6.0 PARKS AND RECREATION ELEMENT

6.1 Introduction

The purpose of the Parks and Recreation Element is to provide goals and policies that guide the acquisition, development and management of parks, natural areas, trails and recreation facilities and programs for the City of Covington. This Element is divided into seven sections to address planning context, service standards, community needs, goals and policies, and implementation.

The Parks and Recreation Element is derived from the community planning process and analysis used to develop the 2010 Parks, Recreation and Open Space (PROS) Plan, which is a companion document to this Element and is incorporated herein by reference. It provides an inventory of park and recreation facilities and programs in Covington; outlines services standards for parks and facilities; identifies near-term community recreation demand; and presents a strategy for providing additional facilities and programs to meet the needs of the City's residents and visitors.

6.2 Planning Context

This section discusses legislative directives (including the GMA and the CPP) as well as the Parks and Recreation Element's relationship to other Comprehensive Plan elements and other community plans.

6.2.1 Legislative Directives

Growth Management Act

While the Parks Element is considered an optional element under the GMA, park and recreation facilities are required to be included in the mandatory capital facilities plan element. The Act identifies 13 broad planning goals to guide the development of comprehensive plans and development regulations (codified in RCW 36.70A). Of these, three goals directly influence the development and implementation of the City's parks, recreation and open space programs.

- Retain open space, enhance recreational opportunities, conserve fish and wildlife habitat, increase access to natural resource lands and water, and develop parks and recreation facilities. (RCW 36.70A.020(9))
- Protect the environment and enhance the state's high quality of life, including air and water quality, and the availability of water. (RCW 36.70A.020(10))
- Identify and encourage the preservation of lands, sites, and structures, that have historical or archaeological significance. (RCW 36.70A.020(13))

This Parks and Recreation Element aims to meet the intent of the requirements outlined in the GMA and provide a clear direction toward the protection and expansion of recreation opportunities for the citizens of Covington.

Countywide Planning Policies

The King County Countywide Planning Policies state that an open space system should be provided and that physical and visual access to rivers, lakes, and streams should be protected throughout the county. The Parks, Open Space and Cultural Resources chapter of the King County Comprehensive Plan makes significant references to the King County Park, Recreation, and Open Space Plan adopted in 2004 and outlines 32 policy statements pertaining to the provision of regional parks, natural areas and resource lands. The plan notes the need for cooperation, coordination and partnerships with public agencies, private groups and individuals to develop the regional parks and open space system.

6.2.2 Relationship to Other Comprehensive Plan Elements

The vision, goals, policies and recommendations of the Parks and Recreation Element have all been coordinated with, and are supportive of, the framework that has been established in Covington's Comprehensive Plan. This Element not only provides for the recreational needs of Covington's residents, but also is supportive of a broader network of regional greenspace and trails to surround the community.

The Parks and Recreation Element functions in concert with the Environmental Element by establishing policies for the acquisition, development and management of City-owned natural areas. The Land Use Element is supported through policies aimed at the continued provision of facilities and services to support anticipated growth. In addition, the Parks and Recreation Element establishes

policies for the coordination of funding and level of service requirements set forth in the Capital Facilities Element.

6.2.3 Relationship to Other Parks and Recreation Plans

In preparing the Parks and Recreation Element, the park, trail and open space systems of the City of Kent, Maple Valley and King County were considered. The planning direction established by Washington's Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Planning (SCORP) program and RCW 36.70 also provided a regional basis for the Parks and Recreation Element. In addition, several planning documents and studies have been prepared since Covington incorporated in 1997 that have influenced parks and recreation service in the City. A summary of each of these is listed below.

2006 Covington Parks and Recreation Department Strategic Plan

This strategic plan is based in the Parks and Recreation Department's mission, vision and values and has three major purposes: present a long-term vision of success to direct planning and management efforts; prioritize projects to focus funding and budgeting; develop a management process that considers existing commitments when new requests and initiatives are presented.

2006 Community Forestry Plan

This draft plan includes the City's tree ordinance, tree establishment and maintenance procedures, a park and open space tree inventory and a 2007-2013 action plan. The Arbor Day program and the annual application to the Tree City USA membership program are highlighted as part of the educational component of the action plan.

2003 Arts Comprehensive Plan

This 6-year plan outlines the goals, objectives and performance measures for the Arts Commission and the Parks Department. The plan promotes the use and appreciation of the arts in the City's activities and facilities, while assisting the City in meeting the planning requirements for potential funding sources.

2002 Comprehensive Recreation Program Plan

The plan outlines a specific focus for city recreation services and identifies key recreation policies and practices to facilitate service delivery. The plan lists the vision, guiding principles, goals,

implementation strategies and a pricing policy for recreational programming.

6.2.4 Community Vision for Parks & Recreation

The future vision for Covington's park and recreation system is summarized as follows:

- *Covington is responsive to community needs*. The City will establish specialized recreation services and acquire additional parkland to meet the needs of its growing and diverse community. Partnering with other agencies, Covington will pursue opportunities and innovative solutions for new facilities and inclusive access to services.
- *Covington promotes active lifestyles, personal fitness and a greater sense of place and community*. Through joint marketing efforts and partnership development with regional health and fitness providers, Covington will strive to be one of the healthiest cities in Washington.
- *Covington is a walkable community with an expanded trails network connecting parks and natural areas with neighborhoods and downtown*. This includes a comprehensive system of on-road bicycle routes as well as off-road trails, so people have alternative transportation options and access to passive recreation opportunities for wellness and exploration.
- *Safe, attractive, well-kept parks and natural areas will be a key contributor to the city's health and economic prosperity*. Community outreach and education will build awareness of the benefits of parks, trails and recreation, along with encouraging residents to participate in improving their park system.

6.2.5 Planning Area Description

The City of Covington is situated in King County, between the cities of Kent and Maple Valley and maintains a modest system of neighborhood and community parklands, along with providing an aquatic center and aquatics programming. Additionally, a significant number of small, private pocket parks and greenspaces have been added throughout the City as a result of significant new residential development over the past ten years.

Covington's landscape character includes rolling foothills divided by three major creek drainages: Soos Creek, Little Soos Creek and Jenkins Creek. These drainage courses and forested slopes are among some of Covington's most striking features. With the exception of the commercial town center, most of the community retains natural greenbelts, and the vegetation and topography of

these greenspaces offer a variety of recreational, aesthetic and educational opportunities which serve as the context for the Parks and Recreation Element.

6.3 Park System Definitions and Standards

This section provides information for adopted service standards and describes the following park classifications within the City:

- Community parks
- Neighborhood parks
- Pocket Parks
- Natural Areas & Greenspaces
- Trails & Bikeways
- Special Facilities

6.3.1 Community Parks

Community parks are larger sites developed for organized play, contain a wider array of facilities and, as a result, appeal to a more diverse group of users. Community parks are generally 20 to 50 acres in size, should meet a minimum size of 20 acres when possible and serve residents within a 1-mile radius of the site. In areas without neighborhood parks, community parks can also serve as local neighborhood parks.

In general, community park facilities are designed for organized or intensive recreational activities and sports, although passive components such as pathways, picnic areas and natural areas are highly encouraged and complementary to active use facilities. Since community parks serve a larger area and offer more facilities than neighborhood parks, parking and restroom facilities are provided. Community parks may also incorporate community facilities, such as community centers, senior centers or aquatic facilities.

6.3.2 Neighborhood Parks

Neighborhood parks are small park areas designed for unstructured play and limited active and passive recreation. They are generally 3 to 5 acres in size, depending on a variety of factors including neighborhood need, physical location and opportunity, and should meet a minimum size of 2 acre in size when possible.

Neighborhood parks are intended to serve residential areas within short walking distance (up to ½-mile radius) of the park and should

be geographically distributed throughout the community. Access is mostly pedestrian, and park sites should be located so that persons living within the service area will not have to cross a major arterial street or other significant natural or man-made barrier, such as ravines and railroad tracks, to get to the site. Additionally, these parks should be located along road frontages to improve visual access and community awareness of the sites.

Generally, developed neighborhood parks include amenities such as pedestrian paths, picnic tables, benches, play equipment, a multi-use open field for youth soccer and baseball, sport courts or multi-purpose paved areas, landscaping and irrigation. Restrooms are not provided due to high construction and maintenance costs. Parking is also not usually provided; however, on-street, ADA accessible parking may be included.

6.3.3 Pocket Parks

Pocket parks are very small and serve a limited radius (up to ¼-mile) from the site; they provide passive and play-oriented recreational opportunities. Examples of pocket parks can include a tot lot with play equipment such as a climber, slide or swings; a viewpoint; or waterfront access areas such as at street ends. A small urban plaza or civic recognition project may also be considered a pocket park. Parking is not provided at pocket parks, although lighting may be used for security and safety.

6.3.4 Natural Areas & Greenspaces

Natural areas

Natural areas are those which are preserved to maintain the natural character of the site and are managed to protect valuable ecological systems, such as riparian corridors and wetlands, and to preserve native habitat and biodiversity. In managing for their ecological value, these natural areas may contain a diversity of native vegetation that provides fish and wildlife habitat and embodies the beauty and character of the local landscape. Low-impact activities, such as walking, nature observation, and fishing are allowed, where appropriate, and horseback riding is also permitted on certain sites.

Greenspaces

Greenspaces are passive-use open spaces and turf areas without developed amenities or structured functions.

6.3.5 Trails & Bikeways

Trails

Trails are non-motorized transportation networks separated from roads. Trails can be developed to accommodate multiple uses or shared uses, such as pedestrians, in-line skaters, bicyclists and equestrians. Trail alignments aim to emphasize a strong relationship with the natural environment and may not provide the most direct route from a practical transportation viewpoint.

Bikeways

Bikeways are different than trails in that they are within road rights-of-way and their principal focus is on safe and efficient transportation routes. Bikeways serve distinctly different user groups than trail users. Typical bikeway user groups would include bicycle commuters, fitness enthusiasts and competitive athletes. Their emphasis is on speed, which can create conflicts with recreation-type trails and their respective user groups.

6.3.6 Special Facilities

Special facilities include single-purpose recreational areas such as skateparks and display gardens, along with community centers, aquatic centers and public plazas in or near the downtown core. Additionally, publicly-accessible sport fields and play areas of public schools are classified as special facilities; while they often serve as proxies to public parks, school sites have restricted daytime access and offer limited recreational use during non-school hours.

6.3.7 Service Standards

Service standards for park facilities are one recognized method of expressing the quantity of recreation service provided for a given level of demand. It is represented as a ratio of quantity versus demand, and it is commonly expressed as a number of acres or miles of facilities per a given population, such as 3 acres of neighborhood park per every 1,000 people or 0.75 miles of trail per 1,000 people.

Table 6.1 shows the adopted service standards for parks and recreational facilities, including trails, in Covington. It is important to bear in mind that the suggested standards are an expression of minimum acceptable facilities for the citizens of Covington. The service standards are a starting point for local level of service assessments. Only the four (4) service standards that will be

adopted for the purposes of funding in Chapter 10 (Capital Facilities Element) are presented in the section below.

Table 6.1. Parks & Recreation Service Standards

Classification	Size Guideline	Proximity Guideline	Service Standard
Community Parks	20-50 acres; 20-acre minimum desired	up to 1-mile radius	5 acres / 1,000
Neighborhood Parks	3-5 acres; 2-acre minimum desired	up to 1/2-mile radius	3 acres / 1,000
Pocket Parks	NA	up to 1/4-mile radius	
Natural Areas & Greenspace	NA	NA	6 acres / 1,000
Trails & Bikeways	NA	NA	0.75 miles / 1,000

Neighborhood and pocket parks are combined for a service standard of 3 acres per 1,000 residents.

6.4 Park Inventory and Facilities

This section provides a summary inventory and overview of Covington's existing public and private developed parks, trails, and recreational facilities.

Covington provides nearly 170 acres of public parkland and natural areas distributed among 24 city-owned sites. A number of other public and private open spaces exist throughout Covington and add to the City's recreation resources.

The major non-city, public open space is Soos Creek Park, a 731-acre regional park which partially lies within the western edge of the City's boundaries. This park forms a greenbelt that separates Covington from Kent and includes the Soos Creek Trail, a 1.4-mile multi-purpose trail with parallel equestrian trail. Lake Meridian Park, operated by the Kent Parks Department, is located immediately west of Soos Creek Park and is also heavily used by Covington residents.

Covington residents are also served by several small parks operated by homeowner associations as private parks. The largest privately-owned, publicly-accessible open space is Camp McCullough, a 38-acre Christian campground, located on the western shore of Pipe Lake.

Schools of the Kent and Tahoma School Districts provide additional open space and active recreation opportunities for area youth with athletic fields, tennis courts, basketball courts and playgrounds. Since the City does not own or operate any athletic

fields at the present, individual sports leagues work with each school district via use and maintenance agreements to facilitate practice and game play for local youth sport teams.

Table 6.2 summarizes the existing parks and facilities inventory by park type. The maps on the following pages (Figures 6.1 & 6.2) identify public parks, trails and natural areas managed by the City of Covington. A detailed inventory and assessment of existing parks, natural areas and recreational facilities is contained in the PROS Plan.

Table 6.2. Park System Inventory by Type (Summary)

Type	Number of Sites	Acreage
Community Parks	**2**	**51.98**
Neighborhood Parks	**10**	**68.95**
Public, City-owned	*3*	*4.46*
Private	*7*	*64.49*
Pocket Parks	**11**	**5**
Public, City-owned	*1*	*0.39*
Private	*10*	*4.61*
Natural Areas & Greenspace	**30**	**182.4**
Public, City-owned	*16*	*109.75*
Private	*14*	*72.65*
Special Facilities	**3**	**39.56**
Public, City-owned	*2*	*1.41*
Private	*1*	*38.15*
County	**5**	**276.5**
Schools	**8**	**77.9**
	Total Acreage	**702.29**

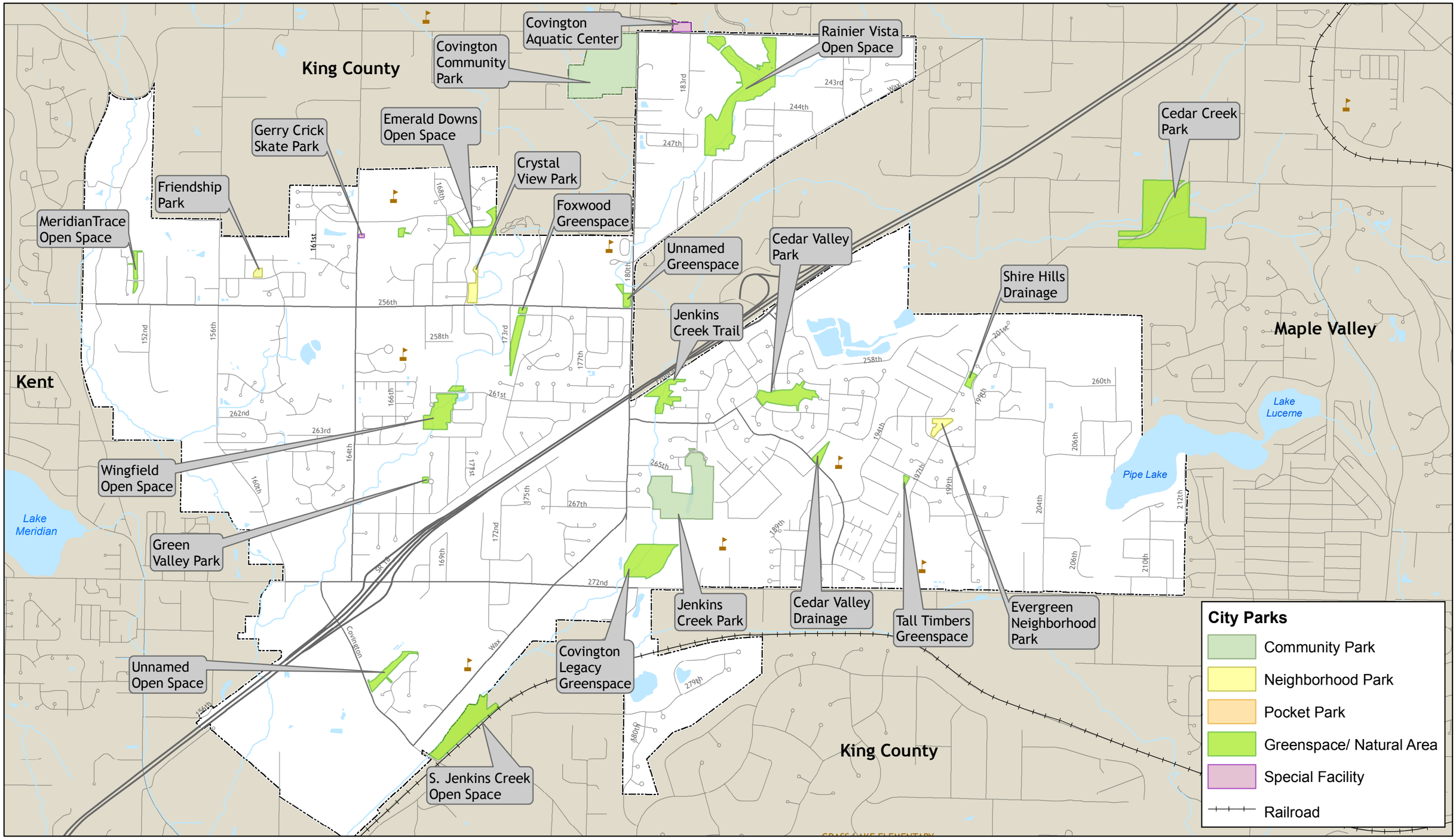

Figure 6.1. Existing City-owned Parks and Natural Areas

***NOTE:** Property names may be temporary place-holder names for administrative purposes and do not necessarily indicate park classification.

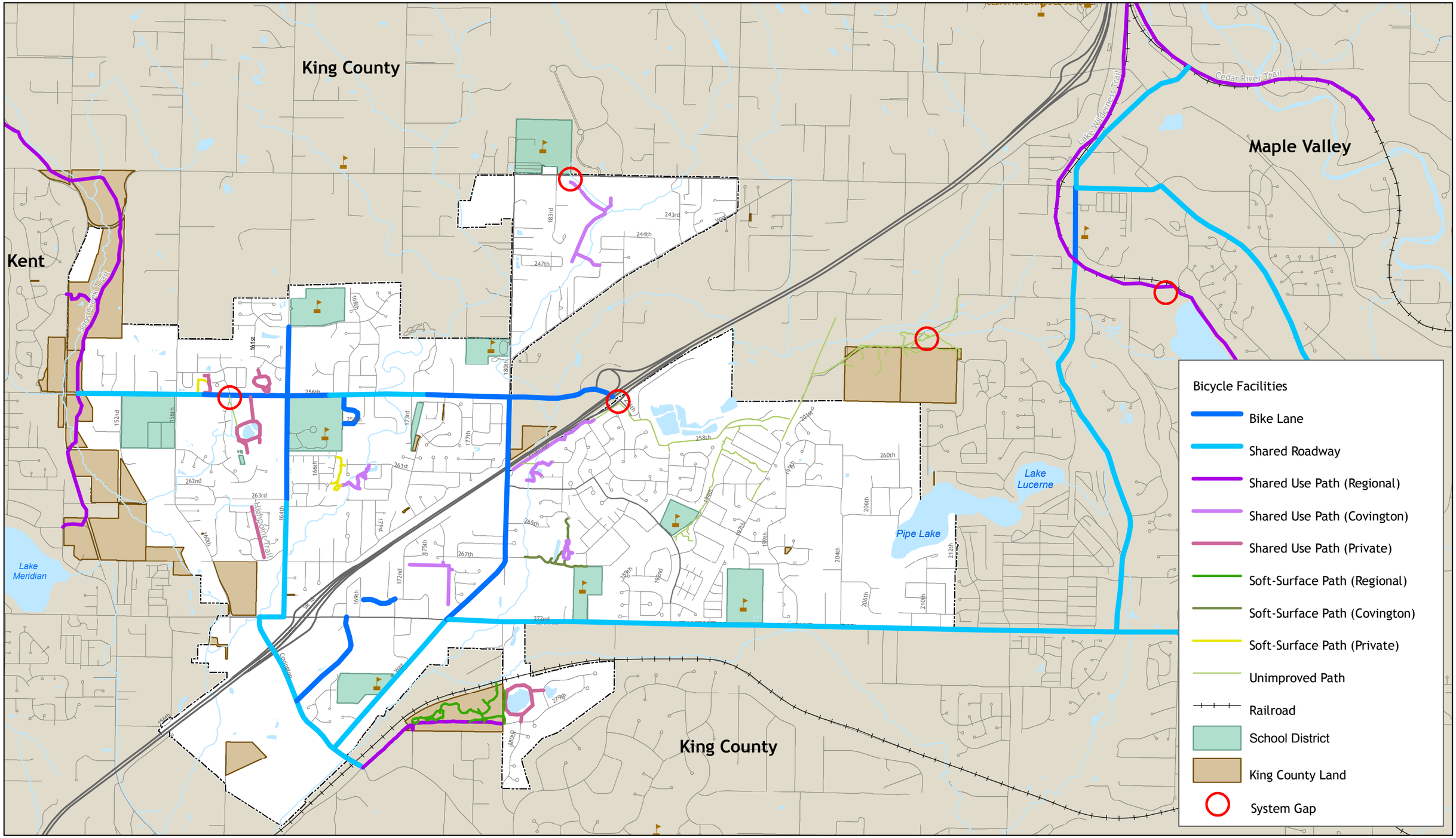

Figure 6.2. Existing Trails, Bikeways and Paths

0 0.25 0.5 Miles

6.5 Needs Assessment

This section summarizes the core needs resulting from a review of the park system, community feedback and stakeholder input. A summary of level of service (LOS) measurements for park and trail facilities is also provided.

6.5.1 Parks & Natural Areas

A gap analysis of the park system was conducted to examine and assess the current distribution of parks throughout the City. The analysis reviewed the locations and types of existing facilities, land use classifications, transportation/access barriers and other factors as a means to identify preliminary acquisition target areas. The gap analysis showed that much of the city lacks reasonable access to public parkland, with significant gaps in the west-central and eastern areas of the City. A total of nine potential acquisition areas were identified and discussed in more detail in the PROS Plan.

The greatest documented need is for additional community park sites to provide the land base for a blend of passive and active recreation opportunities, such as sport fields, picnicking and walking. The City should consider an acquisition along Pipe Lake to provide for these recreational needs and to also provide water access. Secondarily, new neighborhood parks are needed to improve overall distribution and equity, while promoting recreation within walking distance of residential areas. Also, the need for an urban plaza in the downtown core was identified, as was the need for the acquisition of natural area to connect current City ownership south of Jenkins Creek Park.

Regarding park development, the planned construction of the Covington Community Park will provide needed recreation opportunities and improve the City's level of service. The redevelopment and renovation of Jenkins Creek Park as a second community park serving the City is also a noted priority. Although many Covington residents benefit from access to private, homeowner parks, the City should remain committed to developing additional neighborhood parks, especially for those residents not affiliated with private park amenities.

6.5.2 Sport Fields & Sport Courts

The City currently does not provide youth athletic programs, but it works in support of the various youth leagues and organizations with regard to field access and broad dialogue about long-term needs and facility planning. A significant deficit of sport fields

exists for local practice and game play, as well as for quality tournament play. To help address this need, the City should continue to facilitate discussions with area leagues and staff from Maple Valley and Black Diamond for the purposes of field planning and coordination, addressing geographic proximity of fields to the player base and for strategizing about long-term financing opportunities. In addition to the needs of the existing leagues, field demands exist for rugby, football and lacrosse which also should be considered.

Aside from field sport needs, a current deficiency and limited distribution of sport courts exist. School sites provide limited access to basketball courts, and no public tennis or volleyball courts exist within the City.

6.5.3 Trails

Currently many of the existing bicycle and pedestrian trails are limited in length, and few connect to the regional trail network, schools, parks or other key destinations. The pathway system is further hindered by physical barriers, such as SR-18, which bisects the City. The PROS Plan identifies the development of several trail segments and corridors in an effort to create a robust trail network that provides logical connections to key destinations and are convenient for the community to use. In support of an expanded trail network, the City should continue to pursue the purchase or dedication of access easements or greenspace corridors to facilitate linkages with existing trail segments.

6.5.4 Recreation Facilities & Programming

Community events, fitness programs and educational classes were ranked as the most desired programming options. While the City participates in Covington Days and other community events, such as the tree lighting and run/walk events, the City should consider incremental growth in recreation services to focus on programs not currently offered by local or regional providers, such as health and fitness education for youth and fall prevention programs for seniors. As the City considers offering more events, it should seek to share costs with private sponsors and develop a series of seasonal activities.

Past discussions regarding the development of a community recreation center were also reviewed in light of current community attitudes and potential operational challenges. One option includes the expansion of the Covington Aquatic Center. While this center can accommodate a second story for a fitness room, it would not

be large enough to accommodate extensive recreation programming or a teen center.

Recent discussions by city officials have expanded the concept of a recreation center to discuss the potential of a multi-jurisdictional facility to support residents of Covington, Maple Valley and Black Diamond. Such a facility would be jointly funded by the cities and/or require voter support from the wider area. Given the interest in recreation facility space for programming, it is recommended that an additional review of alternatives for providing recreation center "services" be performed, while addressing the initial financial considerations, understanding and modeling user demand and analyzing options for facility and program cost recovery.

6.5.5 Repair, Renovation & Safety Projects

A major theme from community planning process for the PROS Plan was that the maintenance and upkeep of public parklands is paramount to residents' use and enjoyment of the facilities. Covington residents are keenly interested in the renovation of their parks and natural areas system. The desire for better and more consistent maintenance of parks and facilities, along with a variety of suggestions for specific site upgrades and enhancements suggests that the City's park system must improve its facilities to establish the respect and patronage of its citizens. Several renovation projects are noted in the Capital Facilities Plan, with special attention toward improvements at Jenkins Creek Park.

6.5.6 Level of Service Assessment

A level of service (LOS) assessment was conducted as a means to understand the distribution of parkland acreage and trails by classification and for a broader measure of how well the City is serving its residents with access to these recreation amenities. Using the service standards discussed above, Table 6.3 illustrates the current and projected levels of service for parkland, natural areas and trails for Covington.

Table 6.3: Current & Projected Levels of Service by Park Classification

Facility Type	Service Standard	Existing Inventory	Current Surplus / (Deficit)	Projected Surplus / (Deficit) (2020) [1]
Parks:		*acres*	*acres*	*acres*
Community	5 acres / 1,000	39.7 ac.	(36.9) ac.	(49.7) ac.
Neighborhood & Pocket	3 acres / 1,000	52.0 ac.	(13.6) ac.	(21.3) ac.
Natural Areas & Greenspace	6 acres / 1,000	109.8 ac.	3.0 ac.	(12.3) ac.
Trails:		*miles*	*miles*	*miles*
Trails	0.75 miles / 1,000	4.7 mi.	(8.6) mi.	(10.6) mi.
Bikeways	0.75 miles / 1,000	7.1 mi.	(6.3) mi.	(8.2) mi.

[1] Assumes growth projection between current population of 17,785 and 2020 population of 20,335.

The current level of service for community parks is 2.9 acres per 1,000 residents, which includes the undeveloped properties of the Covington Community Park and Jenkins Creek. The current deficit of 37 acres is expected to grow to approximately 50 acres by 2020. A small current deficit exists for neighborhood parks, which is expected to grow to approximately 20 acres. The current level of service for natural areas is meeting the standard, but it is also expected turn to a deficit in the coming 10 years.

The current level of service indicates a deficiency of over 8 miles of pathways and over 6 miles of bikeways; however, the pathway system expansion projects listed in the Capital Facilities Plan will help ameliorate some of this projected deficit and create a dynamic network of on-street and off-street pathways linking major destinations throughout Covington.

6.6 Goals and Policies

The following section presents the goals and policy statements that have been developed through the community planning process for the PROS Plan. These statements have been derived by analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of the existing park system; input of Covington residents' responses to the Parks Survey; review and feedback from the Parks and Recreation Commission; national and local recreation trends and issues; and from identifying opportunities for strategic progress during the next 5 to 10 years.

6.6.1 Community Engagement

PRG 1.0 Encourage meaningful public involvement in park and recreation planning and engage residents through department communications.

PRP 1.1 *Involve residents and stakeholders in system planning, park site facility design and recreation program development to solicit community input, facilitate project understanding and engender public support.*

PRP 1.2 *Use a variety of methods and media to increase resident awareness about Parks and Recreation Department activities via community events, interpretive tours, presentations to neighborhood, homeowner and civic groups and other venues.*

PRP 1.3 *Expand and update the city's web site to enhance citizen communication, expand access to information and improve public outreach and marketing.*

PRP 1.4 *Prepare and publish a comprehensive park and trail facilities map for online and print distribution to highlight existing and proposed routes and promoting Covington as an active-lifestyles community.*

PRP 1.5 *Host special events, festivals, concerts and cultural programming to promote wellness and community identity, foster civic pride and promote tourism and the benefits of recreation.*

PRP 1.6 *Expand community-based volunteer and stewardship development and improvements opportunities, such as planting and restoration activities, in conformance to established City standards.*

PRP 1.7 *Conduct periodic joint sessions between the Parks and Recreation Commission, City Council and other commissions to improve coordination and discuss policy matters of mutual interest.*

6.6.2 Health, Wellness & Programming

PRG 2.0 Establish a varied and inclusive suite of recreation programs that accommodate a spectrum of ages, interests and abilities.

PRP 2.1 *Leverage City resources by forming and maintaining partnerships with other public, non-profit and private recreation providers to deliver recreation services and secure access to existing facilities (e.g. schools) for field sports and other community recreation.*

PRP 2.2 *Emphasize service provision to children, teens, seniors, people with disabilities and other population groups with limited access to market-based recreation options.*

PRP 2.3 *Explore partnership opportunities with regional healthcare providers and services, such as MultiCare, Valley Medical Center and the King County Health Department, to promote wellness activities, healthy lifestyles and communications about local facilities and the benefits of parks and recreation.*

PRP 2.4 *Promote and expand special events and programming, such as summer programs and environmental education. Utilize the region's parks, trails, waterfronts and recreation facilities as settings to provide and/or facilitate a wider array programs and activities.*

PRP 2.5 *Continue to foster the partnership with the Kent and Tahoma School Districts to utilize school sites to provide active recreation facilities. Explore opportunities to co-develop facilities on school property or property adjacent to schools.*

PRP 2.6 *Explore options with Maple Valley, Black Diamond and King County for the development of a joint community facility for recreation, fitness and leisure activities.*

PRP 2.7 *Periodically undertake a comprehensive evaluation of existing recreation program offerings in terms of persons served, customer satisfaction, cost/subsidy and availability of similar programs via other providers.*

PRP 2.8 *Study and create cost recovery guidelines for existing and planned recreation programs and services.*

PRP 2.9 *Coordinate with the Covington Art Commission to encourage participation in, appreciation of and education in the arts and to improve the capacity of local arts agencies in providing art programs that benefit community residents.*

6.6.3 Parks, Natural Areas & Trails

PRG 3.0 Acquire and develop a high-quality, diversified system of parks, recreation facilities and open spaces that is attractive, functional, accessible and safe – providing equitable access to all residents.

PRP 3.1 *All city residents should live within one-half mile of a developed neighborhood park and one mile of a developed community park.*

PRP 3.2 *Provide a combined service standard of 8 acres per 1,000 resident-equivalents of developed neighborhood and community parks.*

PRP 3.3 *Provide an overall parks and natural areas service standard of 14 acres per 1,000 resident-equivalents.*

PRP 3.4 *Preserve and protect parks and open space within Covington's boundaries. Prepare and adopt a "no net loss" of public parks policy, such that the City will consider parkland losses only when converted parkland is replaced in equal to or better size and/or quality.*

PRP 3.5 *Designate parks, recreational areas, trails and natural areas to be of local or regional significance if they contain significant recreation or cultural opportunities or facilities, unusual or special botanical resources, environmentally sensitive areas that serve a significant role or provide a significant function in the natural systems within the City, or public art and are*

associated in a significant way with an historic event, structure or person with a significant effect upon the City, state or nation.

PRP 3.6 *Adopt plans, development and building regulations, and review procedures to protect locally or regionally significant parks, urban separators, and recreation and open space areas from adverse physical and environmental impacts caused by incompatible land uses in the vicinity of these resources.*

PRP 3.7 *Develop and implement minimum design and development standards for park and recreation amenities within private developments to maintain minimally-acceptable standards of development and to address community facility needs, equipment types, accessibility and installation procedures.*

PRP 3.8 *Identify and protect areas of local or regional significance and increase and enhance public access to shoreline areas.*

PRP 3.9 *Pursue low-cost and/or non-purchase options to preserve open space and greenbelts, including the use of conservation easements, current use assessment and development covenants.*

PRP 3.10 *Actively plan and coordinate with King County, Kent, Black Diamond and Maple Valley for the acquisition of parks and open space within or in close proximity to the urban growth area.*

PRP 3.11 *Encourage and support the participation of community-based or non-profit conservation organizations, which offer options and alternatives to development in the interest of preserving desirable lands as a public benefit.*

PRG 4.0 Protect and manage the City's environmentally-sensitive lands, remnant open spaces and natural and cultural resources to highlight their uniqueness and local history.

PRP 4.1 Retain as open space those areas having a unique combination of open space values, including the separation or buffering between incompatible land uses; visual delineation of the City or a distinct area or neighborhood of the City; aquifer recharge areas; floodwater or stormwater storage; stormwater purification; recreational value; aesthetic value; and educational value.

PRP 4.2 Retain and protect as open space those areas that provide habitat for rare, threatened or endangered plant or wildlife species, may serve as a corridor for wildlife movement, and may include and encourage public use for wildlife interpretation and observation.

PRP 4.3 Develop management plans for the City's larger natural areas and greenspaces and facilitate community-based volunteer restoration. Plan for and manage the use of natural areas in coordination with the City's Critical Areas Ordinance and other resource protection guidelines.

PRP 4.4 Manage vegetation in natural areas to support or maintain native plant species, habitat function and other ecological values; remove and control non-native or invasive plants as appropriate.

PRP 4.5 Coordinate with King County, Kent, Black Diamond and Maple Valley to explore opportunities to preserve and enhance the ecological function, habitat quality and recreational value of the Soos Creek, Little Soos Creek and Jenkins Creek corridors.

PRP 4.6 Coordinate with other public agencies and private landowners for the protection of valuable natural resources and sensitive

lands through the purchase of development rights, easements or title and make these lands available for passive recreation, as appropriate.

PRP 4.7 *Recognize that designating private property for open space uses does not establish or promote any public access rights to such property.*

PRP 4.8 *Revise and adopt the draft Covington Community Forestry Plan to articulate a long-term strategy for tree protection, urban forestry management and public education and outreach.*

PRP 4.9 *Consider creating community-based volunteer and stewardship opportunities as a ways to inform and engage residents about urban forestry issues, such as tree planting, tree care and management and the benefits of urban trees.*

PRP 4.10 *Analyze the City's existing tree canopy cover, establish canopy cover goals and promote urban forestry programs in order to maintain healthy atmospheric conditions.*

PRP 4.11 *Establish and promote a recognition program for the City's Heritage Trees.*

PRP 4.12 *Comply with the Evergreen Communities Act (RCW 35.105) and obtain and maintain Evergreen Community status.*

PRP 4.13 *Maintain Tree City USA status.*

PRP 4.14 *Promote the installation and management of street trees as an extension of urban habitat and providing green infrastructure benefits.*

PRG 5.0 Develop a high-quality system of shared-use park trails and bicycle & pedestrian corridors that connect significant local landscapes, public facilities, neighborhoods and the downtown core.

PRP 5.1 *Create a network of interconnected, shared-use trails for walking, hiking and cycling to*

promote connectivity between parks, neighborhoods and public amenities.

PRP 5.2 *Provide a trails service standard of 0.75 miles per 1,000 resident-equivalents.*

PRP 5.3 *Integrate the siting of proposed trail segments into the development review process. Require development projects along designated trail routes to be designed to incorporate the trail as part of the project.*

PRP 5.4 *Work with local agencies, utilities and private landholders to secure trail easements and access to greenspace for trail connections.*

PRP 5.5 *Require development projects along designated trail routes to be designed to incorporate the trail as part of the project. Sensitive area buffers within proposed subdivisions and short-subdivisions shall be widened to accommodate additional open space and a public easement for future trails.*

PRP 5.6 *Designate publicly-owned trails and City-dedicated easements on private lands as community trails and manage the use, maintenance and operation of each trail accordingly.*

PRP 5.7 *Coordinate with Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad for a potential rail-with-trail opportunity.*

PRP 5.8 *Coordinate with King County, Kent, Black Diamond and Maple Valley for the joint planning, development and maintenance of a regional pedestrian-bicycle trail system, to include linkages to the Soos Creek Trail, Lake Wilderness Trail, Cedar River Trail and the proposed SR-18 Trail.*

PRP 5.9 *Address pedestrian safety and access across Kent-Kangley Road, SR-18 and the railroad tracks.*

PRP 5.10 Provide trailhead accommodations, as appropriate, to include parking, wayfinding signage, restrooms and other amenities.

6.6.4 Concurrency

PRG 6.0 Ensure that new park and recreational services are provided concurrent with new development.

PRP 6.1 New development shall provide funds or parkland for concurrent park development and maintenance.

PRP 6.2 Require on-site (or nearby off-site) development of recreation facilities or appropriate and usable parkland in conjunction with the approval of any development project involving more than 20 new dwelling units. The development of recreational amenities shall conform to the City's minimum guidelines and the general needs outlined in this Plan. Fees in lieu of development may be accepted by the City if such mitigation is not practicable.

PRP 6.3 Mixed use development involving more than 20 new dwelling units in the downtown area shall be exempted from the requirement to develop on-site park, recreation or open space facilities. Instead, upon approval by the City, in lieu of fees may be accepted for such mixed-use developments, to be spent on designated park, recreation or open space resources within the City that serve the development.

PRP 6.4 New commercial development shall be responsible for financing and providing downtown amenities such as parks, open spaces and public art.

6.6.5 Management & Operations

PRG 7.0 Provide a parks, trails and open space system that is efficient to administer and operate, while providing a high level of user comfort, safety, aesthetic quality and protection of capital investment.

PRP 7.1 *Provide sufficient financial and staff resources to maintain the overall parks system to high standards.*

PRP 7.2 *Maintain all parks and facilities in a manner that keeps them in safe and attractive condition; repair or remove damaged components immediately upon identification.*

PRP 7.3 *When developing new facilities or redeveloping existing facilities, review and consider the projected maintenance and operations costs prior to initiating design development. Emphasize the maintenance, enhancement and renovation of existing parks prior to the development of new facilities.*

PRP 7.4 *Formulate illustrative master plans for the development or redevelopment of each city park, as appropriate, to take maximum advantage of grant or other funding opportunities.*

PRP 7.5 *Design and maintain parks, trails and facilities to offer universal accessibility for residents of all physical capabilities, skill levels and age. All facilities shall conform to the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) guidelines and requirements.*

PRP 7.6 *Incorporate sustainable development and low impact design practices into the design, planning and rehabilitation of new and existing facilities. Prepare sustainability best management practices for grounds maintenance and operations. Consider the use of non-invasive, native vegetation for landscaping in parks and natural areas to minimize maintenance requirements and promote wildlife habitat and foraging.*

PRP 7.7 *Standardize the use of graphics and signage to establish a consistent identity at all parks, trailheads and other facilities.*

PRP 7.8 *Standardize park furniture (trash cans, tables, benches, fencing, water fountains) to reduce inventory costs and improve appearance of, and maintenance consistency within, parks.*

PRP 7.9 *Coordinate park planning, acquisition and development with other City projects and programs that implement the comprehensive plan. Seek partnerships with other public agencies and the private sector to meet the demand for cultural and recreational facilities in the City.*

PRP 7.10 *Encourage volunteer park improvement and maintenance projects from a variety of individuals, service clubs, scouting organizations, churches and businesses.*

PRP 7.11 *Periodically evaluate user satisfaction and numerical use of parks, facilities and programs; share this information with staff, Parks and Recreation Commission and City Council as part of the decision making process to revise offerings or renovate facilities.*

PRP 7.12 *Pursue alternative funding options for the acquisition and development of parks and facilities, such as through private donation, sponsorships, partnerships, county, state and federal grant sources, among others. Place priority on maximizing grants and other external sources of funding, or inter-agency cooperative arrangements, to develop the City's park resources.*

PRP 7.13 *Promote professional development opportunities that strengthen the core skills and engender greater commitment from staff, Commission members and key volunteers, to include trainings, materials and/or affiliation with the National Recreation & Park Association (NRPA) and the Washington Recreation & Park Association (WRPA).*

6.7 Implementation

The PROS Plan summarizes information found elsewhere in the Comprehensive Plan that is required as basic elements of a capital facilities plan under the GMA, including the inventory of existing facilities and a forecast of future needs. In addition, a table listing proposed new facilities with estimated acquisition and development costs can be found in the PROS Plan CIP. Additionally, park and recreation facilities are included in the Capital Facilities Element of the Comprehensive Plan (Chapter 10).

The total amount of funding to support the documented community demand for parks and recreation services exceeds the City's current financial capacity. Since park projects and recreation services must compete for funds with many other vital City functions and services, the proposed park and trail capital improvement projects identified in the PROS Plan were prioritized according to high, medium and low priorities, in consideration of an analysis of the community's needs, population and geographic distribution, project opportunities and potential funding. The PROS Plan also addresses various sources of park and recreation funding that are available to the City of Covington. Some of these sources are limited to particular types of projects or programs, while others are more general and may be applied to most any park project.

A number of strategies exist to improve service delivery for the Covington Parks and Recreation Department; however, clear decisions must be made in an environment of competing interests and limited resources. A strong community will is necessary to bring many of the projects listed in the PROS Plan to fruition. Given the current operating and capital budgets for the Department, general fund and grants alone will be unable to support both land acquisition and development for the highest priority projects, and a future bond, levy and/or special assessment backed by the support of local voters may be necessary.

6.7.1 Capital Facilities Planning

The Capital Facilities Element summarizes information, provided in more detail in the PROS Plan, regarding the proposed park and trail facilities for Covington's 6-year capital improvement projects. Figure 6.3 illustrates the locations of the capital improvement plan projects identified in the PROS Plan.

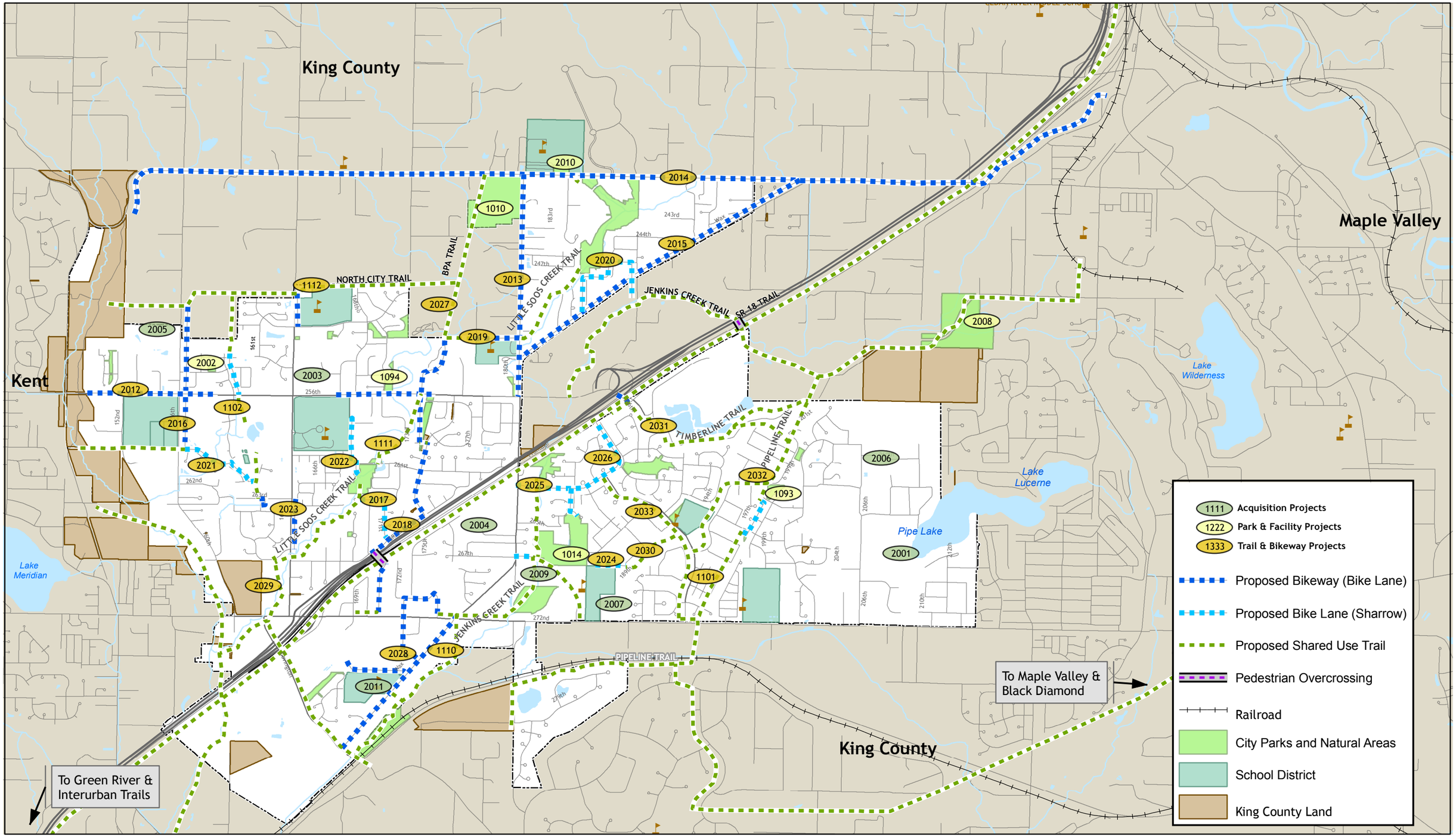

Figure 6.3. Parks and Recreation Capital Improvements Plan Map