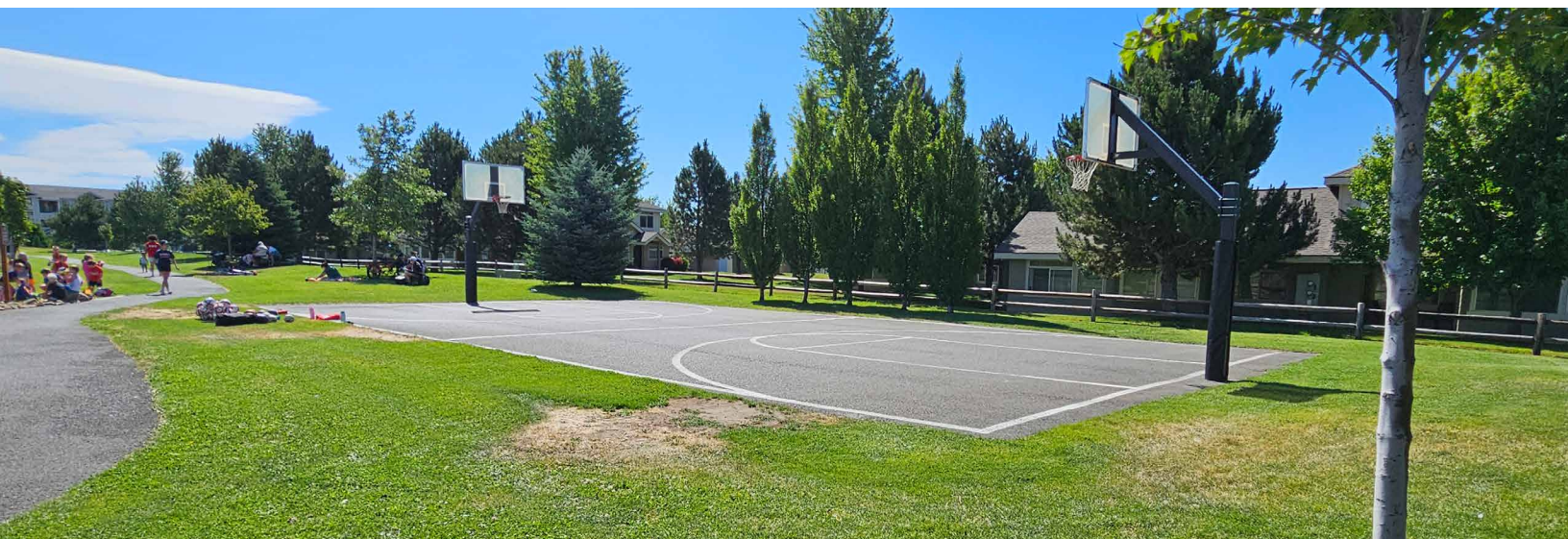
PARK DISTRICT

In addition to the public facilities district, the City of Ellensburg alone or in coordination with Kittitas County may consider forming a parks district. The City may consider either a Parks and Recreation District (PRD) or a Metropolitan Parks District (MPD), depending on the anticipated service area. Unlike the PFD, the City may consider a variety of boundary of options for a parks district, depending on the best fit for the service area, including the county, a portion of the county, or a single city. MPDs may also be initiated by a resolution of the governing bodies of the city and/or county included in the district or be initiated by a petition of 15% of registered voters. Since 2011, one third of MPD ballot measures across the State of Washington have passed. PRDs may only be initiated by a petition signed by 15% of registered voters. PRDs and MPDs have funding mechanisms available to fund parks capital and operations and maintenance costs.

Funding mechanisms include a regular property tax levy and bonds, but MPDs allow for greater revenue generation. MPDs may permanently levy up to \$0.75 per \$1,000 in assessed value. PRDs have greater restrictions in property taxes, including a 6-year limit on a maximum \$0.60 per \$1,000 in assessed value subject to approval by a supermajority of voters.

The importance of a park district is that it can fund a greater variety of projects and services. However, it may be challenging to obtain voter approval for a park district in the short term if a PFD is pursued first.

North Alder Street Park



SIX-YEAR MAINTENANCE AND OPERATIONS FUNDING

Between 2019 and 2024, Ellensburg's park and recreation facility operating costs (maintenance and recreation operations combined) have averaged approximately \$2.9 million annually. In 2024 alone, operations and maintenance costs totaled \$3.4 million. In this period, revenues dedicated to parks operations and maintenance have averaged \$450,000 annually, for a cost recovery of approximately 15.5% primarily funded through charges for services. Historically, the City of Ellensburg has used General Fund revenues to support unfunded operations, along with County contributions, grants, and donations.

Looking forward, the City may need as much as \$6.5 million annually for park maintenance and facility operations (including the Fieldhouse, new parks, and new trails), plus any leasing costs associated with the new Fieldhouse, which will be determined through the arrangement for facility development. In the short term, the City may rely on the following existing sources of funding to support operations:

- **General Fund:** General fund revenues are the largest source of funding used to support parks operations and maintenance costs. The City of Ellensburg's general fund is primarily supported by property and sales taxes, which are unrestricted in use, and allow the City to use these funds for a wide range of priority expenditures. Without the adoption or identification of new funding sources, general fund revenues are anticipated to continue to fund the deficit between operations and maintenance revenues for parks and recreation.

- **Insurance Funds:** As noted in capital funding, insurance monies are available to support the development and operations of the new Rotary Park Fieldhouse. If \$250,000 is spent on capital projects, the City will have \$6.75 million in insurance funds available for the ongoing operations and maintenance of the facility, including costs for leasing the facility, staffing, operations, and maintenance.
- **Charges for Services:** The City of Ellensburg collects program fees, event admissions, facility rentals, and facility admissions are a core funding source for ongoing operations and maintenance costs. The City of Ellensburg receives an annual average of \$410,000 in charges for services.
- **Other Grants, Donations, and County Revenues:** Other funding sources that have historically served to support operations and maintenance include revenue from Kittitas County for the Adult Activity Center, donations, and a Health and Human Services Aging and Long-Term care grant. Together, these resources have provided an average of \$75,000 in operations and maintenance funding annually.

POTENTIAL OPERATIONS FUNDING

Since the insurance monies noted above are finite, Ellensburg will need to expand and diversify its funding sources to provide sustainable revenues dedicated to parks and recreation operations and maintenance. These potential funding sources include increased charges for services, a potential public facilities district, or a parks and recreation district.

- **Charges for Services:** Currently, the City of Ellensburg charges fees to recover approximately 15% of the cost of operations. Increasing fees, offering more profit-generating recreation programs, as well as adopting a fee philosophy and cost recovery targets will help support additional revenue generation, offering the City of Ellensburg a stronger dedicated revenue source for operations and maintenance. Additional charges for services the City may consider include event permitting fees, admissions fees, and rental and concession facilities. Note that operating assumptions for the Fieldhouse assume a much higher cost recovery rate.
- **Park and Recreation Districts:** Also noted as a mechanism to support capital projects, a Parks and Recreation District (PRD) or a Metropolitan Parks District (MPD) may be approved by voters to provide a sustainable, dedicated source of revenue for both capital costs and ongoing operations and maintenance. The City of Ellensburg may consider a parks district to support the costs of increasing park maintenance of facility operations through a dedicated property tax. It would also offer additional flexibility in the types of projects and services supported.

- **Public Facilities District:** If approved by voters, the City of Ellensburg estimates that it may receive approximately \$2 million annually (or \$8 million in the next six years), assuming formation of a PFD in 2027 and 2028. As noted in capital funding sources, approximately \$300,000 may be needed to support priority capital projects. The remaining \$7.7 million may be used to support annual operations and maintenance costs (for eligible to projects and services associated with regional facilities costing more than \$10 million). Long term, these funds will be critical to support ongoing operations costs for the new Rotary Park Fieldhouse or other eligible facilities, such as a new aquatics facility. A PFD may enter into agreements with city, county, or state entities for the “design, financing, acquisition, development, construction, reconstruction, lease, remodeling, alternation, maintenance, equipping, reequipping, repair, operation, or management of one or more facilities of the parties” according to RCW 36.100.010 (8).

In the long term, increases in recreation fees and charges, along with voter approval of at least one additional funding mechanism will be needed for sustainable maintenance and operations.



Paul Rogers Wildlife Park

NEXT STEPS

The Action Plan and Sustainable Funding Plan identify a strategy to move forward with implementing two tiers of priority projects over the next six years following adoption of the PROS Plan. Depending on funding decisions by City Council, City staff, and voters (both in Kittitas County and in the City of Ellensburg), a total of 11 projects may be implemented by 2031 based on the Department's typical funding levels. An additional 14 projects may be implemented if potential funding is secured.

As shown in Table 6-6, most projects would support adding new facilities to existing sites (development) or improving existing parks and facilities (renovation). If potential funding is available, then Tier 2 priorities such as land acquisition for a new community park and future trail corridors could be implemented. These short-term priorities reflect the City's immediate focus on addressing critical needs and advancing high-priority improvements across Ellensburg's park and recreation system.

TABLE 6-6: SIX-YEAR PRIORITY PROJECT SUMMARY

	Total Projects	# of Sites	Number of Projects			
			Acquisition	Development	Renovation	Restoration
Tier #1 Projects	11	8	0	7	4	0
Tier #2 Projects	14	9	5	5	3	1

Moving forward, City leaders, staff, partners, and voters will begin the critical work of determining the community's willingness to pay for the enhanced parks, facilities, programs and services that residents desire. As next steps to support implementation, the City should:

1. Update the City's impact fee methodology and rates in conjunction with its Comprehensive Plan update.
2. Apply for grant funding, using PROS Plan findings regarding key needs and project costs in grant applications.
3. Move forward with Fieldhouse development, continuing to explore options for County residents to approve a Public Facilities District to support sustainable, long-term operations when insurance monies are spent. This includes revising Fieldhouse operations projections and developing an operations proforma to better anticipate operations costs, leasing rates, and cost recovery rates at the new facility.
4. Publicize the results of the PROS Plan to collaborate with partners and leverage donations, especially for desired projects that did not have funding sources identified. Community commitment will be key to moving those forward.
5. Over the next several years, incorporate findings from the adaptive reuse analysis of the Veterans Memorial Pool and Fitness Center, along with a new indoor aquatic facility master plan, and results from a potential ballot measure for a new Public Facilities District or Park District to determine next steps for a new aquatic facility. This project may proceed after financial sustainability is achieved in Fieldhouse operations.
6. Apply PROS Plan findings, use the prioritization tool, and incorporate new funding estimates into annual budgeting and workplan development to implement Tier #1 and, if possible, Tier #2 projects over the next six years. These tools will continue to help sequence project implementation in the long term.

The PROS Plan is a living document, intended to be flexible and responsive as community needs, funding opportunities, and City priorities evolve. Regular updates and use will ensure the plan remains relevant and effective in supporting decisions over time. Continued leadership, investment, and collaboration among City departments, community partners, and residents will be needed to successfully implement this plan. As Ellensburg continues to grow, the PROS Plan will guide the City in enhancing its park and recreation system, which is an integral part of the community's identity and quality of life.