

1 Plan Overview



Introduction & Purpose

Introduction

Welcome to the City of Liberty Lake's Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan. This intentionally dynamic document is crafted to meet the requirements of the Growth Management Act (GMA) and maintain the city's eligibility for Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) funding, along with other potential funding sources, over the next six years and beyond. This document provides a comprehensive overview and assessment of the City's parks and recreation areas, recreational offerings, and public art. It captures the community's recreational needs and preferences through surveys, public outreach initiatives, and online tools. Furthermore, the Master Plan establishes a vision, sets planning goals, and evaluates the current level of service offered by the existing mix of city parks and open spaces.

Purpose

The City of Liberty Lake's Parks and Recreation Master Plan is a forward-looking and community-focused initiative designed to guide the future planning of parks, recreation, open space, and trails in the area. As the city experiences growth and evolving community needs, this plan provides a comprehensive framework for meeting parks and programming level of service gaps and enhancing access to quality, in-demand recreational amenities and natural open spaces.

At its core, the Master Plan reflects a shared commitment among the City of Liberty Lake and its partners to invest in the health, well-being, and quality of life of all residents. The plan integrates local values with best practices in park and trail development, placemaking, and community engagement.

Drawing from extensive public input, demographic analysis, and environmental context, the Master Plan outlines key goals, strategies, and priority projects designed to create a more connected, resilient, and inclusive system of public spaces. Whether it's enhancing neighborhood parks, expanding multi-use trails, protecting habitat areas, or developing a potential recreation center, this plan serves as a roadmap for thoughtful, equitable growth and environmental stewardship, ensuring long-term community resilience and livability.



Vision & Values

Vision

"The City of Liberty Lake creates spaces where the community is welcomed to gather, play, and connect."

Values

Liberty Lake will offer a **connected and inclusive parks and recreation system** that celebrates community, nature, and its heritage.

By providing vibrant and safe spaces for play, wellness, and gathering, the city will foster **civic pride and stewardship**.

The City strives to **preserve green spaces** that sustain Liberty Lake's character and quality of life for generations to come.





Regulatory Requirements

Growth Management Act Requirements

The State of Washington, under RCW 36.70A.070 'Comprehensive Plans - Mandatory Elements', outlines the components that each city's comprehensive plan must include, stating the plan "shall consist of a map or maps, and descriptive text covering objectives, principles, and standards used to develop the comprehensive plan. The plan shall be an internally consistent document, and all elements shall be consistent with the future land use map. A comprehensive plan shall be adopted and amended with public participation as provided in RCW 36.70A.140.

Each comprehensive plan shall include a plan, scheme, or design for each of the following (with emphasis on the parks and recreation element in bold, italicized text):

1) A land use element designating the proposed general distribution and general location and extent of the uses of land, where appropriate, for agriculture, timber production, housing, commerce, industry, recreation, open spaces, general aviation airports, public utilities, public facilities, and other land uses.
2) A housing element ensuring the vitality and character of established residential neighborhoods.
3) A capital facilities plan element consisting of an inventory of existing capital elements, forecasts of future needs, proposed locations and capacities, a six-year financing plan, and a requirement to reassess if probable funding falls short of meeting existing needs. Park and recreation facilities shall be included in the capital facilities plan element.
4) A utilities element consisting of the general location, proposed location, and capacity of all existing and proposed utilities.
5) Rural element including lands that are not designated for urban growth, agriculture, forest, or mineral resources.
6) A transportation element that implements, and is consistent with, the land use element.
7) An economic development element establishing local goals, policies, objectives, and provisions for economic growth and vitality and a high quality of life. A city that has chosen to be a residential community is exempt from the economic development element requirement of this subsection.
8) ***A park and recreation element that implements, and is consistent with, the capital facilities plan element as it relates to park and recreation facilities. The element shall include:***
    a) ***Estimates of park and recreation demand for at least a ten-year period;***
    b) ***an evaluation of facilities and service needs; and***
    c) ***an evaluation of intergovernmental coordination opportunities to provide regional approaches for meeting park and recreational demand.***

Washington Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) Requirements

The Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) is a state agency that manages several grant programs to create outdoor recreation opportunities, protect the best of the state's wildlife habitat and farmland, and help return salmon from near extinction. To be eligible to apply for specific grant funding programs, a municipality or agency must have adopted a recreation or conservation plan before applying for a grant, and plans must meet specified requirements. The methodology, organization, and content of this PROST plan addresses the critical RCO eligibility guidelines.

City of Liberty Lake Requirements

The recommendations for improvements detailed in this Parks and Recreation Master Plan align with the City of Liberty Lake's Comprehensive Plan and Municipal Code.

The Liberty Lake Municipal Code includes provisions related to parks, recreation, and open space. Parks & Recreation facilities and uses such as athletic fields, playgrounds, picnic areas, nature resource preservation areas, and outdoor swimming facilities are permitted uses in all zones. Recreational exercise facilities are permitted in the Mixed-Use zones (M-1, M-2, and M-3); Commercial zones (C-1 and C-2); and the Industrial zone, with additional limited use in areas zoned as "Open Space" if the facility complies with the development standards of the "Open Space" zone. Community center facilities are permitted or granted limited use in all zones but the Industrial zone. Liberty Lake has two Special Area Plan Overlay District where parks and community centers are fully permitted, and recreational exercise facilities are also allowed. Liberty Lake's development code Article 10-2B-1E and 10-2C-1E specifies that development standards within the single family and mixed residential districts are based on the principle of providing direct and convenient access to schools, parks, and neighborhood services. In other words, development standards within Liberty Lake are intended to produce a park system with sufficient parklands to serve the entire city, connected by a safe, accessible, and multimodal bicycle lane and sidewalk network.

Liberty Lake's Parks and Recreation Master Plan informs the 6-year and 20-year Capital Improvement Plans (CIP), plans which further inform the City's near-term and long-term budgeting, procurement, and construction needs. The recommendations in this plan are also flexible and provisional to allow for unforeseen future opportunities that may arise during this plan's performance period.



Process

While RCO has no specific requirements for the number of pages, number of chapters, or format for comprehensive parks plans, it is expected that the plan will capture the needs of the organization and, more importantly, the quality of life desired by the community.

The process used to develop the City of Liberty Lake's Parks and Recreation Master Plan is modeled after elements noted in RCO Manual 2: Planning Policies & Guidelines. Whether this plan supports a grant application for a capital project (facility development and land acquisition) or a non-capital project (architectural, engineering, planning, etc.,) the organization of this plan and the process followed is purposefully designed to capture the elements expected by RCO.

Aside from this, the first section, the project overview, this plan is structured around six primary sections or elements needed for an effective comprehensive parks plan:

Community Context

This chapter provides the background context of who lives in Liberty Lake and establishes a future population forecast for later estimates of parks and recreation demands. Comparisons are drawn between the city's demographics compared to the county and state to identify higher need groups which ought to be considered in the parks master planning process.

Inventory & Assessment

This chapter details the physical spaces and assets in and around Liberty Lake, establishing the current condition of parks, facilities, and recreational infrastructure, along with a preliminary tree canopy assessment. The chapter also inventories recreational programming and public art, documenting the range of activities, events, and cultural assets offered by the city and its partners and comparing them to peer communities. Finally, it describes regional parks, trails, and recreation amenities that complement the local system and expand access to nature-based and destination recreation opportunities.

Public Involvement

This chapter describes how the Liberty Lake Parks and Recreation Master Plan planning process gave the public ample opportunity to be involved in plan development and adoption.

Demand and Needs Analysis

This chapter presents an evaluation of park, recreation, and open space demands in Liberty Lake using a combination of quantitative metrics, qualitative input, and comparative benchmarking. It outlines the analytical framework used to assess level of service, including park acreage, facility distribution, walkable access, and trail and sidewalk connectivity, and describes how these measures are informed by national standards and peer community comparisons.

The chapter also documents recreation trends, community preferences, and projected population growth to frame future demand scenarios, and includes an assessment of park access, equity, and non-motorized connectivity through mapping and network analysis. Together, these components establish the basis for identifying future park, facility, and infrastructure needs and informing long-range planning and investment decisions.

Goals and Objectives

The plan must support Liberty Lake's park and recreation mission, including the current project, with broad statements of intent, or goals that capture a community's desired outdoor recreation resources.

Capital Improvement Program

This chapter identifies and prioritizes recommended capital projects to address current deficiencies, accommodate future demand, and guide investment in Liberty Lake's parks, recreation facilities, and trails over the planning horizon.

Plan Adoption

This section outlines the formal review and adoption process for the Liberty Lake Parks and Recreation Master Plan, including required approvals to establish the plan as an official policy document guiding future decision-making and implementation.

Figure 1-1: Liberty Lake Parks and Recreation Master Plan - Process and Report Structure

