



# Parks, Recreation & Open Space Plan

2016 Update

## Covington Parks & Recreation Department Mission Statement

Our mission is to build a great community  
together through people, parks and programs.



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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# Executive Summary

This Parks, Recreation and Open Space (PROS) Plan is a six-year guide and strategic plan for managing and enhancing park, trail and recreation services in Covington. It establishes a path forward for providing high quality, community-driven parks, trails, greenspaces and recreational opportunities. The Plan provides a vision for the City's park and recreation system, proposes updates to City service standards for park and facility classifications and addresses departmental goals, objectives and other management considerations toward the continuation of high-quality recreation opportunities to benefit residents of Covington.

This Plan was guided with input and direction of city residents and the Parks and Recreation Commission. The Plan inventories and evaluates existing park and recreation areas, assesses the needs for acquisition, site development and operations and offers policies and recommendations to achieve the community's goals.

## Covington's Park & Recreation System

The City of Covington currently provides over 166 acres of public parkland and recreation facilities distributed among 25 parks, special facilities and natural areas. This system of parks supports a range of active and passive recreation experiences and is supplemented by over 125

acres of private parks and open spaces managed by a number of homeowners associations. In addition, the City provides a skate park and access to approximately 7 miles of trails within its parks and greenways.

Recreation services are available to Covington residents through a wide range of public and private recreation, health and fitness providers and facilities. The Covington Aquatic Center is the backbone of the City's recreation programming, and it provides a venue for specialized aquatics programming, activities and events.

Covington is a maturing young city with many families with children. New investments in parks and recreation will be necessary to meet the needs of the community, support youth development, provide options for residents to lead healthy, active lives and foster greater social and community connections.

## Goals & Policies

This Plan includes goals and objectives intended to guide City decision-making to ensure the parks and recreation system meets the needs of the Covington community for years to come. These goals and objectives were based on community input and technical analysis. They include:

**Community Engagement and Communication:** Encourage meaningful public involvement in park and recreation planning and inform residents through department communications.

**Recreation Programming:** Establish a varied and inclusive suite of recreation programs that accommodate a spectrum of ages, interests and abilities.

**Parks, Recreation, Open Space and Trail System:** Acquire and develop a high-quality, diversified system of parks, recreation facilities, open spaces and trails that is attractive, functional, accessible, and safe – providing equitable access to all residents.

**Natural Areas and Greenspaces:** Protect and manage the City's environmentally-sensitive lands, open spaces and natural and cultural resources to highlight their uniqueness, local history and environmental value

**Trails and Pathways:** Develop a high-quality system of multi-use trails and bicycle and pedestrian corridors that connects to regional trails and provides access to significant local landscapes, public facilities, neighborhoods, and businesses.

**Park Planning:** Plan for a parks, recreation facilities, trails, and open space system that is efficient to administer and operate, while protecting capital investment.

## Level of Service Standards

As an update to the 2010 PROS Plan, this Plan assessed the City's service standards for parks and recreation facilities to achieve community goals within projected resources. These standards include:

- **Community Parks:** This Plan maintains the acreage standard for community parks of 5 acres per 1,000 people to continue to emphasize the relative importance of active

parks within the park system. The City currently is not meeting this standard, and it will need to acquire an additional 56 acres of parkland to meet the needs of future residents.

- **Neighborhood Parks:** This Plan maintains the acreage standard for neighborhood parks of 3 acres per 1,000 people, and the combined acreage of existing City-owned and HOA parks nearly meet that standard. With projected growth in residential development and with a significant reliance on HOA sites filling the need for neighborhood parks, the City should be able to meet this standard in the near future. However, significant gaps appear in the west-central and eastern areas of the City that are not served by HOA parks.
- **Natural Areas and Greenspaces:** This Plan also maintains the service standard of 6 acres per 1,000 people for natural areas and greenspaces. With City-owned and HOA open spaces, this standard is currently being met.
- **Specialized Recreation Facilities:** The previous PROS Plan did not include a numeric standard for special use facilities, and this Plan maintains that approach. Special use recreation facilities are, by their nature, unique and do not translate well to a population based numeric standard.

## Future Improvements

The City of Covington is anticipated to grow to approximately 21,200 residents over the next six years. Serving existing and future residents will require improvements to existing parks and expansion of the park, trail and recreation system. The 6-year Capital Facilities Plan proposes approximately \$43.8 million of investment in acquisition, development and renovation of the parks system over the next six years and identifies additional investment priorities for the future.

To ensure existing parks provide desired recreational amenities and opportunities, the Plan includes investments in the development and improvement of neighborhood and community parks. For example, development of the next phases of the Covington Community Park will greatly expand recreational resources for the community as a whole. The Plan also proposes smaller improvements throughout the park system to enhance accessibility, safety and usability of park features.

The Plan includes a focused land acquisition program to ensure sufficient land and trail corridors for outdoor recreation as City population grows. It identifies target acquisition areas to secure community parkland and fill gaps in neighborhood park access and to close gaps in the trail network.

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# Plan Overview

*A great community through people, parks & programs*

## Purpose of the Plan

This Covington Parks, Recreation and Open Space (PROS) Plan is an update to the 2010 PROS Plan. Covington has experienced significant changes since the adoption of the earlier PROS Plan, and this Plan has been revised to address community choices and opportunities following the development of Covington Community Park and expansion of recreation programming to include youth sports.

A Parks, Recreation and Open Space (PROS) Plan is a document that guides City elected and appointed officials, management and staff when making decisions or taking actions regarding planning, acquiring developing or implementing parks, open space, recreation programs or recreational facilities. The Plan is intended to be updated every six years to remain current with the community's recreational interests and maintain eligibility for state-based grants.

This PROS Plan creates a vision for an innovative, inclusive and interconnected system of parks, trails and open spaces that promotes outdoor recreation, health and environmental conservation as integral elements of a livable community. The Plan will establish a path forward to guide the City's efforts to provide high quality, community-driven parks, trails, natural areas and recreation services throughout Covington.

The 2015 PROS Plan considers the park and recreation needs of residents citywide. It

provides updated inventories, demographic conditions, growth projections, needs analysis, revenue forecasts and capital project phasing. The Plan establishes specific goals, objectives, recommendations and actions for developing, conserving and maintaining high-quality parks, trails, facilities and open spaces across the City.

## Planning Process Overview

The PROS Plan update began in late spring 2015 with the intent to have a completed, adopted plan by the end of February 2016. This update is required every six years to maintain eligibility for grants administered by the Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO). The RCO requires jurisdictional applicants to have a current parks plan as a criterion for grant applications. This Plan is intended to comply with all RCO requirements.

The adopted Plan is also designated to meet the requirements of the State of Washington Growth Management Act (GMA), which is codified as Chapter 36.70A Revised Code of Washington. The GMA requires counties to:

- Designate the general location and extent of land uses including recreation and open space lands;
- Identify lands useful for recreation, including wildlife habitat, trails and connection of critical areas;
- Estimate park and recreation demand for at least a 10 year period;
- Develop a capital facilities plan (CFP) identifying funds necessary to implement the plan for at least a six-year period.

The PROS Plan is a reflection of the community's interests and needs for park and recreational facilities, trails and programming. The planning process was aimed to encourage and enable public engagement in the choices, priorities and future direction of the City's park and recreation system. The PROS Plan project team conducted a variety of public outreach activities to solicit feedback and comments, in concert with the refinement of the park system inventory, level of service review and the current and future needs assessment. An overview of the planning timeline is depicted below.

Current community interests surfaced through a series of public outreach that included mail and online surveys, open house meetings, stakeholder meetings, MindMixer online engagement, website content and Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission meetings. The updated inventory became the basis for determining the current performance of the system to the adopted standards for park and trails. An overarching needs analysis was conducted for recreation programs and facilities, parks, trails and open space to assess current demands and project future demand to account for population growth. To implement the goals of the Plan, a capital facilities plan was developed with a set of strategies that identified costs and potential funding sources. Together this process is represented in the planning document that will be reviewed by the public and elected officials. Once adopted, the Plan can become a component of the City's Comprehensive Plan and direct park and recreation service delivery for the next 6 - 20 years.

## Community Vision

During annual strategic planning sessions, the Covington City Council reviews and updates the overarching vision, mission and goals for the City. Within the vision of “Covington: Unmatched quality of life,” city leaders have adopted a mission statement providing the framework for the future planning of Covington, and it reads as follows:

*“Covington is a destination community where citizens, businesses and civic leaders collaborate to preserve and foster a strong sense of unity.”*

To supplement this mission, City Council periodically adopts a set of goals to direct and refocus city priorities and investments. The Council goals for 2015 are:

- **Economic Development:** Encourage and support a business community that is committed to Covington for the long-term and offers diverse products and services, family wage jobs, and a healthy tax base to support public services.
- **Town Center:** Establish Covington Town Center as a vibrant residential, commercial, educational, social, and cultural gathering place that is safe, pedestrian-friendly, well-designed, and well-maintained.
- **Youth and Families:** Provide city services, programs and facilities such as parks and recreation and human services that emphasize and meet the needs of Covington’s youth and families.
- **Neighborhoods:** Establish and maintain neighborhoods that offer a variety of housing options that are diverse, safe, accessible, and well-designed.
- **Municipal Services:** Plan, develop, implement, and maintain high quality capital infrastructure and services that reflect the needs of a growing community.
- **Customer Service:** Recruit, support, and retain a professional team of employees, volunteers, and stakeholders who offer outstanding customer service, ensure stewardship of the public’s money, and promote the City.

Many of these Council goals can be met, in part, through the provision of parks, trails and recreation services.

The previous PROS Plan offered a future vision of Covington that was an outgrowth from resident feedback regarding their interests, needs and preferences for parks and recreation services. These principles provide the foundation for the goals, objectives, recommendations and guidelines in the following chapters within this Plan.

- **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.

With a rapidly growing population and a relatively high proportion of families with children, Covington consistently strives to promote community pride and inclusion through festivals and activities. The City hosts the annual Covington Days community festival, which brings residents and community agencies together to enjoy food, fun and family activities. With the development of phase-1 of Covington Community Park, residents have a new venue for outdoor events, festivals and sports. The pending development of phase-2 will bring more amenities to the park and solidify this site's place as a true foundation to Covington's park system.

While the City is young, its residents are proud of their city and what has been accomplished in its growing park system, but they also are interested in certain facility and program enhancements. This Plan documents those desires and provides a framework for addressing capital improvements and funding in the near-term.

## Contents of the Plan

The remainder of the Covington PROS Plan is organized as follows:

- Chapter 2: Introduction – provides an overview of the City of Covington, its Parks and Recreation Department, demographics and past planning efforts.
- Chapter 3: Community Engagement – highlights the methods used to engage the Covington community in the development of the Plan.
- Chapters 4 - 7: Needs Assessment & Recommendations – discusses survey results, community feedback and other recreation trend data and provides context to the identification of potential park, trail and recreation system enhancements.
- Chapter 8: Goals & Objectives – provides a policy framework for the parks and recreation system grouped by major functional or program area.
- Chapter 9: Capital Facilities Plan – details a 6-year program for addressing park and recreation facility enhancement or expansion projects.
- Chapter 10: Implementation Strategies – describes a range of strategies and alternatives to consider in the implementation of the Plan.
- Appendices: Provides technical or supporting information to the planning effort and includes a summary of the community survey, stakeholder notes, funding options and user fee assessment, among others.



# Introduction

## Setting & Planning Area

Incorporated in 1997, the City of Covington is situated in King County between the cities of Kent and Maple Valley. The City maintains a modest system of neighborhood and community parklands, along with providing an aquatic center, aquatics programming and limited recreation programming. Covington includes many small, private pocket parks and greenspaces, which have been platted and built over the past 15 years. Additionally, the pending redevelopment of the downtown core create opportunities for new trail connections and a civic plaza in support of expanded community activities and economic redevelopment.

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.

## Parks & Recreation Department Overview

The Covington Parks and Recreation Department is responsible for the planning, acquisition, design and construction of City parklands. The City also operates the Covington Aquatic

Center and associated aquatics programs, such as instruction, fitness, recreation and safety training. The aquatics program is the core and anchor of the City’s recreation offerings. The Department also includes parks, youth athletics, recreation and special event divisions that strive to provide classes and programs along with community events, arts and cultural opportunities for residents and visitors. The department has 5 full-time staff and is funded through several sources, including user fees, sales tax revenue, utility tax revenue and grants. Additionally, the park maintenance division is funded through the Department’s budget, and staff are shared with the Public Works. The total budget for fiscal year 2015 was slightly more than \$2.6 million.

## Demographics

Covington is a young and growing city. The City incorporated in 1997 and has experienced rapid growth over the past 15 years. The City is home to many families with children. Covington’s residents are generally educated and have high incomes. While the city is predominately white, the population of communities of color has increased over the past decade.

### Population

Covington has grown by over 6,000 residents since its incorporation, from 12,762 people in 1997 to an estimated 18,520 in 2015 (see Figure 1). Growth during this time period was relatively steady, with an annual increase of just under 3%.

Covington is growing more quickly than King County as a whole. From 2000 to 2010, Covington grew by 27.5%, while the King County population increased by 11.2% to 1,931,249 people.

The City is anticipating continued growth in the future, though at a more moderate pace. The Puget Sound Regional Council projects that Covington’s population will rise to 19,383 people in 2020 and 24,508 people in 2040. This represents an annual growth of approximately 1.2%.

Figure 1. Population Change – Actual and Projected: 1997 - 2040

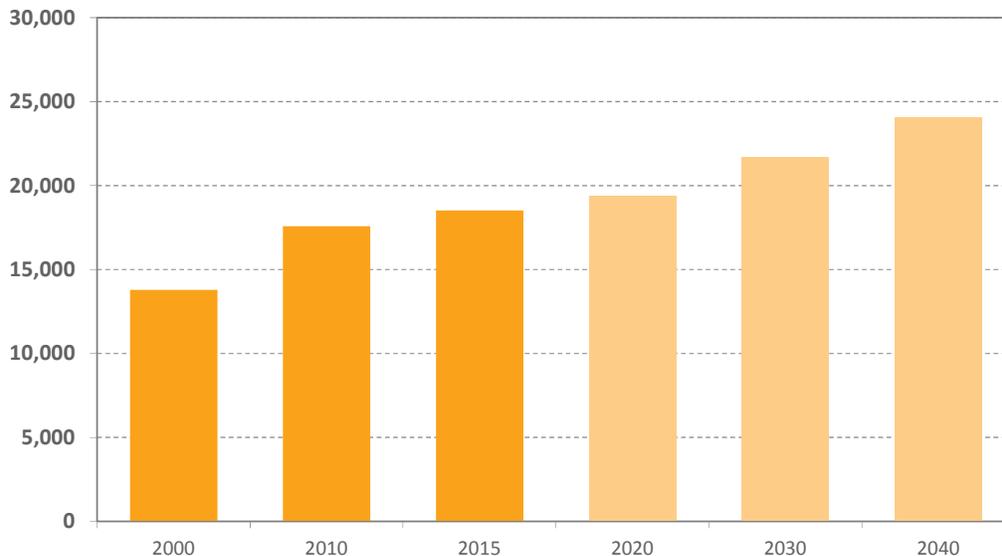


Figure 2. Population Characteristics: Covington, King County & Washington

Demographics	Covington	King County	Washington
<b>Population Characteristics</b>			
Population (2000)	<b>13,783</b>	1,737,034	5,894,121
Population (2010)	<b>17,575</b>	1,931,249	6,724,540
Population (2015)	<b>18,520</b>	2,052,800	7,061,410
Percent Change (2000-15)	<b>34.4%</b>	18.2%	19.8%
Communities of Color (2010)	<b>24.0%</b>	31.3%	22.7%
Persons w/ Disabilities (2013)	<b>1,578</b>	182,987	819,251
Persons w/ Disabilities (%)	<b>8.8%</b>	9.3%	12.2%
<b>Household Characteristics</b>			
Households	<b>5,817</b>	789,232	2,620,076
Percent with children under 18	<b>46.5%</b>	29.2%	31.9%
Median Income	<b>\$84,323</b>	\$68,065	\$57,244
Average Household Size	<b>3.02</b>	2.4	2.51
Average Family Size	<b>3.31</b>	3.05	3.06
Home Ownership Rate	<b>82.6%</b>	59.1%	63.9%
<b>Age Groups</b>			
Median Age	<b>34.7</b>	37.1	37.3
Population < 5 years of age	<b>6.8%</b>	6.2%	6.5%
Population < 18 years of age	<b>28.6%</b>	21.4%	23.5%
Population 18 - 64 years of age	<b>65.1%</b>	67.7%	64.2%
Population > 65 years of age	<b>6.3%</b>	10.9%	12.3%

## Age Group Distribution

Covington’s population is relatively young. The median age of City residents is 34.7 – younger than King County (37.1), the State of Washington (37.3) and the nation (37.2). Approximately 29 percent of Covington residents are youth up to 18 years of age, 52% are 20 to 55 year olds, and 16% are 55 and older. The population has aged slightly since 2000, when the median age was 32.1 and 34% of the population was under 18 years of age.

The City’s largest “20-year” population group is comprised of 35- to 54-year-olds, representing 33.2% of the population in 2010.

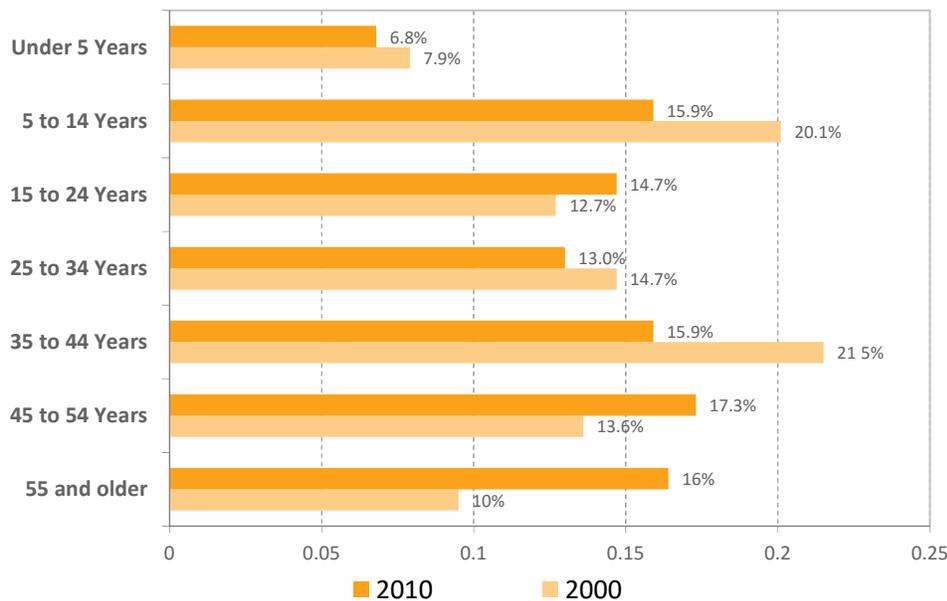
The following breakdown is used to separate the population into age-sensitive user groups.

- Under 5 years: This group represents users of preschool and tot programs and facilities, and as trails and open space users, are often in strollers. These individuals are the future participants in youth activities.
- 5 to 14 years: This group represents current youth program participants.
- 15 to 24 years: This group represents teen/young adult program participants moving out of the youth programs and into adult programs. Members of this age group are often seasonal employment seekers.
- 25 to 34 years: This group represents involvement in adult programming with characteristics of beginning long-term relationships and establishing families.

- 35 to 54 years: This group represents users of a wide range of adult programming and park facilities. Their characteristics extend from having children using preschool and youth programs to becoming empty nesters.
- 55 years plus: This group represents users of older adult programming exhibiting the characteristics of approaching retirement or already retired and typically enjoying grandchildren. This group generally also ranges from very healthy, active seniors to more physically inactive seniors.

Table 3 illustrates the age distribution characteristics of these cohorts and provides a comparison to 2000 Census data.

Figure 3. Age Group Distributions: 2000 & 2010



## Race and Ethnicity

In 2010, Covington was 76.1% White, 8.5% Asian, 4.2% African American, 0.8% American Indian or Alaskan Native, 0.6% Pacific Islander, 3.9% other race, and 5.8% from two or more races. Just over 9% of people identified as Hispanic or Latino of any race. This was an increase (11.8%) in the percentage of communities of color since 2000.

According to the 2013 American Community Survey, approximately 14.7% of Covington’s population speaks a language other than English at home, and 5% speak English less than very well. This is a lower of percentage of people than in King County (24.8%) and Washington as a whole (17.5%).

## Household Characteristics

The 2010 average household size in the City of Covington was 3.02 people, higher than the state (2.67) and national (2.51) average. Average household size remained the same since 2000. The average family size in Covington is larger, at 3.31 people. Of the 5,817 households in the City, 46.5% have children under 18, 63% were married couples living together, 16.7% had a single head of household, and 20.1% were non-families.

## Income and Poverty

In 2010, the median household income in Covington was \$84,323. This income level was \$16,258 (24%) higher than the median income for King County residents, \$27,079 (47%) higher than residents of Washington, and \$34,878 (70.5%) higher than the national average. The median household income in Covington has increased by 32% (\$20,612) since 2000.

At the lower end of the household income scale, approximately 19.8% percent of Covington households earn less than \$25,000 annually, which is significantly fewer than households of King County (17%), the State of Washington (20.1%), and the United States (23%). On the other end of the income scale, 23 percent of City households have household incomes in the higher income brackets (\$100,000 and greater), lower than the County (33.6%) but similar to level in Washington (24%) and across the nation (22%).

In 2010, 4.1% of Covington's families were living below the poverty level. The poverty threshold was an income of \$20,050 for a family of four. This percentage is lower than the countywide (6.4%), statewide (8.2%) and national (10.5%) levels. Poverty affects 6.4% of those under 18 and 1.7% of those 65 and older, which is lower than statewide and national figures. The percentage of local families accessing food stamp or SNAP benefits (6.4%) is also much lower than state and national averages (9.8% and 11.9%, respectively).

## Employment & Education

The 2010 work force population (16 years and over) of Covington is 12,381 (70%). Of this population, over three quarters (76.6%) is in the labor force, 3% is unemployed, and 23% is not in the labor force. The primary occupation of the working population is management, professional, and science occupations at 33.7%, while sales, office, and service occupations comprise an additional 40.6% of the workforce.

According to the 2013 American Community Survey, approximately 19% of Covington residents have a Bachelor's degree, and another 10% have completed a graduate degree or higher. This level of education attainment is lower than residents of King County (29% and 17%, respectively) and Washington (20% and 12%, respectively) as a whole. Additionally, 93% of City residents have a high school degree or higher, 3% higher than the statewide average.

## Persons with Disabilities

The 2013 American Community Survey reported 8.8% (1,578 persons) of Covington's population 5 years and older as having a disability that interferes with life activities. This is lower than state and national averages (both 12%). Among residents 65 and older, the percentage rises to 34.5%, or 377 persons, which is on par with percentages found in the general senior population of Washington State.

## Health Status

Information on the health of Covington residents is not readily available. However, King County residents rank as some of the healthiest residents in Washington (5th out of 39

counties), according to the County Health Rankings. Approximately 22% of King County adults are overweight or obese, compared to 27% of Washington adults.

Approximately 15% of King County adults age 20 and older report getting no leisure-time physical activity – the lowest rate for any Washington county. The statewide average is 18%. This may be due, in part, to the large number of places to participate in physical activity, including parks and public or private community centers, gyms or other recreational facilities. In King County, 98% of residents have access to adequate physical activity opportunities, which is higher than the 89% average for all Washington residents.

According to the County Health Rankings, King County also ranks well compared to all Washington counties for health outcomes, including length and quality of life, and health factors (such as health behaviors, clinical care, social and economic factors, and the physical environment).

## Review of Other Community Plans

To supplement community outreach, eight community plans were reviewed for past policy direction and goals as they pertain to the provision and planning for parks, trails and recreation in Covington. The development of each involved public input and final adoption by the respective responsible legislative body.

### 2014 City of Covington Comprehensive Plan

The parks and recreation element of the City's comprehensive plan is derived from the adopted 2010 Covington Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan and is incorporated by reference. The parks and recreation elements reinforces the recommendations for park land acquisition to address the need for a more equitable distribution of parks for Covington residents. The greatest need targeted for additional community park land for a blend of passive and active uses, preferably 20 acres or more. Phased implementation of Covington Community Park will improve the City's level of service. The redevelopment and renovation of Jenkins Creek Park was a second community park development priority. Several trail segments and corridors were also identified from the PROS plan as priorities for connecting key destinations in a system of existing trails that are limited in length and provide few connections. The plan considers incremental growth in recreation programming that focuses on health and fitness education for youth and seniors. The development of a community recreation center was also discussed with consideration for the potential of a multi-jurisdictional facility between Covington, Maple Valley and Black Diamond.

### 2010 Covington Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan

The 2010 Covington Parks, Recreation and Open Space (PROS) Plan proposed a more walkable community with interconnected trails and access to nature that included a downtown plaza to serve the growing community. The PROS plan outlined a six-year capital facilities plan that ranked projects in order of priority. Major recommendations included the acquisition of additional parkland; adoption of a neighborhood and community park standard (8 acres/1,000 people) and an overall parks and natural area standard (14 acres/1,000 people);

the formation of partnerships with healthcare providers; exploration of options for joint community recreation facility development with neighboring cities; design and development standards for park amenities installed by private developers; and the analysis of more sustainable and long term funding for park and trail acquisition and development.

## 2009 Downtown Plan and Zoning Study

The Downtown Plan envisions the town center as a “complete community,” meaning that over the long term a complete transportation system is established; there is a broader range of land uses, including residential, retail, and civic uses; and there is a livable, walkable public realm, which is rooted in healthy natural systems and includes a public gathering space which provides a “heart” for the community. The public plaza will have visually prominent east-west connections to the Jenkins Creek and its future trail. This Plan shows the preferred location for the Jenkins Creek trail to be on the west side the creek. (The existing Capital Improvement Plan calls for the trail to be developed on the east side of the creek.) The Downtown Plan also adds the goal of a future park and/or open space along the Jenkins Creek corridor and connections to the Downtown area. The Downtown Plan seeks to create an interconnected network of parks and trails to establish an identity for Downtown and the larger community and make Downtown more attractive to developers, investors, employees, residents, families and customers.

## 2009 Transportation Assessment (Downtown Plan and Zoning Study)

The 2009 Transportation Assessment of the City of Covington Downtown Study Area was prepared by Nelson/Nygaard to assist the refinement of the guiding principles of the Downtown Plan and Zoning Study. The study focused the need for non-motorized facilities and a multi-use trail network and focused on the potential for improving both sides of SE 272nd. Designing for pedestrian-friendly streets with sidewalks and bicycle facilities identified the need for better connections and contiguous circulation. The assessment highlighted the Soos Creek and Jenkins Creek regional trails and proposed extensions in the Covington CIP that could create a partial ring around the City including areas west, south and east of downtown.

## 2012 Northern Gateway Area Study

The Northern Gateway Area Study analyzed 484 acres, bisected by SR 18, to comprehensively review the area’s suitability for commercial development and the feasibility of inclusion in the King County urban growth are (UGA) and Covington Potential Annexation Area (PAA) and the annexation of the southeast portion of the study area already assigned as a PAA to Covington. The study area contains no formal parks or recreation facilities. Proposed shared use trail alignments are planned for along Jenkins Creek, SR 18 and in the southwest portion of the study area.

## 2014 Hawk Property Subarea Plan

The Hawk Property Subarea Plan is intended to guide future development in the northern gateway area and adjacent to SR 18, a major regional transportation link. As the site transitions from its former use as resource extraction to urban development, the subarea plan guides the establishment of land use and urban design options. The vision for the site is the creation of an urban village with a mix of commercial development as well as housing. Public recreational amenities are included, such as parks, natural open space, a pond, and bicycle and pedestrian trails that link to the regional trail system. New policies were recommended for incorporation into the City's comprehensive plan relating to parks and recreation including: acquisition and development of publicly accessible gathering spaces to serve as neighborhood focal points and event venues; develop park and greenspace areas as publicly accessible recreational and habitat amenities (while protecting natural resources); integrate connecting trail network to provide continuous pedestrian routes through trails and sidewalks. Development standards also include: maintaining public access trails abutting the pond; provision of at least one public gathering place at the pond area of at least one-half acre to serve as a public amenity; at least one public gathering place (1/2 acre minimum) in the RCMU zoning district suitable for special events and celebrations; and at least one park of sufficient size to include a range of active recreational uses for residents of varying ages and interests. All public gathering spaces must be linked physically and visually to adjacent sidewalks or trails.

## 2013 Urban Forestry Strategic Plan

The Urban Forestry Strategic Plan addresses how to manage and maintain public trees and included a basic urban tree canopy assessment. The plan outlined six major objectives for the City's urban forest strategy that included tree inventory management, coordination of an interdepartmental Tree Team and establishing canopy goals across the City.

## 2006 Covington Community Forestry Plan

The 2006 Community Forestry Plan was intended to direct the management of tree resources within park and open space areas. The plan recognizes that trees are an asset and a resource that should be planned to ensure future community value. The plan proposed the expansion of the parks commission to the parks and forestry commission, a tree ordinance and the specific future management of tree resources within parks and natural areas. An action plan for future planting, maintenance and education was recommended.

## 2012 Green to Cedar Rivers Trail Feasibility Study

This feasibility study identified key considerations for future development of two trail corridors. The Green to Cedar Rivers Trail and Covington Highlands Trail are proposed to connect from the Green River to the existing Cedar River Trail, and between the Soos Creek Trail and the Green to Cedar Rivers Trail. The plan identified a preliminary preferred alignment for these trails, as well as opportunities and constraints for trail development. Maple Valley is located at the center of these two trail alignments, and when completed, these trails will significantly enhance regional trail connectivity.

## Benefits of Parks, Recreation & Open Space

A number of organizations, non-profits, and studies have noted the overall health, economic, environmental and social benefits provided by parks, open space and trails. In 2005, The Trust for Public Land published “The Benefits of Parks: Why America Needs More City Parks and Open Space.” This report makes the following observations about the benefits of parks and open space, all of which have health impacts.

- Improvements to physical and mental health are increased through physical activity and contact with the natural world.
- Social and community benefits, including more stable neighborhoods, improved social connections and reductions in crime and juvenile delinquency.
- Increases in local economic prosperity as residential and commercial property values rise, community and economic development sustainability, and enhanced tourism.
- Environmental benefits through trees and other vegetation, which improve air quality, act as natural air conditioners and assist with storm water control and erosion.

### Physical Activity Benefits

Residents in communities with increased access to parks, recreation, natural areas and trails have more opportunities for physical activity, both through recreation and active transportation. By participating in physical activity, residents can reduce their risk of being or becoming overweight or obese, decrease their likelihood of suffering from chronic diseases like heart disease and type 2 diabetes, and improve their levels of stress and anxiety.

Nearby access to parks has been shown to increase levels of physical activity. According to studies cited in the National Park and Recreation Association’s 2010 report, the majority of people of all ages who visit parks are physically active during their visit. In addition, the CDC reports that greater access to parks leads to 25 percent more people exercising three or more days per week. Park location and access also matters. According to a study in Los Angeles, people who live within 1 mile of a park are four times more likely to visit the park one or more times per week, compared to those who live further away.

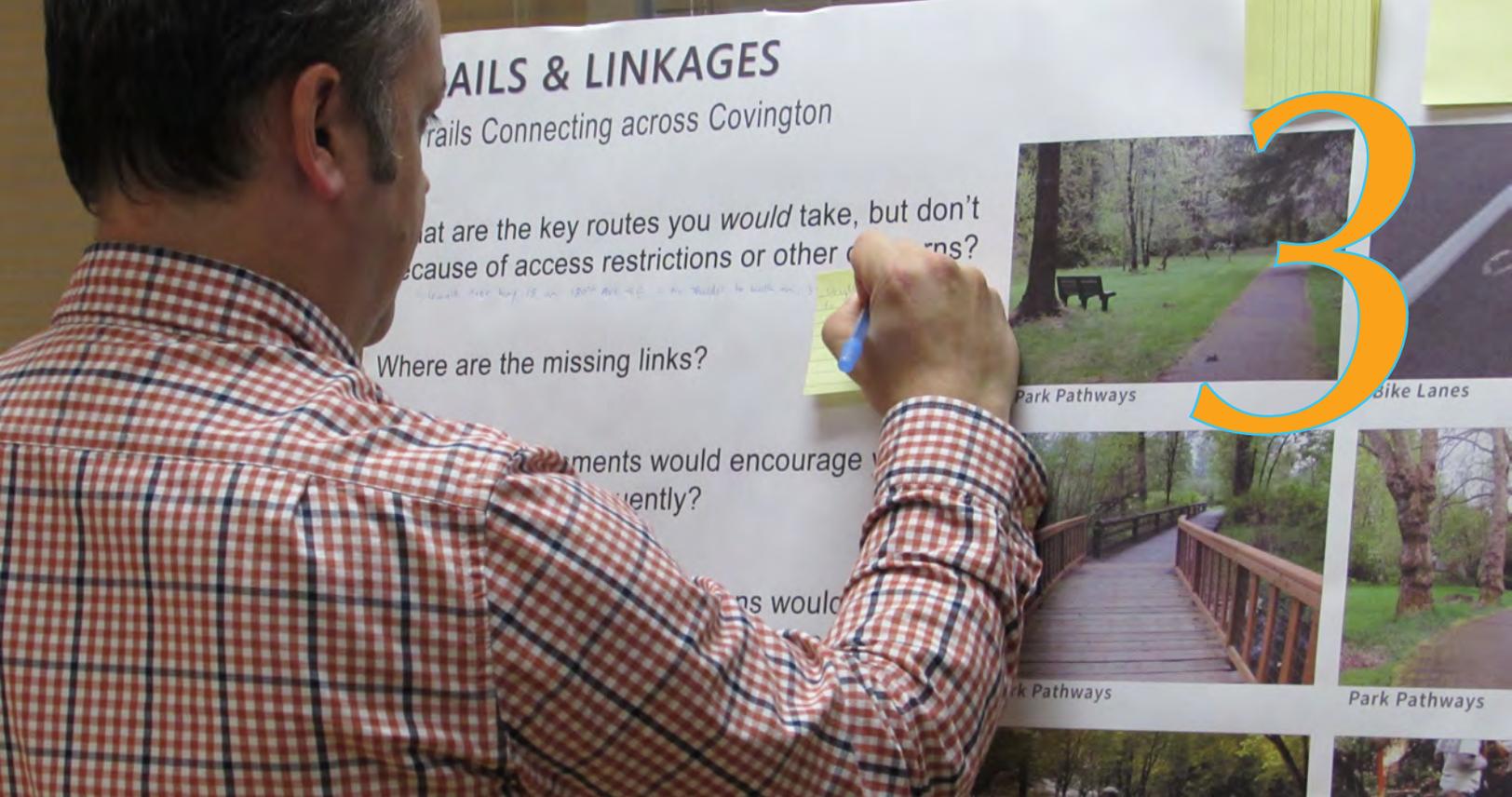
Providing convenient access to parks and recreation is particularly important in neighborhoods with lower socioeconomic status, as parks can provide free or low-cost options for physical activity. Access to parks and recreation is also important for communities of color and individuals with a low income or low education level – all of which are factors that increase a person’s risk of obesity and related diseases.

### Social and Community Benefits

Park and recreation facilities provide opportunities to engage with family, friends, and neighbors, thereby increasing social capital and community cohesion, which can improve residents’ mental health and overall well-being. People who feel that they are connected to their community and those who participate in recreational, community and other activities are more likely to have better mental and physical health and to live longer lives than those who do not. Access to parks and recreational facilities has also been linked to reductions in crime, particularly juvenile delinquency.

## Economic Benefits

Parks and recreation facilities can bring positive economic impacts through increased property values, increased attractiveness for businesses (quality of life) and workers, and through direct increases in employment opportunities. Improved economic conditions can in turn improve health outcomes, as people have more money to spend on food, housing, childcare and other daily needs. However, increased property values can cause a decrease in housing affordability and an increase in housing displacement, due to rising rents or property taxes, negatively impacting the quality of life for affected residents.



# Community Engagement

Community engagement and input played a important role in establishing a clear planning framework that reflects current community priorities. Most residents care deeply about the future of Covington's parks and trail system and appreciated the opportunity to offer feedback in the development of this Plan. Public outreach methods were varied and extensive, including:

- A mail-based community survey
- A supplemental online survey
- Two community meetings
- Informational displays and interactions at the Covington Days celebration
- Three stakeholder discussions
- MindMixer online engagement platform
- Website content & email blasts
- 2 Park and Recreation Commission meetings

Throughout this process, the public provided information and expressed opinions about their needs and priorities for parks, trails and recreation facilities and programs in Covington. This feedback played a crucial role in updating policy statements and prioritizing the capital facilities project list contained within this Plan.

## Community Survey

The Covington Parks and Recreation Department contracted for the administration of a community survey between May and June of 2015 as a component of this Plan. The purpose of the survey was to gather input to help determine park, trail, open space and recreation priorities of the community. In collaboration with staff, the project team designed a 26-question survey to assess residents' recreational needs, preferences and priorities. This allowed the survey to be tailored to issues of strategic importance to effectively plan the future of the parks and recreation system.

The survey was designed to obtain representative results from households across the City. It was administered as a mail survey. In all, over 2,000 surveys were mailed, and a total of 346 surveys were completed (response rate of 17.3%). Survey respondents had the option to return the print version or to call a 1-800 number to have the survey administered in Spanish over the phone. The sample size is sufficient to assess opinions generally and allows a review by multiple subgroups including age, gender and other demographics.

Additionally, the mail survey was converted to an online survey and promoted via the City website. The responses from the online survey were maintained separately from the statistical, mail survey to preserve integrity of the mail survey sample. A total of 249 surveys were completed for the online survey.

A detailed discussion of community survey results appear in the Needs Assessment chapters of this Plan (starting on page 19). The survey instrument and a summary of the response data from the mail and online surveys are provided in Appendix C and D.

## Major Findings

Covington residents generally are satisfied with parks, trails and recreation opportunities in the City, but many indicated an interest in additional or expanded services and facilities.

- Covington gets high grades for park quality and upkeep. Overall satisfaction (“excellent” and “good”) with the condition of parks and trails was high (88%).
- Responses were equally favorable regarding the quality of recreation programs and activities, with 88% of respondents rating programs and activities as excellent or good.
- 69% indicated a need for walking and biking trails. Other desired recreation amenities include: small neighborhood parks (63%), large community parks (60%), playgrounds (49%) and picnic shelters (45%).
- Recreation programs that were noted as the most important include swim lessons (28%), community special events/festivals (28%), adult fitness and wellness programs (23%), and youth sports programs (19%).
- Approximately 48% indicated they would be very supportive of creating a special recreation district composed of residents of the City of Covington and neighboring communities. An additional 27% were somewhat supportive of the idea.
- City residents indicated a strong willingness to support funding to develop and operate the types of indoor programming spaces. Approximately 80% of those surveyed are willing to support at least \$4 per month in added taxes. Over 15% were willing to pay over \$9 per month.

## Public Meetings & Displays

The project team sought feedback from local residents and program users at three events during the course of the project. Two traditional public meetings were held at Covington City Hall, and a staffed information booth was part of the Covington Days celebration. Meeting flyers, newspaper articles, social media and email announcements were used to publicize the events and encourage participation. Summary responses from each of the meetings are provided in Appendix E.

### Community Open House Meeting #1 (May 13, 2015)

Community members were invited to an open house on Wednesday, May 13, 2015 from 4:00 - 8:00 p.m. at Covington City Hall. As the first of three public sessions for the PROS Plan update, the project team prepared informational displays covering three major themes for parks and recreation. These display stations included Recreation Programming, Trails & Linkages, and Parks & Outdoor Recreation. Attendees were encouraged to talk with staff, record their comments and complete a written comment card. City staff and project team staff engaged with participants to explore current issues, needs and interests related to park, trail and recreation opportunities and needs.

### Covington Days Information Booth - Meeting #2 (July 18-19, 2015)

The second public session was a component of the two-day Covington Days celebration that occurred in mid July. Informational displays provided highlights from the community survey and posed a series of questions to spark ideas and feedback from event attendees. Comments were varied and ranged from park improvement ideas to recreation programming needs to the desire for specialized facilities, such as dog parks and splash pads. The booth was staffed for both days of the event, and City staff and Parks and Recreation Commissioners successfully engaged with residents who had not previously heard of the project or did not attend the first public meeting.

### Community Open House Meeting #3 (September 8, 2015)

The third PROS Plan open house was held in early September to review and comment upon proposed projects, priorities and draft recommendations for the parks and recreation system. A dozen display stations provided graphic and narrative information covering the following topics: existing parkland inventory and associated watershed catchment areas, existing & proposed trail routes, and recreation program priorities. Attendees provided comments on the proposed trail network, along with the proposed distribution of parks and park amenities throughout the City. Attendees indicated support for the proposed direction in capital project and programming priorities.

## Stakeholder Discussions

Interviews with external stakeholders were conducted to more broadly assess the opportunities

for program enhancements, partnerships and coordination. Stakeholders were identified by City staff based on their past coordination with the City and their involvement or interest in the future of Covington's park, recreation or trail facilities. The stakeholder meetings were held between mid May and late July 2015, and the following individuals and local organizations provided insight to the Plan:

- Teens from Kentlake High School
- Covington Economic Development Council
- MultiCare
- Valley Medical
- Kentwood High School Booster Club
- Recreation Program Users

Stakeholder comments were often specific to the particular perspective or interest of the stakeholder group. Overall, comments were generally favorable in regard to existing City facilities and the potential for future improvements within Covington. Stakeholders recognized the limited financial capacity of the City and were often quick to offer suggestions for potential partnerships or other means to accomplish specific projects. Suggested projects ranged from coordinating the development of trail connections, identifying opportunities for recreation programs, and improving existing parklands. Specific recommendations are reflected in the Needs Assessment chapters, and stakeholder discussion summaries are provided in Appendix F.

## Other Engagement Platforms

In addition to the direct outreach opportunities noted above, the Covington community was informed about the planning process through a variety of media platforms. The following methods were used to inform residents about the project and about opportunities to participate and offer their comments.

- City website
- MindMixer ( [covington.mindmixer.com](http://covington.mindmixer.com) )
- Facebook & Twitter
- The Covington - Maple Valley Reporter

A project webpage was posted on the City's website to provide background information, meeting announcements and project materials such as meeting notes, displays and summary reports. The page was updated periodically to keep residents informed of progress and alerted to opportunities for involvement during the process.

In addition to the City's own social media feeds (Facebook and Twitter), the project team utilized the MindMixer platform ([mindmixer.com](http://mindmixer.com)) as an integrated, on-going online community discussion. The tool allowed for integration with the traditional public meetings, and it enabled residents to submit ideas, offer feedback and answer questions about key issues and topics. The MindMixer site was also linked to the City's social media accounts.



# Parks & Outdoor Recreation

## *Parks, Places & Spaces for Active Living*

Parks are the foundation of the City's park and recreation system. Covington's parks provide residents with a variety of active and passive recreational amenities. They are places where people can spend time with friends and family, exercise and play, learn and explore and engage with the City's landscape, wildlife and culture. By improving existing parks and providing new parks as the City grows, the City can actively support the mental and physical health of residents and ensure its park and recreation system meets the needs of the whole community.

## National & Regional Trends

### National Survey on Recreation and the Environment

The National Survey on Recreation and the Environment (NSRE) is a comprehensive survey that has been collecting data and producing reports about the recreation activities, environmental attitudes and natural resource values of Americans since the 1980s. The NSRE core focus is on outdoor activity participation and personal demographics. The most recent 2012 NSRE reports the total number of people participating in outdoor activities between 2000 and 2007 grew by 4.4% while the number of days of participation increased by

approximately 25 percent. Walking for pleasure grew by 14% and continues to lead as the top favorite outdoor activity.

Nature-based activities, those associated with wildlife and natural settings, showed a discernible growth in the number of people (an increase in 3.1% participation rate) and the number of days of participation. American's participation in nature-based outdoor recreation is increasing with viewing, photographing, or otherwise observing nature clearly measured as the fastest growing type of nature-based recreation activity.

## Public Parks and Health: The Trust for Public Land

Aside from the recreational activity and sports participation figures noted in this Plan, a number of organizations and non-profits have documented the overall health and wellness benefits provided by parks, open space and trails. The Trust for Public Land published a report in 2005 called "The Benefits of Parks: Why America Needs More City Parks and Open Space." This report makes the following observations about the health, economic, environmental and social benefits of parks and open space.

- Physical activity makes people healthier.
- Physical activity increases with access to parks.
- Contact with the natural world improves physical and physiological health.
- Value is added to community and economic development sustainability.
- Benefits of tourism are enhanced.
- Trees are effective in improving air quality and act as natural air conditioners, assisting with storm water control and erosion.
- Recreational opportunities for all ages are provided.

Another significant, recent trend is that of the relationship between child development and access to nature or nature play. Stemming from Richard Louv's book "Last Child in the Woods," a relative network of organizations and agencies have come together to discuss the impacts of nature play and seek funding and partnerships to facilitate ways to connect kids to their local environment. Recent studies show that children are smarter, more cooperative, happier and healthier when they have frequent and varied opportunities for free and unstructured play in the out-of-doors, according to the Children & Nature Network, a national non-profit organization working to reconnect children with nature and co-founded by Louv.

## State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan

The Washington Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) is a 5-year statewide recreation plan published by the Washington Recreation and Conservation Office. The SCORP is designed to determine outdoor recreation issues and opportunities and helps explore local park and recreation planning strategies. It includes data on current trends in recreation participation and demand in Washington. Findings from the SCORP were reviewed to help inform planning and funding considerations for future park and recreational facilities.

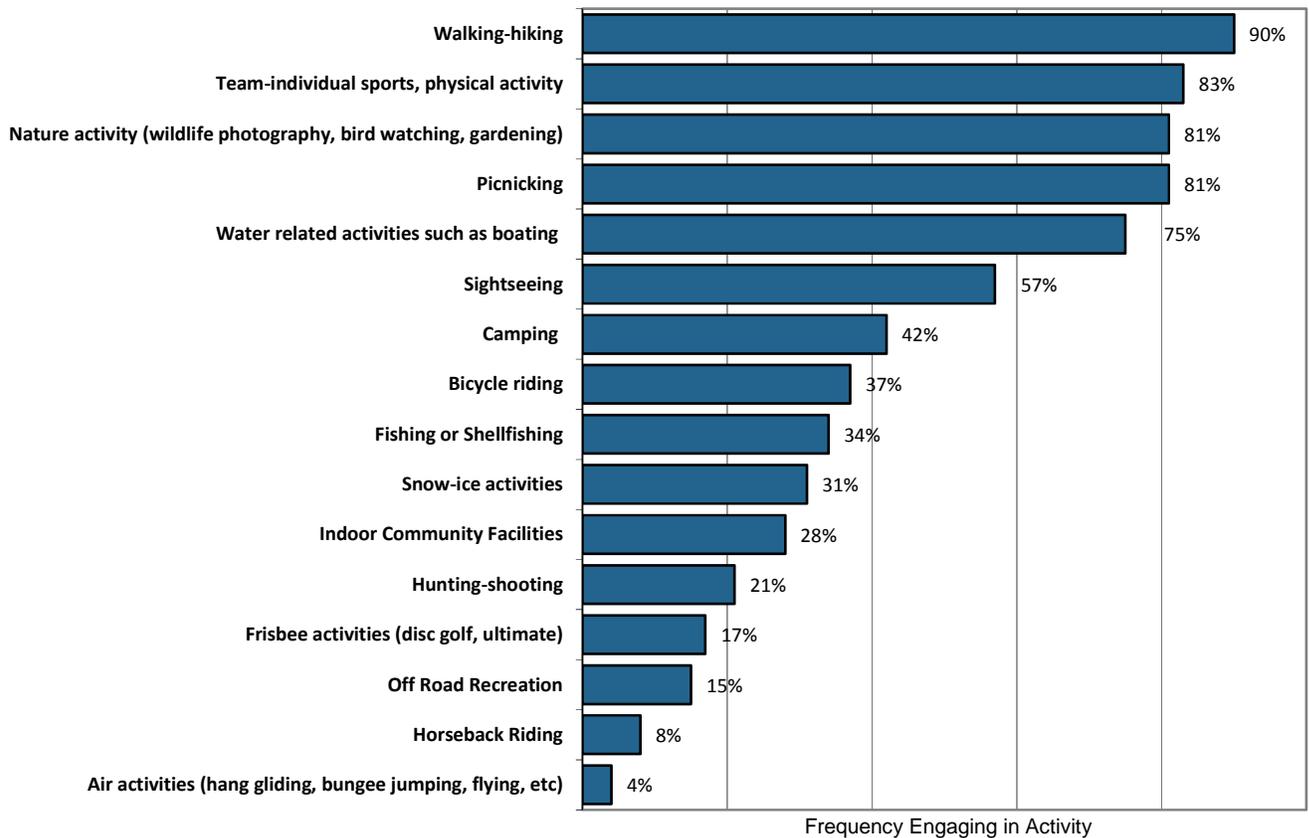
The 2013 SCORP confirms that outdoor recreation is still an integral part of life for most Washington residents; 90% participate in the most popular category of activities, which

includes walking and hiking, demonstrating the pervasiveness of outdoor recreation in Washington’s culture. Significant increases in rates of participation in outdoor recreation activities since 2006 indicate the importance of the state and local communities to continue their investment in outdoor recreation facilities and opportunities.

Low-cost activities, less strenuous activities, or activities that can be done close to home (activities with any of these characteristics) have high participation rates among Washington residents. These include activities such as walking, recreational activities (jogging and fitness activities), nature activities and picnicking/barbecuing/cooking out. The most intensive users of public facilities and lands are participants in hiking, beachcombing, picnicking/barbecuing/cooking out, wildlife viewing and swimming in pools or natural waters. More specialized activities have lower rates with the categories of horseback riding and air activities (flying, parachuting, bungee jumping, etc.) having the lowest participation rates. Participation rates in the 2013 SCORP Outdoor Activity Categories are depicted in Figure 4.

The overall category of walking (in which 90% of Washington residents engaged) is made up largely of those walking without a pet (71% of residents do this), with hiking (54%) and walking with a pet (52%) being of medium importance and climbing or mountaineering (10%) being of minor importance. The breakdown of nature-based activities, in which 81% of Washington residents participated adds further details for wildlife viewing and photography (59%) and gardening (57%) each has a majority of residents participating. This overall category includes 16 different types of nature activities.

Figure 4. Statewide Participation Rates by Outdoor Activity (2013 SCORP)



According to the 2013 SCORP report, it is assumed that most people will continue to engage in the outdoor activities in which they previously participated. After listing the activities in which they participated, residents were then asked if they planned to do those activities in the coming year. An overwhelming majority of them (91%) indicated that they planned to do all of the same activities in which they had participated in the previous year and another 3% indicated that they planned to do most of those activities. Therefore, it is likely that rates of planned participation would be roughly the same as the actual participation rates discussed previously in this section of the SCORP.

Regarding new forms of recreation, several activities were newly tracked in the 2012 resident survey, including general frisbee play (16.8%), disc golf or frisbee golf (4.5%) and ultimate frisbee or frisbee football (3.0%). While ultimate frisbee requires nothing more than a field, disc golf requires infrastructure for the tees and the baskets, which has potential implications for recreation providers resulting from cross traffic play and user conflicts.

Another activity that is newly tracked in 2012 is swimming in natural waters, in which 35.7% of residents participated. While this activity does not require any facility for the activity itself, it may benefit from some infrastructure, including access to water. Likewise, snorkeling was also newly tracked (3.7%), as were two other water-related activities: using a splash park (8.1%) and using a spray park (6.4%).

The participation rates confirm that outdoor recreation is an integral part of life in Washington's communities and a pervasive value in the Pacific Northwest. Research indicates that nature and outdoor recreation have a significant positive impact on human health, both physical and mental. Washington's economy also benefits directly and indirectly from outdoor recreation through consumer spending, tax revenue and jobs.

The 2013 SCORP Recommendations encourage local park and recreation service providers to:

- Recognize a return to nature-based activities.
- Understand that the top constraints to participation are social factors (not facilities or opportunities).
- Capitalize on the social benefits of outdoor recreation.
- Focus on increasing and/or improving recreation facilities and opportunities that support active recreation.
- Continue to offer diverse outdoor recreation activities and opportunities.
- Take advantage of current technology by using a map-based information system to provide an inventory of supply.
- Recognize recreation types in which supply may not be meeting demand.
- Focus on the capacity of facilities.
- Consider the implications of changing demographics when making recreation decisions.
- Increase priority of wetlands management as a recreation asset.

From the 2013 SCORP, the broadest recommendation for all areas across Washington is to continue the investment in outdoor recreation facilities and opportunities as the foundation for fulfilling the needs and expectations for the benefit of both residents and the natural environment.

## Economic Analysis of Outdoor Recreation in Washington

Released in January 2015, this economic assessment study quantifies the contribution of outdoor recreation to Washington State's economy and way of life. Prepared by Earth Economics, the report states that "the benefits of Washington's outdoor recreation industry go beyond supporting jobs to include creating a way of life. It is estimated that Washingtonians, on average, spend 56 days a year recreating outdoors. According to the recreation surveys and public land records used in this study, there were a total of about 446 million participant days a year spent on outdoor recreation in Washington, resulting in \$21.6 billion dollars in annual expenditures."

The study revealed that expenditures were highest for recreation associated with public waters which includes a number of activities with high trip and equipment expenditures, especially motorized boating. Special events such as sports tournaments and races, which generally involve fees and attract overnight stays were ranked second in expenditures, followed by recreation on private lands, which includes expensive recreation activities such as golf, skiing and off-highway vehicle riding and hunting, which often occur on private timberland. Local parks are the most common place for people to visit as well as the most accessible and least costly destination.

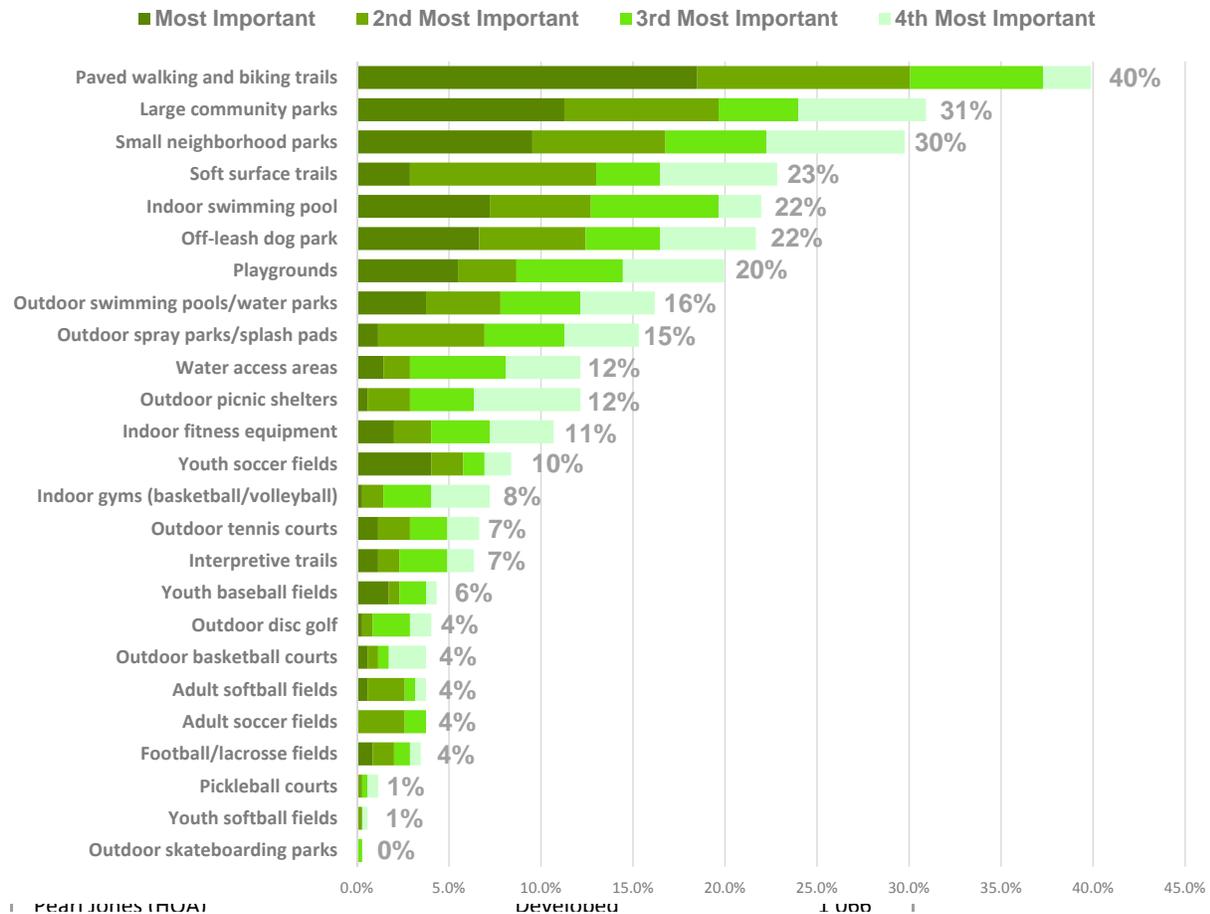
The report also recognizes that the value of outdoor recreation goes beyond its traditional economic contribution. Benefits included the general improved quality of life people get from engaging in outdoor recreation (improved physical health, lower health care costs, reduced juvenile crime, less work absenteeism) and from the ecosystem services recreational lands provide. Trees, water and animals provide ecosystem goods and services has been measured to contribute a combined total estimated value of between \$134 billion and \$248 billion a year. The economic analysis report concludes that "investment in outdoor recreation yields tremendous results."

## Local Feedback & Trends

While many residents have not used Covington's existing parks, those who have are generally satisfied with their quality. However, a majority of residents who responded to the survey, indicated that they have a need for additional neighborhood parks (63% of respondents) and community parks (60%). Approximately 30% of residents felt that each of these types of parks was the most important park and recreation facility for the City.

Participants in the teen stakeholder discussion were particularly interested in additional unprogrammed park areas to spend time with friends. Survey respondents also expressed a need for additional paved and soft surface walking and biking trails, which can often be on-road facilities or popular amenities in larger parks. The following chart illustrates the top ranked needs for park facilities by survey respondents.

Figure 5. Most Important Park & Recreation Facilities Sorted by Top 4 Choices



## Neighborhood Parks

Neighborhood parks are designed for unstructured, non-organized play and limited active and passive recreation. This Plan recommends a minimum neighborhood park size of 1.5 acres, though they are generally 3 to 5 acres in size. The size of neighborhood parks can vary depending on neighborhood need, physical location and opportunity, among others. Generally, developed neighborhood parks include amenities such as pedestrian paths, picnic tables, benches, play equipment, a multi-use open field for informal play, sport courts or multi-purpose paved areas and landscaping. Restrooms are not provided due to high construction and maintenance costs. On-site parking also is not usually provided; however, on-street, ADA-accessible parking stall(s) may be provided.

With a reasonably-priced housing stock and proximity to the greater Seattle metropolitan area, Covington continues to attract couples and young families, and access to neighborhood-based recreation opportunities are vitally important to existing and new residents.

## Current Inventory

Covington currently has two City-maintained neighborhood parks.

- Crystal View Park, a 1.90 acre City-owned and maintained, partially developed park
- Evergreen Park, a 1.70 acre City-owned and maintained, undeveloped park site

Private homeowner associations (HOAs) provide another nine neighborhood parks, and three (Abotsford Estates Park, The Reserve and Tamarack Park) are located on City-owned property, but maintained and managed by HOAs.

Figure 6. Neighborhood Parks

Park Name	Status	Acreage
Evergreen Park	Undeveloped	1.7
Crystal View Park	Partially Developed	1.9
Abotsford Estates Park (HOA)	Developed	2.75
Coho Creek (HOA)	Developed	2.17
Crofton Heights (HOA)	Developed	4.61
Crofton Hills (HOA)	Developed	0.29
Pearl Jones (HOA)	Developed	1.066
Tamarack (HOA)	Developed	0.58
Tamarack (HOA)	Partially Developed	1.68
The Reserve (HOA)	Developed	4.8
The Reserve (HOA)	Developed	9.4
Timber Hills (HOA)	Developed	1.85
Timberlane (HOA)	Developed	5.22
Winterwood Estates (HOA)	Developed	12.36
<b>Total Neighborhood Park Acreage</b>		<b>50.38</b>

Private HOA parks contribute significantly to the City’s total park acreage, providing more small-scale recreation opportunities than City facilities. However, these private parks are not open to the general public. Because of this, the City should remain committed to providing neighborhood parks, especially for those residents not affiliated with private, homeowner association amenities and resources.

## Level of Service

This Plan proposes an acreage standard of 3.0 acres per 1,000 residents for neighborhood parks. Using this proposed service standard, Figure 7 illustrates the current and projected levels of service for neighborhood parks. Existing City-owned and HOA parks provide a level of service of 2.72 total neighborhood park acres per 1,000 residents, based on the 2015 population. The level of service for developed neighborhood parks is 2.57 acres per 1,000 residents. With projected population growth, the City needs to acquire additional neighborhood parkland to meet levels of service citywide. The City should consider acquiring additional neighborhood parkland to meet both level of service standards as well as distribution and access goals, as described below.

Figure 7 Current and Projected Level of Service for Neighborhood Parks

Metric		Measurement			
<b>Proposed Level of Service (LOS) Standard</b>		<b>3.0 acres per 1,000 residents</b>			
2015 Population		18,520 residents			
2021 Population		21,257 residents			
Parkland Acreage (Neighborhood & Pocket)		Total		Developed	
City-owned & maintained		3.6 acres		1.21 acres	
Private		46.78 acres		46.31 acres	
<b>Total</b>		<b>50.38 acres</b>		<b>47.52 acres</b>	
Year	2015	2021	2015	2021	
Effective Level of Service based on total acreage (acres/1,000 residents)	2.72	2.37	2.57	2.24	
Net LOS to Standard (acres/1,000 residents)	(0.28)	(0.63)	(0.43)	(0.76)	
Attainment of Standard	91%	79%	86%	75%	
Acreage surplus (deficit)	(5.18)	(13.39)	(8.04)	(16.25)	

## Distribution and Proximity

Neighborhood parks are intended to serve residential areas within close proximity - within a 1/2-mile walking distance of the park. They should be geographically distributed throughout the community. Access to neighborhood parks is mostly pedestrian, and park sites should be located such that people living within the service area can reach the park safely and conveniently.

To better understand where acquisition efforts should be directed, 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. In reviewing parkland distribution and assessing opportunities to fill identified gaps, residentially zoned lands were isolated, since neighborhood and community parks primarily serve these areas.

The service areas of public parks were reviewed separately from those of private parks to better understand specific needs. Map 3 illustrates the application of the neighborhood park distribution standards (1/4-mile and 1/2-mile walking distance) from existing, publicly owned neighborhood parks. Community parks were also assumed to provide neighborhood park-level service to residents within a 1/2-mile walking distance. This map shows that much of the City lacks reasonable access to public parkland. Significant gaps appear in the west-central and eastern areas of the city.

Private parks partially fill the distribution gaps noted above, see Map 4. However, these parks are not open to the general public and only serve the residents of the unique homeowner associations in which they sit. Coverage is most extensive in the area of The Reserve and Lake Winterwood. Also, while the Timberlane area contains a significant reserve of greenspace lands as tree corridors, the only significant park site with amenities is the Timberland community center.

A composite service area map, see Map 6, more accurately represents those areas with existing access to public or private “active” park lands. As this map indicates, significant gaps remain in the central and eastern sections of the City.

Based on the distribution and accessibility of public and private parks, residential areas in the following locations are generally underserved by neighborhood parks:

- South of approximately SE 260th and northwest of State Route 18, except areas within the Pioneer Ridge, Glennwood, Wood Crest, Wingfield, Savana, and Channing Park HOAs
- North of Cedar View Elementary School, between approximately 188th Ave SE and 194th Ave SE
- East of approximately 200th Ave SE to the city limits
- Surrounding Covington Elementary.

## Acquisition of New Neighborhood Parks

New neighborhood parks are needed to improve overall distribution and equity, while promoting recreation within walking distance of residential areas. This Plan recommends the acquisition of 5-6 additional neighborhood parks in the following locations to meet community needs, see Map 8 for locations:

- N1: This proposed park, located at central/west (or could be proposed community park site)
- N2: central/west
- N3: northeast
- N4: south/central
- N5: east/central
- N6: far east/northern

The targeted acquisition areas do not identify a specific parcel(s) for consideration; rather the areas encompass broader regions in which acquisitions would be desired. These acquisition targets represent a long-term vision for improving parkland distribution throughout Covington. The identification of these acquisition areas will help direct the City’s resources toward filling existing distribution gaps and also provide direction to future residential developments with regard to the need for and potential locations of neighborhood parks.

The following recommendations for neighborhood parks should also be considered in future acquisition planning and decisions.

### Neighborhood Park Site Size

The City should aim to acquire additional neighborhood park sites that are, at minimum, 3 acres in size. Many existing public and private neighborhood parks are less than 2 acres, which can restrict their ability to provide quality recreational opportunities or utility.

### System Development

Many underserved areas of the City have significant development potential. As development occurs, the City should capitalize on impact fees and/or developer dedication of

neighborhood parkland in new developments. Parkland acquired through these means would serve new and existing residents and be open to the general public.

## **HOA Parks**

The City should consider requiring public access on City-owned, HOA-maintained park sites to provide park access to nearby residents who do not live within HOA boundaries. The City should review acquisition records, titles and/or plats to identify current restrictions or conditions and re-assess the potential of these sites to serve as public parkland open to all residents.

In addition, the City should review state statutes and case law to explore the potential to acquire and maintain HOA parks where it would significantly improve service levels by allowing broader public access, such as in the Pearl Jones Park area.

## **Greenspaces**

In some underserved areas, existing greenspaces may offer opportunities to provide limited neighborhood park amenities within a natural setting, through improvements like walking trails and nature-based play areas.

## **Pedestrian Access**

Covington's street pattern and the pedestrian environment are critical to the accessibility of neighborhood parks for local residents. Park siting and design should ensure pedestrians do not have to cross a major arterial street or other significant natural or man-made barrier to get to the site, unless safe crossings are provided. Neighborhood parks should be located along road frontages with pedestrian improvements to promote accessibility, visual access and community awareness of the sites. Connecting and frontage streets should include sidewalks or other safe pedestrian access.

## **Wayfinding**

The City should consider placing wayfinding signage to increase awareness and use of public parkland.

## **Development & Improvement of Existing Neighborhood Parks**

Improving Covington's existing neighborhood parks would provide residents with additional recreational opportunities and help meet service standards.

- Crystal View Park – Adding a covered picnic area and a walking path/overlook along Little Soos Creek, making accessibility improvements to the play area and paths and restoring vegetation could improve the recreational opportunities available at this park.
- Evergreen Park – This currently undeveloped park is being used informally for BMX biking. Given the site's slope and current use, formal improvements for off-road cycling, BMX riding or bike skills course could be considered in future development plans.

The City should make general improvements to neighborhood parks as needed to ensure proper maintenance, usability and quality of park features and grounds.

## Pocket Parks

Pocket parks are small parks that provide limited opportunities for active play and passive recreation. They are generally less than 1.5 acres in size and provide some recreational amenity to residents within a ¼-mile walking distance. Developed pocket parks may include lawn or other vegetation, a place to sit and possibly a small feature – such as a play area, public art, or a historic or cultural marker. Pocket parks can be located on public or private land and are often created as part of residential development projects. While pocket parks can bring additional recreational amenities to a community, they cannot provide the range of experiences and activities of neighborhood and community parks.

## Current Inventory

Covington currently has one pocket park – Friendship Park, a fully developed 0.6-acre park. Improving the ADA accessibility of Friendship Park, particularly for the play area, play equipment and picnic tables, would enable access by all of Covington’s residents. Private homeowner associations own and maintain 14 additional pocket parks, all of which are fully developed but do not offer general public access. These HOA pocket parks include:

Figure 8. HOA Pocket Parks

Park Name	Status	Acreage
Aqua Vista at Pipe Lake HOA	Developed	0.75
Channing Park HOA	Developed	0.36
Cornerstone HOA	Developed	0.41
Glennwood HOA	Developed	0.31
Maple Creek HOA	Developed	0.13
Morgans Creek	Developed	0.07
N. Rainier Vista HOA	Developed	0.05
North Parke HOA	Developed	0.48
Parke Meadows HOA	Developed	0.45
Pearl Jones HOA	Developed	0.03
Pioneer Ridge (High Point) HOA	Developed	0.25
S. Rainier Vista HOA	Developed	1.08
Savana HOA	Developed	0.57
Wood Crest HOA	Developed	0.13
<b>Total HOA Park Acreage</b>		<b>5.07</b>

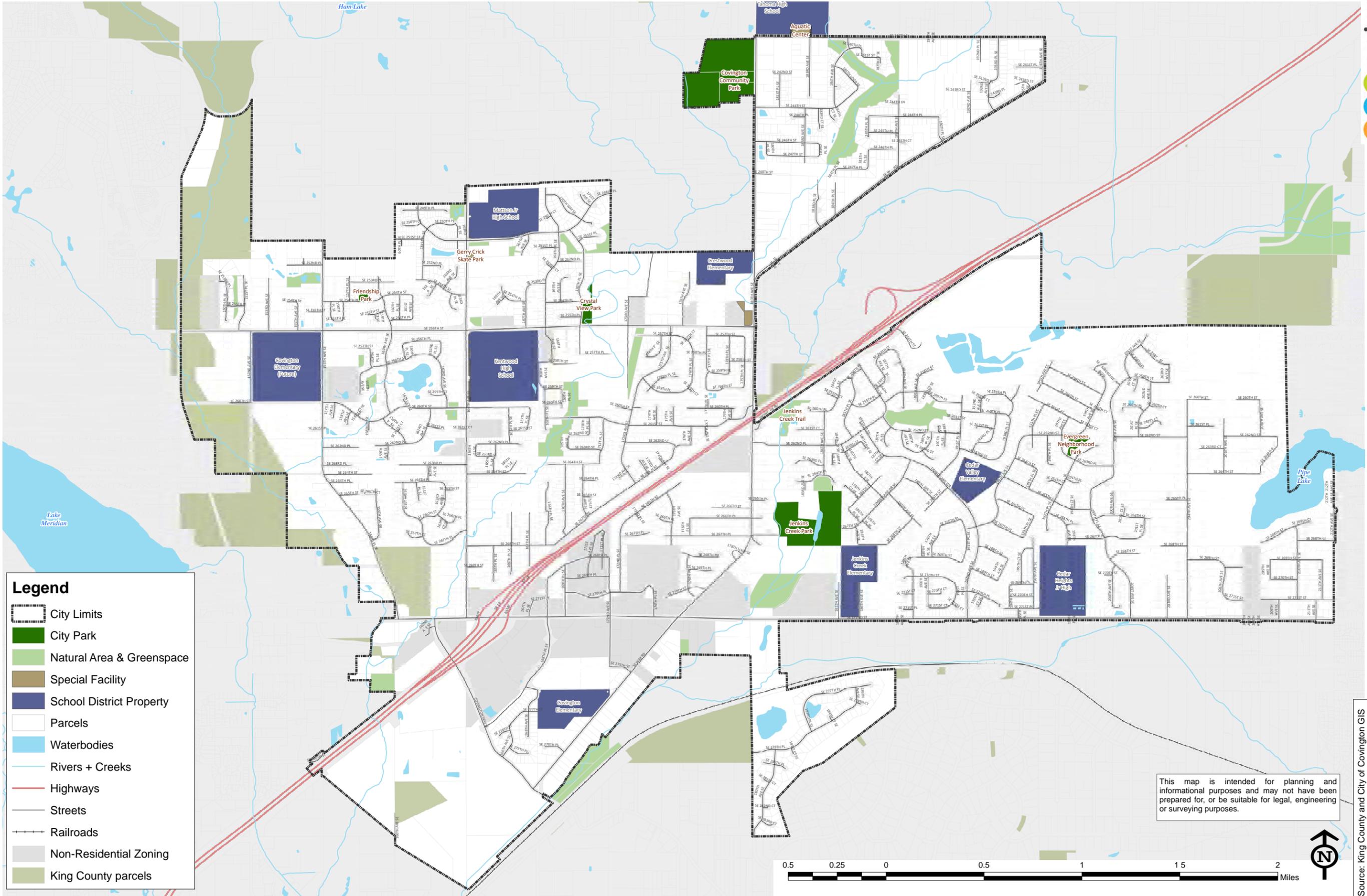
## Distribution and Proximity

Pocket parks provide limited recreational amenities that serve residential areas within a 1/4-mile walking distance of the park. Access to pocket parks is mostly pedestrian, and park sites should be located such that people living within the service area can reach the park safely and conveniently.

Map 4 shows areas within ¼-mile walking distance of a City or HOA pocket park. For HOA pocket parks, the service area has been limited to the HOA boundary, since these parks are only open to local HOA residents. Pocket parks currently serve a number of neighborhoods in the northwest and eastern portions of Covington.

## Future Pocket Parks

Since pocket parks provide only limited recreational opportunities and have high per-acre maintenance costs, this Plan recommends that the City focus on providing neighborhood and community parks.



**Legend**

-  City Limits
-  City Park
-  Natural Area & Greenspace
-  Special Facility
-  School District Property
-  Parcels
-  Waterbodies
-  Rivers + Creeks
-  Highways
-  Streets
-  Railroads
-  Non-Residential Zoning
-  King County parcels

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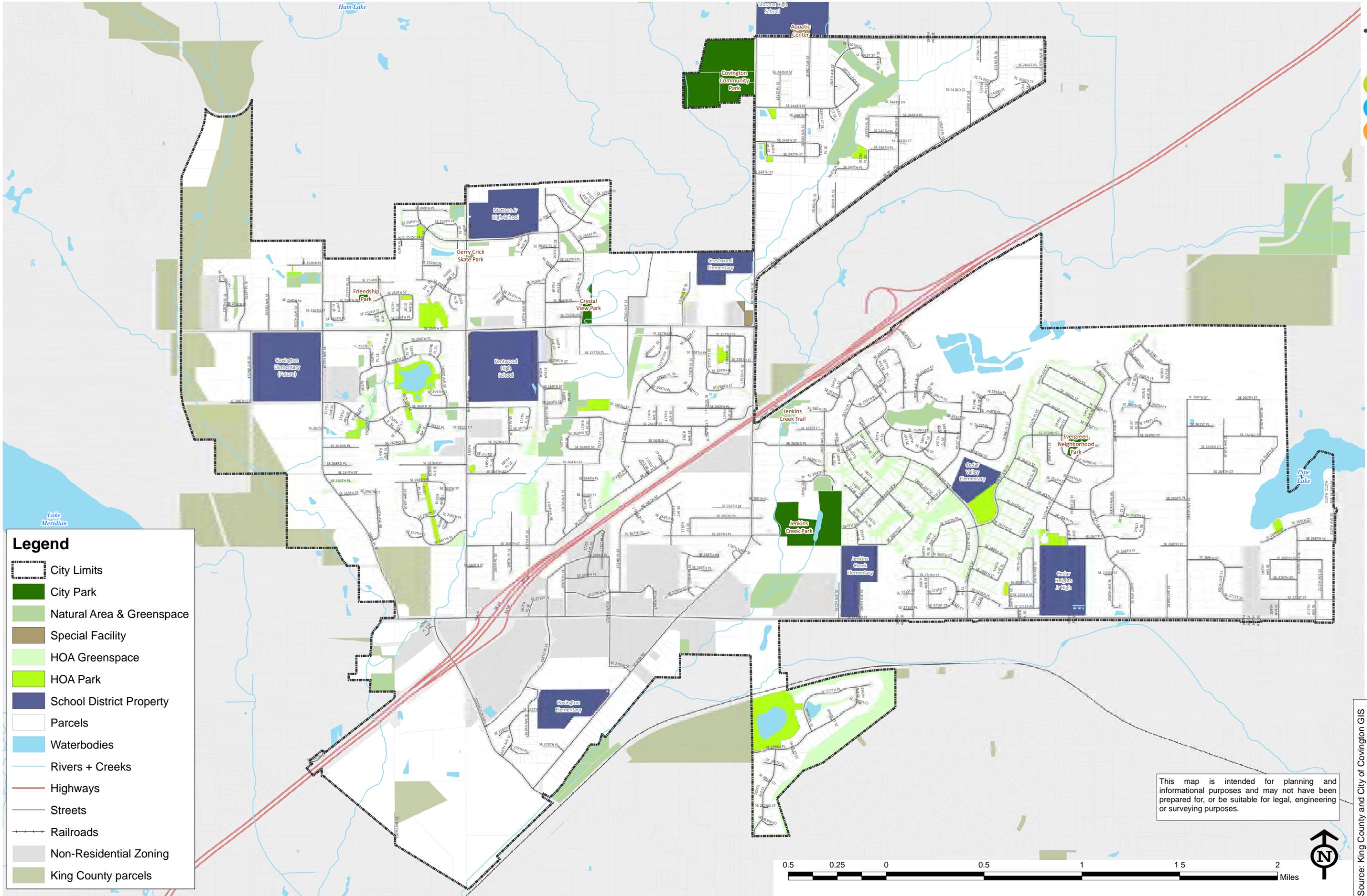


Source: King County and City of Covington GIS  
Date: 15 December 2015



**Parks, Recreation & Open Space Plan | 2016**  
**MAP 1: Existing City-owned Parks**

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- Legend**
- City Limits
  - City Park
  - Natural Area & Greenspace
  - Special Facility
  - HOA Greenspace
  - HOA Park
  - School District Property
  - Parcels
  - Waterbodies
  - Rivers + Creeks
  - Highways
  - Streets
  - Railroads
  - Non-Residential Zoning
  - King County parcels

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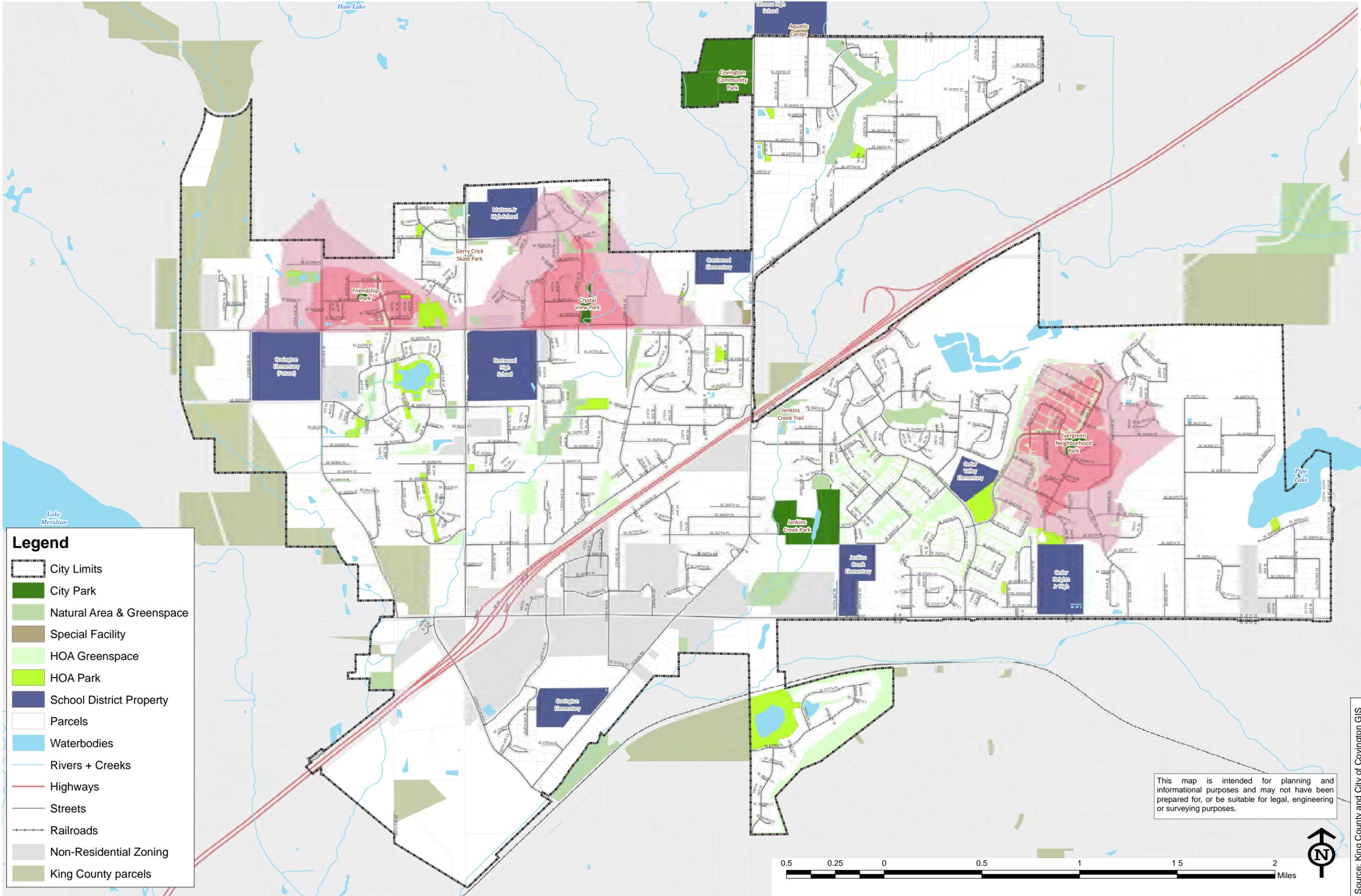


Source: King County and City of Covington GIS  
Date: 15 December 2015



**Parks, Recreation & Open Space Plan | 2016**  
**MAP 2: Existing Parks - City-owned & HOA Parks**

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**Legend**

- City Limits
- City Park
- Natural Area & Greenspace
- Special Facility
- HOA Greenspace
- HOA Park
- School District Property
- Parcels
- Waterbodies
- Rivers + Creeks
- Highways
- Streets
- Railroads
- Non-Residential Zoning
- King County parcels

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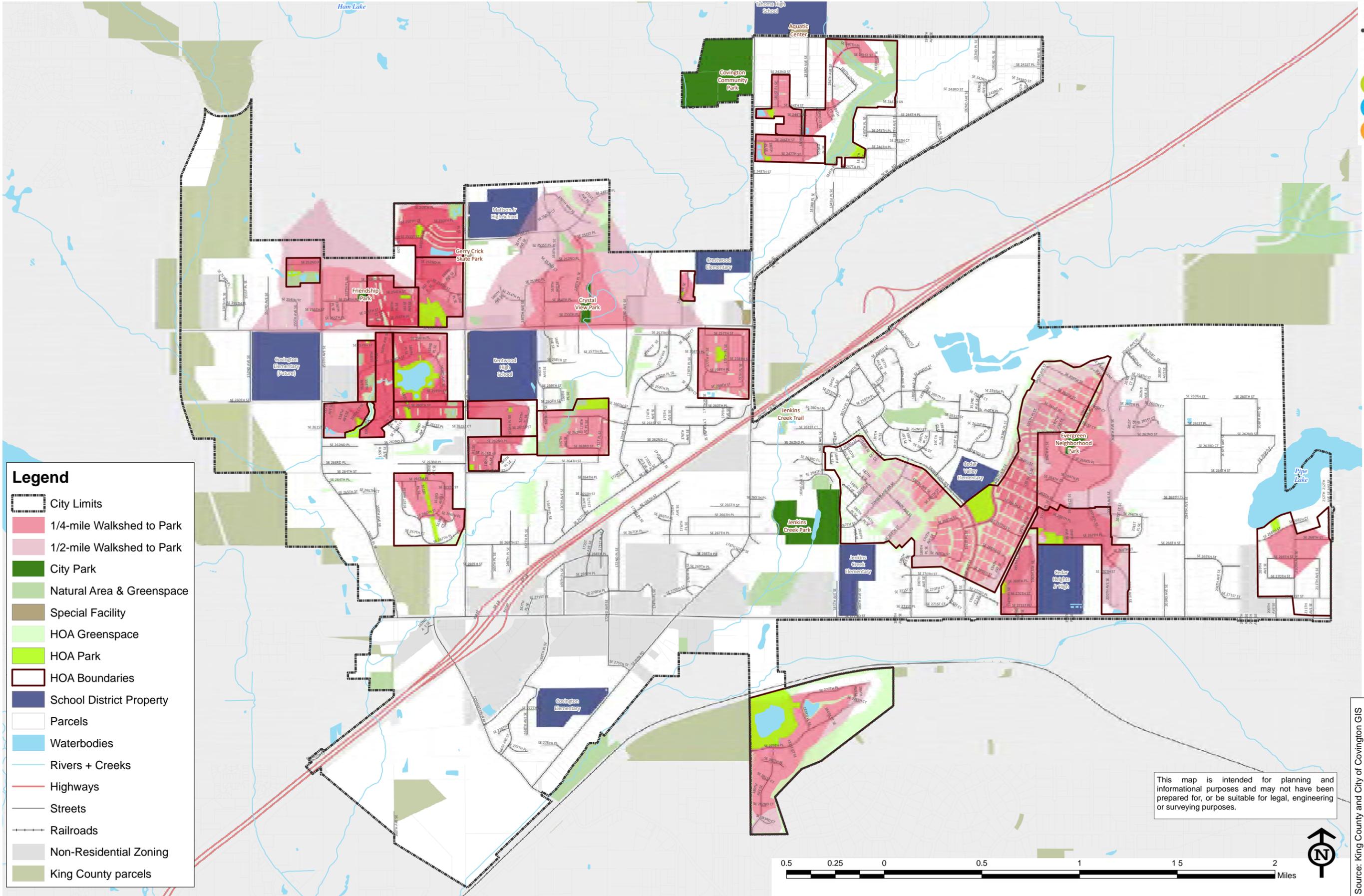


Source: King County and City of Covington GIS  
Date: 15 December 2015



**Parks, Recreation & Open Space Plan | 2016**  
**MAP 3: Parkland Walksheds - Neighborhood Parks (City only)**

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**Legend**

- City Limits
- 1/4-mile Walkshed to Park
- 1/2-mile Walkshed to Park
- City Park
- Natural Area & Greenspace
- Special Facility
- HOA Greenspace
- HOA Park
- HOA Boundaries
- School District Property
- Parcels
- Waterbodies
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- Highways
- Streets
- Railroads
- Non-Residential Zoning
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Source: King County and City of Covington GIS  
Date: 15 December 2015



**Parks, Recreation & Open Space Plan | 2016**  
**MAP 4: Parkland Walksheds - Neighborhood & Pocket Parks (City & HOA)**

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## Community Parks

Community parks are large park sites that generally include a wide array of both passive and active recreation facilities. In general, community parks are designed for active and structured recreational activities and sports, although complementary passive components such as pathways, picnic areas and natural areas provide passive, non-organized opportunities for individual and family activities. Because of the wide array of amenities, community parks appeal to a diverse group of users. Community parks are generally 15 to 30 acres in size, and should meet a minimum size of 20 acres when possible, and serve residents within a 1-mile drive, walk or bike ride from the site. In areas without neighborhood parks, community parks can also serve as local neighborhood parks. Since community parks serve a large geographic area, on-site parking and restroom facilities should be provided.

### Current Inventory

Covington currently has two partially developed community parks.

Figure 9. Community Parks

Park Name	Status	Acreage
Jenkins Creek Park	Partially Developed	20.30
Covington Community Park	Partially Developed	29.90
<b>Total Community Park Acreage</b>		<b>50.20</b>

- Jenkins Creek Park: This 20.3 acre community park is partially developed with seating, picnic areas, paved and unpaved paths, and a scenic wetland and meadow. The extent of developable parkland is limited by the numerous wetlands and steep slopes on site. The park currently has one functioning bridge/boardwalk and another bridge planned. The westernmost bridge, at the SE 267th Place Road End entrance, collapsed in December 2010 leaving residents of nearby neighborhoods without pedestrian access to the commercial area west of the park. The construction of the new bridge will re-establish this important pedestrian corridor.
- Covington Community Park: This 29.9 acre community park is partially developed with a multi-purpose field, ADA accessible trail, open meadow and forest areas, two portable restrooms and a parking lot. A master plan for the new Covington Community Park has been developed, and design for an expanded second phase is underway.

### Level of Service

This Plan proposes an acreage standard of 5.0 acres per 1,000 residents for community parks. Using this proposed service standard, Figure 10 illustrates the current and projected levels of service for community parks. Existing parks provide a level of service of 2.7 acres per 1,000 residents. With projected population growth, the City will need to acquire an additional 56.1 acres of community parkland to meet the desired standard.

Figure 10. Current and Projected Level of Service for Community Parks

Metric	Measurement			
<b>Proposed Level of Service (LOS) Standard</b>	<b>5.0 acres per 1,000 residents</b>			
<b>2015 Population</b>	18,520 residents			
<b>2021 Population</b>	21,257 residents			
Parkland Acreage (Community)	Total		Developed	
City-owned & maintained	50.2 acres		14.05 acres	
Private	0 acres		0 acres	
<b>Total</b>	<b>50.2 acres</b>		<b>14.05 acres</b>	
Year	2015	2021	2015	2021
Effective Level of Service based on total acreage (acres/1,000 residents)	2.71	2.36	0.76	0.66
Net LOS to Standard (acres/1,000 residents)	(2.29)	(2.64)	(4.24)	(4.34)
Attainment of Standard	54%	47%	15%	13%
Acreage surplus (deficit)	(42.40)	(56.09)	(78.56)	(92.24)

## Distribution and Proximity

Community parks are intended to serve residential areas within a 1-mile walking or bicycling distance of the park. A gap analysis of community park service areas was conducted to identify currently underserved areas of the city and assess acquisition needs. This analysis followed a similar methodology to that undertaken for neighborhood parks, including consideration of locations and types of existing facilities, land use classifications, transportation/access barriers and other factors as a means to identify preliminary acquisition target areas.

Map 5 illustrates the application of the community park distribution standards (1/2-mile and 1-mile walking or biking distance) from existing, publicly owned community parks. This map shows that residential areas in the following locations are underserved by community parks:

- The west-central areas of the city, east of 156th Ave SE and northwest of State Route 18 to the city limits
- The eastern portions of the city, east of approximately 196th Ave SE to the city limits

## Acquisition of New Community Parks

Acquisition and development of additional community park sites is a significant documented need. Such acquisitions would provide the land base for a blend of passive and active recreation opportunities, such as sport fields, picnicking and walking. As noted above, this Plan suggests the acquisition of two community park sites of 20 to 30 acres each:

- C1: One site to serve the medium density residential areas northwest of SR 18.
- C2: A second community park site, adjacent to Pipe Lake, to serve the eastern portion of the City and provide water access opportunities.

## Development and Improvement of Existing Community Parks

Improvement of Covington's two existing community parks would greatly enhance recreational access for nearby residents and would address significant level of service deficiencies. The development of approximately 30 acres of existing community parkland will be necessary to meet level of service standards for 2020.

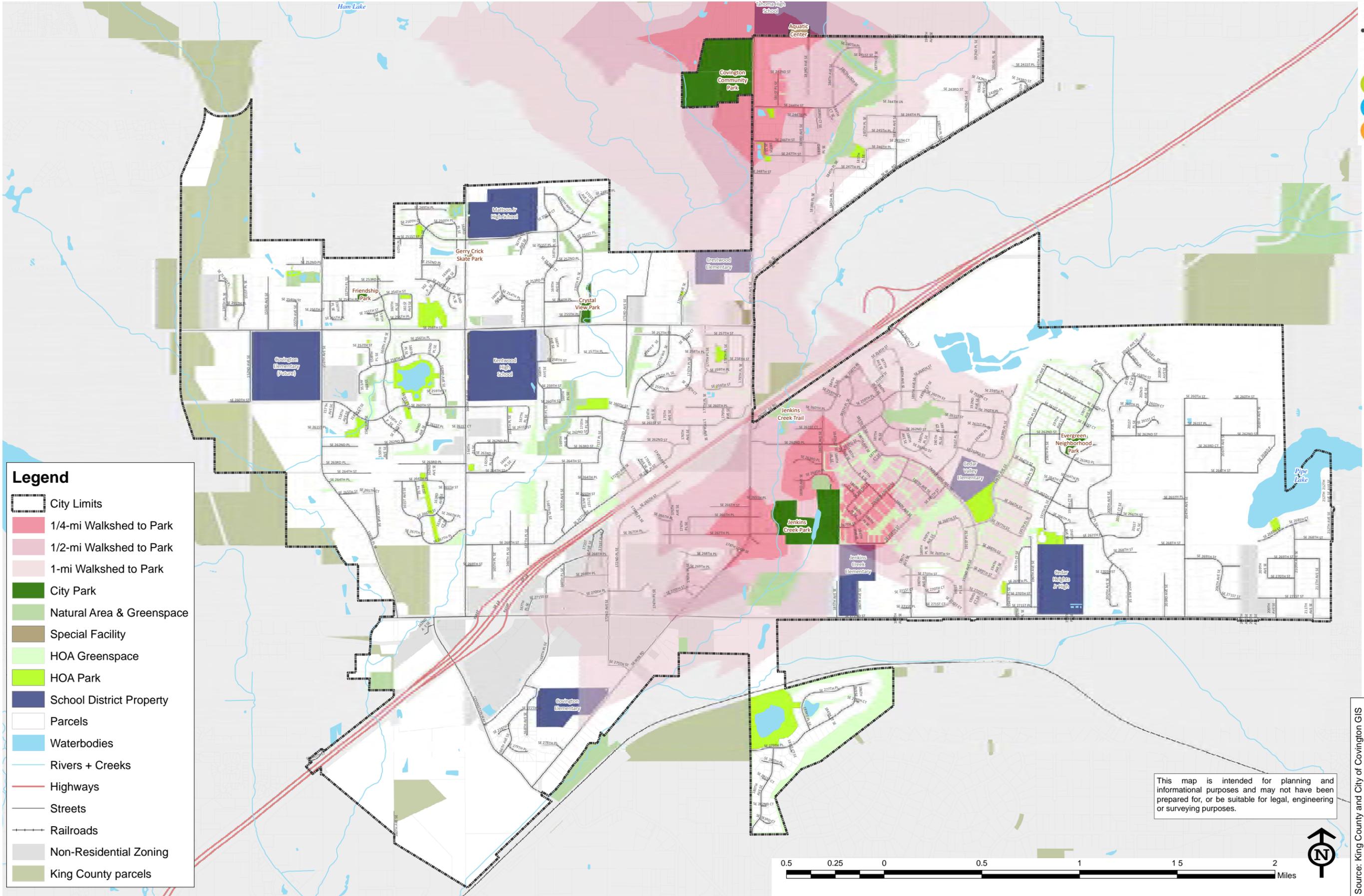
- **Jenkins Creek Park:** Park renovations, including addressing deteriorating trails, bridges, signage and benches would help address community needs and support recreational use. Based on community feedback, there is strong support for the renovation and re-opening of this park. Also, as the City's second largest park, it is well-positioned, from a physical location perspective and from a resource perspective, to play a significant role in Covington's park system; however, no on-site parking is currently available and the limited opportunities to locate parking remain a significant barrier. The City should make a focused effort to update and renovate this site to expand and enhance the interior trail network, provide for picnicking, disc golf and/or off-leash dog areas (in the upper area), along with environmental education opportunities in relation to the pond and lowlands.
- **Covington Community Park:** The second and third phases of construction of Covington Community Park, currently being planned, will add a play area, picnic tables, stage and picnic shelters, benches, basketball and tennis courts, baseball and soccer field, paved and soft surface trails, boardwalk, outdoor stage, terrace with water feature, restrooms/concession, interpretive areas, teen activities area, open lawn, restored wetlands, and a parking lot to the park. These improvements will greatly enhance the recreational opportunities at the park.

In general, the City should also improve community parks as needed to ensure proper maintenance, usability and quality of park features and grounds.

## Town Center Community Plaza

The adopted Downtown Plan included a public plaza in Covington's Town Center Concept Plan for the downtown core. The plan also identifies this plaza as a critical element in the brand identification for downtown and supports the creation of a 'living room' to the community that can be programmable for events and activities, while also providing trail connections. To further reinforce the themes and goals from the Downtown Plan, the City should continue to work with the Chamber of Commerce, Planning Commission and Parks and Recreation Commission to seek funding for the acquisition and development of the downtown plaza and the nearby trail connections along Jenkins Creek.

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- Legend**
- City Limits
  - 1/4-mi Walkshed to Park
  - 1/2-mi Walkshed to Park
  - 1-mi Walkshed to Park
  - City Park
  - Natural Area & Greenspace
  - Special Facility
  - HOA Greenspace
  - HOA Park
  - School District Property
  - Parcels
  - Waterbodies
  - Rivers + Creeks
  - Highways
  - Streets
  - Railroads
  - Non-Residential Zoning
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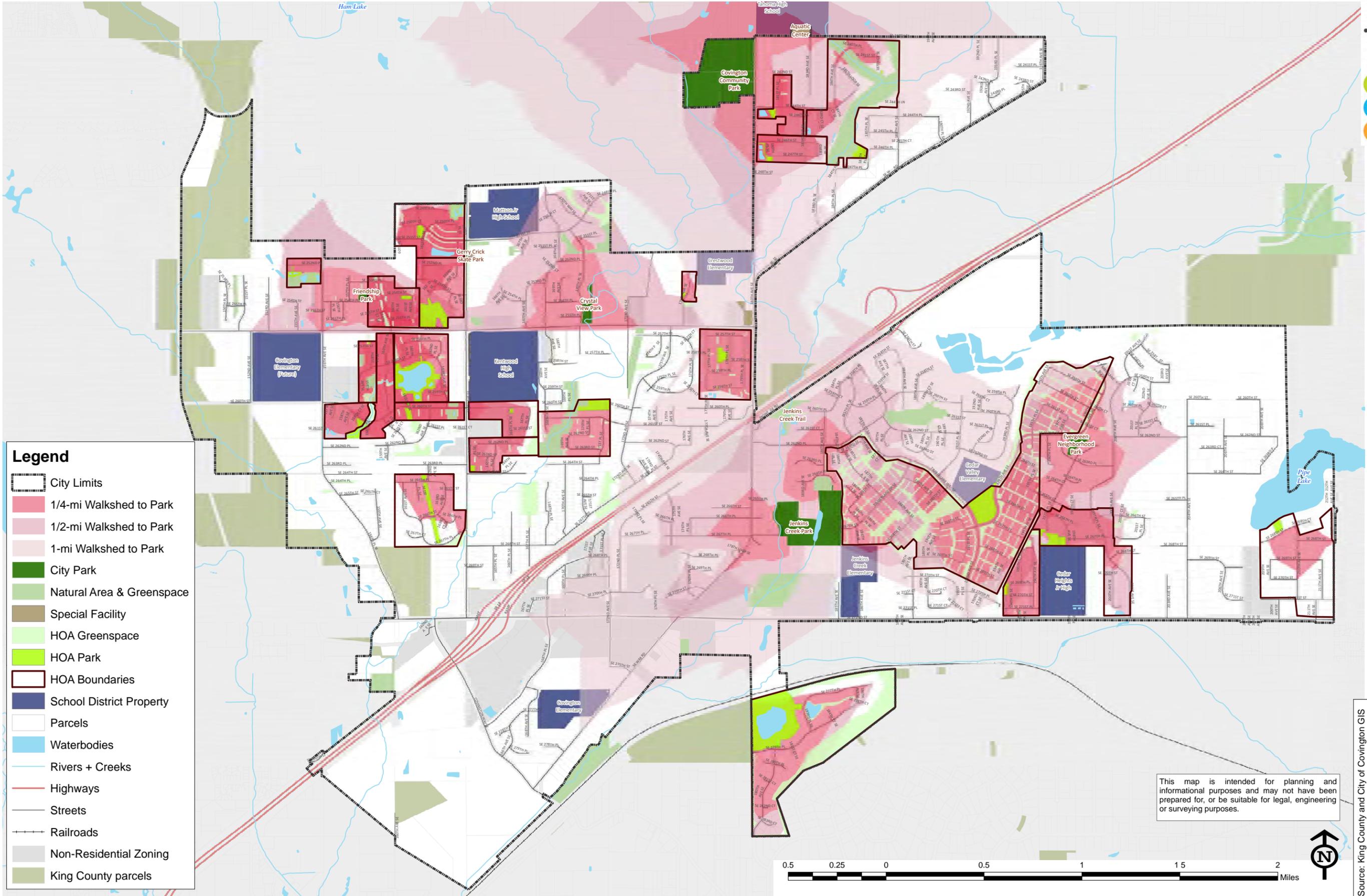


Source: King County and City of Covington GIS  
Date: 15 December 2015



**Parks, Recreation & Open Space Plan | 2016**  
**MAP 5: Parkland Walksheds - Community Parks**

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**Legend**

- City Limits
- 1/4-mi Walkshed to Park
- 1/2-mi Walkshed to Park
- 1-mi Walkshed to Park
- City Park
- Natural Area & Greenspace
- Special Facility
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Source: King County and City of Covington GIS  
Date: 15 December 2015



**Parks, Recreation & Open Space Plan | 2016**  
**MAP 6: Parkland Walksheds - All Parks**

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## Other Specific Park Facilities

Survey respondents also voiced interest in a range of other, specific (single-use) facilities, such as dog parks, community gardens and others. National recreation trends support the expansion of the Covington system to accommodate these interests; however, these uses must be considered in relation to other demands on the City's parks system and for the dedicated space often required to support them.

### Off-leash Dog Areas

With regard to dog parks (or off-leash areas), it is recommended that the City provide a minimum, 2-acre site for this use within the next five years. Ideally, a dog park would be a component to a larger community park, where infrastructure (parking, restrooms, garbage collection) exists and supports multiple activities. Additionally, the development of a dog park will require specific code revisions, the development of rules and policies and community support for self-policing for behavioral issues and waste pick-up. Communities throughout the Northwest have relied on grassroots or non-profit organizations for the on-going operations and maintenance of such facilities.

### Community Gardens

Gardening is a popular recreational activity statewide, with 58% of residents reporting participation. Community gardens provide common space for residents to grown fruits, vegetables and flowers. Gardens have been shown to increase healthy food consumption, while providing opportunities for active living, social connections, and lifelong learning. Community gardens are becoming more popular park amenities in urban environments, where residents may have limited outdoor space. Gardens are also popular with a diverse range of residents. Siting of community garden plots could be considered in the design and development of future neighborhood and community parks.

### Alternative Sports

Providing facilities for alternative or emerging sports – such as disc golf, skateboarding, BMX, mountain biking, climbing and parkour – can offer residents a more diverse range of recreational experiences, while creating destinations that attract local and regional visitors. Covington currently has an outdoor skate park with a concrete base and pre-assembled moveable features. The Gerry Crick Skate Park is located near Mattson Middle School, and the City should consider a redesign of this facility or the construction of a new, larger skatepark. Opportunities and facilities for other alternative sports are limited in the City. While survey and recreational trend information is limited, a number of residents supported additional facilities for alternative sports during open house events. Opportunities to develop alternative sports facilities should be considered during the design and development of future community parks.

## Repair, Renovation & Safety

Covington residents are keenly interested in the renovation of their parks system and the preservation and restoration of their natural areas. 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 expand the patronage of its residents. Numerous comments were offered regarding the need for repairs to damaged amenities, more frequent patrolling to enhance safety and graffiti removal. Concerns with the levels of maintenance exist, and this issue will erode public support for the park system over time if left unchecked.

The City of Covington should prioritize proactive maintenance and rehabilitation of existing park facilities and amenities. The City's investment in its park system requires proper stewardship to ensure it continues to provide desired services for decades to come.

With limited budgets and ongoing maintenance needs, many cities struggle to provide adequate maintenance and operations support. This often results in a situation where proactive maintenance is deferred and assets are repaired, rehabilitated or replaced only when there is an urgent need. This situation can result in a loss of services, such as when a facility is closed due to a lack of funding for needed repairs; higher long-term maintenance costs, as assets in worse condition may degrade more quickly and be more difficult and costly to fix; and a loss of public confidence. Covington should plan for long-term asset management needs by:

- **Inventory information:** The City should continue to maintain standardized and systematic inventory documentation of park system infrastructure, including the quantity, location, condition, and expected useful life of park assets.
- **Condition assessments:** Ongoing condition assessments of assets, particularly those with a high risk of failure, can highlight urgent repair needs and help the City better understand and plan for maintenance needs.
- **Lifecycle planning:** By tracking installation and the expected useful life of assets, the City can plan for proactive maintenance and replacement of assets in the future. Such information can also aid in future budgeting for capital repairs and overall asset management, as well as for predicting staffing requirements.
- **Future park improvements:** To minimize costs, capital plans and individual development projects should address long-term maintenance and operation costs. Where possible, design choices should consider future costs. The City can also make intentional choices in the design and development of parks to reduce future maintenance, energy and water costs. For example, both high- and low-tech strategies, ranging from high-efficiency machinery and equipment to planting native plants and reducing lawn areas, can help reduce long-term expenses.

## Design Continuity & Standards

Upon review of the City's existing developed parks and the privately-held homeowner association (HOA) parks, it was noted that a general lack of design continuity exists throughout the City.

The implementation of updated design standards will benefit the City in several ways. By providing continuity in furnishings and construction materials, there will be consistency in the methods used to maintain, repair and replace them as they become worn or damaged. Parks will be more efficiently maintained, more aesthetically appealing and more safe.

Separately, specific attention should be placed on the privately-held parks with regard to minimum design criteria or standards as new facilities are permitted and constructed. While these parks are neither owned nor operated by the City, public perceptions about their appearance and level of development might become an issue in the future. One near-term approach to address privately developed park sites is to prepare and adopt city design standards to be placed on the site development at the time of development review, with minimally-acceptable maintenance requirements placed either on the tract title or in a written development agreement with the City. Additionally, these steps are more crucial in the event the developer is building the park in lieu of paying impact fees; such agreements and design criteria will help ensure that the broader goals of the city's parks system are met.

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# Programs & Facilities

## *Activities for People of All Ages*

The City of Covington’s recreational programs – such as athletics, fitness and wellness, cultural arts, aquatics and special events – are a foundation of residents’ opportunities to be active and connect with their community.

The City’s recreational programming is currently centered primarily in four areas:

- General Recreation
- Aquatics
- Athletics
- Special Events

## National & Regional Trends

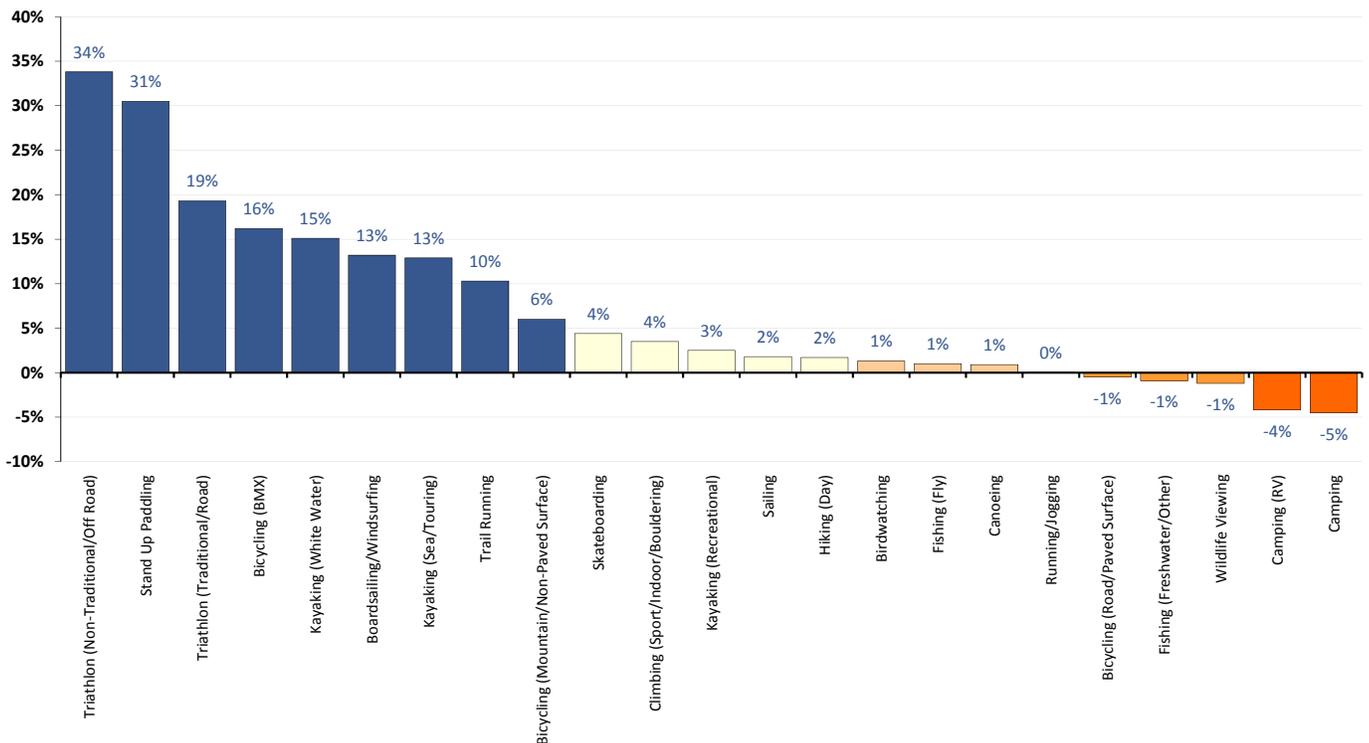
### The Outdoor Participation Report

According to 2015 Outdoor Participation Report, published by the Outdoor Foundation in Boulder, Colorado, participation in outdoor recreation, team sports and indoor fitness activities vary by an individual’s age. Gender also plays a role in determining behaviors and

participation trends. Figure 11 illustrates the three-year trend changes by major activity. Recent trend highlights include the following:

- The biggest motivator for outdoor participation was getting exercise.
- Running, including jogging and trail running, was the most popular activity among Americans when measured by number of participants and by number of total annual outings.
- Walking for fitness is the most popular crossover activity.
- Almost one-quarter of all outdoor enthusiasts participated in outdoor activities at least twice per week.
- Indoor fitness becomes the preferred activity among young women ages 16 to 20 and remains the most popular form of activity. Males, however, favor outdoor activities until they are age 66 and older.
- Outdoor activities are popular among children, especially among boys ages 11 to 15.
- Participation rates drop for both males and females from ages 16 to 20. These rates climb back up slightly for females into their early 20’s and males late 20’s before gradually declining throughout life.

Figure 11. 3-Year Change in Outdoor Recreation Participation of Youth (6-24) (2014 Outdoor Foundation)



## The State of the Industry Report

Recreation Management magazine’s 2015 State of the Industry Report listed the top 10 program options most commonly planned for addition over the next three years, along with the frequency (in parentheses) noted by survey participants:

1. Mind body / balance programs (25.2%)
2. Fitness programs (24.9%)
3. Educational programs (24.3%)
4. Day camps & summer camps (22.8%)
5. Environmental education (21.5%)
6. Teen programming (20.4%)
7. Adult sports teams (19.4%)
8. Active older adult programs (19.4%)
9. Holidays & other special events (19.1%)
10. Nutrition & diet counseling (17.4%)

For most programming types, community centers are the ones most likely to be planning to add such programs. There are a few exceptions; parks are most likely to be planning to add environmental education, sports tournaments or races, individual sports activities and water sports.

The same report indicated park systems that are planning to add features to their facilities in the next three years list their top five planned amenities as:

- Playgrounds
- Park shelters, such as picnic areas and gazebos
- Park restroom structures
- Outdoor sports courts for basketball, tennis, etc.
- Bike trails

## Sports Trends: National Sporting Goods Association

The National Sporting Goods Association (NSGA) reported on participation levels in 47 sports indicating that 32 sports experienced growth during 2012. Highlights from the 2013 NSGA participation survey include:

- Fitness sports each increased about 5%.
- Team sports showed mixed results with participation lagging in basketball, baseball, ice hockey and soccer and increases in lacrosse, softball and volleyball.
- Tackle football experienced the largest team sport drop of nearly 13% decline in participation. Over half the decline was in the 7-11 age group of those who might participate on an infrequent basis.
- Female participation in 40 of the 47 sports/activities has increased compared to only 11 sports showing increased male participation.
- Indoor gaming activities increased by an average of 11%.

Overall, the trend shows that participation in many sports is rebounding with some sports continuing to struggle to attract new participation.

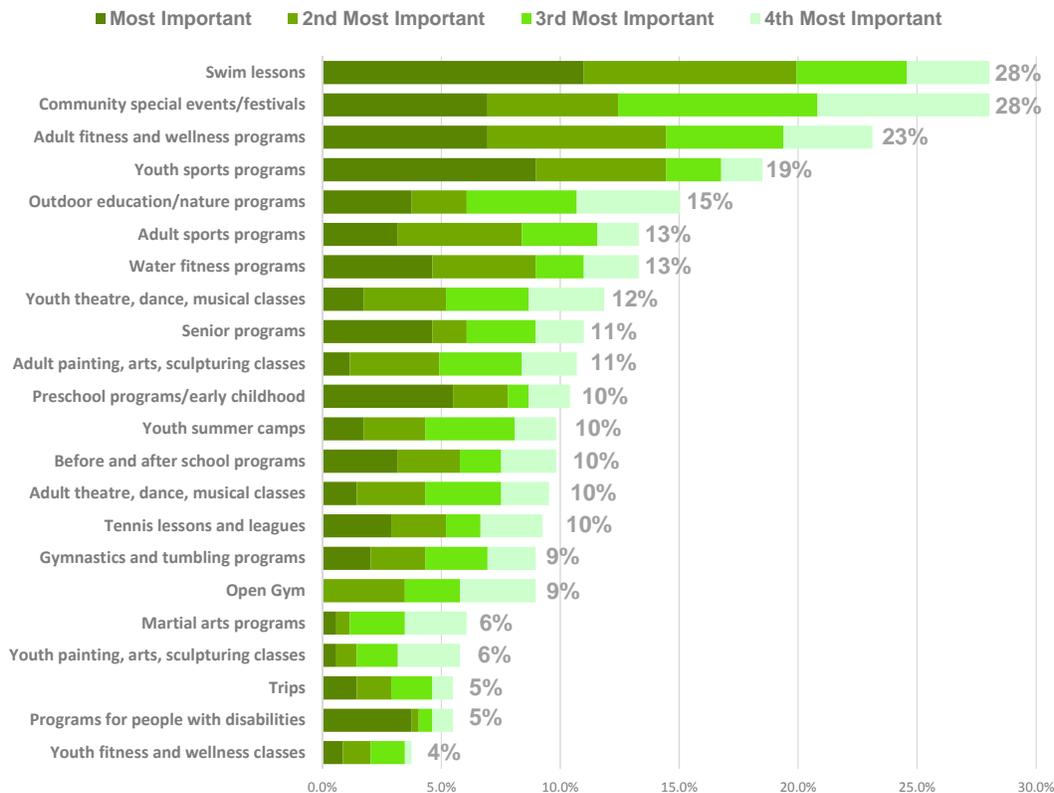
# Community Participation & Feedback

The community survey conducted as part of the PROS Plan update included a set of questions pertaining to recreation programs and facilities. One-third of survey respondents have participated in recreation, sports, aquatics, cultural or special events, programs and activities offered by the City of Covington in the past year. Of the respondents who indicated they participated in a program in the last 12 months, 56% participated in Covington Days. Other programs households have participated in include: swim lessons (36%), special events/festivals (29%), and youth soccer (28%).

Participants in these activities are generally satisfied with their quality, with a significant majority of participants (88%) rating the quality of programs and activities as “excellent” or “good”.

The most important programs were swim lessons, community special events/festivals, adult fitness and wellness programs, youth sports programs, and outdoor education/nature programs.

Figure 12. Most Important Recreation Programs Sorted by Top 4 Choices



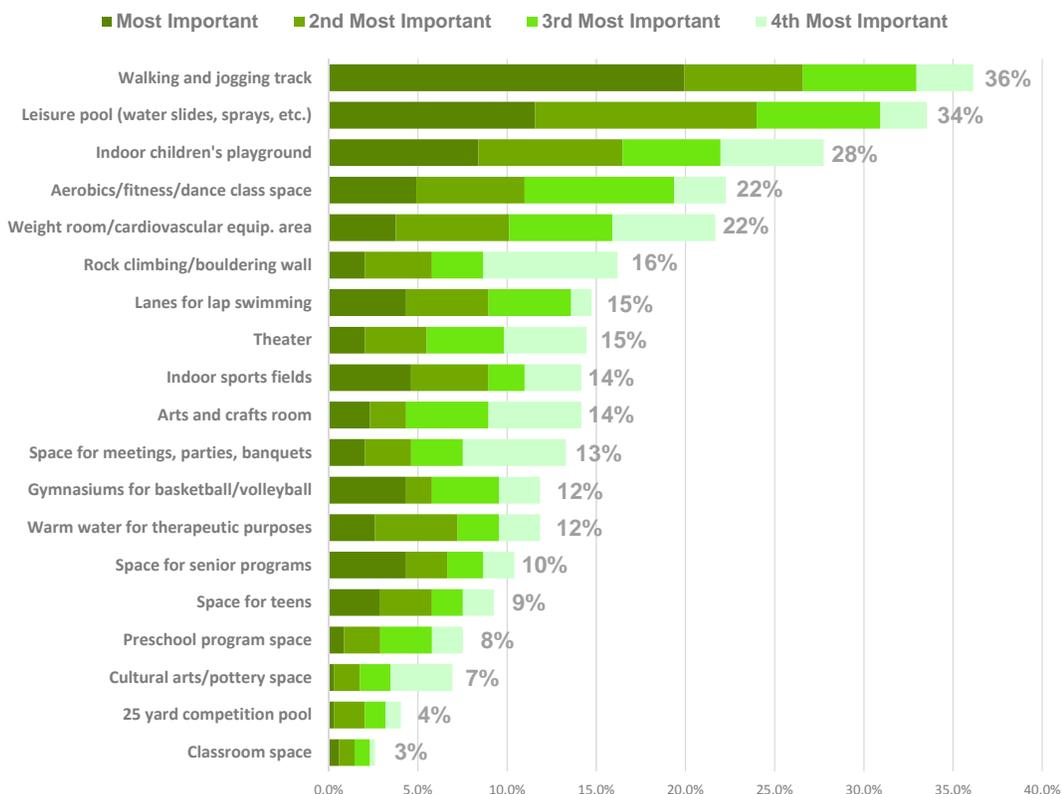
Beyond the survey, a series of open houses and focus group meetings were held in the community. These included meetings with teens, economic development individuals, recreation programming representatives, input gathered during Covington Days, and a general community open house. Some of the key findings included:

- Greater emphasis on fitness, youth sports, adult sports and outdoor education.
- Wellness programs for local businesses.
- An increase in teen and senior programming.

- Teen programming, with a separation between middle school and high school kids.
- A greater emphasis on serving people with special needs.
- A strong interest in a community center that can serve a cross section of needs in the community.
- An expanded aquatic center.

The survey included a question exploring the possibility of developing new indoor facilities and asked respondents to identify the potential indoor programming spaces they would use. The following chart illustrates the composite summary of the top 4 choices.

Figure 13. Most Important Indoor Recreation Spaces Sorted by Top 4 Choices



Survey respondents were asked about their preferences for funding recreation programming. Seventy-nine percent (79%) of respondents indicated that adult programs should be paid by “100% fees/0% tax” or “75% fees/25% tax”. Fifty-three percent (53%) of respondents indicated programs for disabled should be paid by “0% fees/100% tax” or “25% fees/75% fees”.

## General Recreation Programs

The City of Covington offers a variety of general recreational and educational programs, which vary from cultural arts to fitness, education and outdoor recreation. The majority of the City’s recreation programming focuses on youth. The programs, which are in addition to sports, aquatics and special events programs, include:

- Fitness: Youth Nutrition and Adult Zumba, Yoga and Bootcamp

- Cultural Arts: Youth Ballet, Tap & Jazz, Hip Hop, Art, Acting
- Education: Youth Math Camp, Bricks for Kidz, and Engineering Challenge
- General Interest: Youth Cooking, Super Sitters, and Safe at Home as well as Adult Parenting and Dog Obedience
- Outdoor Recreation: Birding, Boating Safety

The scope and capacity for recreation programming is affected by the general lack of indoor and outdoor spaces that can enable and support a wider variety of recreation services. The vast majority of all general recreation programs are provided on a contract basis with the City of Covington working with other local providers.

In an effort to refine and refocus programming, this Plan recommends providing recreational programs and activities based on three categories of priority – core, secondary and support. The placement of programs into these three categories does not indicate the overall importance of these activities in the community, but rather the role of the Department in providing these programs. The proposed distribution of program areas between the Core, Secondary and Support categories is similar to the City’s current focus of recreation programs.

- Core Programs are programs that are a primary responsibility of the City of Covington Parks & Recreation Department to provide. This Plan recommends that youth sports, fitness/wellness, aquatics, and special events be considered core programs.
- Secondary Programs are programs that are a lower priority for direct provision by the Parks & Recreation Department, but may be offered by other organizations through contract with the City. This Plan recommends that adult sports, cultural arts, general interest, and teen programs be considered secondary programs.
- Support Programs are programs that are not a priority for the Parks & Recreation Department to provide directly, but where the City may provide support for other local providers through facilities and promotion of other providers’ activities. This Plan recommends that education, special needs, outdoor recreation and senior programs be considered support programs.

CORE PROGRAMS	SECONDARY PROGRAMS	SUPPORT PROGRAMS
Primary responsibility of City Parks & Recreation Department  ■ Youth Sports ■ Aquatics ■ Fitness / Wellness Programs ■ Special Events	May be offered by City or offered by other organizations via contract  ■ Adult Sports ■ Teen Programs ■ Cultural Arts Programming ■ General Interest Programming	City as supporter of other providers through facilities and promotions  ■ Outdoor Recreation ■ Senior Activities ■ Educational Programming ■ Special Needs Programming
		

The City’s existing offerings, as well as future needs, were divided into these categories based on the following criteria:

- Facilities: Does the City have the necessary facilities to support the program? If not,

the program was included in the support category.

- **Number of People Served:** Does the program or service serve a relatively large population base? The greater the number of people served, the more likely the program is to be in the core category.
- **Cost/Revenue:** What is the cost of providing the program in relationship to revenues generated? The better the cost recovery level, the more likely the program is to be a core or secondary service.
- **Demand:** Is the program or service in high demand by the community? The higher the demand the greater the likelihood of the program being in the core area.
- **Partnerships:** Are there partners that can assist with the provision of programs and facilities? Partnerships place a program in the secondary or even support category.
- **Other Providers:** Are there other providers that are able to provide the program or service? If there are viable other providers then the program is probably in the support category.
- **Economic Benefit:** Does the activity provide an economic benefit to the community and attract visitors? The greater the economic benefit the more likely the program is to be in the core or secondary category.

The proposed categorization of programs also reflects residents' preferences for recreation programs. Core programs are those with the highest community expressed need and support. For example, residents who responded to the survey indicated they have a need for special events (43%) and think they are the most important program (28%). Residents also have an expressed need and importance for the other core programs: swim lessons (39% and 28% respectively), adult fitness and wellness programs (35, 23%), and youth sports programs (28%, 19%).

## Core Program Recommendations

### Fitness & Wellness

Fitness and wellness programs are one of the fastest growing program areas in public recreation programming. As Americans become increasingly aware of the benefits of good health and that obesity (especially among children) is a major health risk, demand for programming in this area has risen. Fitness/Wellness programs will need to receive increased emphasis (across all program areas) as a response to a renewed interest locally and nationally on improving the overall health and physical condition of people, especially youth. The Parks and Recreation Department currently has few fitness and wellness programs due in part to the lack of a true recreation center. However, the City should focus on enhancing fitness/wellness programs in the future, potentially in partnership with a local health care provider. The Department should also emphasize the importance of integrating wellness initiatives into other program areas as well.

The City should consider incremental growth in recreation programs that are not currently offered by local or regional providers. Potential options cited by community members include yoga/meditation, cooking and gardening classes, organized group walks, health and fitness education for youth, and fall prevention programs for seniors.

## Secondary Program Recommendations

### Cultural Arts

The City currently offers a variety of cultural arts programs for youth. The Parks and Recreation Department should continue to provide and enhance cultural arts programs, particularly in the visual arts. However, the City should work in coordination with local non-profit cultural arts organizations and for-profit firms, which should provide the majority of specialized cultural arts programming.

### Teen Programs

Covington offers very few programs focused on teens. Teen programming will need to see a much greater emphasis in the coming years, but it is expected that these services will be primarily provided by other organizations.

### General Interest

Covington's Park and Recreation Department currently offers a limited number of youth and adult general interest classes and programs. However, general interest programs – and summer camps in particular – are often a major focus for recreation departments. This Plan recommends that the City place a greater focus on these programs in the future, with an emphasis on offering summer camp programs.

## Support Program Recommendations

### Education

Covington offers a limited set of youth-focused educational programs. This type of programming is most often being provided by the school district or specialized non-profit or private providers. It is not anticipated that the City will grow its educational programming much in the future. Education programming will primarily be the role and responsibility of other providers; however, the City could offer and promote its parks and trails as venues for use in support of third party based programs.

### Special Needs

The Department's only special needs programming is hosting Special Olympics. It is often difficult for recreation agencies to have a significant special needs program on their own. As a result, recreation departments often offer these programs in partnership with other local jurisdictions and service agencies in order to provide high quality programs in a cost effective manner. The Department should provide special needs programming through contracts with other providers or as a consortium with other cities in the area.

### Outdoor Recreation

With outdoor areas and resources available, the City should place a greater emphasis on these activities, through partnerships with other agencies and organizations in the Covington area.

## Senior Programs

Senior programming currently is not offered by the City. Programming for seniors will need to increase as the overall population ages, with a greater emphasis on the needs of the Baby Boomer generation. In particular, this generation has greater participation in active recreation opportunities than previous generations. City partnerships with local senior oriented organizations should reduce the need for the City to be a major direct provider.

## Aquatics

The Covington Parks & Recreation Department has a strong aquatic program, with an emphasis on lessons and water exercise. The City's Aquatic Center (formerly the King County Tahoma Pool) is home to a year-round public pool, which attracts visitors from the greater Covington area. The City offers youth swim lessons, swim teams, water polo, the Dash & Splash Camp and recreational swimming. For adults, the City offers water exercise programs, Masters swim, Triathlon adult swim training, Aqua Zumba, recreational swimming and lap swimming. The City's Aquatic Center is also used by competitive swim teams from the Kent School District, by a USA Swim Team and by private rental groups. The Aquatic Center averages approximately 110,000 visitors per year, including general attendance, activity participants and rental groups.

While the community survey completed as part of this PROS Plan did not ask detailed questions about aquatic center facility needs, a telephone survey conducted in 2009 asked Covington residents how they would rate the priority of certain aquatic features. A lap pool and instructional pool area were the highest rated facility features, followed by a therapy pool, fitness room and sauna – which are currently unavailable at the Center. The survey also asked residents about their need for a variety of different aquatic options and how well those programs serve their aquatics needs. Open swims, classes, lap swims, lessons and pool rentals for private events were noted as the highest priority programs, which is consistent with current scheduling.

The City's aquatics program generally meets the community's needs and will not likely require significant future changes. The Department will need to continue to stress aquatic programming, especially learn to swim classes for children, as a primary program area. Aquatic exercise programs should also continue to be emphasized. With the competitive orientation of the pool, continuing to encourage swim and water polo team use will be critical.

The strength and continuity of aquatics programming should also be weighed against the physical needs of the pool and its infrastructure. The Aquatic Center is an aging facility that is rapidly nearing the end of its useful life, and it has approximately eight to ten years of service remaining. In the near term, the City should conduct a study to examine and assess the facility's life cycle and explore options for renovation, demolition/reconstruction and a new facility in a different location. The City previously had considered expanding the Aquatic Center by adding a second story for fitness rooms. However, even with such an expansion, this would still not be large enough to accommodate extensive recreation programming or a teen center. Additionally, the current site is encumbered with limited parking and is situated on land leased from the Tahoma School District.

# Athletics

## Youth Sports

The City's Parks and Recreation Department currently provides a number of youth team sports, including basketball, baseball, flag football, soccer, volleyball, gymnastics, camps and martial arts. The City is the primary provider of youth sports. The area lacks non-governmental youth sports organizations, and the Kent School District has reduced middle school sports programs. The City's youth sports programs serve approximately 1,000 to 2,000 youth per year and is projected to grow considerably in the near future.

To meet local needs, the Parks and Recreation Department should continue to provide and enhance youth sports as a core program in the future. Demand for and participation in youth athletic programs is likely to grow in the future. The Department should also consider opportunities to expand youth sports camps and clinics and increase its focus on the development of adventure sports (skateboarding, climbing, archery, fencing, Ultimate Frisbee, BMX, etc.).

The City also supports two local youth athletic leagues and organizations. With the demand for youth sports fields continuing to grow, it is not unusual for youth sports organizations to build and operate their own fields on their own property or on leased undeveloped public land.

- Kent Little League serves Covington residents and currently has 500 players (7-13 yr old). With its current enrollment, KLL's need for field space has stabilized, and they continue to lease and program fields from King County, Kent School District and local churches. The future of one of the two fields located at the Covington Christian Fellowship Church is in question with a pending development of a portion of the church property.
- Kent Youth Soccer Association also serves Covington residents and serves approximately 1,700 youth from the greater Covington area. The league has a long-term lease agreement with King County for field space at North Green River (the "Pea Patch") and will be responsible for the upkeep and maintenance. KYSA is particularly interested in transitioning fields to artificial turf and installing field lighting to extend play for the shoulder season.

In addition to local practice and game play, both KLL and KYSA have voiced interest in hosting seasonal tournaments, but access to quality fields are a prerequisite. Tournaments present the potential to generate income for the league and local area. Generally, parents and teams stay between 4-6 nights for tournaments, which in turn promote local economic development through lodging and food services revenue.

## Adult Sports

The City is not currently a provider of adult sports leagues or individual sports, though it has offered softball and baseball leagues in the past. This is due in part to the fact that there are limited facilities available for sports activities and the City's priority is on youth sports. Since adult sports can often generate significant revenue, there may need to be an increased emphasis in this area in the future. Designating certain facilities or time periods for adult

sports may be necessary if greater focus is going to be placed on this program area. The Athletics Division may also want to develop more individual, league and adventure sports for adults, potentially in partnership with other groups or organizations, and designate certain facilities or time periods for adult sports.

## Sport Fields

The City of Covington currently has one multi-purpose field at the Covington Community Park. The City also partners with the Kent School District for use of school fields for City athletic programs. Residents are generally either very supportive (34%) or somewhat supportive (36%) of the City of Covington partnering with the School District to upgrade sports fields with tax dollars. Only 17% were not supportive.

Additional sports fields are needed to meet community needs and allow the future expansion of youth and adult sports programs and leagues.

The City is planning additional soccer, baseball and softball fields for phase 3 development of Covington Community Park. The development of additional community parks in the future should also consider opportunities for additional multi-purpose athletic fields.

The City should also 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 with respect to league boundaries and for strategizing about long-term financing opportunities. In addition to the needs of the existing leagues, other field demands exist for rugby, football and lacrosse that should also be considered.

## Sport Courts

The City has a current deficiency and limited distribution of sport courts. School sites provide limited access to basketball courts. Numerous “street” hoops were noted during the inventory process and reinforced the demand for sport courts. No public tennis, volleyball or pickleball courts exist within the City, and only one pickleball court is available at an HOA park. The City should consider opportunities to expand sport court facilities during the development of future community and neighborhood parks.

## Special Events

The Parks & Recreation Department has a major focus on special events. The City puts on over 20 special events throughout the year, including those hosted at the Aquatic Center and in City parks. These events are well attended, with over 5,400 people attended the 5 most popular events in 2014 (combined). Covington’s Parks & Recreation Department’s special events and programs include:

- Sweetheart Swim
- Underwater Egg Hunt
- Daddy Daughter Dance
- April Pool's Day
- Moms Swim Free for Mother's Day
- Summer Splashtacular
- Covington Days Festival
- Summer Concerts in the Park
- Outdoor Family Concert
- Outdoor Family Movie
- Covington KidsFest
- Harvest Festival
- Spooky Swim
- Halloween Swim
- Veterans Swim Free for Veteran's Day
- Holiday Tree Lighting
- Hollydaze Float-in Movie.

Special Events should continue to be a core program and primary area of emphasis for the Department in the future. Special events draw communities together, attract visitors from outside the community and are popular with residents. However, due to the time and resource requirements of special events, the overall growth in the number of events should be limited in the future. This will ensure the City can adequately invest in its overall recreational offerings and ensure high-quality special events. Other community groups should be encouraged to be the primary funders and organizers of as many community wide events as possible. If the City decides to offer more events, it should seek to share costs with private sponsors and look to develop a series of seasonal activities. Existing events promoted and sponsored by community organizations include the following:

- Summer's End Fun Run
- Purple Light Nights
- Hollydaze
- Sausage & Cider Fest
- Relay for Life, Dad Swim Free for Father's Day

## Community Recreation Center

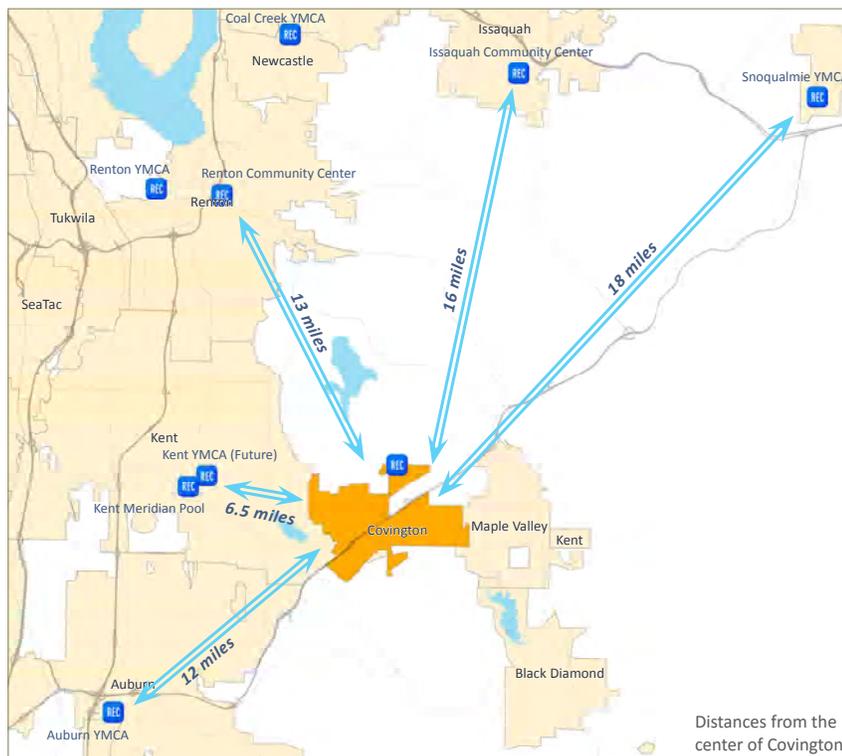
The City does not have a community recreation center that provides adequate space for indoor recreational activities. The need for a community center in the area was identified in the City's 1999 and 2010 PROS plans. City and other local recreational programs are currently provided in public school buildings, at private facilities (fitness centers, dance studios, outdoor aquatic clubs, etc.), non-profits (YMCA's, Boys & Girls Clubs, cultural arts centers, etc.) or at private schools. A full-service community center, including a gymnasium, workout room, multi-purpose rooms and teen center, would provide space for a variety of fitness, educational and community programming.

Former guidelines from the National Recreation and Parks Association suggested a service standard of one community center per 15,000-25,000 people, and while that standard is no longer in use, it suggests that a certain population density is required to support such a facility. While public sentiment exists for a community center, a cautious approach should be taken and consideration given to acquisition and development of a new facility versus the purchase (or lease) and renovation of an existing building in the three-city region.

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, Black Diamond and unincorporated King County. Such a facility could be jointly funded by the cities and/or require voter support from the wider area. At the present, city residents need to travel 20 to 40 minutes to visit a public or non-profit recreation center, as illustrated in Figure 14.

Figure 14. Location of Other Public or Non-Profit Recreation Centers near Covington



Given the interest in recreation facility space for programming, this Plan recommends an additional review of alternatives for providing recreation center “services” while addressing the initial financial considerations, understanding and modeling user demand and analyzing options for facility and program cost recovery.

### Future Kent YMCA

In August 2015, the City of Kent and the YMCA announced a plan to build a \$25 million recreational facility and pool at Kent’s expanded Morrill Meadows Park. This proposed site is an approximately 10 to 15 minute drive from downtown Covington. The proposed 50,000 square foot facility is expected to include a lap pool, activity pool and gymnasium, and it would also likely have fitness equipment areas, group exercise rooms, along with facilities for youth and families. The new facility is expected to open in three to five years, pending funding and a development agreement. This facility, if constructed, could significantly improve the availability of recreational programs and spaces in the greater Covington area.

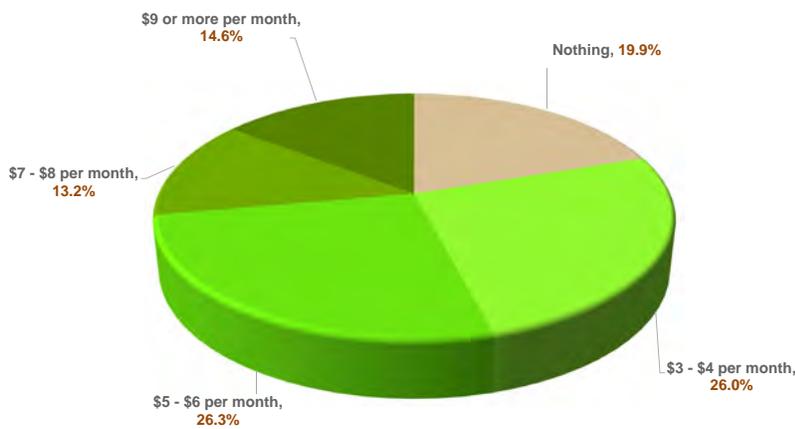
## Facility Funding

New or retrofitted facilities not only add to maintenance and operating costs, but they must be conceived with consideration given to the flexibility of programming, intended uses and services, along with cost recovery goals. Furthermore, voters are generally more supportive of paying for expanded services when the shared use of facilities can be demonstrated; it is generally more difficult to secure voter support for single-purpose facilities. If desired, construction and operation of a community recreation center could be supported through the following options.

### Tax Revenue and/or User Fees

Slightly more than half (52%) of survey respondents indicated that development of future indoor recreation facilities should be paid mostly by user fees. Other ways the facility should be paid for include: mostly from taxes and some user fees (27%), 100% from user fees (20%), and 100% from taxes (0.3%). However, in a separate question, survey respondents indicated some willingness to support such a facility through increased local tax assessments. A strong majority (80%) of respondents indicated they would be willing to pay at least \$3 - \$4 per month in additional tax revenue for costs to develop and operate indoor programming spaces. Approximately 15% were willing to pay \$9 or more per month (15%).

Figure 15. Willingness to Pay for Recreation Facilities



### Special District Formation

If there is a commitment to a regional approach to providing recreation programs and services, it may be wise to explore the possibility of establishing a recreation district to not only develop and operate recreation facilities, but also to fund the programs and services that would take place in these facilities. There are several options regarding the type of district that can be established including a Metropolitan Park District and a Recreation Service Area.

## Planning & Administration

### Program Planning

The Department has strong tracking and record keeping regarding recreation programs and their registration and attendance numbers. However, the Department does not have a long-range program plan in place to guide future programming decisions.

The Department should develop a detailed plan for the delivery of recreation services to the citizens of Covington for the next 5 to 10 years. This plan should take into consideration the future Core and Secondary services, along with the role of other organizations and recreation providers in the area. There will need to be clearly identified areas of programmatic responsibility to ensure that there is not overlap in resource allocation. From this, the Department should establish a 5-year program plan that identifies the priorities for program development, the responsible staff member and the required resources. Each program area or facility (Aquatic Center) would then develop their own 5-year plan with a specific and detailed implementation plan for each year.

### Agency Coordination

Across the country, recreation departments often serve as a coordinating agency and a clearinghouse for multiple recreation organizations and providers, in an effort to bring a comprehensive scope of recreation programs to a community. This has also increased the number of partnerships that are in place to deliver a broader base of programs in a more cost effective manner. There is also a much stronger emphasis on revenue production and raising the level of cost recovery to minimize tax dollar use to offset recreation programming.

### Staffing

In order to continue to grow the number of recreation programs and services that are offered, adequate staffing is necessary to not only conduct the program itself, but also to supervise and administer the activities. With staffing costs being the single greatest expense for parks and recreation departments, many agencies have attempted to minimize the number of full-time staff by contracting for certain programs or partnering with other providers for services. Nationally, the need to reduce full-time staff became even more acute with the poor financial condition of most municipal governments during the recent recession. However, even with this approach, there still needs to be adequate full-time staff to oversee and coordinate such efforts. Part-time staff is still the backbone of most recreation departments and comprise the vast majority of program leaders and instructors. Many departments have converted program instructors to contract employees with a split of gross revenues (usually 70% to the instructor and 30% to the city) or developed a truer contract for services that either rents facilities and/or takes a percentage of the gross from another organization. The use of volunteers can help to augment paid staff but should not be seen as a substitute for them. As part of its detailed planning for the provision of recreation services, the City should explore staffing alternatives and trade-offs to fulfill its mission and meet its programming goals.

## Funding

Funding is the basic requirement for the provision of recreation programs and services, including the development of facilities to support programs and staff to manage and provide the programming. This usually requires a tax dollar commitment from residents, along with other sources including program fees, grants and partnering with other agencies. In many recreation departments, funding limits have been the greatest single challenge to continuing to provide not only existing programs but also bringing on any new services.

In order to accomplish a high level of recreation services, recreation departments have been much more aggressive in their fee setting with the goal of covering more operational expenses for most programs. However, with a more entrepreneurial approach to assessing fees for activities comes the need to develop a broad based scholarship program that allows for those individuals that cannot afford to pay the opportunity to participate in recreation activities. Such programs usually have a limited budget and do require the user to pay at least something for service.

## Partnerships

With limited resources and facilities, the City will need to continue to rely on other groups and organizations to provide some recreation programs and services for the community. Within this partnership-based approach, the City should take a more regional approach to providing recreation programs and services and work with neighboring jurisdictions to develop and expand programming.

The Department also will need to provide many of the facilities, especially outdoor parks, which other organizations use to provide recreational programming. The City should also aim to serve as a “clearinghouse” for recreation programs and services provided by others in order to ensure residents are aware of the breadth of recreational programs and amenities available in the community. This may involve promotion of their activities, coordinating of some programs and scheduling of facilities. Other organizations that could provide activities include the following.

### Youth Sports Organizations

While the Parks & Recreation Department will continue to be the provider for most youth sports in the community, there are currently other youth sports organizations that have a presence in Covington (Kent Little League, Kent Youth Soccer Association), and some of the new emerging sports (lacrosse, rugby, ultimate Frisbee, etc.) may need to rely on the formation of non-profit youth organizations to start up these programs. However, the Department will still need to provide most, if not all, the facilities for these new sports activities and will need to manage the process. This should include “sanctioning” only one organization per sport in the community, and if there becomes more than three youth sports groups, it is highly recommended that the Department establish a youth athletics council that will meet monthly under the direction of the Athletics Specialist. This council would work to coordinate programs and activities, prioritize athletic facility usage and promote coaches training.

## **School Districts**

Coordinating with the Kent School District to provide youth recreation services, education classes for youth (and even adults), as well as youth sports (location for games and practices), will need to continue to be enhanced. The Kent School District has limited sports programming for middle school students, which puts more pressure on the City to provide sports programs for this age group. The school's facilities should continue to be a primary location for recreation programming to take place. The use of school district athletic fields has already been greatly improved with the City taking on some of the maintenance functions of outdoor facilities.

The City has limited interaction with the Tahoma School District since its boundaries are outside the City limits. However, since the Aquatic Center is next to Tahoma High School, there has been an effort to work more closely together for pool use. This arrangement should be expanded to encourage more use of school facilities that are in close proximity to the City's boundaries.

## **Other Government Organizations**

There needs to be strong efforts to partner with other governmental agencies in the area to develop programs and services. This is most likely to occur with Maple Valley and Black Diamond. Program areas that could be provided by other organizations through a partnership include special needs, special events, outdoor recreation and cultural arts events. It may also be necessary to partner to develop more regionally based facilities (indoor and outdoor) as well.

## **Non-Profit Providers**

The City should coordinate with a variety of non-profit providers to deliver recreation services. Organizations such as the Boys & Girls Club, YMCA cultural arts groups, etc. should be encouraged to develop facilities and provide programs in the greater Covington area. These types of organizations are well positioned to provide a variety of programs in different areas.

## **Private Providers**

Since there are a number of private recreation, sports and fitness providers located in the Covington market (health clubs, dance, martial studios, arts studios and gymnastics providers), these entities should continue to be relied upon to provide more specialized activities that are not easy for the public sector to conduct due to a lack of facilities or expertise.

## **Residential Communities, Condos and HOA's**

Future residential communities, condos and HOA's are likely to provide social and recreation facilities that serve their residents and provide a base level of programs. Their role in providing recreation facilities and services should be recognized.

## Faith Based Organizations

Churches, such as Real Life Church, and other faith-based organizations (Berachah Christian Camp) in Covington often provide some social and recreation services for their congregation and community. These organizations should be seen as possible providers of some basic community based recreation services and facilities.



# Trails & Linkages

## *Connecting to Nature and Community*

Trails and bikeways are key links in Covington’s transportation system – connecting people to parks, schools, downtown and other key destinations. They offer opportunities for active lifestyles and to experience community and nature. In the future, a comprehensive Covington trail and bikeway system could build on the City’s existing trail assets, take advantage of the Soos Creek and proposed Covington Highlands regional trails, and integrate into the City’s active transportation system to provide seamless access throughout the community.

### National & Regional Trends

As was noted in the Parks Chapter, walking and hiking continue to be the most popular recreational activities nationally and regionally, with approximately 90% participating in these activities based on statewide data. Furthermore, over the past ten years national recreation studies have consistently ranked hiking and walking as the most popular form of outdoor recreation. These studies include:

- Sports Participation Survey; National Sporting Goods Association
- Outdoor Recreation Participation Report; The Outdoor Foundation
- State of the Industry Report; Recreation Management Magazine

- Outdoor Recreation in America; The Recreation Roundtable

## Local Feedback & Trends

In 2014, Washington State was named the nation’s number one “Bicycle Friendly State” by the League of American Bicyclists for the eighth year in a row. Statewide, walking and hiking have become the most popular outdoor recreation activity with almost 74% of residents participating.

Similarly in Covington, interest in walking and cycling has grown. Covington is a comparatively new city with few built paths, but is fortunate to be situated in the heart of an existing regional trail network. The City has a unique opportunity to provide an alternative to driving, while providing access to a variety of public amenities citywide.

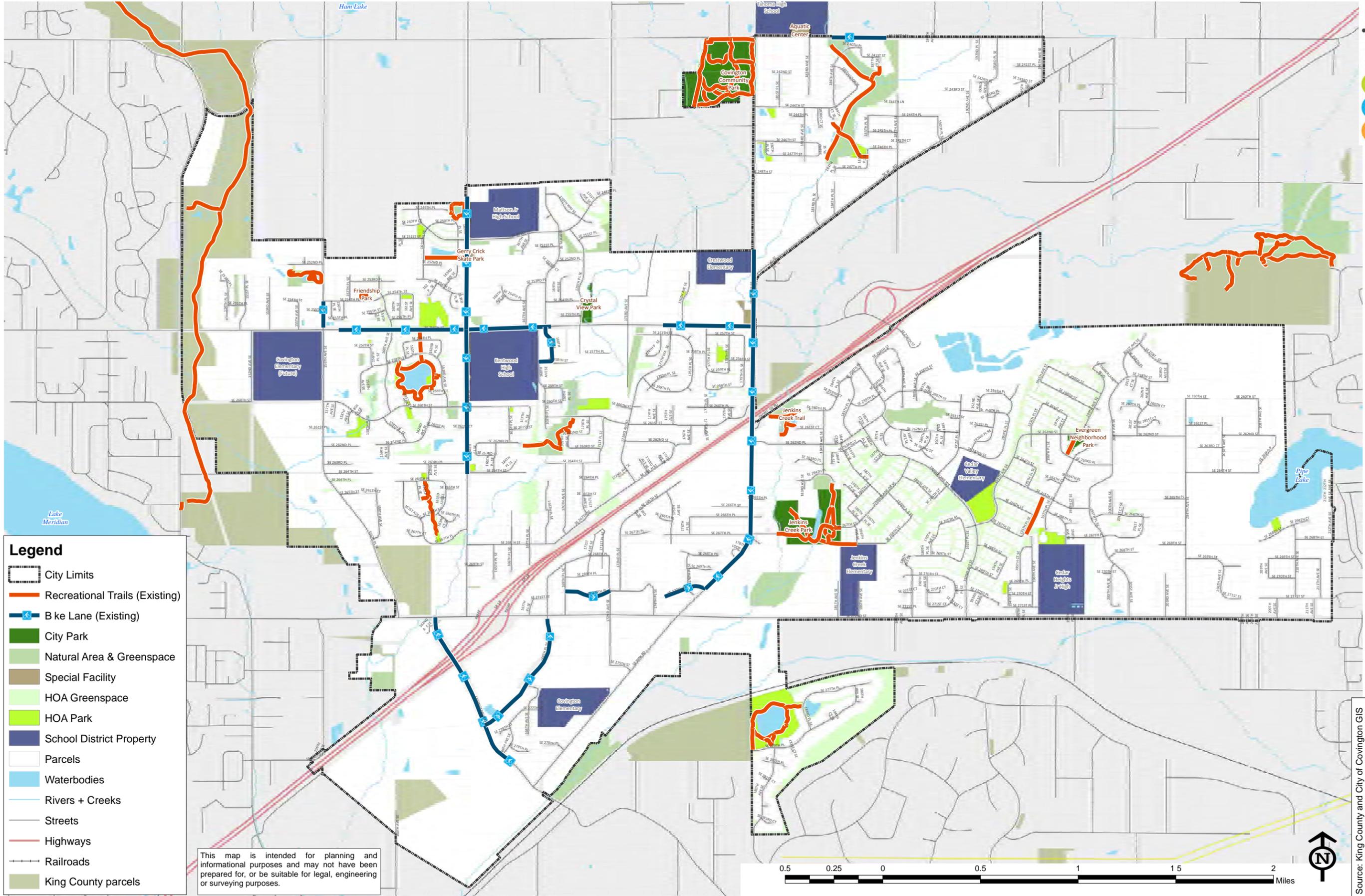
Covington residents value walking and biking trails and feel the City should prioritize expanding opportunities to walk and bike in the city. Nearly 70% of respondents to the community survey indicated that they have a need for paved walking and biking trails – the highest percentage of any listed facility. More specifically, 40% of residents indicated that walking and biking trails were the most important park and recreation facility - the highest percentage for any facility. Despite this interest and need, residents feel that their need for trails is not being met within the City.

## Levels of Service

In recognition of the popular demand for trails, the City’s current inventory of pathway segments and the physical limitations caused by the road network, this Plan proposes a trail standard of 0.75 miles per 1,000 residents. Using this standard, the current level of service indicates a current deficiency of over 6 miles of trails, which will increase to 8.6 miles by 2021 without further improvements, see Figure 16.

Figure 16. Current and Projected Level of Service for Public & Private Trails

Metric	Measurement	
Proposed Level of Service (LOS) Standard	0.75 miles per 1,000 residents	
2015 Population	18,520 residents	
2021 Population	21,257 residents	
Trail Mileage	Total	
City-owned and maintained	3.84 miles	
County and Private	3.5 miles	
<b>Total</b>	<b>7.34 miles</b>	
Year	2015	2021
Effective Level of Service based on total acreage (miles/1,000 residents)	0.40	0.35
Net LOS to Standard (miles/1,000 residents)	(0.35)	(0.40)
Attainment of Standard	53%	46%
Mileage surplus (deficit)	(6.55)	(8.60)



- Legend**
- City Limits
  - Recreational Trails (Existing)
  - Bike Lane (Existing)
  - City Park
  - Natural Area & Greenspace
  - Special Facility
  - HOA Greenspace
  - HOA Park
  - School District Property
  - Parcels
  - Waterbodies
  - Rivers + Creeks
  - Streets
  - Highways
  - Railroads
  - King County parcels

This map is intended for planning and informational purposes and may not have been prepared for, or be suitable for legal, engineering or surveying purposes.



Source: King County and City of Covington GIS  
Date: 15 December 2015



**Parks, Recreation & Open Space Plan | 2016**  
**MAP 7: Existing Trails & Bikeways**

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This Plan also recommends a standard of 0.75 miles per 1,000 residents for on-road bikeways to supplement the trail system and provide additional connections throughout the City. According to this standard, Covington currently falls below this level of service with a deficit of nearly 9 bikeway miles.

Figure 17. Current and Projected Level of Service for Bikeways

Metric	Measurement	
<b>Proposed Level of Service (LOS) Standard</b>	<b>0.75 miles per 1,000 residents</b>	
<b>2015 Population</b>	18,520 residents	
<b>2021 Population</b>	21,257 residents	
Bikeway Mileage	Total	
City-owned & maintained	5.03 miles	
<b>Total</b>	<b>5.03 miles</b>	
Year	2015	2021
Effective Level of Service based on total acreage <i>(miles/1,000 residents)</i>	0.27	0.24
Net LOS to Standard <i>(miles/1,000 residents)</i>	(0.48)	(0.51)
Attainment of Standard	36%	32%
Mileage surplus (deficit)	(8.86)	(10.91)

## Proposed Trail & Bikeway Network

Currently, many of the existing bicycle and pedestrian pathways 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 proposed network will provide logical pathway connections to key destinations, and these pathways should be comfortable and convenient for the community to use. If fully developed, this trail and bikeway network would total nearly 40 miles, exceeding the combined level of service standard for trails and bikeways by 10 miles in 2021.

### Signature Trails & Connections

The trail and pathway network described below will help create an expanded and dynamic system of on-street and off-street pathways linking major destinations throughout Covington.

#### Soos Creek Trail

The Soos Creek Trail is a paved, shared-use trail with a separate soft-surface path that follows Soos Creek Valley. The trail extends approximately 6 miles from Renton to near Lake Meridian in Kent. The southern portion of the trail passes through western Covington. The trail allows walkers, cyclists and equestrians to experience streamside and wetland areas, upland forests and open meadows. Limited trail access points are available in Covington on SE 256th Street just east of 148th Avenue SE. Full trailheads

with parking access are located on the westerly boundary of Covington at the intersection of 148th Avenue SE and SE 249th Street and at the intersection of SE 266th Street and 148th Avenue SE in Kent.

## **Covington Highlands Trail**

The Covington Highlands Trail is a proposed King County regional trail that would connect the Soos Creek Trail, the Green to Cedar Rivers Trail and the Cedar River Trail. The route would also connect Covington to the communities of Maple Valley and Black Diamond.

The King County Green To Cedar Rivers Trail Feasibility Study, published in 2012, recommends alignments, design standards and planning considerations for the Covington Highlands Trail. The preferred route incorporates the North City Trail on the northern boundary of western Covington, the BPA Trail and the Timberlane and Jenkins Creek Trails. However, assembling the right-of-way for the trail will be complex and will require a combination of existing public lands, powerline corridors, road rights-of-way and private land acquisition. The preferred alignment also takes advantage of the potential redevelopment of the Hawk Property Subarea.

The feasibility study also proposed an alternative northern route for the portion of the trail near eastern Covington. This alternative would follow the Jenkins Creek Trail from 256th Street east through Cedar Creek Park.

## **Soos Creek Connector**

The proposed Soos Creek Connector Trail would connect residential neighborhoods in western Covington to the Soos Creek Trail. The proposed trail alignment is located at approximately SE 260th Avenue and extends to 156th Avenue SE. A shared roadway would extend this connection along SE 260th Avenue to the Highpoint Trail.

## **Highpoint Trail**

The Highpoint Trail would connect the Covington Highlands Trail to the Little Soos Creek Trail. Portions of this trail are developed within the Pioneer Ridge and The Reserve HOA parks. This Plan proposes two trail segments, a northern segment connecting SE 256th Street to the Covington Highlands Trail and a southern segment connecting SE 256th Street to the Little Soos Creek Trail.

## **Little Soos Creek Trail**

The Little Soos Creek Trail would follow Little Soos Creek from the Highpoint Trail at approximately 164th Avenue SE northeast to the BPA Trail. This Plan proposes that this trail be divided into four segments for development.

## **BPA Trail**

The BPA Trail would extend from the Covington Community Park to connect to the Soos Creek Trail south along the BPA utility corridor.

## Jenkins Creek Trail

The Jenkins Creek Trail, a northern alternative for the Covington Highlands Trail, would meander along Jenkins Creek, connecting Covington Way northeast through Cedar Creek Park. Due to the length and complexity of this trail, this Plan proposes two development segments – a northern segment would connect 256th Street to Cedar Creek Park and require a crossing of SR-18; the southern segment would connect 256th Street to Covington Way.

## Pipeline Trail

Completing the Pipeline Trail would require a 1.5 mile connection north to the northern reach of the Jenkins Creek Trail, and a 1.15 mile extension south to the Lake Winterwood development. This trail will provide a key north-south connection between major regional trails, such as the Covington Highlands Trail, parks and eastern neighborhoods.

## 194th Trail

The 194th Trail would involve widening the existing detached sidewalk adjacent to 194th Avenue SE to create connections between the Timberlane and Pipeline Trails.

## Park & Local Trails

Currently, 5.7 miles of the 7.3 miles of trails in Covington are located within public or privately-owned parks. These trails provide opportunities for walking and are an important recreational amenity within parks, and they should continue to be incorporated into the design of future parks. However, park trails and pathways tend to be of limited length; connecting these park trails to the larger shared-use trail and bikeway network would greatly increase both recreational opportunities and active transportation connections for Covington's residents.

Internal soft-surface paths currently exist in the Jenkins Creek Park and connect to Jenkins Creek Trail. Private soft-surface trails are also found in the Coho Creek development and the Crofton Hills development. Unimproved paths created by residents follow the vegetated buffer between the Timberlane neighborhood and the quarry following the Pipeline easement to Cedar Creek Park. There are also unimproved paths in various King County properties, but access is limited by “no trespassing” signs. Maintenance of soft-surface trails is time consuming but can be accomplished by volunteer groups. Due to the limited size of the maintenance staff, no additional soft-surface trails are proposed at this time.

## Bike Lanes

The City's existing bike lanes can provide an important foundation for a larger network of bike facilities. However, existing bike lanes are disconnected, end suddenly and miss opportunities to provide connections across the City. The following bike lane routes, which build on the existing network, would improve access from neighborhoods to parks, schools, commercial areas and other important destinations.

- **SE 256th Street Corridor:** Continuing bike lanes along 256th Avenue east to the Soos

Creek Trail would greatly increase bicycle access to this signature trail corridor, as would addressing the gap in the bike lane along SE 256th Street between 170th Place SE and 173rd Avenue SE.

- **164th Avenue SE Corridor:** Continuing bike lanes south along 164th Avenue and east along 272nd Avenue to connect to Covington Way would improve north-south access for residents and allow cyclists to easily reach many neighborhoods and major destinations, including Mattson Middle School, Kentwood High School, the Covington Library, major commercial areas and the proposed Covington Town Center.
- **SE Wax Road Corridor:** Adding bike lanes to the remaining segments of 180th Avenue SE / Wax Road would allow continuous cyclist access from the Covington Community Park to the proposed Covington Town Center - linking the many neighborhoods and schools along this route.
- **Covington Way SE Corridor:** Extending the bike lane to SE Wax Road will strengthen the connection to the Town Center and the planned trail along Jenkins Creek.
- **SE 240th Street Corridor:** While for the most part outside the City's boundaries, 240th Street is an important connection for the northern part of the city to Soos Creek Trail and should be evaluated in partnership with King County for possible bike lanes.

## Shared Roadways

The traffic levels along the existing shared roadways on 256th Street, 164th Avenue and 272nd Street should be evaluated for suitability and safety. Shared roadways typically follow lower volume residential streets, while arterial connectors with higher traffic counts and adequate shoulder room would necessitate striped/signed lanes for safety. They are often improved with traffic calming features to limit traffic speeds and volumes. Once these systems are in place, the installation of additional shared roadways should be evaluated.

The shared roadways recommended in this Plan are on residential streets and provide connections to parks, schools or trails. The City should look to create shared roadways that support pedestrian and bicycle access along:

- SE 260th Street along the Soos Creek Connector, connecting to the Highpoint Trail.
- 160th Avenue SE north of 256th Avenue SE as an on-road segment of the Highpoint Trail.
- 204th Avenue SE to connect Cedar Creek Park to the proposed area of a new community park near Pipe Lake.
- East-to-west along a combination of SE 266th, 267th, and 268th Place to connect the Pipeline Trail, Cedar Heights Middle School and the proposed community park.
- 168th Place SE and 170th Avenue SE, connecting from Kentwood High School through Jenkins Creek Park.
- Along SE 262nd Place and Timberlane Boulevard.
- Along SE 246th Place and 188th Ave SE to connect the Little Soos Creek Trail and the Rainier Vista Open Space to the Jenkins Creek Trail.
- Along 197th Place SE to connect off-road segments of the Pipeline Trail.

## Wayfinding

The proposed trail system will provide connections to key destinations and neighborhoods throughout the city. These trails and connections should be easy to access and convenient to use. This Plan recommends the implementation of detailed trail signage standards, route and wayfinding signage for trails and associated facilities and informational maps and materials identifying existing and planned trail facilities. Additional general information on communication and wayfinding can be found in Chapter 10.

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# Green Infrastructure

## *Growing a Green Future*

Through past acquisitions and transfers from King County, along with proximity to the Soos Creek Greenway and other non-city tracts of open space, Covington is fortunate to have retained several significant natural areas across the city.

The City's natural areas and greenspaces provide for a variety of active and passive recreational opportunities, including walking, hiking and wildlife watching. They also provide places to simply experience nature and find respite from urban living. By protecting and enhancing these places, the City can take an active role in creating recreation opportunities and promoting the physical and mental health of local residents, while protecting their critical habitat and ecosystem service functions.

## Community Values & Trends

In Covington, and across Washington State and the nation, nature-based activities are some of the most popular recreational activities. In Washington State, eight in ten residents report participating in nature-based activities. Those who participate in wildlife watching/photography do so an average of once a week, making it one of the most frequently completed recreational activities. Nature-based recreational activities tend to be low-cost,

require little equipment and accommodate a range of activity levels. According to state surveys, they are most popular with older residents, those with higher incomes and women.

In addition, nine in ten state residents participate in walking or hiking – activities well suited for natural area trails. Virtually all demographic groups report very high levels of participation in walking and hiking, with the highest rates occurring in younger residents (under 46), and those with higher educations or incomes.

## Existing Natural Areas & Greenspaces

Covington’s has a wealth of natural resources, including creeks and riparian areas, wetlands, and upland forest, that provide habitat for native wildlife and contribute to the City’s unique identity and the health and well-being of local residents. While many of the sites managed by the City do not currently accommodate formal, public access, many of these properties will serve as the backbone for future trail corridors.

The City of Covington owns approximately 110 acres of natural areas and open space, mostly located at Cedar Creek Park, Rainier Vista, the Covington Legacy Open Space and the South Jenkins Creek Open Space. Other natural area sites are scattered throughout the community and are generally less than 6 acres in size. Natural areas are those properties that accommodate public access, yet have minimal improvements. Greenspaces generally do not accommodate access due to natural features (i.e., wetlands, slopes) and have no recreational improvements.

Figure 18. Current Inventory of City-owned Natural Areas & Greenspace

Park Name	Classification	Acreage
Cedar Creek Park	Natural Area	31.50
Jenkins Creek Trail Park	Natural Area	3.40
Rainier Vista Open Space	Natural Area	21.50
South Wingfield Open Space	Natural Area	5.50
West Gateway	Natural Area	0.10
Cedar Valley Park	Greenspace	6.75
Covington Legacy Greenspace	Greenspace	10.15
Emerald Downs Open Space	Greenspace	4.00
Foss Open Space	Greenspace	1.10
Foxwood Open Space	Greenspace	3.40
Jenkins Creek Greenspace	Greenspace	1.10
Mattson Open Space	Greenspace	0.60
Meridian Trace Open Space	Greenspace	1.20
Morgans Creek	Greenspace	1.70
N. Jenkins Creek Park Greenspace	Greenspace	1.88
North Wingfield Open Space	Greenspace	3.60
S. Soos Creek	Greenspace	3.30
South Jenkins Creek Open Space	Greenspace	9.70
<b>Total Natural Area &amp; Greenspace Acreage</b>		<b>110.48</b>

Private homeowner associations provide another 100 acres of protected greenspace, the bulk of which is located at Winterwood Estates HOA (47.9 acres). Many greenspaces serve as stormwater retention areas and will not be able to provide significant recreational amenity.

## Level of Service

To promote adequate protection of the City’s natural resources and support opportunities for residents to see and experience nature, this Plan recommends a natural area service standard of 6.0 acres per 1,000 residents. As shown in Figure 19, the City is currently exceeding this standard with City-owned properties. When privately held, HOA properties are included, the City has nearly double the natural areas suggested by the service standard.

Figure 19. Current and Projected Level of Service for Natural Areas & Greenspace

Metric	Measurement	
<b>Proposed Level of Service (LOS) Standard</b>	<b>6.0 acres per 1,000 residents</b>	
<b>2015 Population</b>	18,520 residents	
<b>2021 Population</b>	21,257 residents	
Parkland Acreage (Natural Areas & Greenspaces)		Total
City-owned & maintained		110.48 acres
Private		96.49 acres
<b>Total</b>		<b>206.97 acres</b>
Year	2015	2021
Effective Level of Service based on total acreage (acres/1,000 residents)	11.18	9.74
Net LOS to Standard (acres/1,000 residents)	5.18	3.74
Attainment of Standard	186%	162%
Acreage surplus (deficit)	95.85	79.43

## Future Preservation

While the City currently exceeds the service standard, this Plan recommends the acquisition of select natural areas in support of other recreational goals. The City should focus acquisition efforts on purchase of access easements or greenspaces along trail corridors, particularly along Little Soos Creek and Jenkins Creek.

Future acquisitions should be initially directed toward other public or quasi-public entities, such as Bonneville Power Administration and Puget Sound Energy. When considering other acquisition opportunities, the city should prioritize areas based on high natural resource value, including habitat, water quality, hydrologic, and erosion control values; continuity with existing natural areas to create important wildlife and recreation connections within the existing system; and areas of cultural, historical or scenic significance. When possible, preservation should be in partnership with homeowner associations, other government agencies and/or community organizations.

## Restoration & Enhancement

Covington’s natural areas and greenspaces add to the quality of its neighborhoods, provide critical habitat, function as green oasis within the urban landscape and increase local property values. The City and local homeowner associations have demonstrated a commitment to preserving, protecting and enhancing its natural areas. However, the quality and function of

some natural areas are threatened by development, impacts from neighboring uses, pollution, poor management and non-native invasive species. Through proper management of natural areas and greenspaces, the City and its partners can maintain and enhance these areas and the critical ecosystem and community benefits they provide.

## Interpretive Signage

The City should consider developing an environmental interpretive and signage program to increase public awareness of the role of natural areas within the urban environment. The installation and integration of interpretive signage that reflects Covington's history, culture, natural assets and wildlife populations can enable programmed or self-guided outdoor learning and support other types of passive recreation, such as viewpoints and wildlife viewing areas.

Specifically, the wooded area of Covington Community Park, the lower section of Jenkins Creek Park, Jenkins Creek Trail greenspace and the greenspaces associated with the Wingfield and Rainier Vista subdivisions can provide prominent locations for such interpretive information, along with wildlife viewing stations and other outdoor education elements.

## Natural Green Infrastructure

Covington's natural resources are a critical component of the City's green infrastructure, which provides important ecosystem services functions. The City's urban forest, streams, wetlands and vegetated natural areas help manage stormwater, protect air and water quality, and prevent erosion. Connection, protection and enhancement will improve their ability to provide these important services. This, in turn, can reduce the City's need for built infrastructure, like sewers and water treatment capacity; reduce risks from natural hazards like landslides and floods; and protect the quality of local streams for generations to come.

## Urban Forestry

The City of Covington's Urban Forestry Strategic Plan was developed in 2013 to provide an assessment of the City's existing tree resources, a vision for the future of the City's Urban Forestry Program, and key objectives for the City's future management and investment. The plan's primary objective was to add to the City's understanding of its public trees in order to support better management and maximize the benefits of trees to the community.

A partial street tree inventory was conducted in 2014 that documented the location, species, size and condition of more than 2,000 trees. While the inventory needs to be further developed, completed and maintained, it has provided a strong baseline of data for the City.

Currently 37% of Covington is covered by tree canopy. Coverage is higher on private lands (39%) than on City-owned property (30%). The existing canopy level is higher than communities like Renton and Bellevue, but less than other nearby cities, such as Kirkland. Covington's goal for canopy coverage is 40%. Given the lower level of canopy coverage on City-owned property, this plan recommended actions to preserve and restore trees on public

lands. The Urban Forestry Strategic Plan provided a set of short-term urban forestry actions to build the canopy and improve its management (excerpted):

- Purchase a comprehensive tree inventory program and conduct an inventory of the public trees that includes condition and risk rating, where appropriate.
- Generate a more accurate measurement of the public tree canopy cover by using the i-Tree software. Establish a canopy goal for the City and commit to measure changes over time.
- Develop an annual work plan for the maintenance of publicly-owned and managed trees based on the reports generated by the inventory program.
- Recognize the interdepartmental Tree Team and enable them to develop work plans and budget requests, review policy, regulation and best management practices, and coordinate project-based urban forestry.
- Strive to have more than one staff person (ideally one in each department – Parks, Public Works, Planning) acquire arborist certification to provide interdepartmental support, and provide necessary training to ensure qualified staff for the management of the urban forest.
- Engage the community through neighborhood natural area planning (i.e., Timberlane, Crofton Heights), annual work plan discussions, information on best management practices, and the general promotion of the benefits of the urban forest.
- Update and adopt the Community Forestry Plan (2006) as the City’s Best Management Practices for urban forestry.

Several actions will require staff time and resources to accomplish. Even with the coordinated Tree Team, some projects may require contracting with a qualified professional or specifying a designated staff person. The vision and key objectives all point toward an urban forestry program that will require dedicated staff resources over time.

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# Goals & Objectives

The goals and objectives described in this chapter define the park and recreation services that Covington aims to provide. These goals and objectives were derived from input received throughout the planning process, from city staff, the Parks and Recreation Commission and community members.

The goals and objectives are also directed in large measure by the Washington State Legislature's adoption of the 1990 Growth Management Act. The GMA identifies 14 planning goals to guide the development of comprehensive plans and development regulations. Four of these goals affect the development and implementation of this plan.

- “Encourage the retention of open space and development of recreational opportunities, conserve fish and wildlife habitat, increase access to natural resource lands and water, and develop parks.” 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)
- “Carry-out the goals of the Shoreline Management Act with regards to shorelines and critical areas.” RCW 36.70A.020(14)

Taken together, the goals and objectives provide a framework for this PROS Plan. A goal is a general statement describing an outcome the City wishes to provide. Objectives are more specific, measurable statements that describe a means to achieving the stated goals.



## Community Engagement and Communication

*Goal 1: Encourage meaningful public involvement in park and recreation planning and inform residents through department communications.*

- 1.1 Support the Parks and Recreation Commission and the Arts Commission as the forums for public discussion of parks and recreation and arts issues and conducting joint sessions as necessary between Commission and City Council to improve coordination and discuss policy matters of mutual interest.
- 1.2 Encourage community participation in, appreciation of and education in the arts. Support the Covington Arts Commission in providing art programs that benefit community residents.
- 1.3 Involve residents and stakeholders in system-wide planning, park site facility design and recreation program development. Use a diverse set of communication and informational materials to solicit community input, facilitate project understanding and build public support.
- 1.4 Support volunteer park improvement and stewardship projects from a variety of individuals, service clubs, scouting organizations, churches, and businesses to promote community ownership of parks and recreation facilities.
- 1.5 Continue to promote and distribute information about recreational activities, education programs, community services and events, and volunteer activities sponsored by the City and partner agencies and organizations.
- 1.6 Implement a comprehensive approach for wayfinding and directional signage to and identification and interpretive signage within park and trail facilities.



## Recreation Programming

*Goal 2: Establish a varied and inclusive suite of recreation programs that accommodate a spectrum of ages, interests, and abilities.*

- 2.1 Enable programming and services to meet the needs of diverse users, including at-risk communities or those with special needs.
- 2.2 Expand and enhance the diversity of programs offered, focusing on programs that are in high demand or serve a range of users.
- 2.3 Periodically undertake a comprehensive evaluation of existing recreation program offerings in terms of persons served, customer satisfaction, cost/subsidy, cost recovery, local and regional recreation trends, and availability of similar programs via other providers.
- 2.4 Maintain and enhance program scholarships, fee waivers, and other mechanisms to support recreation access for low-income program participants.
- 2.5 Implement and support special events, festivals, concerts and cultural programming to promote arts, health and wellness, community identity, tourism, the benefits of recreation, and to foster civic pride.
- 2.6 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 recreation facilities and the benefits of parks and recreation.
- 2.7 Leverage city resources by forming and maintaining partnerships with public, non-profit and private recreation providers to deliver recreation services and secure access to existing facilities (e.g. schools) for community recreational use.



## Parks, Recreation, Open Space and Trail System

*Goal 3: Acquire and develop a high-quality, diversified system of parks, recreation facilities, open spaces and trails that is attractive, functional, accessible, and safe – providing equitable access to all residents.*

- 3.1 Provide a level of service standard of 3 acres per 1,000 resident-equivalents of developed neighborhood parks, 5 acres per 1,000 resident-equivalents of developed community parks and 6 acres per 1,000 resident-equivalents of combined natural areas and greenspaces.
- 3.2 Strive to provide equitable access to parks such that all city residents live within one-half mile of a developed neighborhood park and one mile of a developed community park.
- 3.3 To provide equitable park distribution, prioritize park acquisition and development in underserved areas where households are more than ½-mile from a developed park.
- 3.4 Maintain and apply annually for Tree City USA status.
- 3.5 Explore partnership with local utilities, public agencies and private landowners for easements for parkland, trail corridors and recreation facilities.
- 3.6 Explore options to replace the Covington Aquatics Center facility and/or function.
- 3.7 Continue to partner with the Kent and Tahoma School Districts to utilize school sites to provide active recreation and programming facilities. Explore opportunities to co-develop or renovate facilities on school property or property adjacent to schools.
- 3.8 Pursue development of a multi-use indoor facility that provides space for a comprehensive recreation program for Covington residents including the possible coordination with King County, Kent, Black Diamond and Maple Valley for development of a joint community recreation facility.
- 3.9 Periodically evaluate user satisfaction and numerical use of parks and recreation facilities as part of the process to renovate facilities.
- 3.10 Maintain and enhance Covington's recreation facilities to provide recreational opportunities, services and opportunities for users, protect capital investments and provide safety of recreation facilities to better serve users and extend use.
- 3.11 Maintain a standardized and systematic inventory and assessment of park system infrastructure, including quantity, location, condition and expected useful life.



## Open Space: Natural Areas and Greenspaces

*Goal 4: Protect and manage the City's environmentally-sensitive lands, open spaces and natural and cultural resources to highlight their uniqueness, local history and environmental value.*

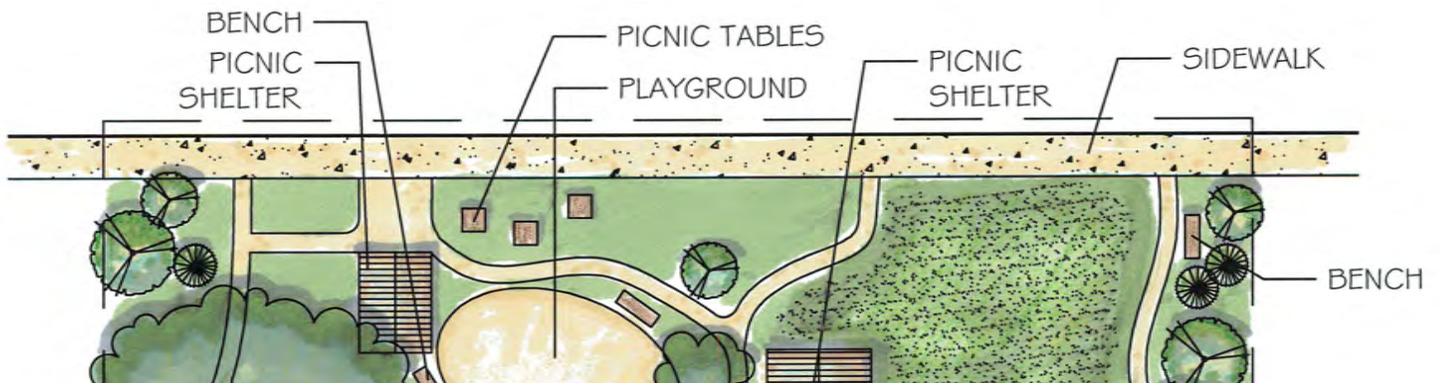
- 4.1 Coordinate with King County, Kent, Black Diamond and Maple Valley to explore opportunities to preserve and enhance the ecological function, habitat quality and recreational value of the Soos Creek, Little Soos Creek, and Jenkins Creek corridors.
- 4.2 Coordinate with other public agencies and private 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.
- 4.3 Pursue low-cost and/or non-purchase options to preserve open space, including the use of conservation easements and development covenants; when considering vacation of any right-of-way, consider its appropriateness for use as public park or open space.
- 4.4 Consider development of management plans for the City's larger natural areas and greenspaces in coordination with the City's Critical Areas Ordinance and other resource protection guidelines.
- 4.5 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.



## Trails & Pathways

*Goal 5: Develop a high-quality system of multi-use trails and bicycle and pedestrian corridors that connects to regional trails and provides access to significant local landscapes, public facilities, neighborhoods, and businesses.*

- 5.1 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, Lake Wilderness, Cedar River and the proposed SR-18 trails.
- 5.2 Develop and adopt design standards for trails and related facilities within the city's trail system.
- 5.3 Provide trailhead accommodations, as appropriate, to include parking, signage, restrooms and other amenities.
- 5.4 Implement trail, route and wayfinding signage for trails and associated facilities, informational maps and materials identifying existing and planned trail facilities.



## Park Planning

*Goal 6: Plan for a parks, recreation facilities, trails, and open space system that is efficient to administer and operate, while protecting capital investment.*

- 6.1 Develop prioritization criteria to address park and recreation facility improvement needs. Review the 20-year Capital Investment Program and prioritize the six-year Capital Improvement Plan on an annual basis.
- 6.2 Update this comprehensive Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan periodically to ensure park and recreation facilities and services meet current and future needs.
- 6.3 Formulate illustrative master plans for the development or redevelopment of each city park, as appropriate, to take advantage of grant or other funding opportunities.
- 6.4 Design parks and facilities to offer universal accessibility for residents of all physical capabilities, skill levels and age, as appropriate.
- 6.5 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.
- 6.6 Establish and utilize design standards to provide continuity in furnishings (signage, trash cans, tables, benches, fencing) and construction materials to reduce inventory and maintenance costs, standardize maintenance practices and improve park appearance.
- 6.7 Incorporate sustainable development and low impact design practices into the design, planning and rehabilitation of new and existing facilities.
- 6.8 Develop and maintain minimum design and development standards for park and recreation amenities within private developments to address community facility needs, equipment types, accessibility and installation procedures.
- 6.9 Estimate the maintenance costs and staffing levels associated with acquisition, development, or renovation of parks or open space areas, and ensure adequate long-term maintenance, life-cycle replacement and operation funding is available prior to action.
- 6.10 Update, adopt and implement the draft Covington Community Forestry Plan to articulate a long-term strategy for tree protection, urban forestry management and public education and outreach.
- 6.11 New development shall provide mitigating funds or parkland, deemed acceptable by the City, for concurrent park development.

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# Capital Facilities Plan

The following Capital Facilities Plan (CFP) lists all park and facility projects considered for the next 6 years. The majority of these projects entail the acquisition and development of parks, renovating or repairing existing facilities and expanding trail corridors. Based on survey results and other feedback, Covington residents have indicated an interest in park upgrades and trail construction as short-term priorities, and the proposed CFP is reflective of that desire.

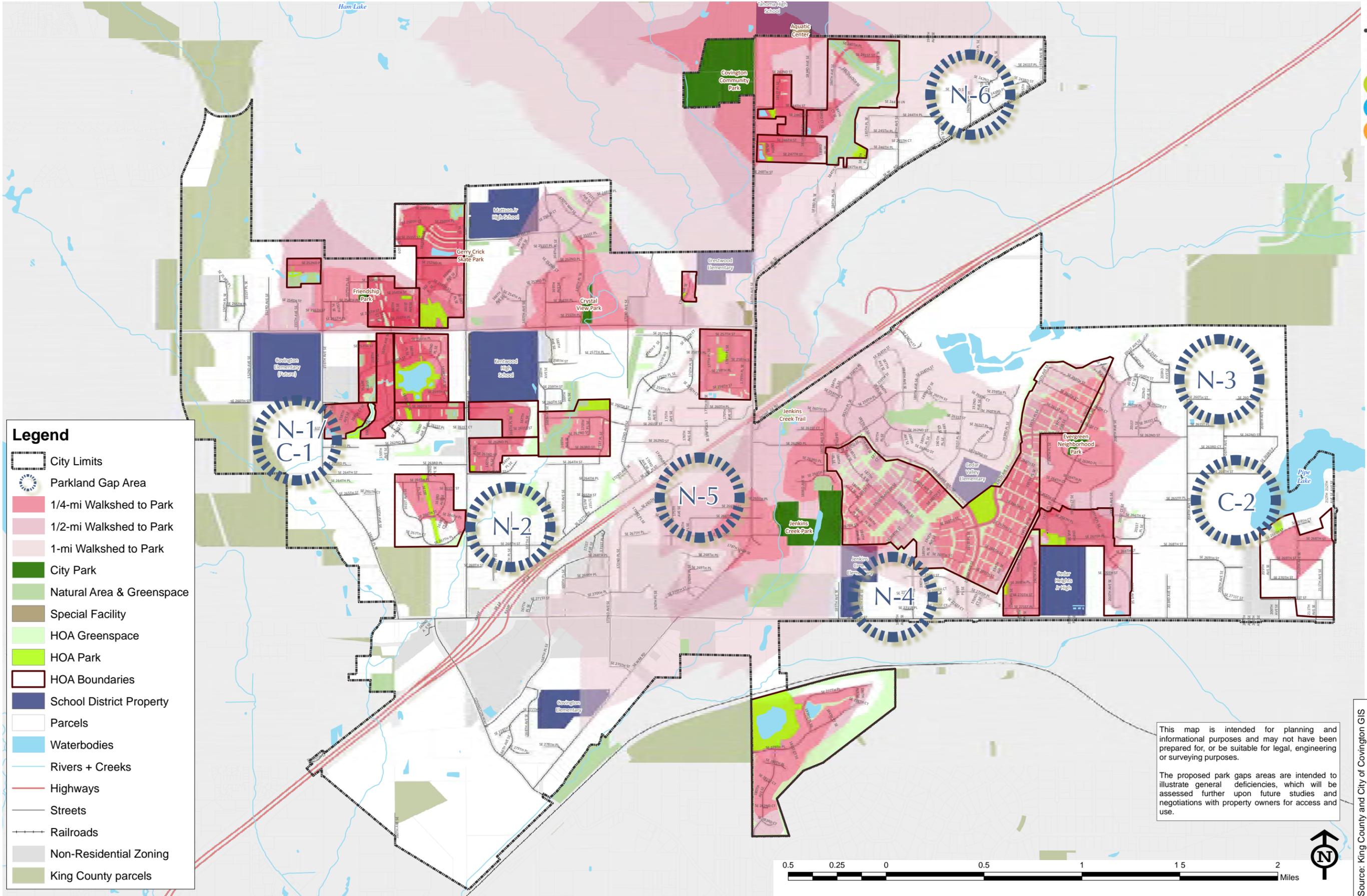
The following CFP project list provides brief project descriptions and priority ranking to assist staff in preparing future capital budget requests.

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**Parks, Recreation & Open Space Plan  
2016 - 2021 Capital Improvement Plan**

Project	CIP #	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	6 - Year Total
Covington Aquatic Center Renovation	2010	\$ 250,000						\$ 250,000
Covington Community Park Ph 1	1010	\$ 31,000						\$ 31,000
Covington Community Park Ph 2	1010	\$ 1,177,000	\$ 7,023,000					\$ 8,200,000
Covington Community Park Ph 3	1010					\$ 1,500,000	\$ 17,500,000	\$ 19,000,000
South Covington (SoCo) Park	1019	\$ 1,428,000		\$ 1,000,000				\$ 2,428,000
Town Center Park Plaza	2011		\$ 65,000					\$ 65,000
Jenkins Creek Park	1014		\$ 50,000	\$ 2,000,000				\$ 2,050,000
Gerry Crick Skate Park Renovation	1013	\$ 121,000						\$ 121,000
Friendship Park Renovation	2002				\$ 175,000			\$ 175,000
Crystal View Park Renovation	1094					\$ 200,000		\$ 200,000
Pipeline Trail North	1101				\$ 478,000			\$ 478,000
Jenkins Creek Trail	1110		\$ 20,000	\$ 30,000	\$ 30,000			\$ 80,000
Cedar Creek Park Clean up	2008		\$ 45,000					\$ 45,000
Community Park #3	1178				\$ 2,010,000	\$ 2,500,000		\$ 4,510,000
Evergreen Park	1093				\$ 573,000			\$ 573,000
Community/Recreation/Aquatic Center Study	3006		\$ 60,000					\$ 60,000
Hawk Park	1009						\$ 1,071,000	\$ 1,071,000
Suncrest Park	1011						\$ 1,592,000	\$ 1,592,000
Neighborhood Park NH-1	2003				\$ 960,000			\$ 960,000
Neighborhood Park NH-2	2004					\$ 960,000		\$ 960,000
Neighborhood Park NH-3	2005						\$ 960,000	\$ 960,000
Revolving Repair & Maintenance								\$ -
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$ 3,007,000</b>	<b>\$ 7,263,000</b>	<b>\$ 1,030,000</b>	<b>\$ 6,226,000</b>	<b>\$ 5,160,000</b>	<b>\$ 21,123,000</b>	<b>\$ 43,809,000</b>

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- Legend**
- City Limits
  - Parkland Gap Area
  - 1/4-mi Walkshed to Park
  - 1/2-mi Walkshed to Park
  - 1-mi Walkshed to Park
  - City Park
  - Natural Area & Greenspace
  - Special Facility
  - HOA Greenspace
  - HOA Park
  - HOA Boundaries
  - School District Property
  - Parcels
  - Waterbodies
  - Rivers + Creeks
  - Highways
  - Streets
  - Railroads
  - Non-Residential Zoning
  - King County parcels

This map is intended for planning and informational purposes and may not have been prepared for, or be suitable for legal, engineering or surveying purposes.

The proposed park gaps areas are intended to illustrate general deficiencies, which will be assessed further upon future studies and negotiations with property owners for access and use.

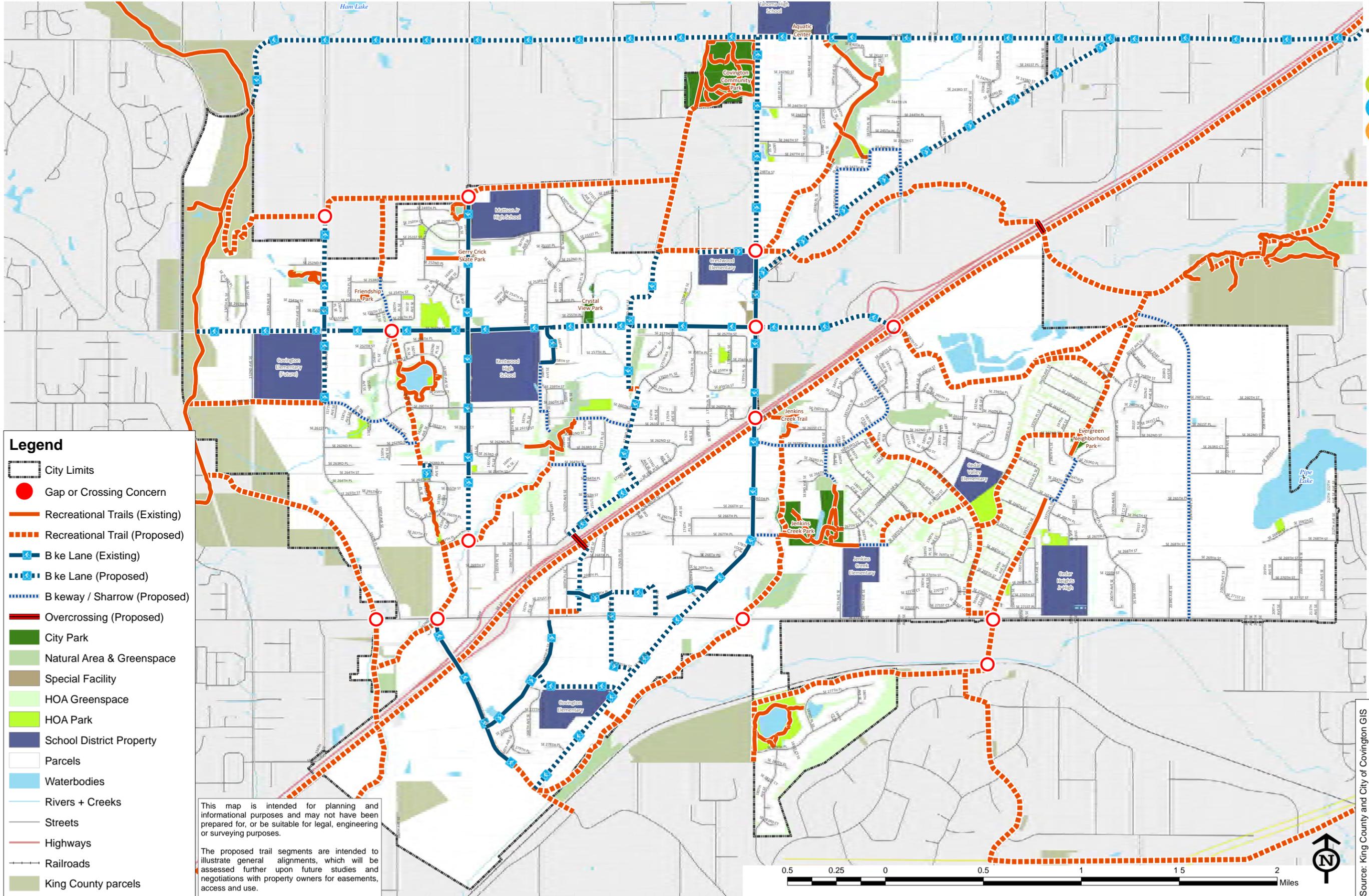


Source: King County and City of Covington GIS  
Date: 15 December 2015



**Parks, Recreation & Open Space Plan | 2016**  
**MAP 8: Proposed Parkland Acquisition Target Areas**

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**Legend**

- City Limits
- Gap or Crossing Concern
- Recreational Trails (Existing)
- Recreational Trail (Proposed)
- B ke Lane (Existing)
- B ke Lane (Proposed)
- B keway / Sharrow (Proposed)
- Overcrossing (Proposed)
- City Park
- Natural Area & Greenspace
- Special Facility
- HOA Greenspace
- HOA Park
- School District Property
- Parcels
- Waterbodies
- Rivers + Creeks
- Streets
- Highways
- Railroads
- King County parcels

This map is intended for planning and informational purposes and may not have been prepared for, or be suitable for legal, engineering or surveying purposes.

The proposed trail segments are intended to illustrate general alignments, which will be assessed further upon future studies and negotiations with property owners for easements, access and use.



Source: King County and City of Covington GIS  
Date: 15 December 2015

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# Implementation Strategies

## Implementation in Context

A number of strategies exist to improve park and recreation 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 this Plan to life, and Covington residents have voiced, via survey results and direct feedback at public meetings, some willingness to support parks and recreation, park maintenance and a high quality of life.

The following considerations are presented to offer near-term direction on implementation and as a means to continue dialogue between the City, its residents and its partners. Given that the operating and capital budgets for the Department are limited, the implementation measures identified below look primarily to non-General Fund options. Additionally, a review of likely funding options is attached as Appendix B and includes local financing, federal and state grant and conservation programs, acquisition methods and others.

## Volunteer & Community-Based Action

The public process for this Plan has demonstrated that residents want to be involved in improving the City's parks, trails and recreational opportunities and want to have their energies guided through coordination with the City. Community sponsored park clean-ups, beautification and planting projects, among other community-building projects, engage citizens and create a stronger sense of community pride and ownership in park and recreation facilities. Additionally, the City benefits from on-going coordination and involvement from the Rotary, local scout troops and other area service and civic groups. The City should also prepare a revolving list of potential small works or volunteer-appropriate projects to post on its website, while also reaching out to the high schools to encourage student projects.

## Partner Coordination & Collaboration

Specific projects and goals identified in this Plan demand a high degree of coordination and collaboration with other city divisions and outside agencies.

Internal coordination with the Public Works and Community Development departments can increase the potential of discrete actions toward the implementation of the proposed trail and bikeway network, which relies heavily on street right-of-way enhancements, and in review of development applications with consideration toward potential parkland acquisition areas, planned trail corridors and the need for easement or set-aside requests. However, to more fully extend the extent of the park system and recreation programs, additional partnerships and collaborations should be sought.

The City should continue to coordinate and negotiate with regional utilities for access to their corridors for trails. A pending gas pipeline project by Williams may provide an opportunity to complete the Pipeline Trail and potentially enable park improvements to Evergreen Park. Puget Sound Energy has offered a positive response to an inquiry about using a portion of their transmission route for recreational trails. Also, BPA maintains a large substation in the southwest corner of the City and has several transmission corridors crossing Covington. These routes represent an opportunity for the City to fill some of the existing gaps in its trail network.

Covington should explore partnership opportunities with regional health care providers and services, such as MultiCare, Valley Medical and the King County Health Department, to promote wellness activities, healthy living and communications about the benefits of parks and recreation. For example, this group could more directly cross-market services and help expand resident understanding of local wellness options, and they could sponsor a series of organized trail walks throughout Covington as a means to expand public awareness of local trail opportunities and encourage residents to stay fit.

The City should continue discussions with the Kent School District regarding the development at the District's new elementary school property located along 156th Street. This site or adjoining property developed in concert with the school development could provide for a small neighborhood park to serve residents in the immediate area, who are currently unserved by public facilities and do not have access to private homeowner association parks.

The City should continue to facilitate discussions with local youth leagues and staff from King

County, Maple Valley and Black Diamond and the Kent and Tahoma School Districts for the purposes of sport field planning and financing additional sport fields to address capacity issues. A multi-field complex could provide field rental revenue, as well as additional tourism revenue, from leagues or sport clubs interested in hosting tournaments, although the lack of hotels in the immediate area may be a hindrance.

The City should reach out to the property owners of certain private open space tracts that were set aside through the land development process for the potential to utilize some of these lands for trail or neighborhood greenway linkages.

The City should continue to explore opportunities to expand public access and ownership along Jenkins Creek and the Little Soos Creek. This could include outreach to and negotiations with landowners with water frontage, as well as opportunities for expanded or improved pathway access to or along the creeks.

Developing or strengthening these types of partnerships will be essential for reaching the goals of the plan and meeting the needs of the future park system. Partnerships may allow the City to share responsibilities for the financial, acquisition, development, planning and operational activities. Partnerships, like many relationships, require time to develop and establish the mutual values that keep the partners at the table, leverage all accumulated resources and lead to successful project or program implementation. City staff may need to grow to allow for the capacity to capture stronger partnerships.

## Enhancing Communications & Outreach

Many of the plan recommendations will require the execution of effective communications and outreach. Promoting the City's park system will require broader marketing and outreach that entails a combination of better signage, more public news coverage, enhanced wayfinding, printed mapping and user information, use of engaging social media platforms, and interactive website/online activities.

To enhance residents' awareness of Covington's park and recreation offerings, the City should:

- Frame its services around the goals of health, fitness and activity.
- Provide publicly available maps of parks and trails.
- Provide wayfinding signage within the park system to direct residents and visitors to the City's parks and facilities.
- Continue to use the City's website and social media accounts to promote events, recreational and education programs, and volunteer activities.
- Prepare visually attractive materials (print or electronic) that have consistency of graphic style and theme.
- Continue to coordinate with web-based mapping applications, such as Google Maps, to ensure park names and locations are shown correctly on these often used sites.

In addition, the City should act as the local hub for information about recreation, programs, events and activities in the community. This may include providing print and web-based information about the benefits of active lifestyles and available recreation resources, but it may also include information about high school sports and other general fitness or health information.

Developing an effective communication and outreach plan will require expertise and effort. As with other Plan recommendations, additional staffing resources may be necessary to accomplish an effective messaging program.

## Local Funding

According to the City budget, Covington maintains significant reserve debt capacity for councilmanic, non-voted bonds (\$17 million) and voter approved debt (\$47 million). The on-going community conversation regarding the future and potential for a recreation center warrants a review of debt implications for such a large capital project, along with polling of voter support for the project.

A short-term bond or levy could be structured to maximize voter support to include parkland acquisitions and development, trail development, downtown plaza development and general park element upgrades. This will require additional review for the compilation of a specific funding package, along with an assessment of potential revenue, political willingness and potential voter support. Either a voter approved levy lid lift or a general obligation bond may be suitable for this purpose. Also, as the debt service for the 2007 bond approaches expiration, the City should reassess its capital needs for upgrades and enhancements to its park and recreation facilities and infrastructure.

## Special District Formation

Another approach to finance the construction and operation of a new community recreation center is through the formation of a special district. Municipalities across Washington have favored the creation of Metropolitan Park Districts (MPD) to meet the recreational needs of residents, while also being sensitive to the set of demands placed on general purpose property tax funds. The City should examine and study the feasibility of establishing an MPD and conduct an assessment of the legal parameters (governance models, boundaries, staffing, tax level authority, prorationing, tax limitation implication, etc.) and political factors affecting the decision to establish a new voter district. The City should strongly consider establishing an MPD with a geography larger than its city limits in acknowledgement of its high rate of non-resident recreation program patrons. The feasibility study should explore configurations that include portions of unincorporated King County to the north and south of Covington, along with Maple Valley and Black Diamond.

## Park Impact Fees

Park Impact Fees (PIF) are imposed on new development to meet the increased demand for parks resulting from the new growth. PIF can only be used for parkland acquisition, planning, and/or development. They cannot be used for operations and maintenance of parks and facilities. The City of Covington does not currently assess impact fees, but the City has completed an impact fee methodology and rate study. Based on conversations with staff, it

is expected that park impact fees will be implemented in 2016. The City should prioritize the usage of PIF to secure new park properties consistent with the priorities within this Plan.

## King County Conservation Futures

The county currently assesses the maximum allowable excise of \$0.0625 per \$1,000 assessed value to fund the Conservation Futures program and provides cities a venue to access these funds through a competitive, local grant process. The City should continue to submit grant applications for support in financing the acquisition of additional natural areas along creeks to facilitate the protection of these lands and enable improved linkages to expand the trail network.

## Grants

Several state and federal grant programs are available on a competitive basis, including WWRP, LWCF, ALEA, USDA, MAP-21. Pursuing grants is not a panacea for park system funding, since grants are both competitive and often require a significant percentage of local funds to match the request to the granting agency, which depending on the grant program can be as much as 50% of the total project budget. Covington should continue to leverage its local resources to the greatest extent by pursuing grants independently and in cooperation with other local partners.

## Other Implementation Tools

Appendix B identifies other implementation tools, such as grants and acquisition tactics, that the City could utilize to further the implementation of the projects noted in the CFP.

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# APPENDIX A: System Inventory Data

**City-Owned Public Parks and Open Space**

Type	Size (Acres)	Extent of Dev (%)	Acres Dev	Trails	Condition (1-10)	Grass Sport Field	Condition (1-10)	Open Lawn Area	Basketball Court (half-court)	Condition (1-10)	Picnic Shelter	Condition (1-10)	Play Equipment	Condition (1-10)	Pool	Condition (1-10)	Restrooms	Condition (1-10)	Restrooms (Temporary)	Condition (1-10)	Parking (spaces)	Condition (1-10)
Jenkins Creek Park	Community	20.30	25%	5.08	1	1	0	1	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Covington Community Park	Community	29.90	30%	8.97	1	10	1	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	10	39	10
<b>Sub Total</b>				<b>50.20</b>	<b>14.05</b>																	

Paved Trails, signs, trash cans, signs, bridge, boardwalk

**FEATURES**

**Neighborhood Parks**

Evergreen Park	Neighborhood	1.70	0%	0.00	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Crystal View Park	Neighborhood	1.90	32%	0.61	0	0	0	1	7	1	8	0	1	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Friendship Park	Neighborhood	0.60	100%	0.60	1	10	0	1	7	1	8	1	7	1	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Sub Total</b>				<b>4.20</b>	<b>1.21</b>																	

Half Basketball, Picnic, Play, Irrigation, trash cans, signs, landscaping, walkway, lighting  
Half Basketball, Picnic shelter and tables, play, signs, walkway

**Special Facilities**

Gerry Crick Skate Park	Special Facility	0.30	100%	0.30	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	4	0	0
Aquatic Center	Special Facility	1.45	100%	1.45	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	25	0
<b>Sub Total</b>				<b>1.75</b>	<b>1.75</b>																	

**Greenspace/Natural Area**

Covington Legacy Greenspace	Greenspace	10.15	0%	0
Cedar Valley Park	Greenspace	6.75	0%	0
Emerald Downs Open Space	Greenspace	4.00	0%	0
Foxwood Open Space	Greenspace	3.40	0%	0
Meridian Trace Open Space	Greenspace	1.20	0%	0
South Jenkins Creek Open Space	Greenspace	9.70	0%	0
Cedar Creek Park	Natural Area	31.50	0%	0
Jenkins Creek Trail Park	Natural Area	3.40	5%	1
Rainier Vista Open Space	Natural Area	21.50	0%	1
South Wingfield Open Space	Natural Area	5.50	0%	1
North Wingfield Open Space	Greenspace	3.60	0%	0
S. Soos Creek	Greenspace	3.30	0%	0
Jenkins Creek Greenspace	Greenspace	1.10	0%	0
N. Jenkins Creek Park Greenspace	Greenspace	1.88	0%	0
Morgans Creek	Greenspace	1.70	0%	0
Foss Open Space	Greenspace	1.10	0%	0
Mattson Open Space	Greenspace	0.60	0%	0
West Gateway	Natural Area	0.10	0%	0

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possible restriction that it cannot have any recreation improvements

**Sub Total 110.48**  
**TOTAL 203.90**

**Public Trails**

Type	(Miles)	
Covington Community Park	Trail	1.50
Evergreen Park	Trail	0.07
Friendship Park	Trail	0.06
Jenkins Creek Park	Trail	0.95
Jenkins Creek Trail	Trail	0.22
Little Soos Creek (King County)	Trail	1.40
Rainier Vista Park	Trail	0.78
Wingfield (Coho) Open Space	Trail	0.26
<b>Total</b>	<b>5.24</b>	

Paved	Condition (1-10)	Soft surface	Condition (1-10)
1	10	1	10
0	0	1	2
1	10	0	
1	1	1	2
1	8	0	
1	9	1	8
1	8	0	
1	7	0	





# APPENDIX B: Implementation Tools

## Local Funding Options

The City of Covington possesses a range of local funding tools that could be accessed for the benefit of growing, developing and maintaining its parks and recreation program. The sources listed below represent likely potential sources, but some also may be dedicated for numerous other local purposes which limit applicability and usage. Therefore, discussions with city leadership are critical to assess the political landscape to modify or expand the use of existing city revenue sources in favor of park and recreation programs.

### Councilmanic Bonds

Councilmanic bonds may be sold by cities without public vote. The bonds, both principal and interest, are retired with payments from existing city revenue or new general tax revenue, such as additional sales tax or real estate excise tax. The state constitution has set a maximum debt limit for councilmanic bonds of 1½% of the value of taxable property in the city.

### General Obligation Bond

<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=84.52.056>

For the purposes of funding capital projects, such as land acquisitions or facility construction, cities and counties have the authority to borrow money by selling bonds. Voter-approved general obligation bonds may be sold only after receiving a 60 percent majority vote at a general or special election. If approved, an excess property tax is levied each year for the life of the bond to pay both principal and interest. The state constitution (Article VIII, Section 6) limits total debt to 5% of the total assessed value of property in the jurisdiction.

### Excess Levy

<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=84.52.052>

Washington law allows cities and counties, along with other specified junior taxing districts, to levy property taxes in excess of limitations imposed by statute when authorized by the voters. Levy approval requires 60 percent majority vote at a general or special election.

### Regular Property Tax - Lid Lift

<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=84.55.050>

Cities are authorized to impose ad valorem taxes upon real and personal property. A city's maximum levy rate for general purposes is \$3.375 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation. Limitations on annual increases in tax collections, coupled with changes in property value, causes levy rates to rise or fall; however, in no case

may they rise above statutory limits. Once the rate is established each year, it may not be raised without the approval of a majority of the voters. Receiving voter approval is known as a lid lift. A lid lift may be permanent, or may be for a specific purpose and time period.

## Sales Tax

<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=82.14>

Washington law authorizes the governing bodies of cities and counties to impose sales and use taxes at a rate set by the statute to help “carry out essential county and municipal purposes.” The authority is divided into two parts. Cities may impose by resolution or ordinance a sales and use tax at a rate of ½% on any taxable event within their jurisdictions. Cities may also impose an additional sales tax at a rate up to ½% on any taxable event within the city. In this case, the statute provides an electoral process for repealing the tax or altering the rate.

## Impact Fees

<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=82.02.050>

Impact fees are charges placed on new development as a condition of development approval to help pay for various public facilities the need for which is directly created by that new growth and development. Counties, cities, and towns may impose impact fees on residential and commercial “development activity” to help pay for certain public facility improvements, including parks, open space and recreation facilities. Funds received must be spent on approved capital projects within 10 years of collection. Covington recently completed an impact fee rate methodology and fees are slated to be implemented in 2016.

## Real Estate Excise Tax

<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=82.46.010>

Washington law authorizes the governing bodies of counties and cities to impose excise taxes on the sale of real property within limits set by the statute. This authority may be divided into three parts relevant to park systems.

A city or county may impose a real estate excise tax (REET 1) on the sale of all real property in the city or unincorporated parts of the county, respectively, at a rate not to exceed ¼% of the selling price, to fund “local capital improvements,” including parks, playgrounds, swimming pools, water systems, bridges, sewers, etc. Also, the funds must be used “primarily for financing capital projects specified in a capital facilities plan element of a comprehensive plan . . . “

A city or county may impose a real estate excise tax on the sale of all real property in the city or unincorporated parts of the county, respectively, at a rate not to exceed ½%, in lieu of a ½% sales tax option authorized under state law. These funds are not restricted to capital projects. The statute provides for a repeal mechanism.

A city or county – in counties that are required to prepare comprehensive plans under the new Growth Management Act – are authorized to impose an additional real estate excise tax (REET 2) on all real property sales in the city or unincorporated parts of the county, respectively, at a rate not to exceed ¼%. These funds must be used “solely for financing capital projects specified in a capital facilities plan element of a comprehensive plan.”

The City share of the real estate excise tax is two one-quarter percent amounts (0.5%) that are restricted for capital projects per RCW 82.46. Since REET collections are directly tied to the frequency and valuation of real estate transactions, this funding source is widely variable with local real estate conditions. REET 1 funds capital projects for parks.

## Real Estate Excise Tax - Local Conservation Areas (King County)

<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=82.46.070>

Boards of County Commissioners may impose, with majority voter approval, an excise tax on each sale of real property in the county at rate not to exceed 1% of the selling price for the purpose of acquiring and maintaining conservation areas. The authorizing legislation defines conservation areas as “land and water that has environmental, agricultural, aesthetic, cultural, scientific, historic, scenic, or low-intensity recreational value for existing and future generations...” These areas include “open spaces, wetlands, marshes, aquifer recharge areas, shoreline areas, natural areas, and other lands and waters that are important to preserve flora and fauna.” King County does not currently assess a Conservation REET.

## Conservation Futures Tax (King County)

<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=84.34>

The Conservation Futures Tax (CFT) is provided for in Chapter 84.34 of the Revised Code of Washington. King County imposes a Conservation Futures levy at a rate of \$0.0625 per \$1,000 assessed value for the purpose of acquiring open space lands, including green spaces, greenbelts, wildlife habitat and trail rights-of-way proposed for preservation for public use by either the county or the cities within the county. Funds are allocated annually, and cities within the county, citizen groups and citizens may apply for funds through the county’s process. The CFT program provides grants to cities to support open space priorities in local plans and requires a 100% match from other sources.

# Federal & State Grants and Conservation Programs

## Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program

### National Park Service

The Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program, also known as the Rivers & Trails Program or RTCA, is a technical assistance resource for communities administered by the National Park Service and federal government agencies so they can conserve rivers, preserve open space and develop trails and greenways. The RTCA program implements the natural resource conservation and outdoor recreation mission of NPS in communities across America. <http://www.nps.gov/ncrc/programs/rtca/>.

## Community Development Block Grants

### U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

These funds are intended to develop viable urban communities by providing decent housing and a suitable living environment, and by expanding economic opportunities, principally for low and moderate income

persons. King County administers CDBG funds on behalf of the King County CDBG Consortium. The Consortium is established under interlocal cooperation agreements between the County and 34 cities and towns and has a Joint Recommendations Committee to advise King County on CDBG funding and program guidelines decisions.

## North American Wetlands Conservation Act Grants Program

### US Fish & Wildlife Service

The North American Wetlands Conservation Act of 1989 provides matching grants to organizations and individuals who have developed partnerships to carry out wetland conservation projects in the United States, Canada, and Mexico for the benefit of wetlands-associated migratory birds and other wildlife. Two competitive grants programs exist (Standard and a Small Grants Program) and require that grant requests be matched by partner contributions at no less than a 1-to-1 ratio. Funds from U.S. Federal sources may contribute toward a project, but are not eligible as match. <http://www.fws.gov/birdhabitat/Grants/NAWCA/index.shtm>.

The Standard Grants Program supports projects in Canada, the United States, and Mexico that involve long-term protection, restoration, and/or enhancement of wetlands and associated uplands habitats.

The Small Grants Program operates only in the United States; it supports the same type of projects and adheres to the same selection criteria and administrative guidelines as the U.S. Standard Grants Program. However, project activities are usually smaller in scope and involve fewer project dollars. Grant requests may not exceed \$75,000, and funding priority is given to grantees or partners new to the Act's Grants Program.

## Recreation and Conservation Office Grant Programs

### Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office

[www.rco.wa.gov](http://www.rco.wa.gov)

The Recreation and Conservation Office was created in 1964 as part of the Marine Recreation Land Act. The RCO grants money to state and local agencies, generally on a matching basis, to acquire, develop, and enhance wildlife habitat and outdoor recreation properties. Some money is also distributed for planning grants. RCO grant programs utilize funds from various sources. Historically, these have included the Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund, state bonds, Initiative 215 monies (derived from unreclaimed marine fuel taxes), off-road vehicle funds, Youth Athletic Facilities Account and the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program.

### Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account (ALEA)

This program, managed through the RCO, provides matching grants to state and local agencies to protect and enhance salmon habitat and to provide public access and recreation opportunities on aquatic lands. In 1998, DNR refocused the ALEA program to emphasize salmon habitat preservation and enhancement. However, the program is still open to traditional water access proposals. Any project must be located on navigable portions of waterways. ALEA funds are derived from the leasing of state-owned aquatic lands and from the sale of harvest rights for shellfish and other aquatic resources.

## **Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program (WWRP)**

The RCO is a state office that allocates funds to local and state agencies for the acquisition and development of wildlife habitat and outdoor recreation properties. Funding sources managed by the RCO include the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program. The WWRP is divided into Habitat Conservation and Outdoor Recreation Accounts; these are further divided into several project categories. Cities, counties and other local sponsors may apply for funding in urban wildlife habitat, local parks, trails and water access categories. Funds for local agencies are awarded on a matching basis. Grant applications are evaluated once each year, and the State Legislature must authorize funding for the WWRP project lists.

## **Land and Water Conservation Fund**

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) provides grants to buy land and develop public outdoor facilities, including parks, trails and wildlife lands. Grant recipients must provide at least 50% matching funds in either cash or in-kind contributions. Grant program revenue is from a portion of Federal revenue derived from sale or lease of off-shore oil and gas resources.

## **National Recreational Trails Program**

The National Recreational Trails Program (NRTP) provides funds to maintain trails and facilities that provide a backcountry experience for a range of activities including hiking, mountain biking, horseback riding, motorcycling, and snowmobiling. Eligible projects include the maintenance and re-routing of recreational trails, development of trail-side and trail-head facilities, and operation of environmental education and trail safety programs. A local match of 20% is required. This program is funded through Federal gasoline taxes attributed to recreational non-highway uses.

## **Youth Athletic Facilities (YAF) Program**

The YAF provides grants to develop, equip, maintain, and improve youth and community athletic facilities. Cities, counties, and qualified non-profit organizations may apply for funding, and grant recipients must provide at least 50% matching funds in either cash or in-kind contributions.

## **Puget Sound Acquisition and Restoration Fund**

Grants are awarded by the Salmon Recovery Funding Board for acquisition or restoration of lands directly correlating to salmon habitat protection or recovery. Projects must demonstrate a direct benefit to fish habitat. There is no match requirement for design-only projects; acquisition and restoration projects require a 15% match. The funding source includes the sale of state general obligation bonds, the federal Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund and the state Puget Sound Acquisition and Restoration Fund.

## **STP/CMAQ Regional Competition - Puget Sound Regional Council**

<http://psrc.org/transportation/tip/selection/>

Surface Transportation Program (STP) funds are considered the most “flexible” funding source provided through the federal Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient, Transportation Equity Act (SAFETEA-LU). Many types of projects are eligible, including transit, carpool/vanpool, bicycle/pedestrian, safety, traffic monitoring/management, and planning projects, along with the more traditional road and bridge projects. The purpose of the Congestion Mitigation Air Quality (CMAQ) program is to fund transportation projects

or programs that will contribute to attainment or maintenance of the national ambient air quality standards for ozone, carbon monoxide and particulate matter. The two goals of improving air quality and relieving congestion were strengthened under SAFETEA-LU by a new provision establishing priority consideration for cost-effective emission reduction and congestion mitigation activities when using CMAQ funding. The King County Growth Management Planning Council serves as the countywide board in the allocation of some federal transportation grant funds to projects within King County, through the Puget Sound Regional Council.

## King County Grant Exchange

<http://dnr.metrokc.gov/wlr/pi/grants.htm>

The Grant Exchange is a clearinghouse of grant and technical assistance programs offered by the King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks with the goals of protecting and enhancing the environment, increasing community stewardship, and providing expertise and consultation to projects. Grants and technical support are an important way in which King County increases opportunities for community stewardship of natural resources. These funds are leveraged by developing and strengthening partnerships with community organizations and local governments. On average, every dollar invested through grants is matched by three dollars in cash and in-kind contributions.

## Wild Places in City Spaces

<http://dnr.metrokc.gov/wlr/pi/grant-exchange/wildplaces.htm>

Wild Places in City Spaces provides grants up to \$10,000 to volunteer organizations, community groups and government agencies for projects reforesting urban areas and restoring habitat within the urban growth area of King County. Funds are available under the Urban Reforestation and Habitat Restoration Grants Program. Grants support projects to reforest urban areas, remove invasive non-native plant species or provide wildlife habitats.

## Natural Resource Stewardship Network

<http://dnr.metrokc.gov/wlr/pi/grant-exchange/NRSN.htm>

The Natural Resource Stewardship Network assists urban forestry and watershed stewardship projects and provides grants and technical assistance to projects that involve communities and youth in improving neighborhood green spaces and forests. Grants of up to \$20,000 are available for projects within the urban growth area of King County that enhance, protect and manage urban forest, soil and water resources and will reimburse up to 50% of labor and materials costs. Inner-city and low income communities receive priority for support. Funds are provided by the King County Forestry Program and the King Conservation District.

## WaterWorks Grants

<http://dnr.metrokc.gov/wlr/pi/grant-exchange/waterworks.htm>

Individual grants up to \$50,000 are available for community projects that protect or improve watersheds, streams, rivers, lakes, wetlands and tidewater. Projects must have a demonstrable positive impact on the waters of King County and provide opportunities for stewardship. A minimum of 10 percent cash match is required for awards more than \$2,500.

## King County Youth Sports Facilities Grant (YSFG)

The Youth Sports Facilities Grant Program is intended to facilitate new athletic opportunities for youth in King County by providing matching grant funds to rehabilitate or develop sports fields and facilities. The maximum award is \$75,000 and projects should be located on public land or have public access for the proposed youth sports use.

## Other Methods & Funding Sources

### Metropolitan Park District

<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=35.61>

Metropolitan park districts may be formed for the purposes of management, control, improvement, maintenance and acquisition of parks, parkways and boulevards. In addition to acquiring and managing their own lands, metropolitan districts may accept and manage park and recreation lands and equipment turned over by any city within the district or by the county. Formation of a metropolitan park district may be initiated in cities of five thousand population or more by city council ordinance, or by petition, and requires majority approval by voters for creation.

### Park and Recreation District

<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=36.69>

Park and recreation districts may be formed for the purposes of providing leisure-time activities and recreation facilities and must be initiated by petition of at least 15% percent of the registered voters within the proposed district. Upon completion of the petition process and review by county commissioners, a proposition for district formation and election of five district commissioners is submitted to the voters of the proposed district at the next general election. Once formed, park and recreation districts retain the authority to propose a regular property tax levy, annual excess property tax levies and general obligation bonds. All three require 60% percent voter approval and 40% percent voter turnout. With voter approval, the district may levy a regular property tax not to exceed sixty cents per thousand dollars of assessed value for up to six consecutive years.

### Business Sponsorships/Donations

Business sponsorships for programs may be available throughout the year. In-kind contributions are often received, including food, door prizes and equipment/material.

### Interagency Agreements

State law provides for interagency cooperative efforts between units of government. Joint acquisition, development and/or use of park and open space facilities may be provided between Parks, Public Works and utility providers.

## Private Grants, Donations & Gifts

Many trusts and private foundations provide funding for park, recreation and open space projects. Grants from these sources are typically allocated through a competitive application process and vary dramatically in size based on the financial resources and funding criteria of the organization. Philanthropic giving is another source of project funding. Efforts in this area may involve cash gifts and include donations through other mechanisms such as wills or insurance policies. Community fundraising efforts can also support park, recreation or open space facilities and projects.

## Acquisition Tools & Methods

### Direct Purchase Methods

#### Market Value Purchase

Through a written purchase and sale agreement, the city purchases land at the present market value based on an independent appraisal. Timing, payment of real estate taxes and other contingencies are negotiable.

#### Partial Value Purchase (or Bargain Sale)

In a bargain sale, the landowner agrees to sell for less than the property's fair market value. A landowner's decision to proceed with a bargain sale is unique and personal; landowners with a strong sense of civic pride, long community history or concerns about capital gains are possible candidates for this approach. In addition to cash proceeds upon closing, the landowner may be entitled to a charitable income tax deduction based on the difference between the land's fair market value and its sale price.

### Life Estates & Bequests

In the event a landowner wishes to remain on the property for a long period of time or until death, several variations on a sale agreement exist. In a life estate agreement, the landowner may continue to live on the land by donating a remainder interest and retaining a "reserved life estate." Specifically, the landowner donates or sells the property to the city, but reserves the right for the seller or any other named person to continue to live on and use the property. When the owner or other specified person dies or releases his/her life interest, full title and control over the property will be transferred to the city. By donating a remainder interest, the landowner may be eligible for a tax deduction when the gift is made. In a bequest, the landowner designates in a will or trust document that the property is to be transferred to the city upon death. While a life estate offers the city some degree of title control during the life of the landowner, a bequest does not. Unless the intent to bequest is disclosed to and known by the city in advance, no guarantees exist with regard to the condition of the property upon transfer or to any liabilities that may exist.

### Gift Deed

When a landowner wishes to bequeath their property to a public or private entity upon their death, they can record a gift deed with the county assessors office to insure their stated desire to transfer their property to the targeted beneficiary as part of their estate. The recording of the gift deed usually involves the tacit agreement of the receiving party.

## **Option to Purchase Agreement**

This is a binding contract between a landowner and the city that would only apply according to the conditions of the option and limits the seller's power to revoke an offer. Once in place and signed, the Option Agreement may be triggered at a future, specified date or upon the completion of designated conditions. Option Agreements can be made for any time duration and can include all of the language pertinent to closing a property sale.

## **Right of First Refusal**

In this agreement, the landowner grants the city the first chance to purchase the property once the landowner wishes to sell. The agreement does not establish the sale price for the property, and the landowner is free to refuse to sell it for the price offered by the city. This is the weakest form of agreement between an owner and a prospective buyer.

## **Conservation and/or Access Easements**

Through a conservation easement, a landowner voluntarily agrees to sell or donate certain rights associated with his or her property (often the right to subdivide or develop), and a private organization or public agency agrees to hold the right to enforce the landowner's promise not to exercise those rights. In essence, the rights are forfeited and no longer exist. This is a legal agreement between the landowner and the city that permanently limits uses of the land in order to conserve a portion of the property for public use or protection. The landowner still owns the property, but the use of the land is restricted. Conservation easements may result in an income tax deduction and reduced property taxes and estate taxes. Typically, this approach is used to provide trail corridors where only a small portion of the land is needed or for the strategic protection of natural resources and habitat. Through a written purchase and sale agreement, the city purchases land at the present market value based on an independent appraisal. Timing, payment of real estate taxes and other contingencies are negotiable.

## **Park or Open Space Dedication Requirements**

Local governments have the option to require developers to dedicate land for parks under the State Subdivision Law (Ch. 58.17 RCW) and the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) (Ch. 43.21C RCW). Under the subdivision law developers can be required to provide the parks/recreation improvements or pay a fee in lieu of the dedicated land and its improvements. Under the SEPA requirements, land dedication may occur as part of mitigation for a proposed development's impact.

## **Landowner Incentive Measures**

### **Density Bonuses**

Density bonuses are a planning tool used to encourage a variety of public land use objectives, usually in urban areas. They offer the incentive of being able to develop at densities beyond current regulations in one area, in return for concessions in another. Density bonuses are applied to a single parcel or development. An example is allowing developers of multi-family units to build at higher densities if they provide a certain number of low-income units or public open space. For density bonuses to work, market forces must support densities at a higher level than current regulations.

## Transfer of Development Rights

The transfer of development rights (TDR) is an incentive-based planning tool that allows land owners to trade the right to develop property to its fullest extent in one area for the right to develop beyond existing regulations in another area. Local governments may establish the specific areas in which development may be limited or restricted and the areas in which development beyond regulation may be allowed. Usually, but not always, the “sending” and “receiving” property are under common ownership. Some programs allow for different ownership, which, in effect, establishes a market for development rights to be bought and sold.

## IRC 1031 Exchange

If the landowner owns business or investment property, an IRC Section 1031 Exchange can facilitate the exchange of like-kind property solely for business or investment purposes. No capital gain or loss is recognized under Internal Revenue Code Section 1031 (see [www.irc.gov](http://www.irc.gov) for more details). This option may be a useful tool in negotiations with an owner of investment property, especially if the tax savings offset to the owner can translate to a sale price discount for the City.

## Current (Open Space) Use Taxation Programs

Property owners whose current lands are in open space, agricultural, and/or timber uses may have that land valued at their current use rather than their “highest and best” use assessment. This differential assessed value, allowed under the Washington Open Space Taxation Act (Ch.84.34 RCW) helps to preserve private properties as open space, farm or timber lands. If land is converted to other non-open space uses, the land owner is required to pay the difference between the current use annual taxes and highest/best taxes for the previous seven years. When properties are sold to a local government or conservation organization for land conservation/preservation purposes, the required payment of seven years worth of differential tax rates is waived. The amount of this tax liability can be part of the negotiated land acquisition from private to public or quasi-public conservation purposes. King County has four current use taxation programs that offer this property tax reduction as an incentive to landowners to voluntarily preserve open space, farmland or forestland on their property. More information is available at

[http://dor.wa.gov/Docs/Pubs/Prop\\_Tax/OpenSpace.pdf](http://dor.wa.gov/Docs/Pubs/Prop_Tax/OpenSpace.pdf) or <http://www.kingcounty.gov/environment/stewardship/sustainable-building/resource-protection-incentives.aspx>

## Other Land Protection Options

### Land Trusts & Conservancies

Land trusts are private non-profit organizations that acquire and protect special open spaces and are traditionally not associated with any government agency. Forterra (formerly called the Cascade Land Conservancy) is the regional land trust serving the Covington area, and their efforts have led to the conservation of more than 234,000 acres of forests, farms, shorelines, parks and natural areas in the region ([www.forterra.org](http://www.forterra.org)). Other national organizations with local representation include the Nature Conservancy, Trust for Public Land and the Wetlands Conservancy.

## Regulatory Measures

A variety of regulatory measures are available to local agencies and jurisdictions. Available programs and regulations include: Critical Areas Ordinance, Covington; State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA); Shorelines Management Program; and Hydraulic Code, Washington State Department of Fisheries and Department of Wildlife.

## Public/Private Utility Corridors

Utility corridors can be managed to maximize protection or enhancement of open space lands. Utilities maintain corridors for provision of services such as electricity, gas, oil, and rail travel. Some utility companies have cooperated with local governments for development of public programs such as parks and trails within utility corridors. A Seattle City Light powerline corridor travels north-south through the eastern portion of Covington providing linear opportunities for parks, trails and connections to neighborhoods.

# APPENDIX C: Mail Survey Summary

Note: Cross tabulations and detailed numerical data regarding survey responses can be provided by the Covington Parks & Recreation Department.

# **Findings Report for a Statistically Valid Community Interest and Opinion Survey**



Submitted to  
**The City of Covington, WA**

By  
**ETC Institute**



725 W. Frontier Circle

Olathe, KS 66061

(913) 829-1215

July 2015

# Section 1

## *Executive Summary*

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# Community Interest and Opinion Survey

## Executive Summary Report

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### Overview and Methodology

ETC Institute conducted a Community Interest and Opinion Survey for the City of Covington during the summer of 2015 to establish priorities for the future improvement of recreation facilities and programs and parks within the community. The survey was mailed to a random sample of households in the City of Covington.

The goal was to complete a total of 300 surveys. A total of 346 households completed the survey. The results for the sample of 346 households have a 95% level of confidence with a precision rate of at least +/- 5.2%.

### Major Findings

#### VISITATION OF PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITIES

- **Park and facilities usage:** Based on the percentage of respondents, 36% indicated they had used the *Covington Community Park Trails*. Other facilities used include: Covington Community Park Sports Field (25%), Jenkins Creek Trail (21%), and Jenkins Creek Park (19%).
- **Quality of Parks and Recreation Facilities:** Based on the percentage of respondents who have visited parks/facilities, 88% rated the *quality of Covington Community Park Trails* as either “excellent” or “good”. Other facilities with a similar quality rating: Covington Community Park Sports Field (86%) and Friendship Park (81%).

#### PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

- **Program and Activity Participation:** Thirty-two percent (32%) of respondents indicated they have participated in recreation, sports, aquatics, cultural or special events programs/activities offered by the City of Covington Parks and Recreation in the past 12 months. Of the respondents who indicated they participated in a program in the last 12 months, 56% participated in *Covington Days*. Other programs households have participated in include: swim lessons (36%), special events/festivals (29%), and youth soccer (28%).



- **Quality of Programs and Activities:** Based on the percentage of respondents who have participated in programs and activities, 63% rated the quality of programs and activities participated in as *good*. Other ratings of program and activity quality are: excellent (25%), fair (9%), and poor (3%).

## FACILITY NEEDS

- **Facility Types Households Have a Need For:** Based on the percentage of respondents, 69% or 3,985 households indicated that they have a need for *paved walking and biking trails*. Other facilities respondents have a need for include: small neighborhood parks (63% or 3,647 households), large community parks (60% or 3,513 households), soft surface trails (54% or 3,130 households), and indoor swimming pool (50% or 2,891 households).
- **Most Important Facilities:** Based on the percentage of respondents' top four most important facilities, 40% indicated that *paved walking and biking trails* are the most important facility. Other most important facilities include: large community parks (31%), small neighborhood parks (30%), soft surface trails (23%), indoor swimming pool (22%) and off-leash dog park (22%).

## PROGRAM NEEDS

- **Programs Households Have a Need For:** Based on the percentage of respondents, 43% or 2,507 households indicated that they have a need for *Community special events/festivals*. Other programs respondents have a need for include: swim lessons (39% or 2,286 households), adult fitness and wellness programs (35% or 2,018 households), water fitness programs (31% or 1,780 households), and youth sports programs (28% or 1,629 households).
- **Most Important Programs:** Based on the percentage of respondents top four most important programs, 28% indicated that *swim lessons* is the most important program. Other most important programs include: community special events/festivals (28%), adult fitness and wellness programs (23%), youth sports programs (19%), and outdoor education/nature programs (15%).



## TIMES FOR OFFERERERING PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES

### OVERALL

- Based on the percentage of respondent households, fifty-seven percent (57%) noted *weekday evenings before 8 pm* as a time they would be interested in Covington Parks and Recreation Department programs and activities. Other times households would be interested include: Saturday mornings (55%) and Saturday afternoons (55%).

### BY AGE GROUP

- **Ages 0 to 5 years:** Based on the percentage of respondent households with children age 0 to 5 years, eight percent (8%) would support programming on weekday mornings. Other times residents would support include: Saturday mornings (6%) and weekday afternoons (5%).
- **Ages 6 to 10 years:** Based on the percentage of respondent households with children age 6 to 10 years, eight percent (8%) would support programming on weekday evenings before 8 pm. Other times residents would support include: Saturday mornings (7%) and Saturday afternoons (6%).
- **Ages 11 to 18 years:** Based on the percentage of respondent households with children age 11 to 18 years, ten percent (10%) would support programming on weekday evenings before 8 pm. Other times residents would support include: Saturday afternoons (8%) and Saturday mornings (4%).
- **Ages 19 to 54 years:** Based on the percentage of respondent households with adults age 19 to 54 years, nineteen percent (19%) would support programming on weekday evenings before 8 pm. Other times residents would support include: Saturday afternoons (14%) and Saturday mornings (13%).
- **Ages 55 years and older:** Based on the percentage of respondent households with adults age 55 years and over, six percent (6%) would support programming on weekday mornings. Other times residents would support include: weekday afternoons before 3 pm (5%) and Saturday afternoons (4%).



## MULTI-USE FULL-SERVICE INDOOR FACILITY DEVELOPMENT

- **Level of Support for a Special Recreation District:** Based on the percentage of respondent households, 48% indicated they would be *very supportive* of creating a special recreation district composed of residents of the City of Covington and neighboring communities. Other levels of support are: somewhat supportive (27%), not supportive (14%), and not sure (11%).
- **Level of Support for Upgrade School District Sports Fields:** Thirty-four percent (34%) of respondents indicated they would be very supportive of the City of Covington partnering with the School District to upgrade sports fields with tax dollars. Other levels of support are: somewhat supportive (36%), not supportive (17%), and not sure (13%).

## PROGRAMMING SPACES

- **Program Spaces Residents Would Use:** Based on the percentage of respondent households, 46% indicated they would use a *walking and jogging track* if developed. Other programming spaces residents would use if developed include: leisure pool (44%), aerobics/fitness/dance class space (37%), indoor children's playground (34%), and space for meetings, parties and banquets (33%).
- **Program Spaces Residents Would Use the Most:** Based on the percentage of respondent households top four choices, 36% indicated they would use a *walking and jogging track* most often, if developed. Other programming spaces residents would use most often include: leisure pool (34%), indoor children's playground (28%), aerobics/fitness/dance class space (22%) and weight room/cardiovascular equipment area (22%).

## COSTS TO PROVIDE PROGRAMMING & TAX DOLLAR SUPPORT

- Respondent households were asked how they felt the costs to provide recreation programming. Seventy-nine percent (79%) of respondents indicated *adult programs* should be paid by "100% fees/0% tax" or "75% fees/25% tax". Fifty-three percent (53%) of respondents indicated *programs for disabled* should be paid by "0% fees/100% tax" or "25% fees/75% fees".
- **Facility Development Fees:** Based on the percentage of respondents, 52% indicated the facility development should be paid *mostly by user fees*. Other ways the facility should be paid for include: mostly from taxes and some user fees (27%), 100% from user fees (20%), and 100% from taxes (0.3%).
- **Tax Revenue Willingness:** Based on percentage of respondents, 26% indicated they would be willing to pay a *maximum of \$5-\$6 per month* in additional tax revenue for costs to develop and operate indoor programming spaces. Other maximum amounts of additional tax revenues include: \$3-\$4 per month (26%), nothing (20%), \$9 or more per month (15%), and \$7-\$8 per month (13%).



## AQUATIC FEATURES

- Usage and Reasons for Usage of the Aquatic Center:** Thirty-four percent (34%) of respondents indicated they have used the *Covington Aquatic Center* in the past 12 months. Of the respondents who indicated they had used the Covington Aquatic Center in the past 12 months, 67% used it for recreation. Other purposes for usage of the Aquatic Center include: swim lessons (45%), private parties (31%), and excise/lap swimming (21%).
- Frequency of Usage:** Based on the percentage of respondents who have used the Covington Aquatic Center in the past 12 months, 40% indicated they used it *1-5 times*. Other number of times used include: 11-25 times (23%), 6-10 times (16%), 26-50 times (12%), 51-100 times (6%), and 101 times or more (3%)
- Satisfaction with Experience:** Based on the percentage of respondents who have used the Covington Aquatic Center in the past 12 months, 51% indicated they were *very satisfied*. Other satisfaction levels are: somewhat satisfied (43%), not satisfied (3%), and not sure (3%).

## SATISFACTION WITH VALUE RECEIVED FROM PARKS AND REC. DEPT.

- Overall Value Received:** Thirty percent (30%) of households indicated they were *somewhat satisfied* with the overall value they receive from the City of Covington Parks and Recreation Department. Other levels of satisfaction include: neutral (40%), somewhat dissatisfied (14%), very satisfied (8%) and very dissatisfied (7%).

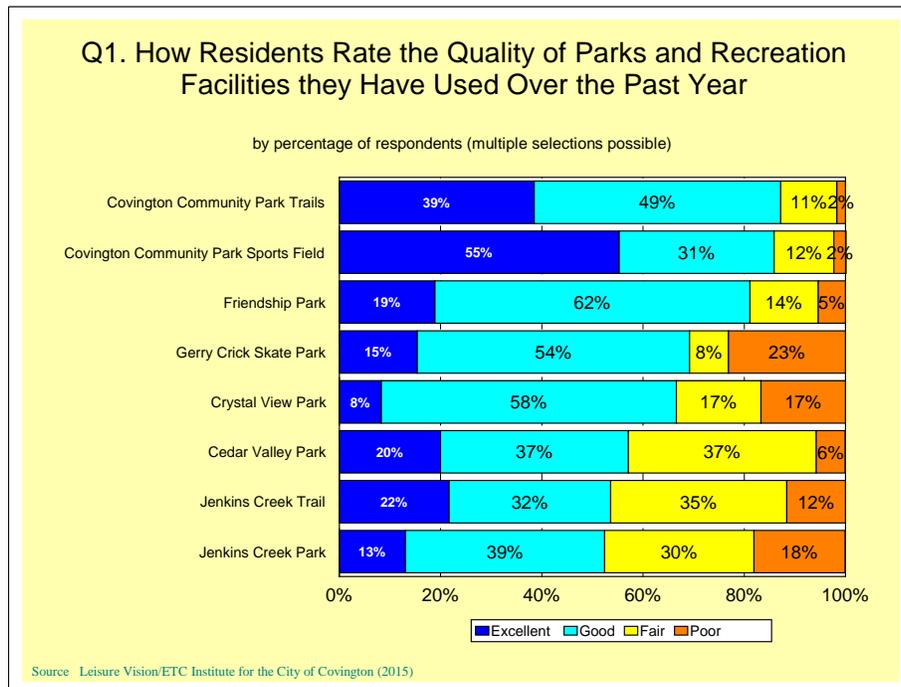
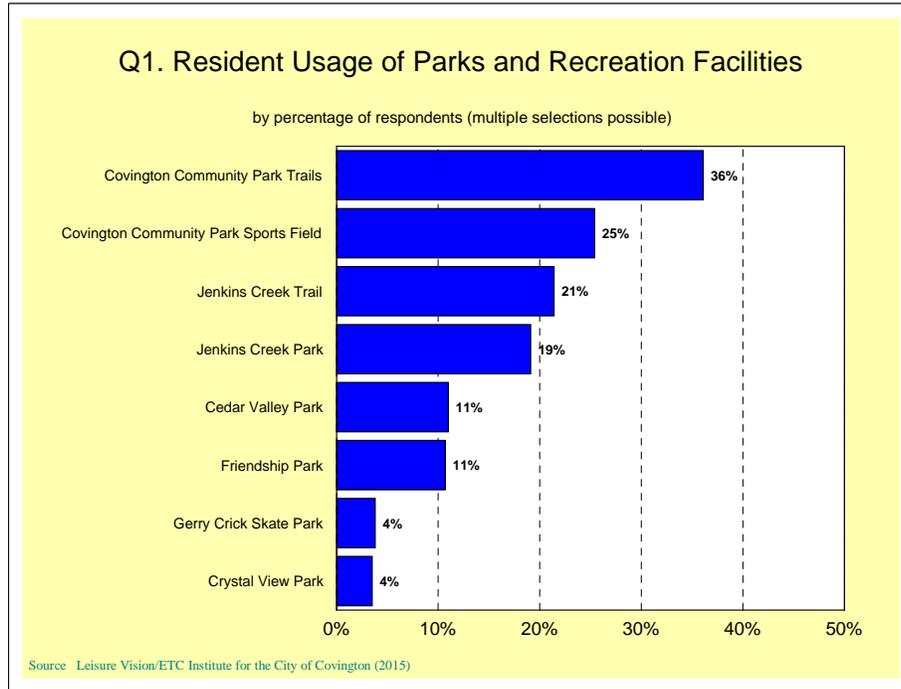
## OTHER

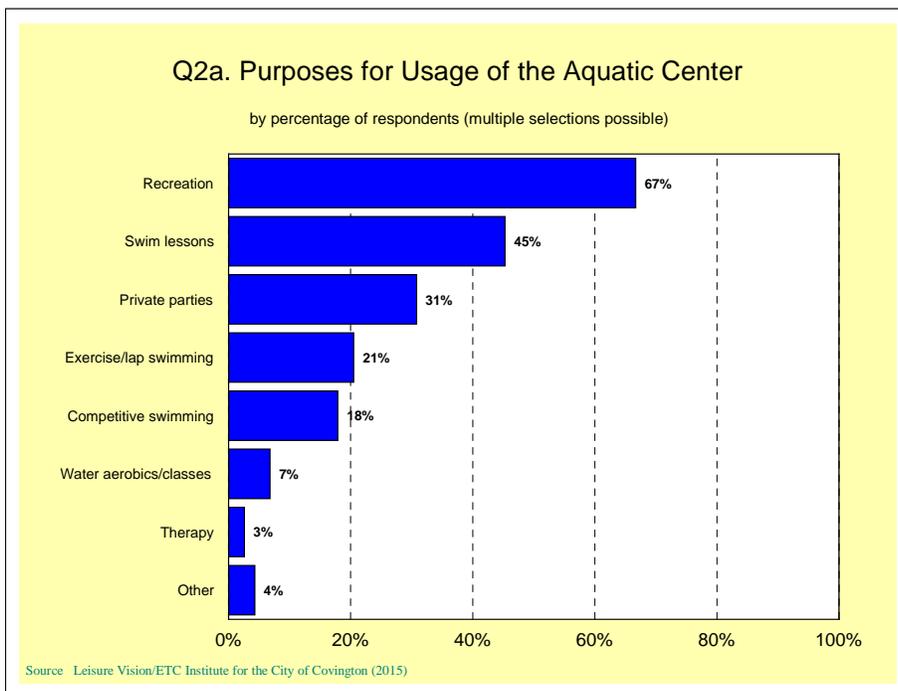
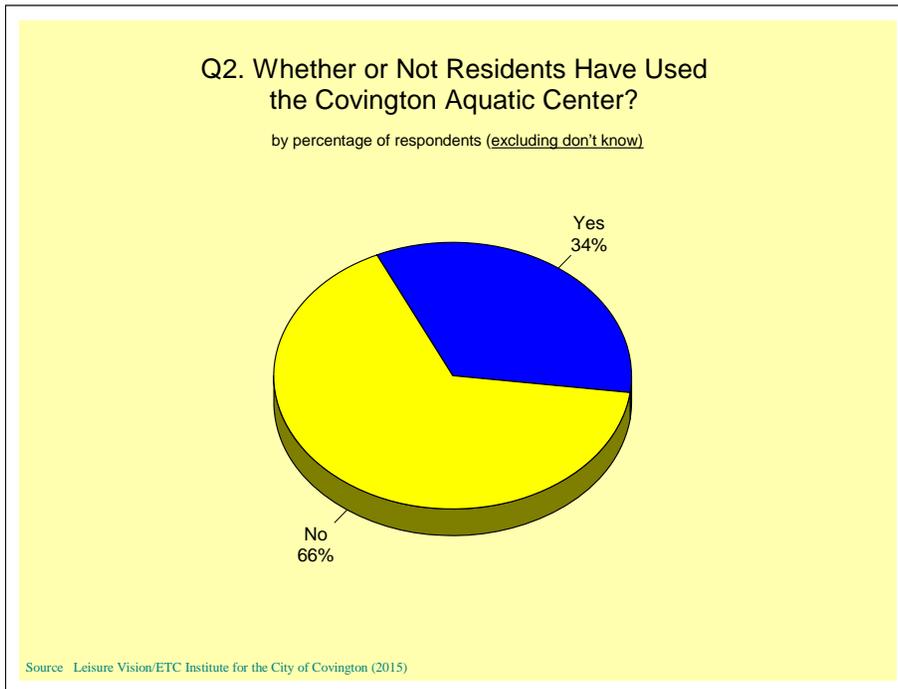
- Reasons Residents Do Not Use Parks:** Based on the percentage of respondents forty-eight percent (48%) indicated *not knowing what is offered* as the reason they do not use parks. Other reasons residents do not use parks include: too busy (32%), facility is not offered (29%) and program is not offered (26%).
- Organization/Facility Usage:** Based on the percentage of respondent households, forty-seven percent (47%) noted they used *King County parks and facilities* in the last 12 months. Other organizations/facilities used include: school district facilities (39%), private fitness clubs (32%), and City of Covington Parks and Recreation Department (31%).
- Ways Residents Have Learned About Programs and Activities:** Based on the percentage of respondents, 36% learned about the City of Covington's Programs and Activities through *community event signs* during the past 12 months. Other ways respondents learned about programs and activities include: from friends and neighbors (32%), newspaper (28%), City website (26%), and City's Recreation Guide (26%).

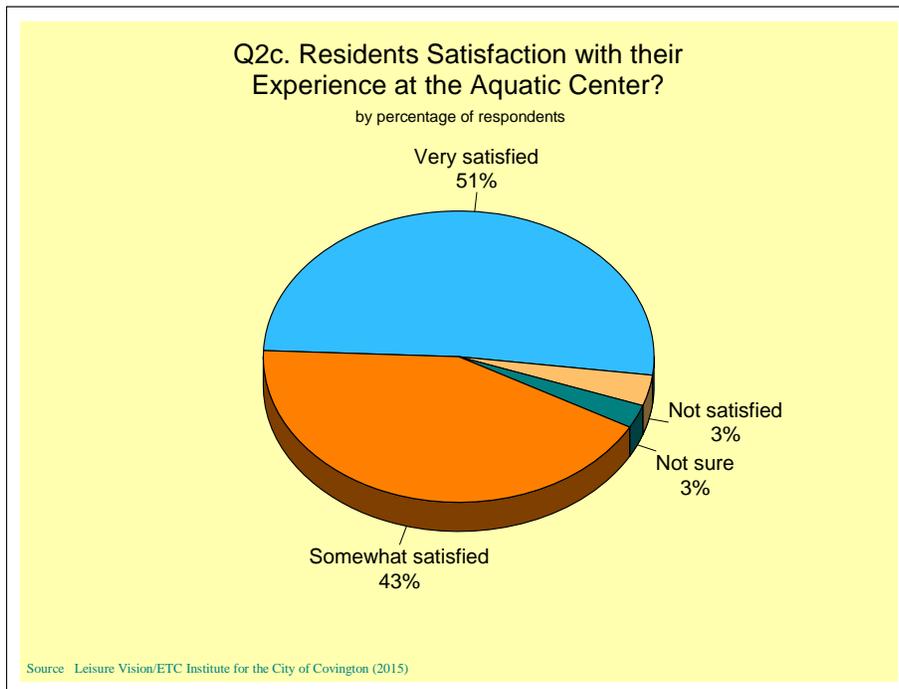
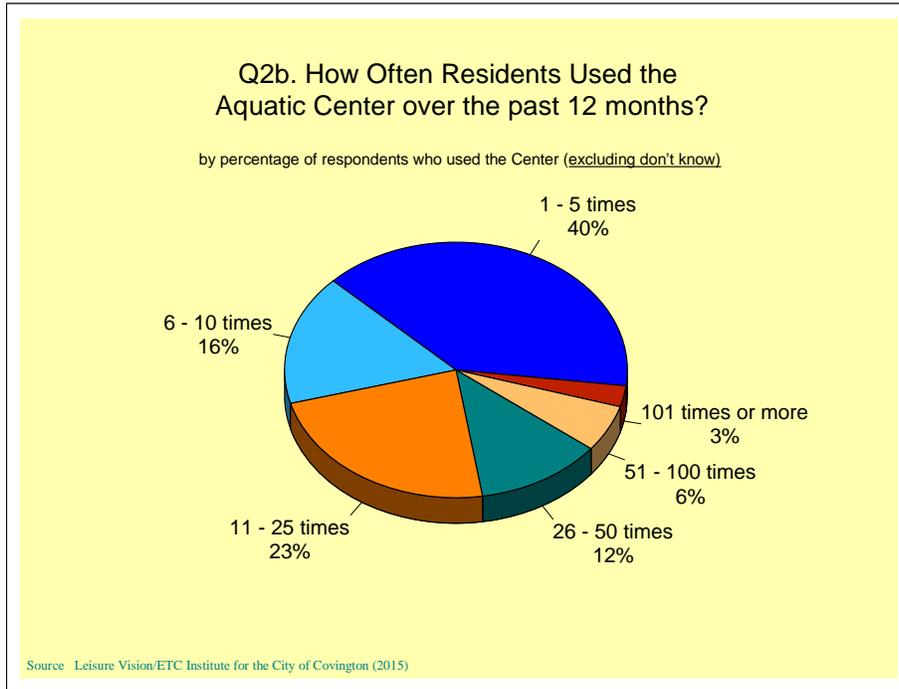
## Section 2

# *Charts and Graphs*

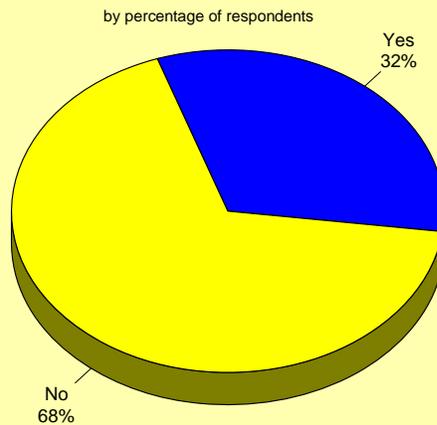
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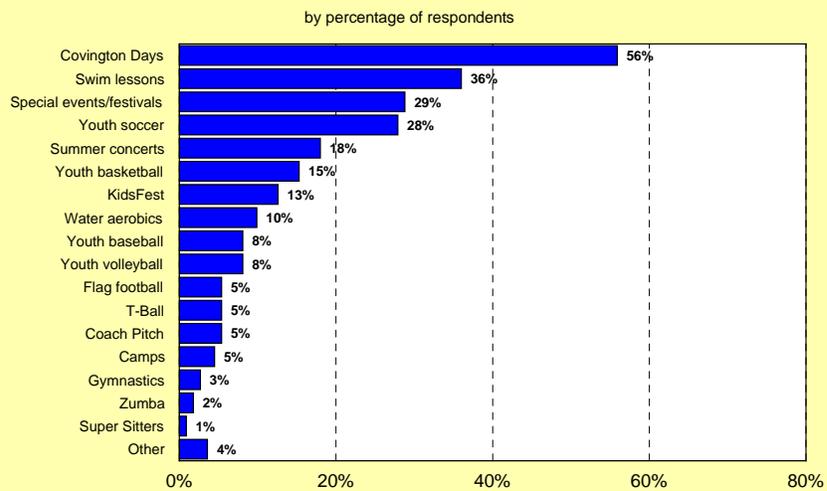


**Q3. Whether or Not Residents Participated in Recreation, Sports, Aquatics, Cultural, or Special Events Programs/Activities Offered by the City of Covington Parks and Recreation Department during the Past 12 Months?**



Source Leisure Vision/ETC Institute for the City of Covington (2015)

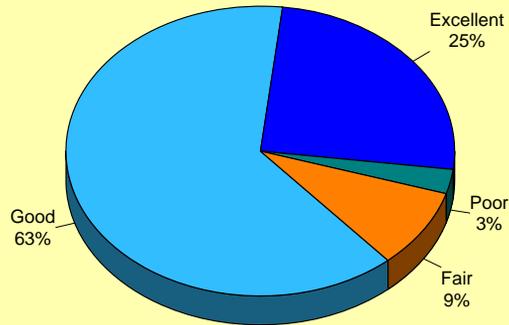
**Q4. City of Covington Parks and Recreation Programs and Activities Residents Participated in During the Past Year**



Source Leisure Vision/ETC Institute for the City of Covington (2015)

**Q5. How Residents Rate the Overall Quality of Programs and Activities They Have Participated In?**

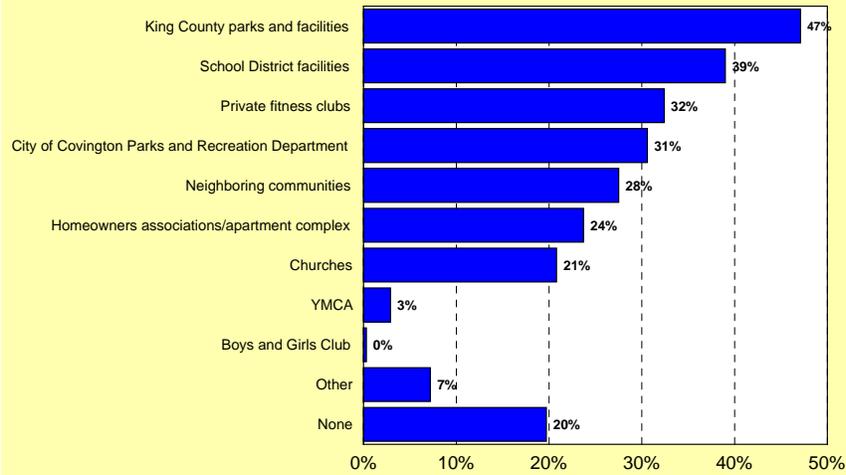
by percentage of respondents



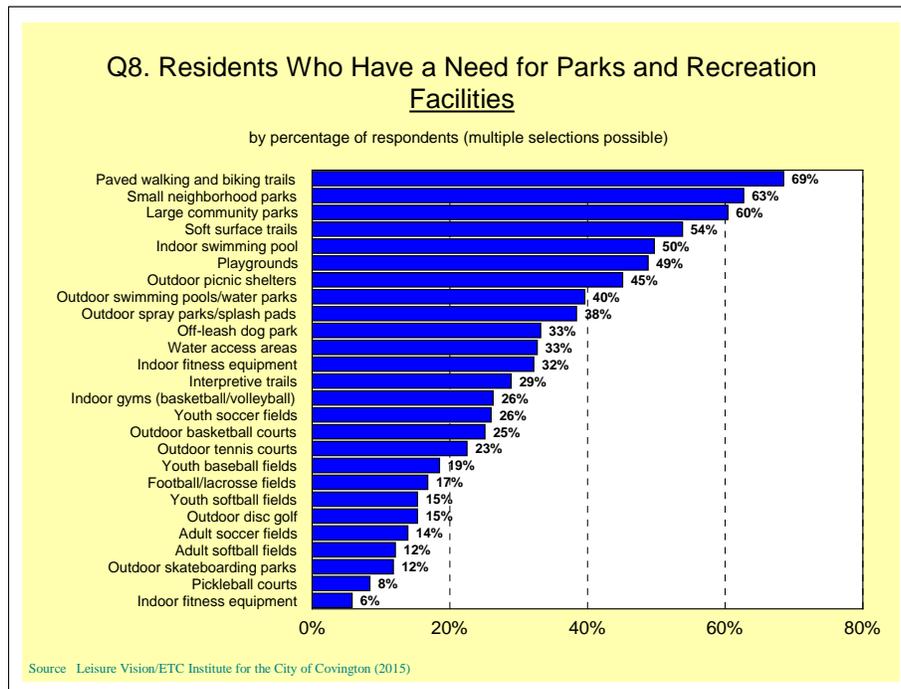
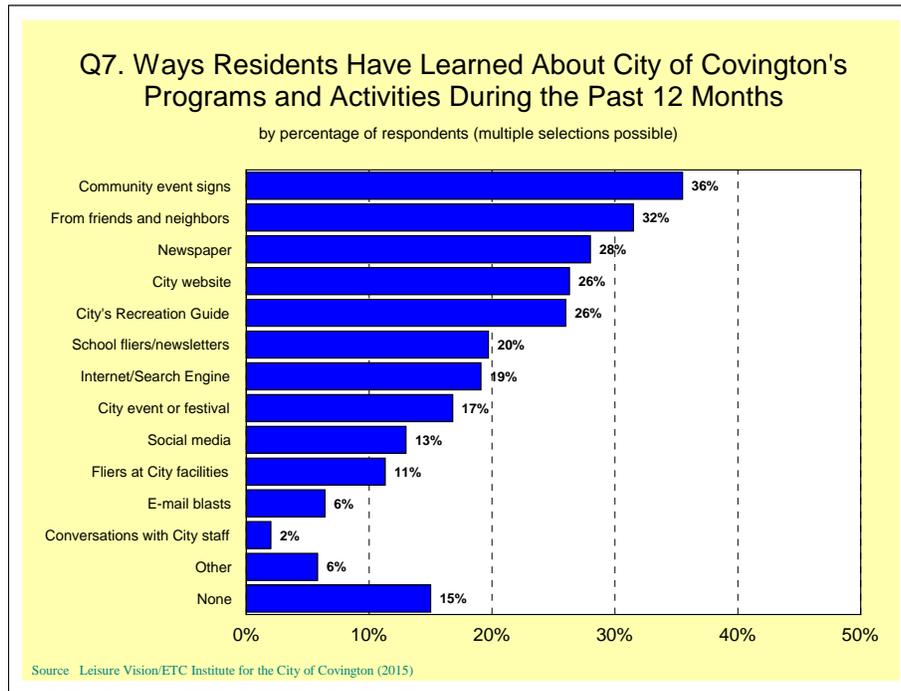
Source: Leisure Vision/ETC Institute for the City of Covington (2015)

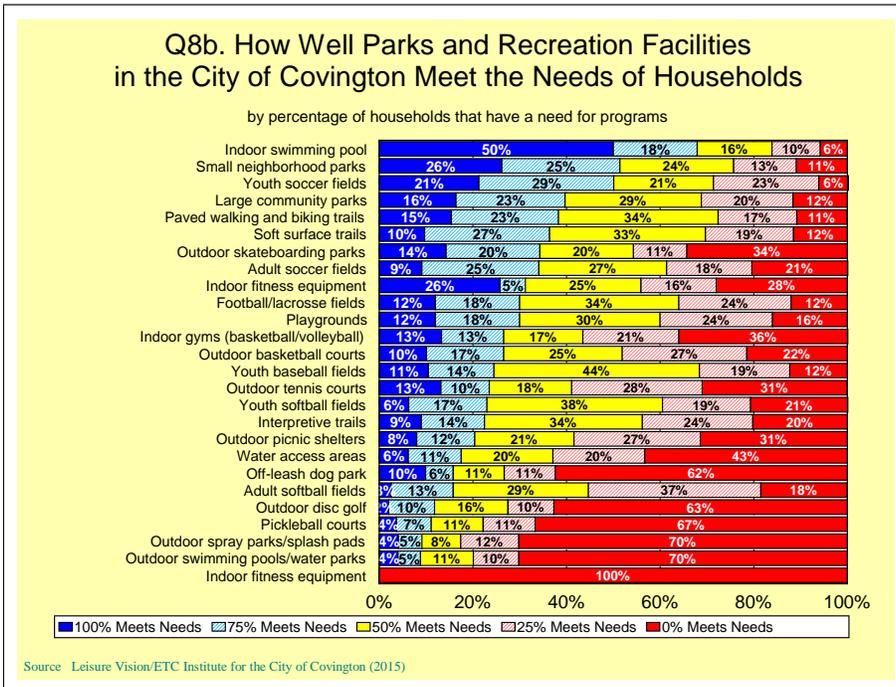
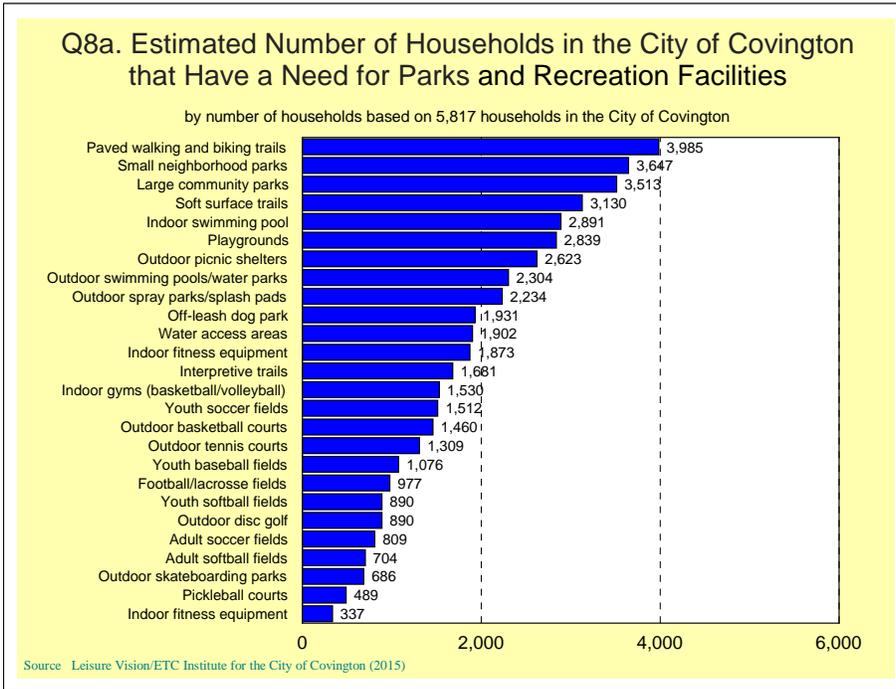
**Q6. Organizations/Facilities that Residents Have Used for Indoor and Outdoor Recreation and Sports Activities During the Last 12 Months**

by percentage of respondents (multiple selections possible)



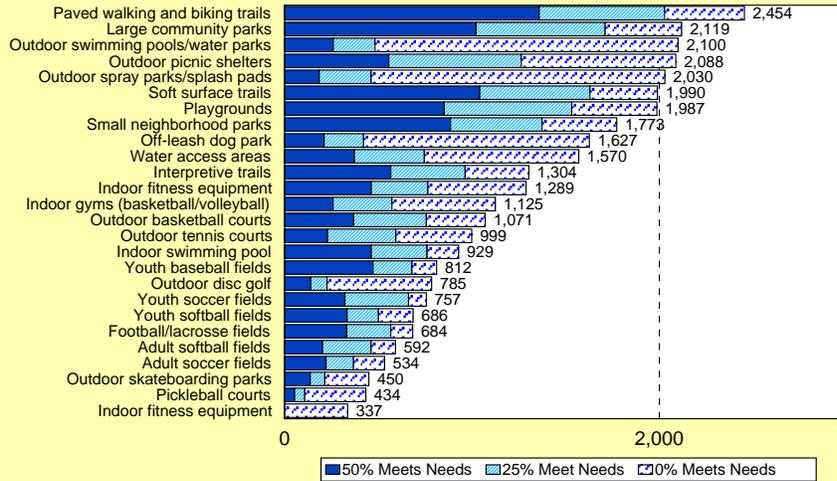
Source: Leisure Vision/ETC Institute for the City of Covington (2015)





### Q8c. Estimated Number of Households in the City of Covington Whose Needs for Parks and Recreation Facilities Are Only Being 50% Met or Less

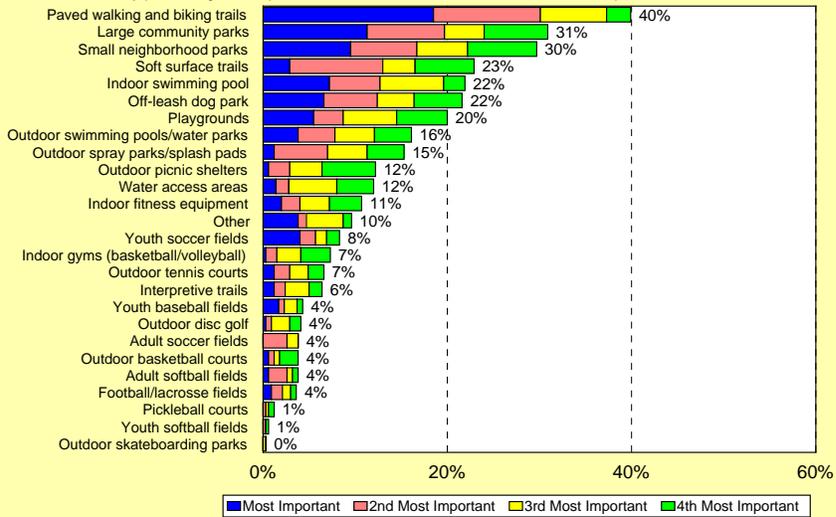
by number of households based on 5,817 households in the City of Covington



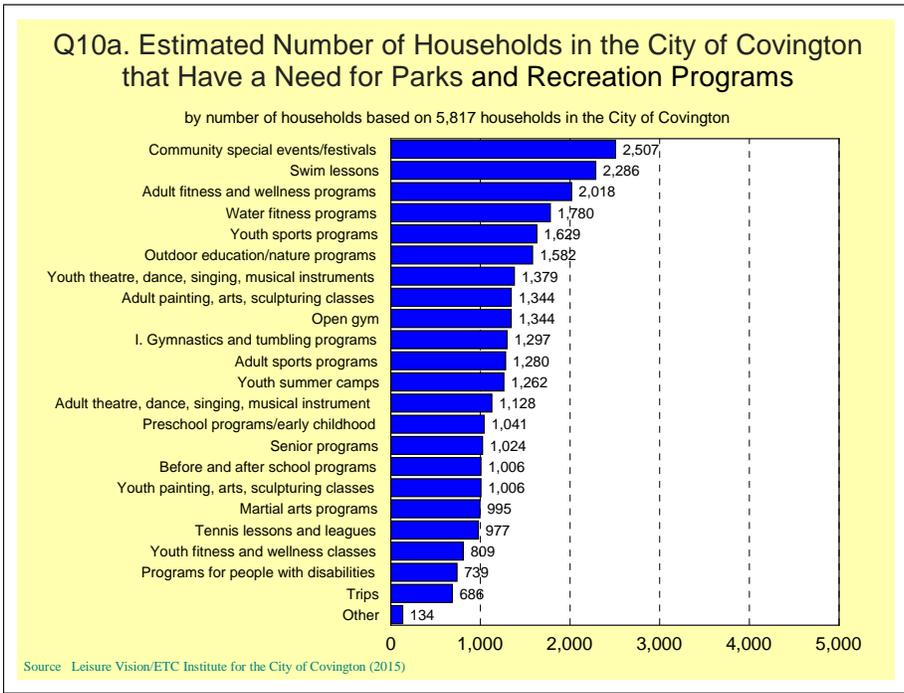
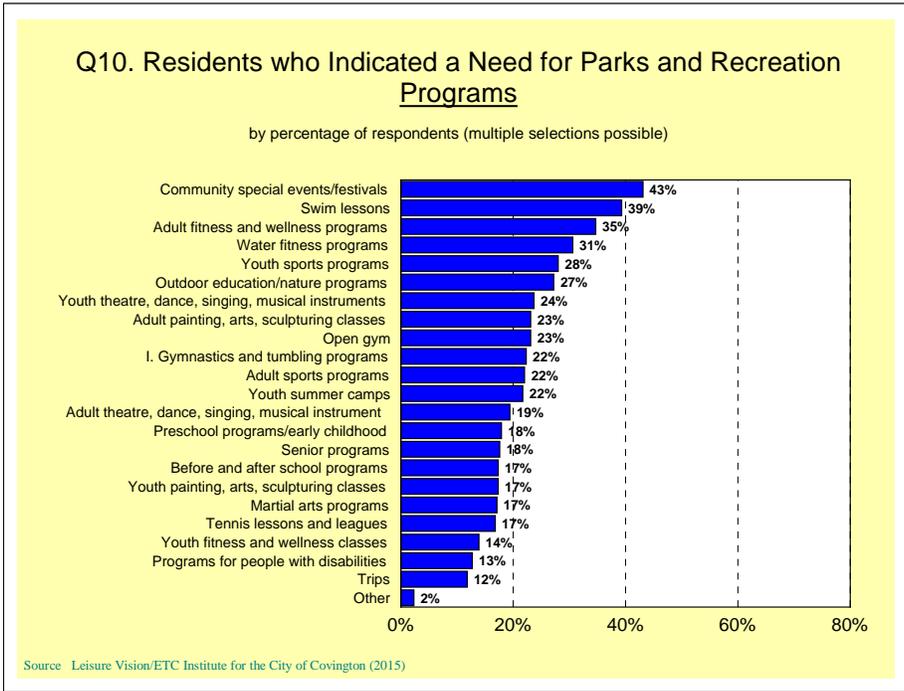
Source: Leisure Vision/ETC Institute for the City of Covington (2015)

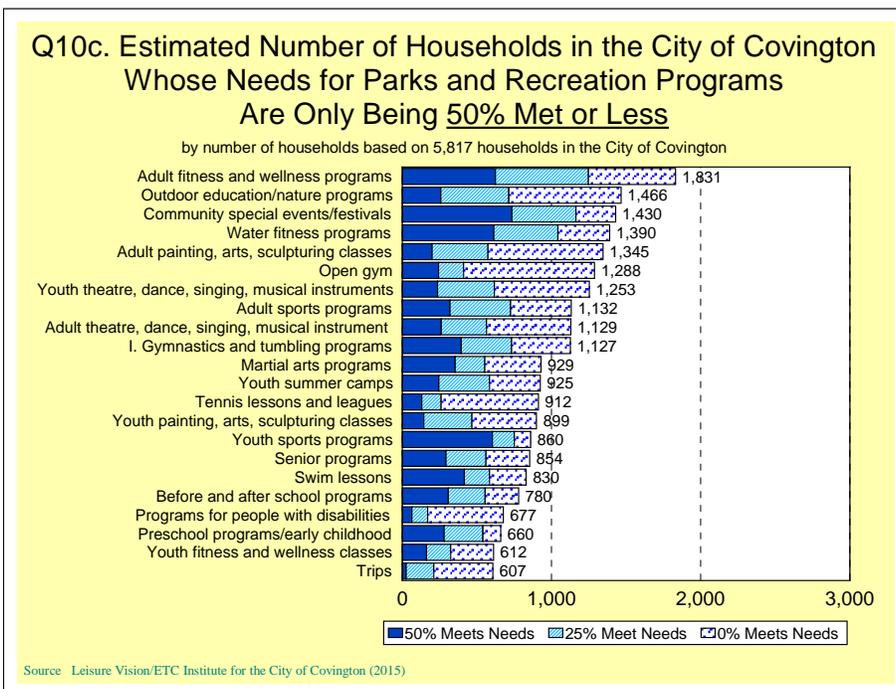
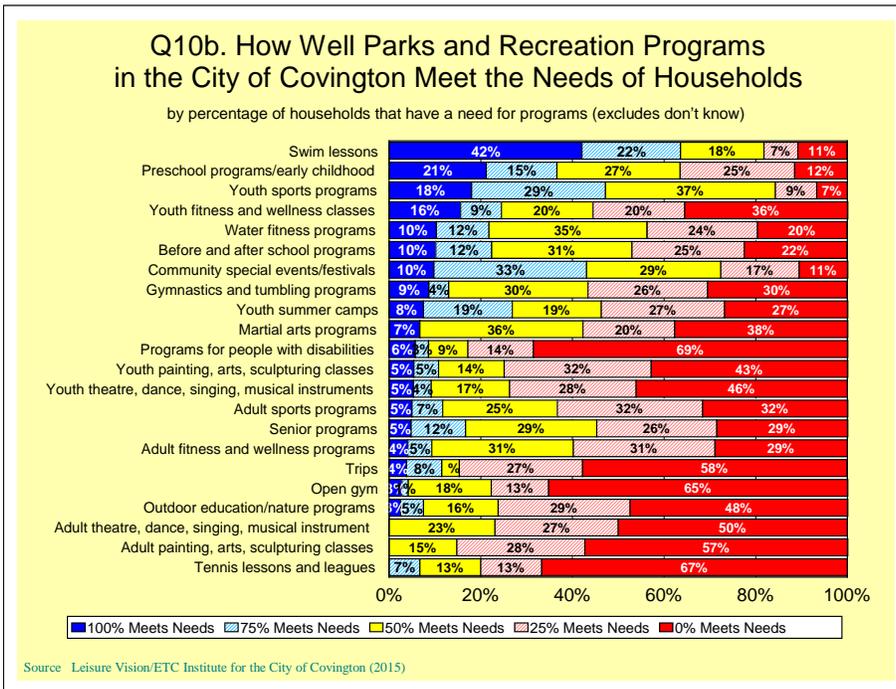
### Q9. Parks and Recreation Facilities that Are Most Important to Households

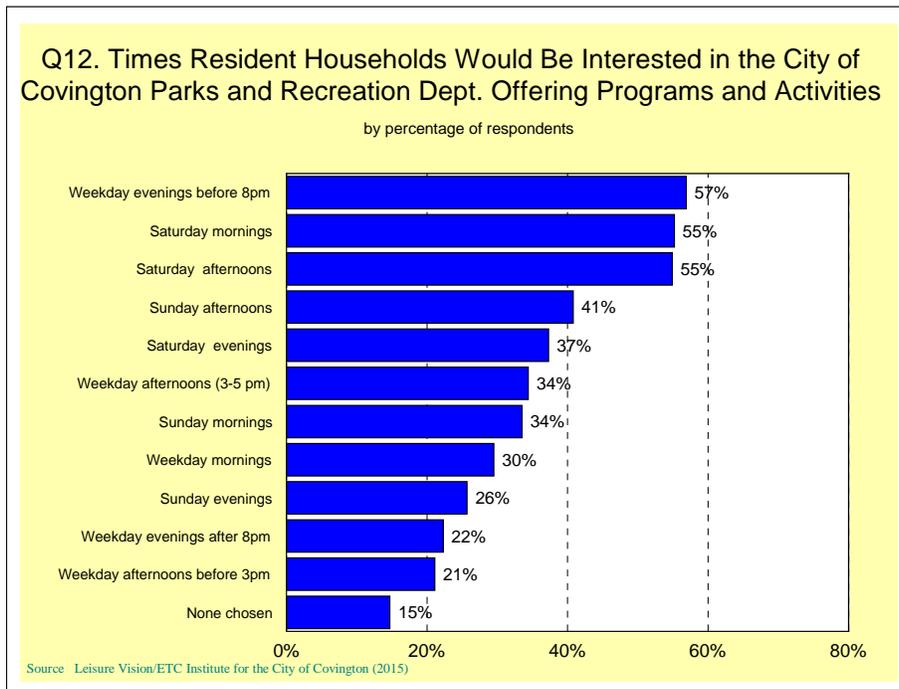
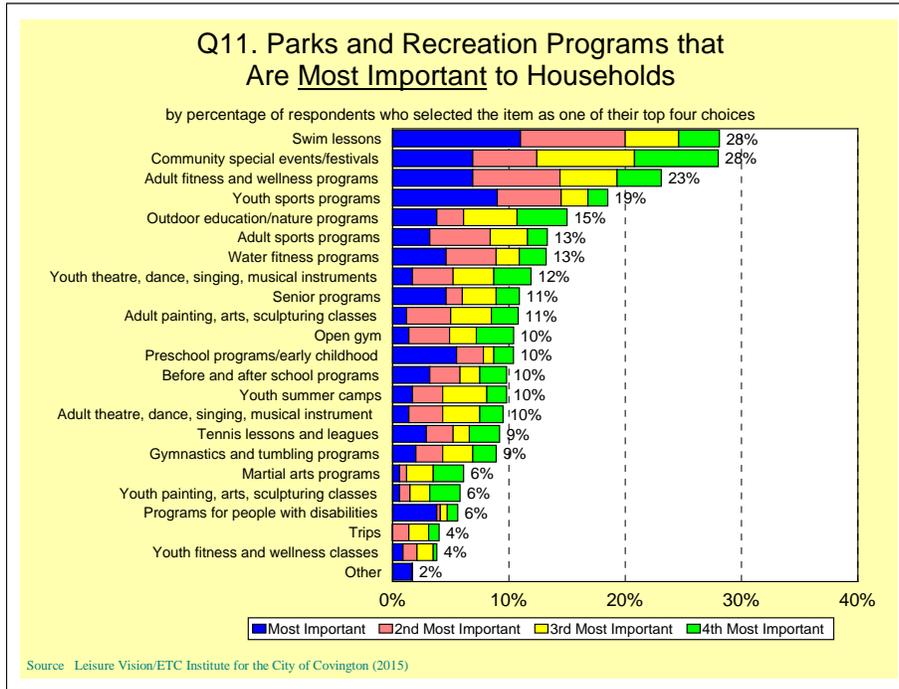
by percentage of respondents who selected the item as one of their top four choices



Source: Leisure Vision/ETC Institute for the City of Covington (2015)

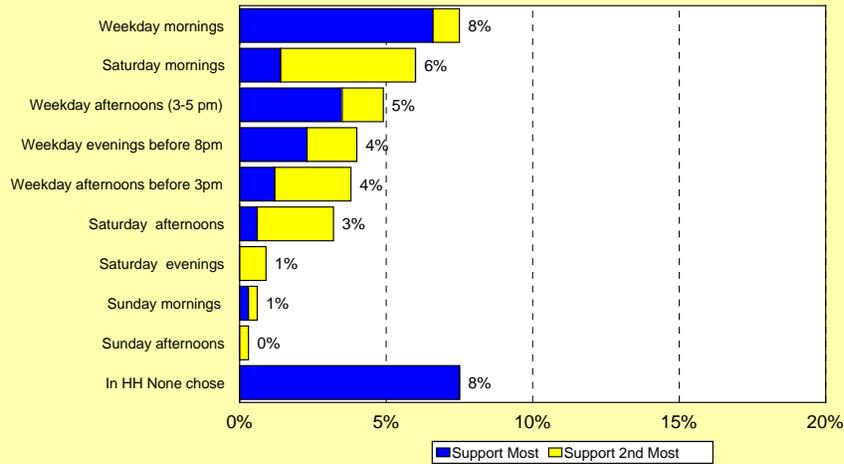






**Q13. Times Residents Most Support the City of Covington Parks and Recreation Department Providing Programming for Ages 0-5 Years**

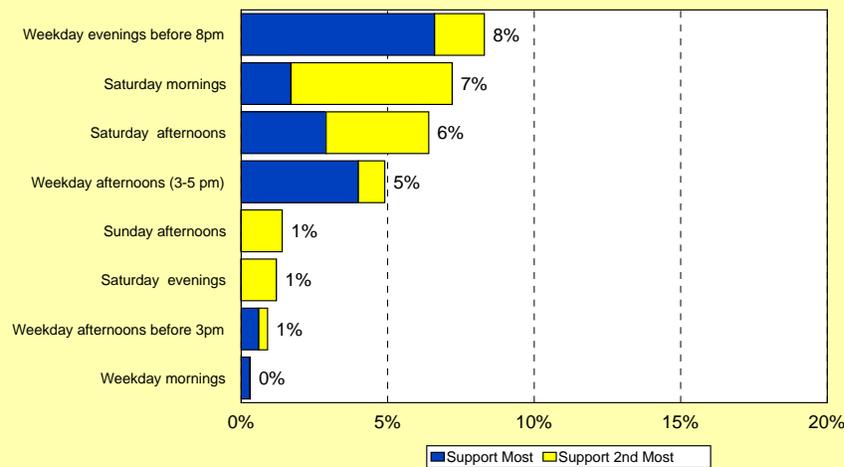
by percentage of respondents who selected the item as one of their two most supported



Source Leisure Vision/ETC Institute for the City of Covington (2015)

**Q13. Times Residents Most Support the City of Covington Parks and Recreation Department Providing Programming for Ages 6-10 Years**

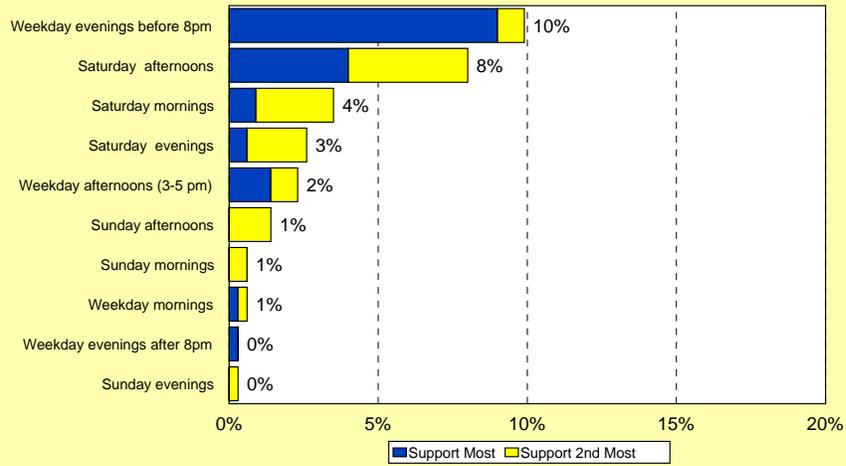
by percentage of respondents who selected the item as one of their two most supported



Source Leisure Vision/ETC Institute for the City of Covington (2015)

**Q13. Times Residents Most Support the City of Covington Parks and Recreation Department Providing Programming for Ages 11-18 years**

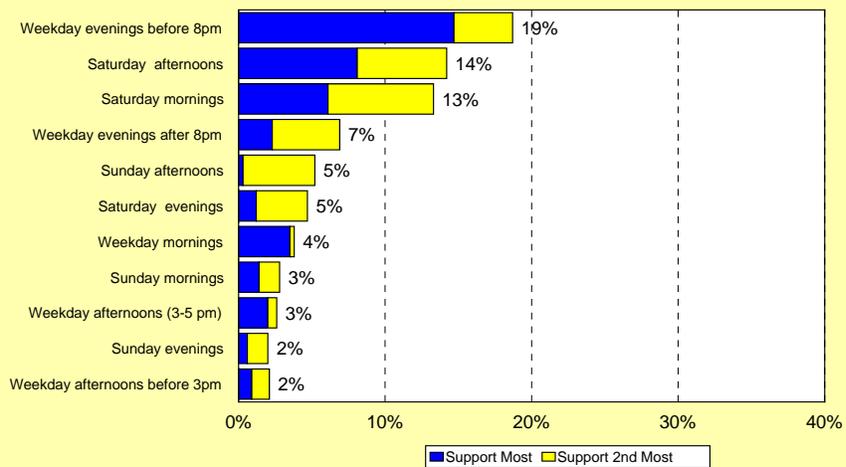
by percentage of respondents who selected the item as one of their two most supported

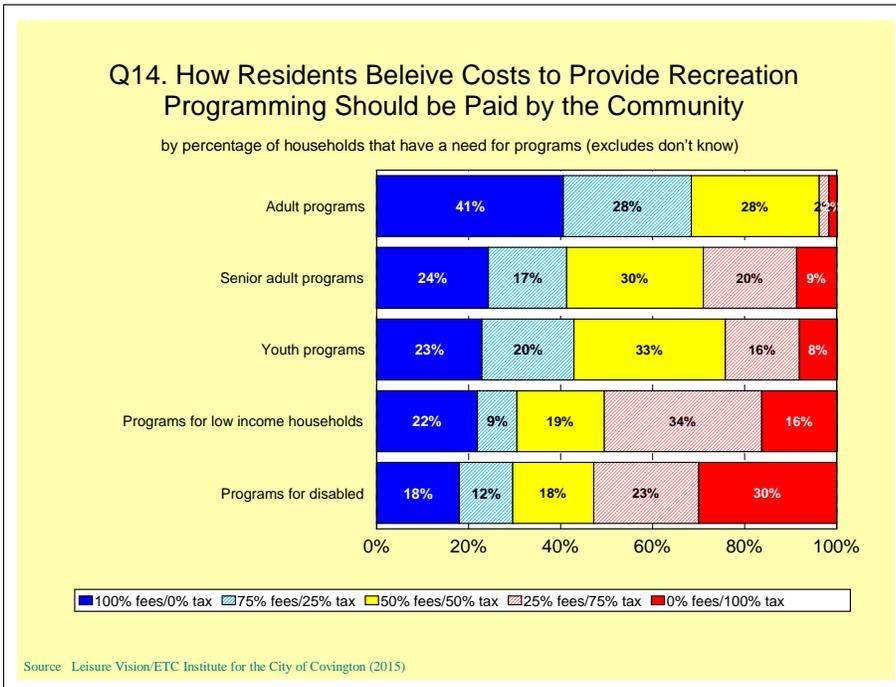
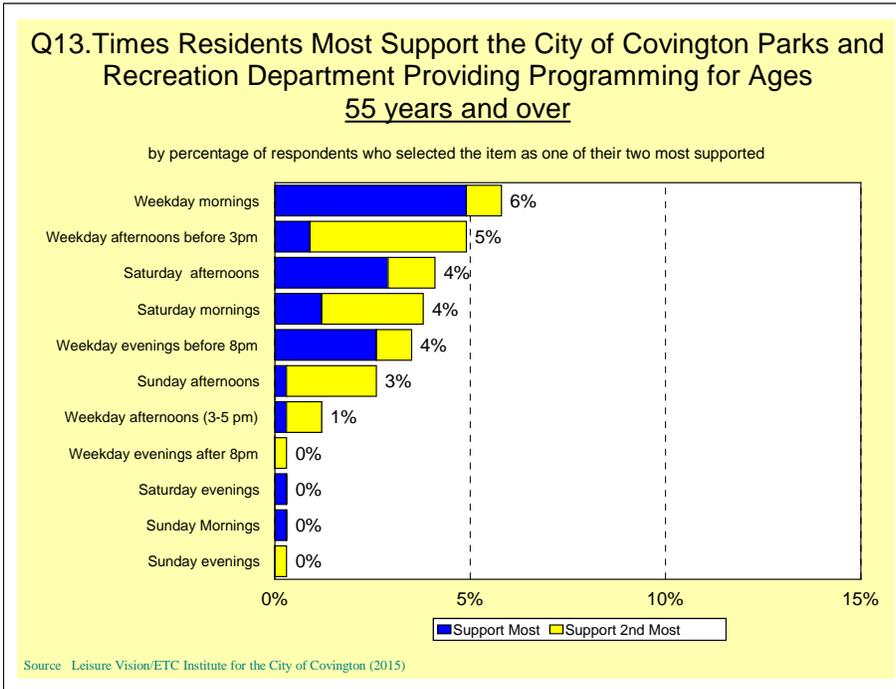


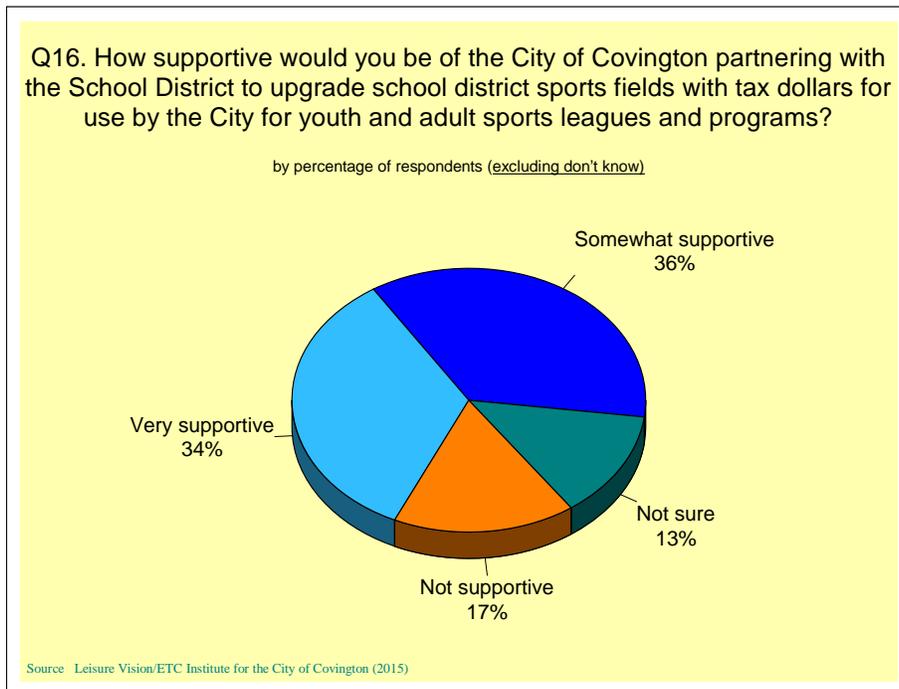
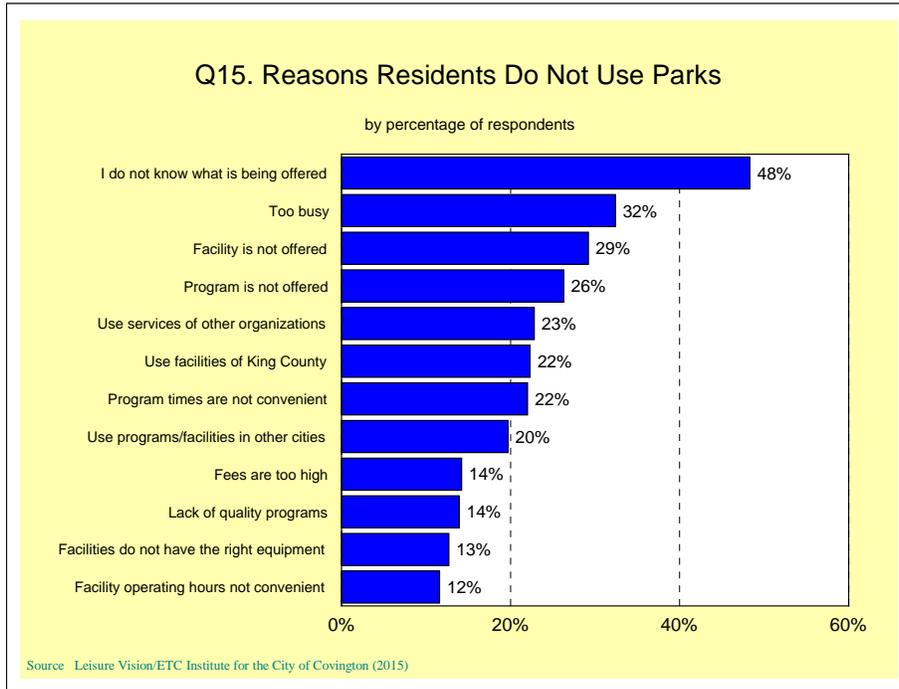
Source: Leisure Vision/ETC Institute for the City of Covington (2015)

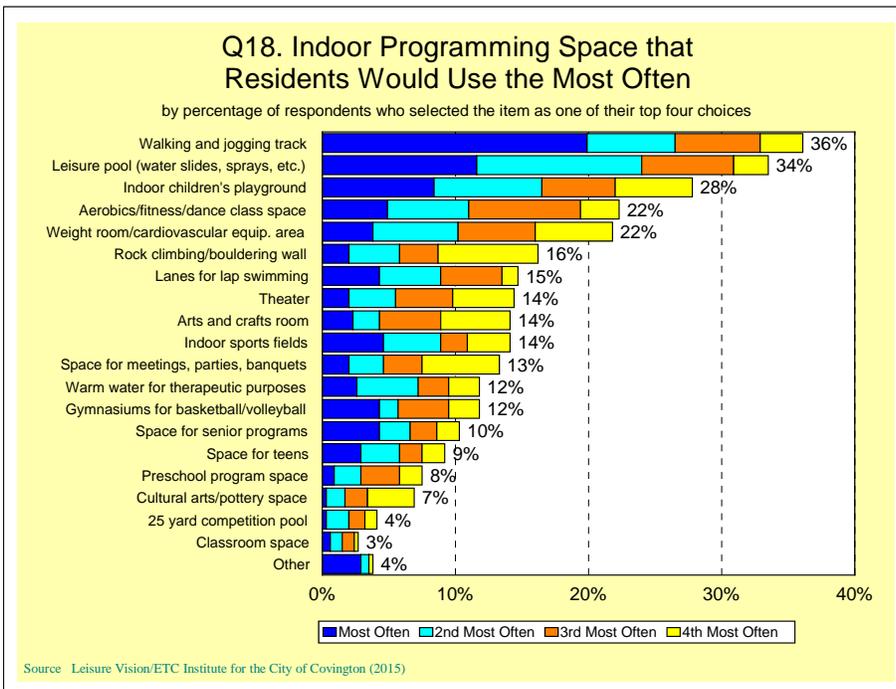
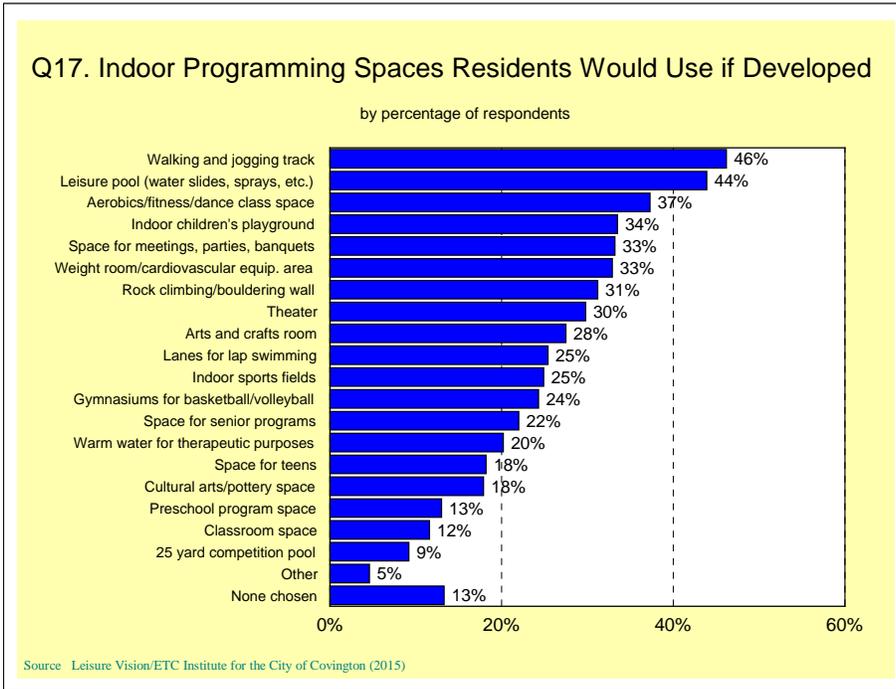
**Q13. Times Residents Most Support the City of Covington Parks and Recreation Department Providing Programming for Ages 19-54 years**

by percentage of respondents who selected the item as one of their two most supported



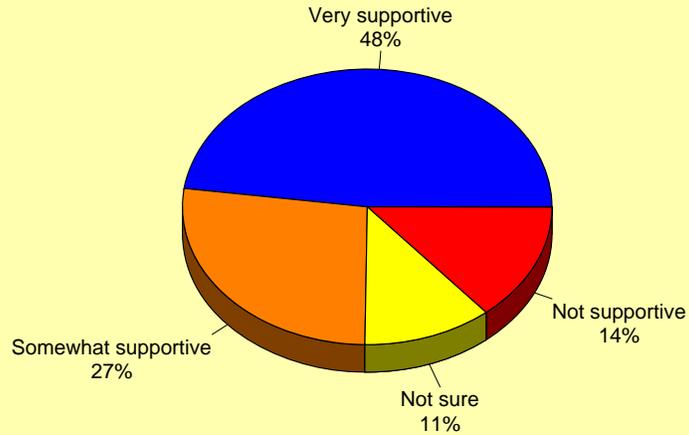






Q19. How supportive would you be of creating a special recreation district to be composed of residents of the City of Covington and neighboring communities?

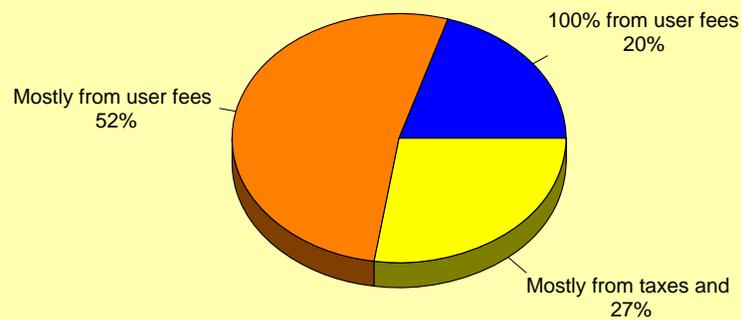
by percentage of respondents



Source Leisure Vision/ETC Institute for the City of Covington (2015)

Q20. If a Multi-Use Facility Was Developed, Residents Feel the Facility Should be Paid for by the Following Means:

by percentage of respondents

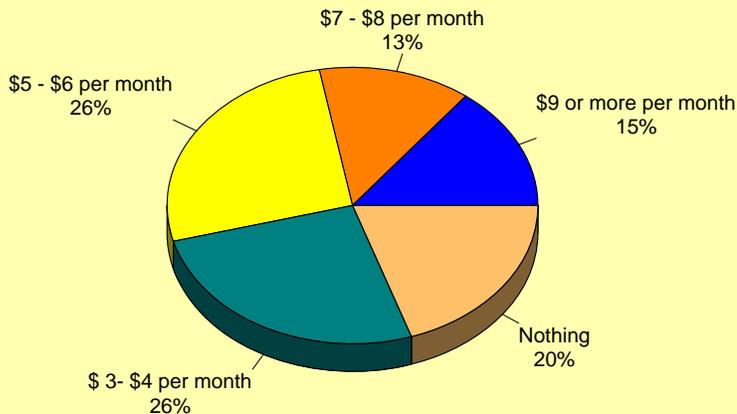


Only 0.3% of respondents chose 100% from taxes

Source Leisure Vision/ETC Institute for the City of Covington (2015)

Q21. What is the maximum amount of additional tax revenue you would be willing to pay to develop and operate the types of indoor programming spaces that are most important to you and your household?

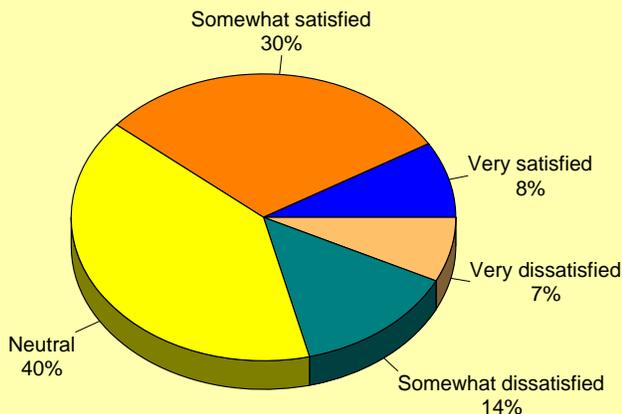
by percentage of respondents excluding "don't know"



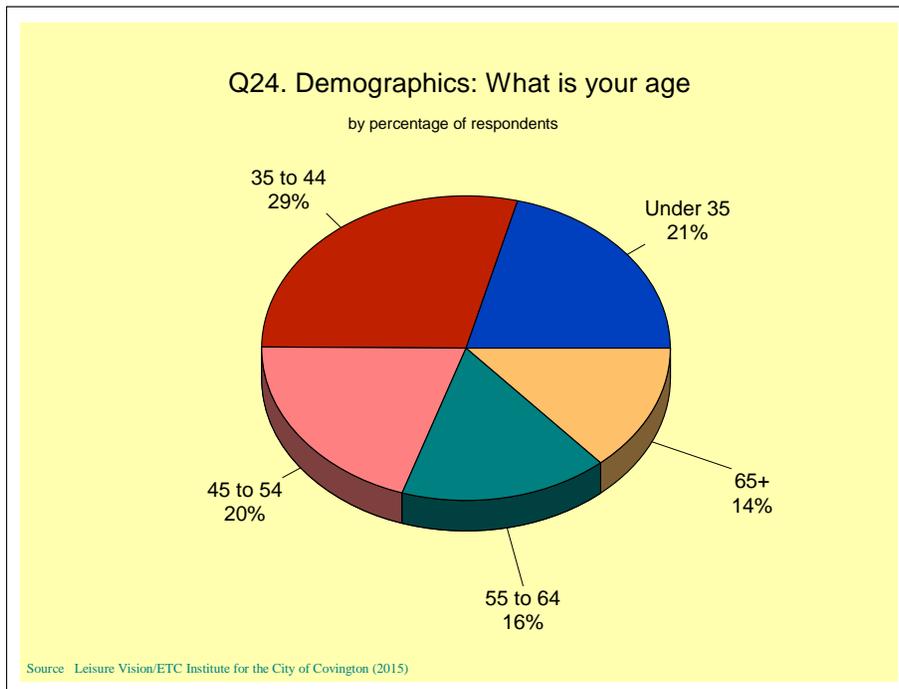
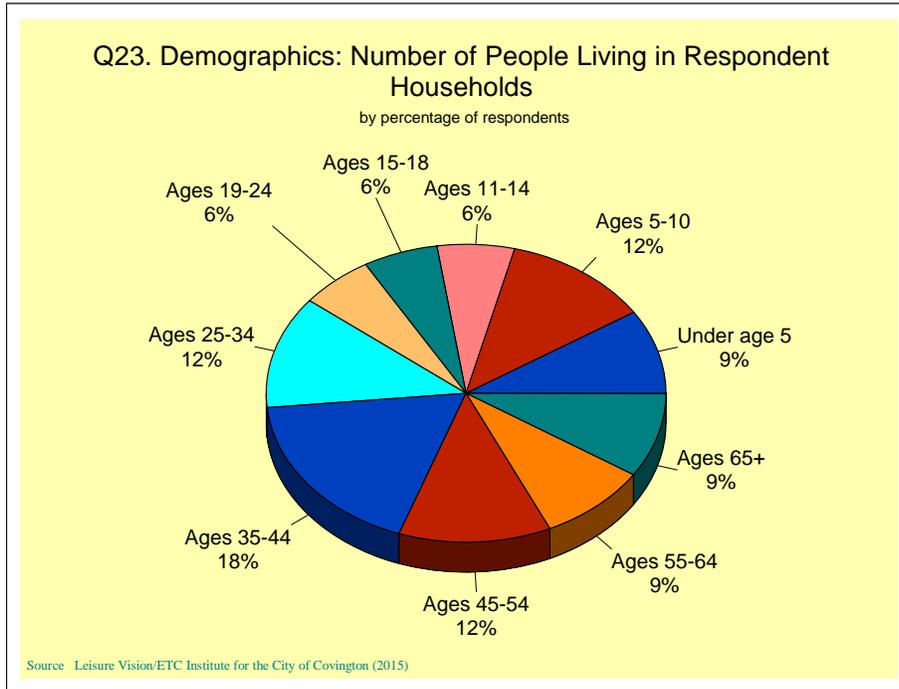
Source Leisure Vision/ETC Institute for the City of Covington (2015)

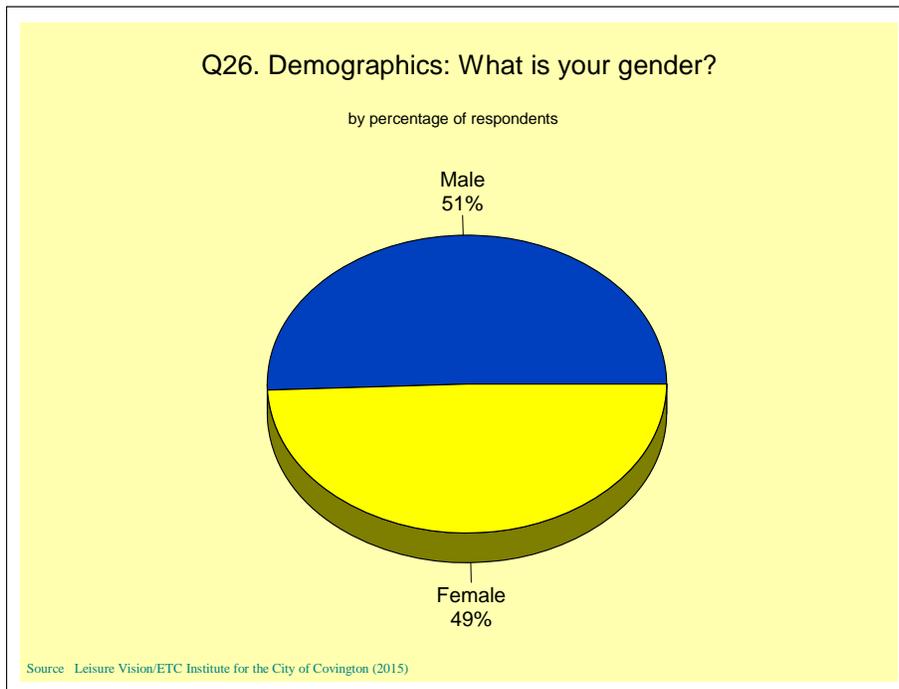
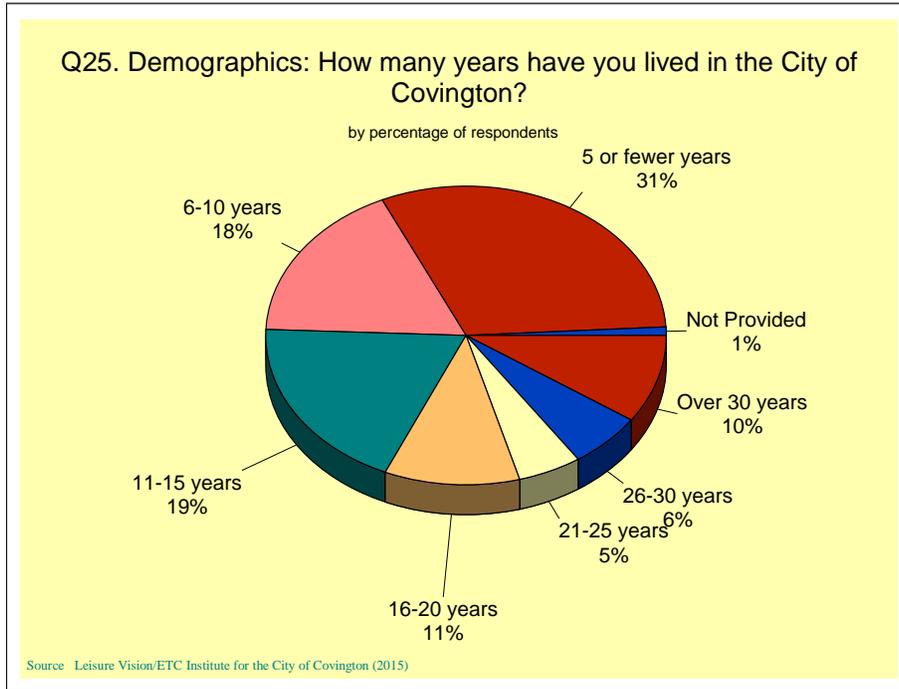
Q22. Please rate your level of satisfaction with the overall value that your household receives from the City of Covington Parks and Recreation Department

by percentage of respondents excluding don't know



Source Leisure Vision/ETC Institute for the City of Covington (2015)





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# APPENDIX D: Online Survey Summary

Note: Cross tabulations and detailed numerical data regarding survey responses can be provided by the Covington Parks & Recreation Department.

# Findings Report for a **\*Non-Statistically Valid\* Community Interest and Opinion Survey**



Submitted to  
**The City of Covington, WA**

By  
**ETC Institute**



725 W. Frontier Circle

Olathe, KS 66061

(913) 829-1215

July 2015

# Section 1

## *Executive Summary*

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# \*Non-Statistical\*

## Community Interest and Opinion Survey

### Executive Summary Report

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## Overview and Methodology

ETC Institute conducted a non-statistical Community Interest and Opinion Survey for the City of Covington during the summer of 2015 to help determine parks, recreation, and cultural priorities for the community. The survey was available online to residents of the City of Covington as well as non-residents. A total of 249 households completed the survey.

## Major Findings

### VISITATION OF PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITIES

- **Park and facilities usage:** Based on the percentage of respondents, 44% indicated they had used the *Covington Community Park Sports Field*. Other facilities used include: Covington Community Park Trails (37%), Jenkins Creek Trail (23%), and Jenkins Creek Park (19%).
- **Quality of Parks and Recreation Facilities:** Based on the percentage of respondents who have visited parks/facilities, 100% rated the quality of *Crystal View Park* as either “excellent” or “good”. Other facilities with a similar quality rating: Covington Community Park Sports Field (97%), Covington Community Park Trails (92%), and Friendship Park (83%).
- **Overall Value Received:** Forty percent (40%) of households indicated they were *somewhat satisfied* with the overall value they receive from the City of Covington Parks and Recreation Department. Other levels of satisfaction include: neutral (28%), very satisfied (17%), somewhat dissatisfied (10%), and very dissatisfied (5%).

### PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

- **Program and Activity Participation:** Thirty-nine percent (39%) of respondents indicated they have participated in recreation, sports, aquatics, cultural or special events programs/activities offered by the City of Covington Parks and Recreation in the past 12 months. Of the respondents who indicated they participated in a program in the last 12 months, 50% participated in *swim lessons*. Other programs households have participated in include: youth soccer (40%), Covington Days (32%), and youth basketball (22%).



- **Quality of Programs and Activities:** Based on the percentage of respondents who have participated in programs and activities, 59% rated the quality of programs and activities participated in as *good*. All forty-one percent (41%) of the remaining respondents rated the quality of programs and activities as excellent.
- **Organization/Facility Usage:** Based on the percentage of respondent households, forty-five percent (45%) noted they used *City of Covington Parks and Recreation Department* in the last 12 months. Other organizations/facilities used include: school district facilities (41%), King County parks and facilities (39%), and neighboring communities (30%).
- **Ways Respondents Have Learned About Programs and Activities:** Based on the percentage of respondents, 35% learned about the City of Covington's Programs and Activities from the *City's Recreation Guide* during the past 12 months. Other ways respondents learned about programs and activities include: city website (29%), from friends and neighbors (26%), school fliers/newsletters (21%), and e-mail blasts (21%).

#### FACILITY NEEDS AND IMPORTANCE

- **Facility Types Households Have a Need For:** Based on the percentage of respondents, 91% or 5,311 households indicated that they have a need for *paved walking and biking trails*. Other facilities respondents have a need for include: large community parks (85% or 4,927 households), indoor swimming pool (85% or 4,921 households), small neighborhood parks (73% or 4,246 households), and playgrounds (71% or 4,153 households).
- **Most Important Facilities:** Based on the percentage of respondents top four most important facilities, 36% indicated that *paved walking and biking trails* are the most important facility. Other most important facilities include: large community parks (29%), outdoor spray parks/splash pads (25%), playgrounds (22%), and outdoor swimming pools/water parks (19%).

#### PROGRAM NEEDS AND IMPORTANCE

- **Programs Households Have a Need For:** Based on the percentage of respondents, 74% or 4,293 households indicated that they have a need for *swim lessons*. Other programs respondents have a need for include: youth sports programs (68% or 3,956 households), community special events/festivals (61% or 3,537 households), and youth theatre, dance, singing, musical instrument classes (51% or 2,949 households).
- **Most Important Programs:** Based on the percentage of respondents top four most important programs, 34% indicated that *swim lessons* is the most important program. Other most important programs include: youth sports programs (29%), community special events/festivals (17%), preschool programs/early childhood (13%), and youth theatre, dance, singing, musical instrument classes (13%).



- **Reasons Respondents' Do Not Use Parks:** Based on the percentage of respondents thirty-three percent (33%) indicated *not knowing what is offered* as the reason they do not use parks. Other reasons respondents do not use parks include: facility is not offered (31%), program times are not convenient (27%), and program is not offered (23%).

## TIMES FOR OFFERERERING PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES

### OVERALL

- Based on the percentage of respondent households, fifty-seven percent (57%) noted *Saturday mornings* as a time they would be interested in Covington Parks and Recreation Department programs and activities. Other times households would be interested include: weekday evenings before 8 pm (57%), Saturday afternoons (50%), and weekday afternoons (3-5 pm).

### BY AGE GROUP

- **Ages 0 to 5 years:** Based on the percentage of respondent households with children age 0 to 5 years, nineteen percent (19%) would support programming on *weekday mornings*. Other times respondents would support include: weekday evening before 8 pm (12%) and weekday afternoons before 3 pm (11%).
- **Ages 6 to 10 years:** Based on the percentage of respondent households with children age 6 to 10 years, eighteen percent (18%) would support programming on *weekday evenings before 8 pm*. Other times respondents would support include: Saturday mornings (16%) and weekday afternoons 3-5 pm (6%).
- **Ages 11 to 18 years:** Based on the percentage of respondent households with children age 11 to 18 years, twenty percent (20%) would support programming on *weekday evenings before 8 pm*. Other times respondents would support include: Saturday mornings (10%) and weekday afternoons 3-5 pm (9%).
- **Ages 19 to 54 years:** Based on the percentage of respondent households with adults age 19 to 54 years, fifteen percent (15%) would support programming on *weekday evenings before 8 pm*. Other times respondents would support include: Saturday mornings (12%) and weekday mornings (9%).
- **Ages 55 years and older:** Based on the percentage of respondent households with adults age 55 years and over, eleven percent (11%) would support programming on *weekday mornings*. Other times respondents would support include: Saturday mornings (4%) and weekday afternoons before 3 pm (4%).



## COSTS TO PROVIDE PROGRAMMING & TAX DOLLAR SUPPORT

- Respondent households were asked how they felt the costs to provide recreation programming. Sixty-five percent (65%) of respondents indicated *adult programs* should be paid by “100% fees/0% tax” or “75% fees/25% tax”. Forty-one percent (41%) of respondents indicated *programs for disabled* should be paid by “0% fees/100% tax” or “25% fees/75% fees”.
- **Level of Support for Upgrade School District Sports Fields:** Forty-four percent (44%) of respondents indicated they would be *very supportive* of the City of Covington partnering with the School District to upgrade sports fields with tax dollars. Other levels of support are: somewhat supportive (33%), not sure (16%) and not supportive (7%).

## PROGRAMMING SPACES

- Based on the percentage of respondent households, 52% indicated they would use a *leisure pool* if developed. Other programming spaces respondents would use if developed include: indoor children’s playground (39%), walking and jogging track (38%), and rock climbing/bouldering wall (36%).
- Based on the percentage of respondent households top four choices, 39% indicated they would use a *leisure pool* most often, if developed. Other programming spaces respondents would use most often include: indoor children’s playground (25%), walking and jogging track (19%) and rock climbing/bouldering wall (17%).

## MULTI-USE FULL-SERVICE INDOOR FACILITY DEVELOPMENT

- **Level of Support:** Based on the percentage of respondent households, 56% indicated they would be *very supportive* of creating a special recreation district composed of respondents of the City of Covington and neighboring communities. Other levels of support are: somewhat supportive (27%), not sure (16%) and not supportive (2%).
- **Facility Development Fees:** Based on the percentage of respondents, 56% indicated the facility development should be paid *mostly by user fees*. Other ways the facility should be paid for include: mostly from taxes and some user fees (36%), 100% from user fees (8%), and 100% from taxes (1%).
- **Tax Revenue Willingness:** Based on percentage of respondents, 28% indicated they would be willing to pay a maximum of \$3-\$4 *per month* in additional tax revenue for costs to develop and operate indoor programming spaces. Other maximum amounts of additional tax revenues include: \$5-\$6 per month (27%), \$7-\$8 per month (19%), \$9 or more per month (19%) and nothing (8%).



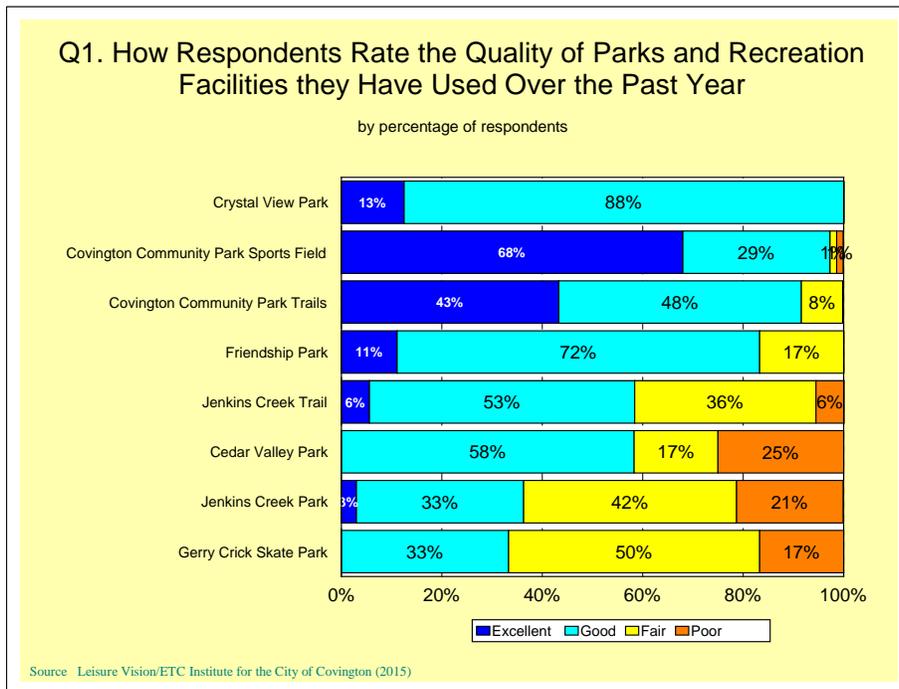
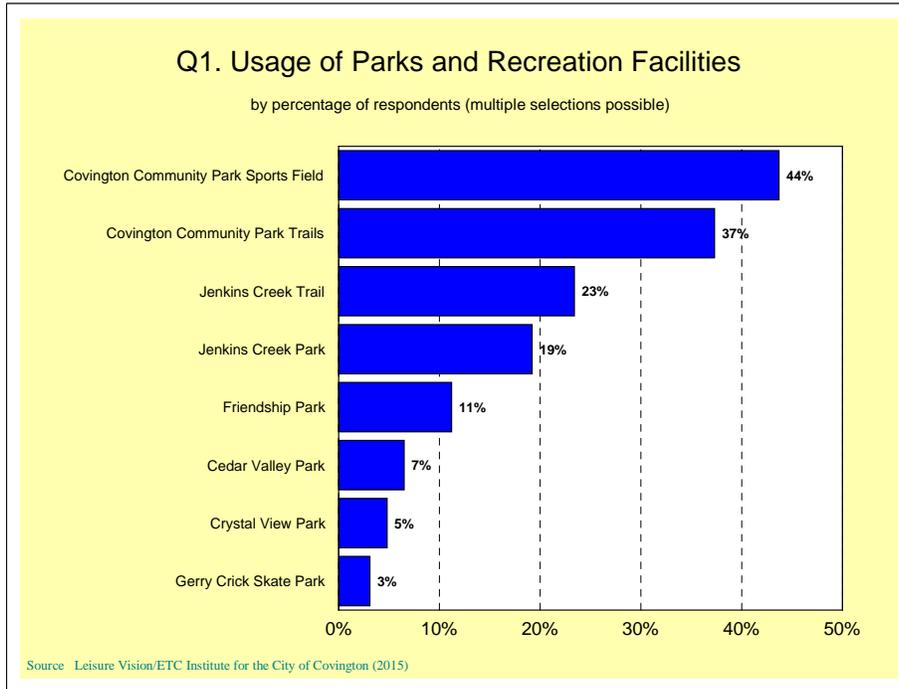
## AQUATIC FEATURES

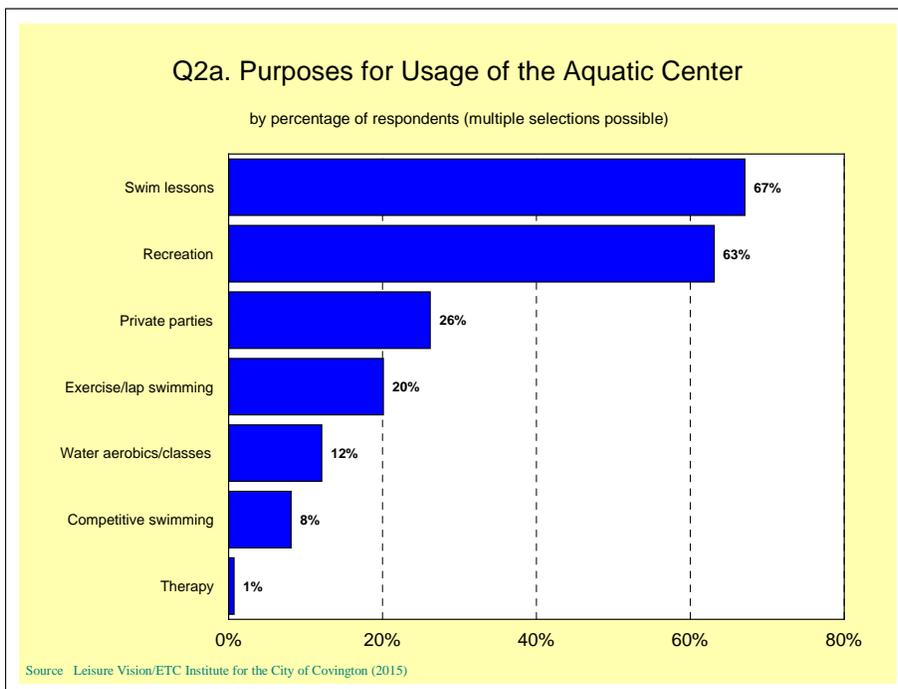
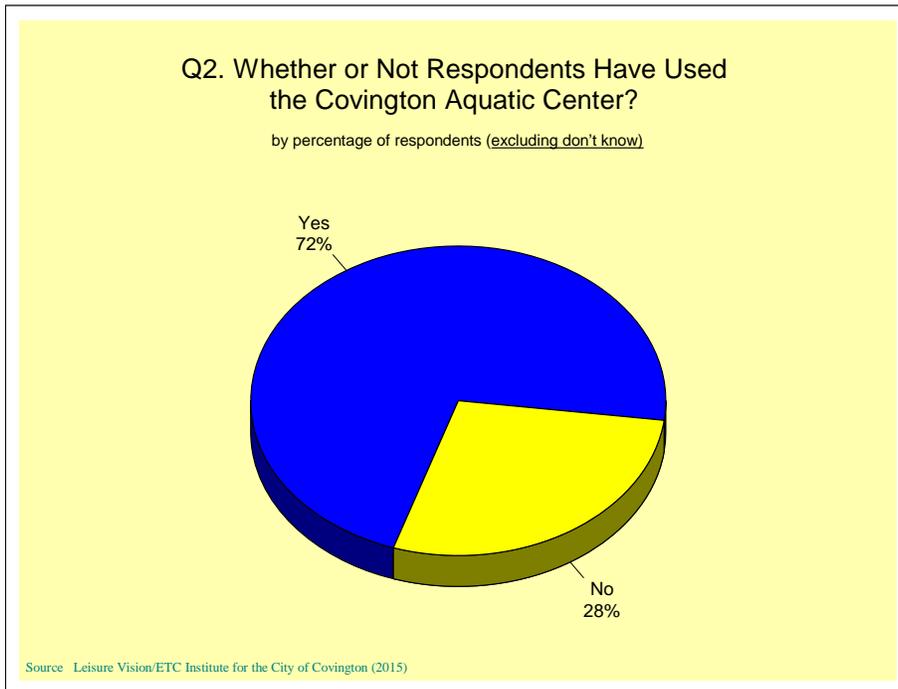
- **Purpose for Use of Aquatic Center:** Seventy-two percent (72%) of respondents indicated they have used the Covington Aquatic Center in the past 12 months. Of the respondents who indicated they had used the Covington Aquatic Center in the past 12 months, 67% used it for *swim lessons*. Other purposes for usage of the Aquatic Center include: recreation (63%), private parties (26%) and excise/lap swimming (20%).
- **Number of Times Used:** Based on the percentage of respondents who have used the Covington Aquatic Center in the past 12 months, 27% indicated they used it *6-10 times*. Other number of times used include: 1-5 times (23%), 11-25 times (20%), 26-50 times (17%), 101 times or more (8%) and 51-100 times (5%)
- **Satisfaction with Experience:** Based on the percentage of respondents who have used the Covington Aquatic Center in the past 12 months, 54% indicated they were *very satisfied*. Other satisfaction levels are: somewhat satisfied (44%), not satisfied (2%) and not sure (1%).

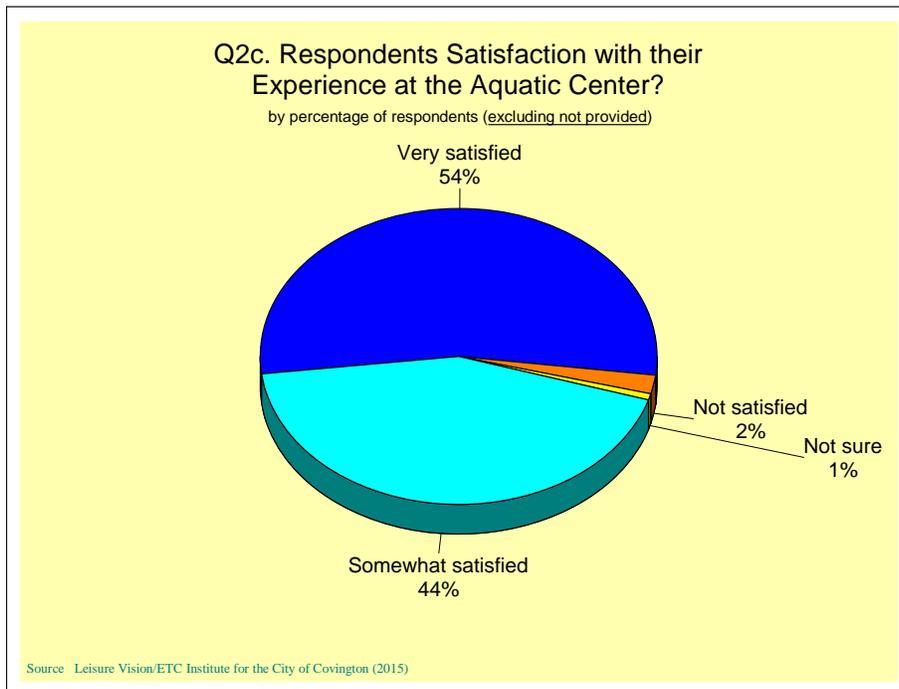
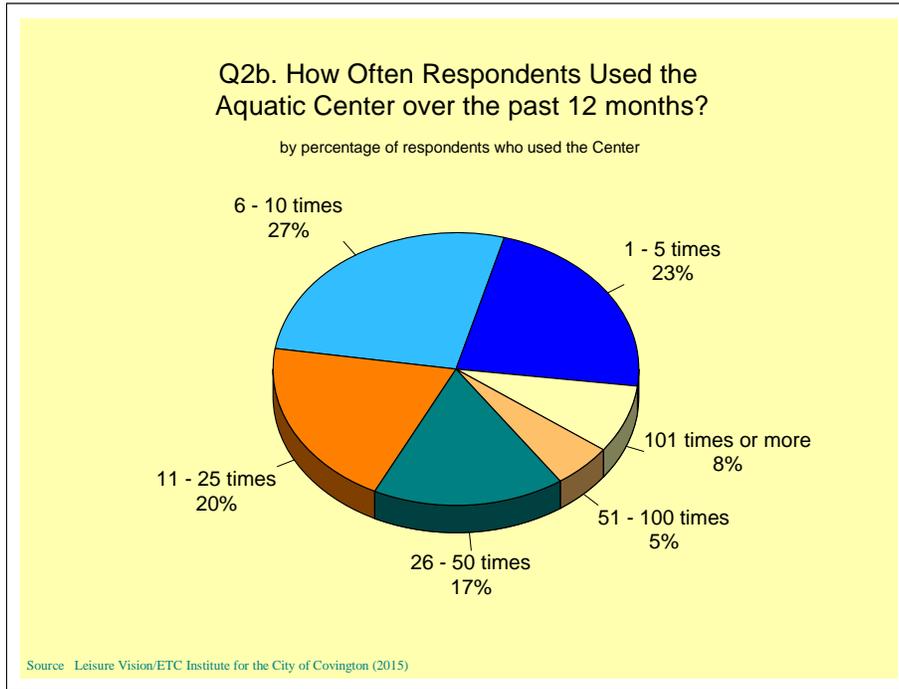
## **Section 2**

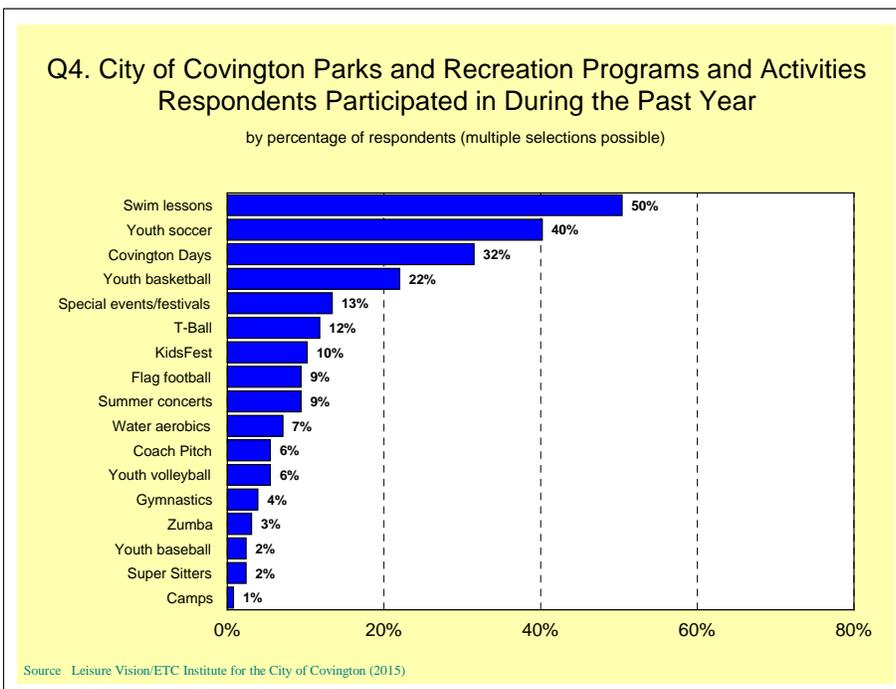
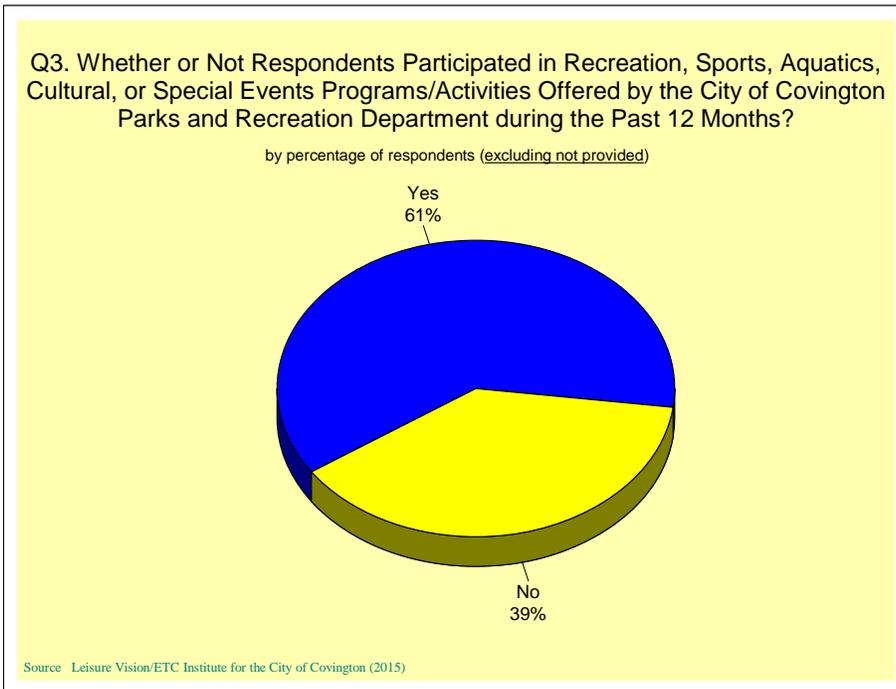
# ***Charts and Graphs***

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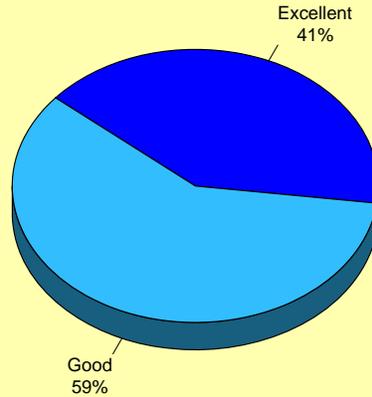






**Q5. How Respondents Rate the Overall Quality of Programs and Activities They Have Participated In?**

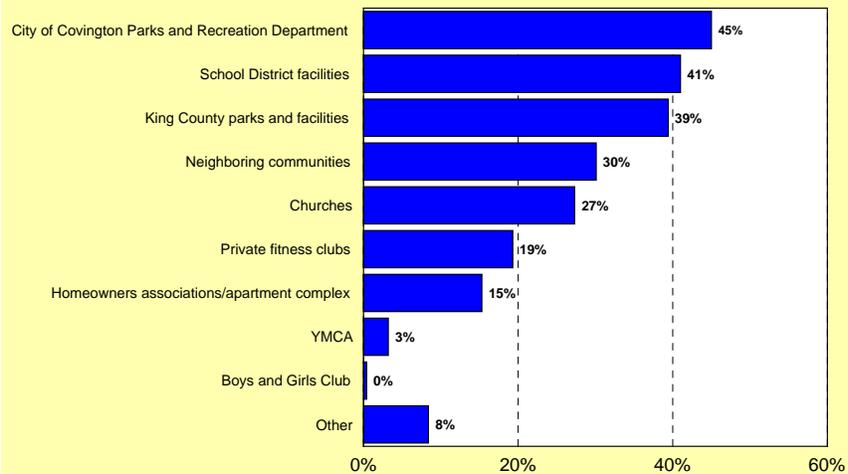
by percentage of respondents (excluding don't know)



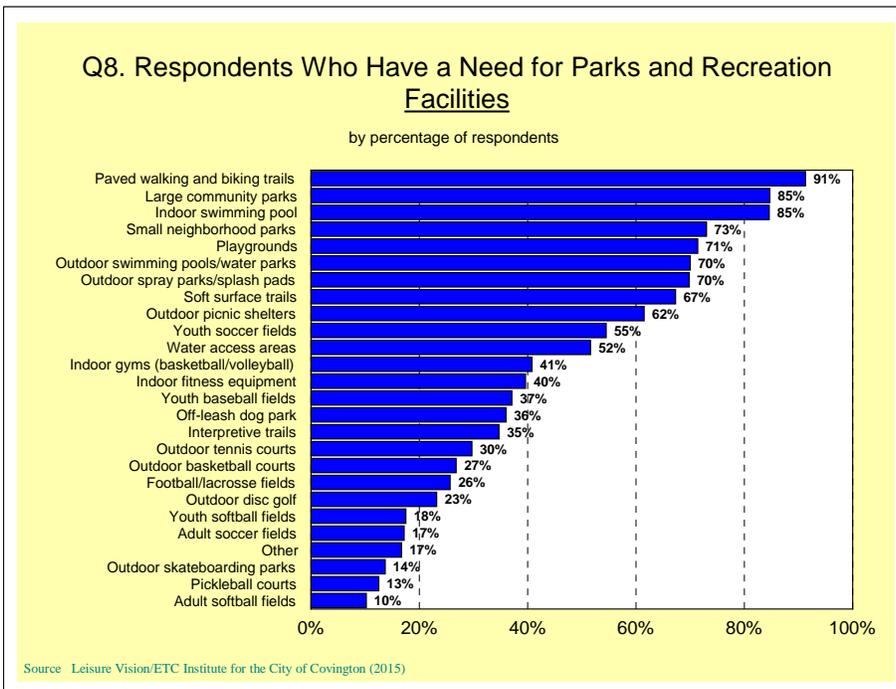
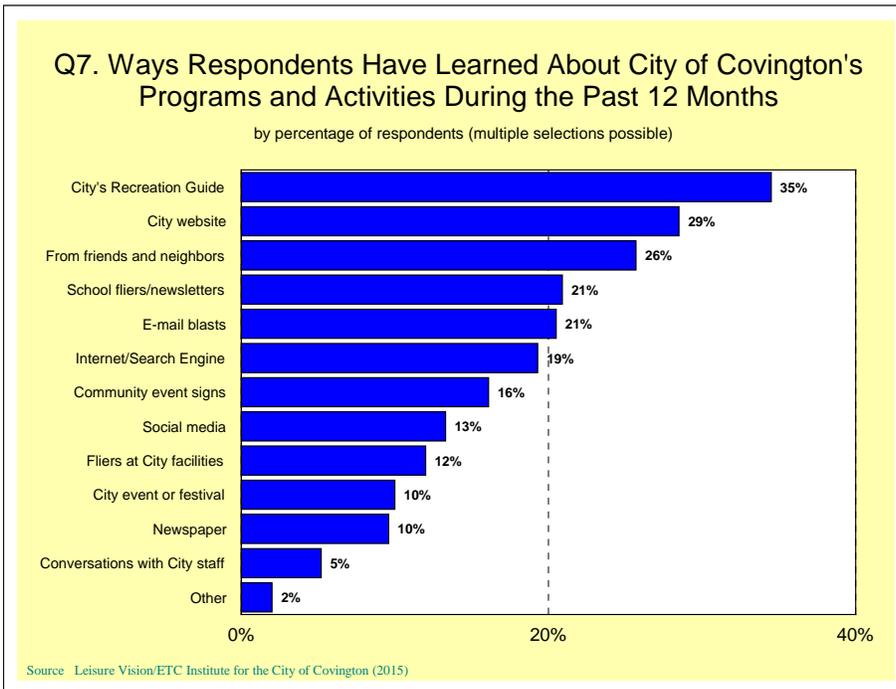
Source Leisure Vision/ETC Institute for the City of Covington (2015)

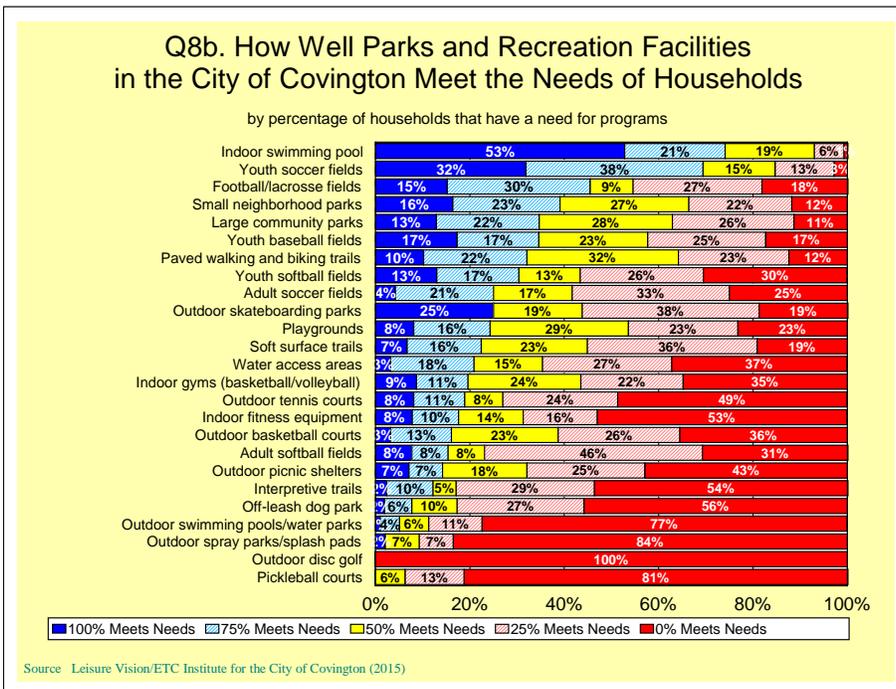
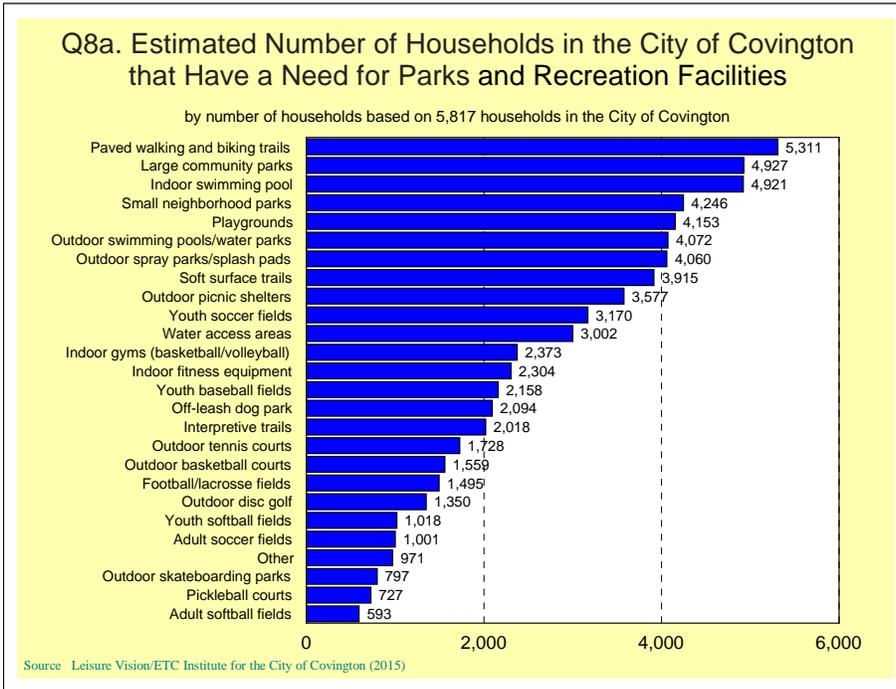
**Q6. Organizations/Facilities that Respondents Have Used for Indoor and Outdoor Recreation and Sports Activities During the Last 12 Months**

by percentage of respondents (multiple selections possible)



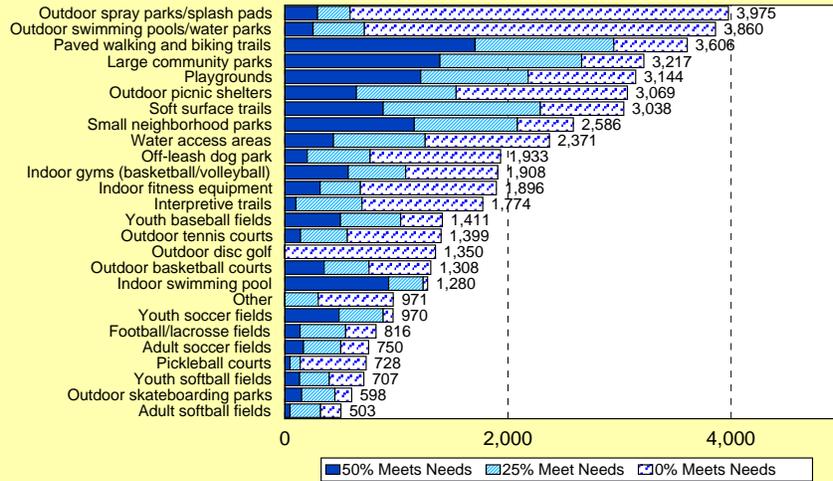
Source Leisure Vision/ETC Institute for the City of Covington (2015)





### Q8c. Estimated Number of Households in the City of Covington Whose Needs for Parks and Recreation Facilities Are Only Being 50% Met or Less

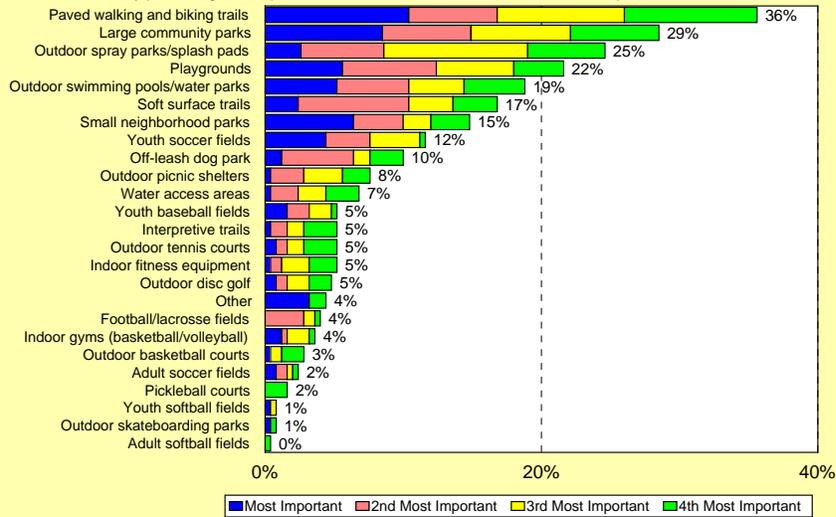
by number of households based on 5,817 households in the City of Covington



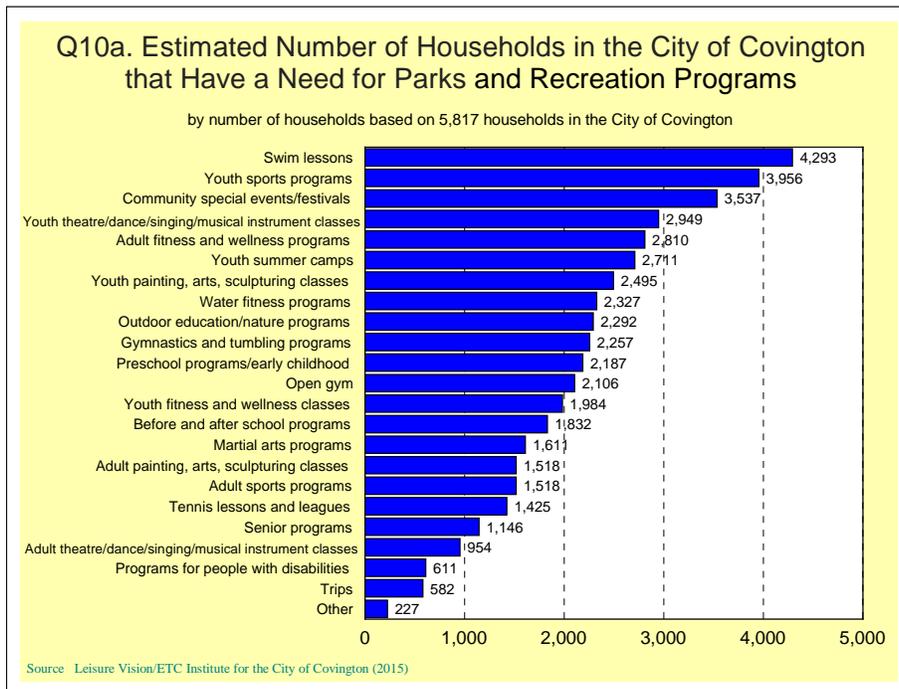
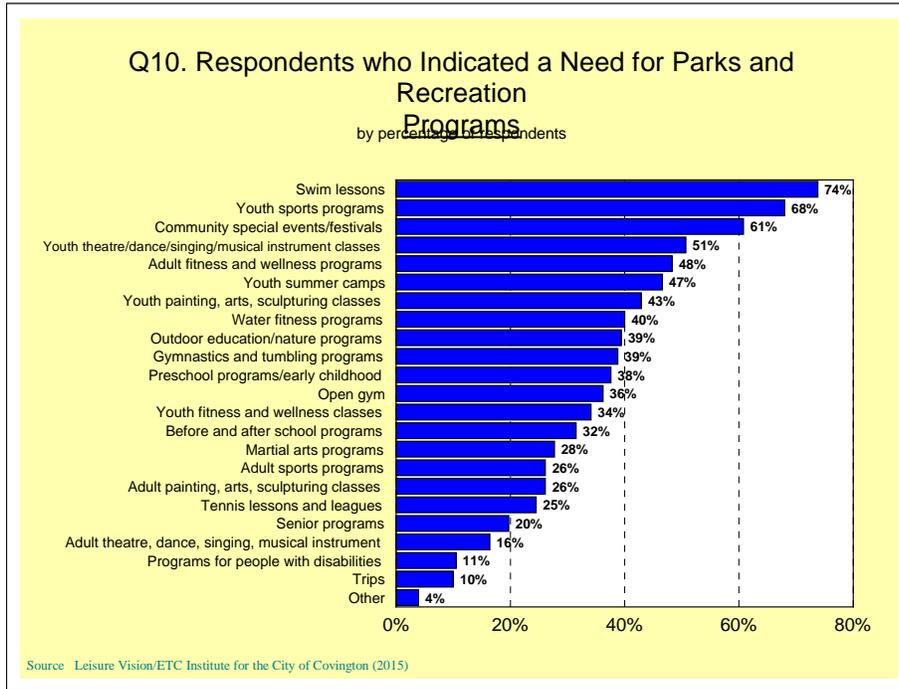
Source: Leisure Vision/ETC Institute for the City of Covington (2015)

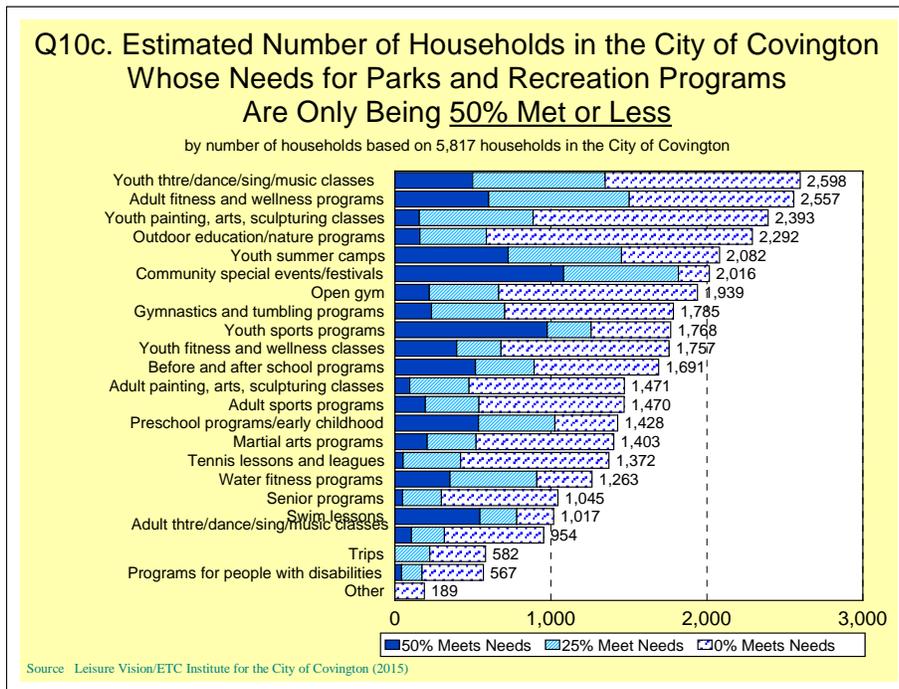
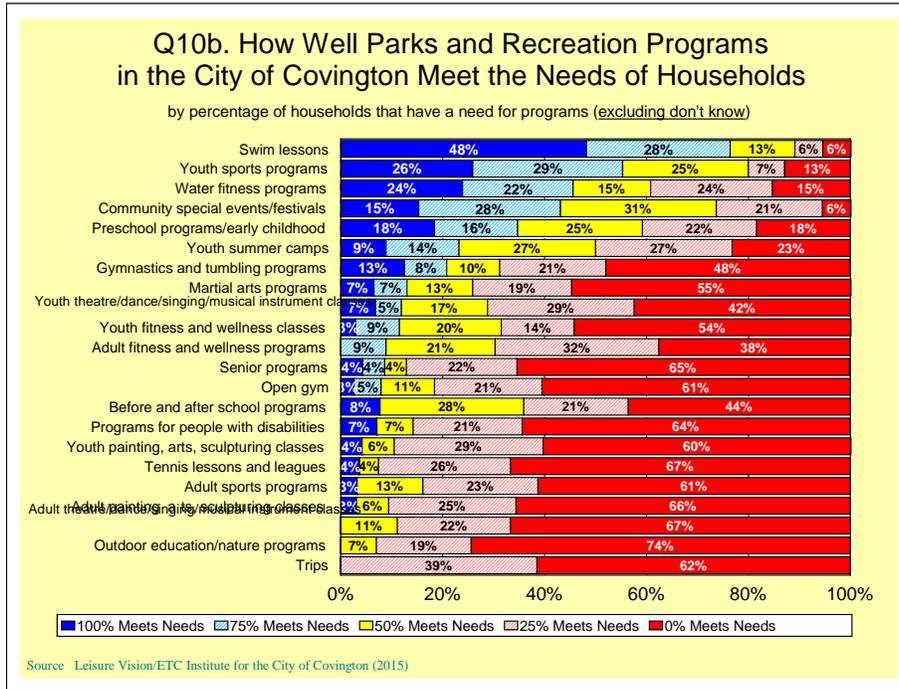
### Q9. Parks and Recreation Facilities that Are Most Important to Households

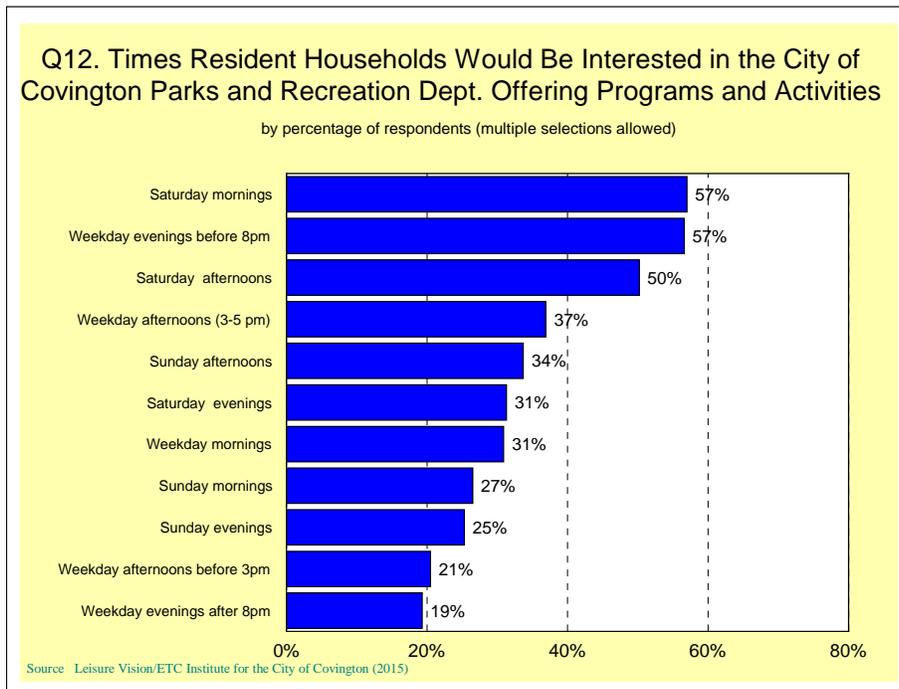
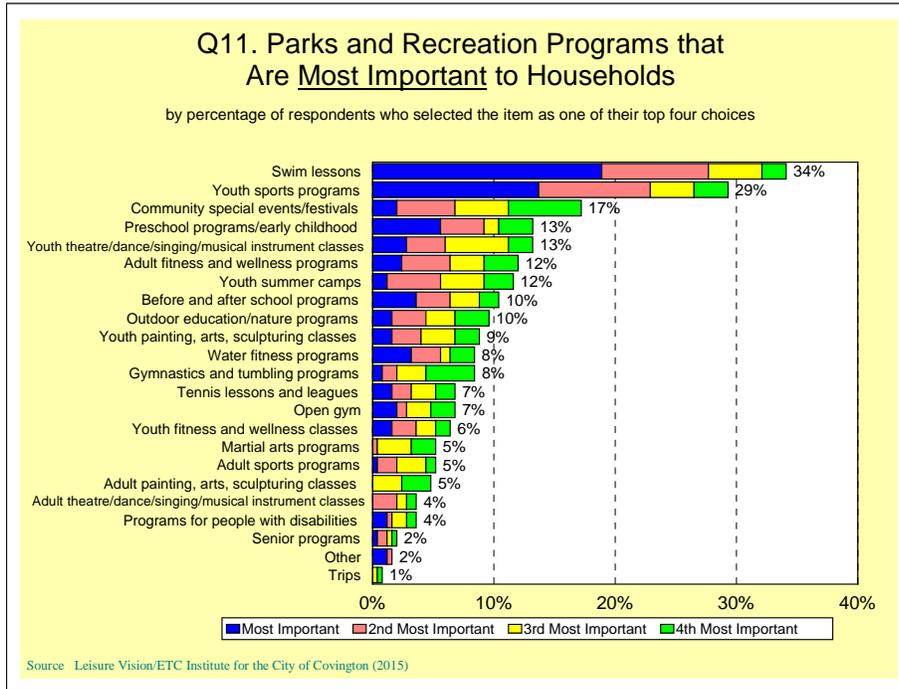
by percentage of respondents who selected the item as one of their top four choices

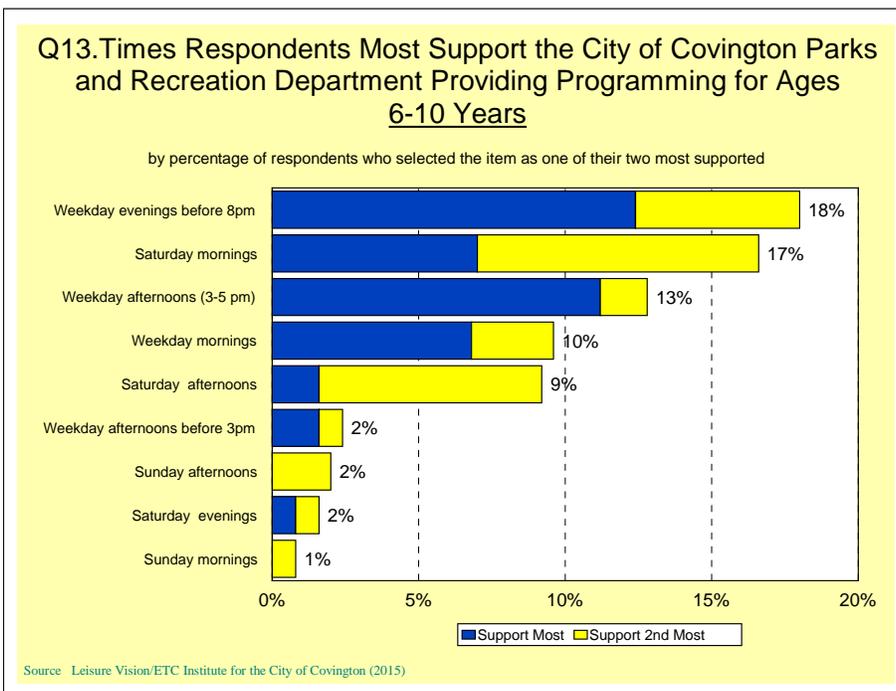
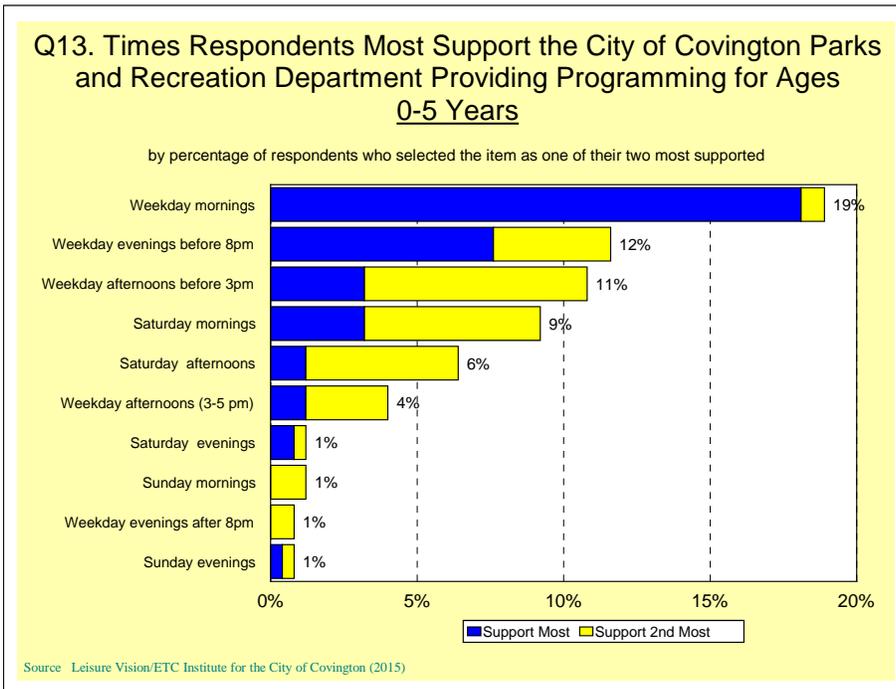


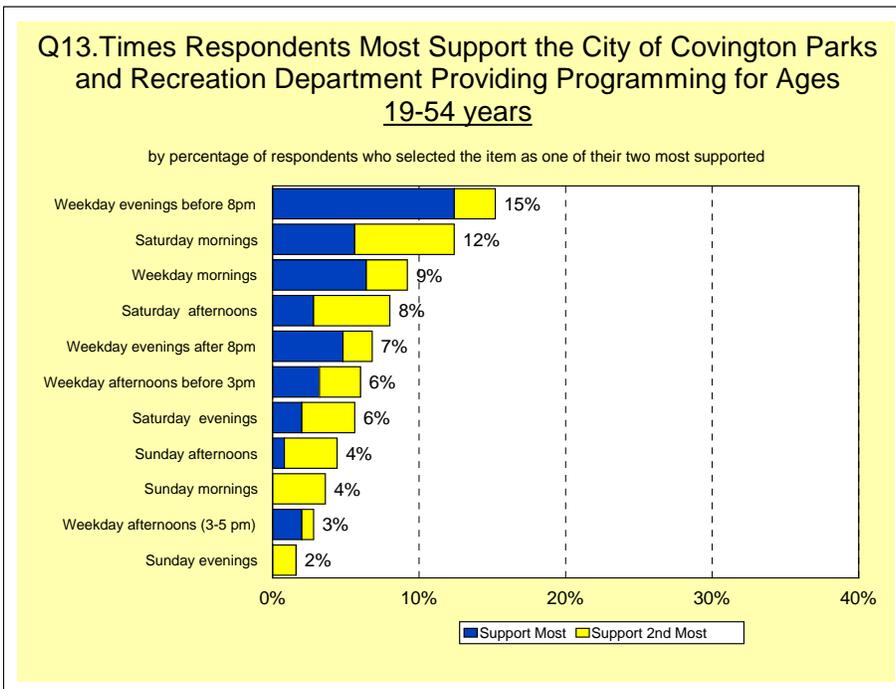
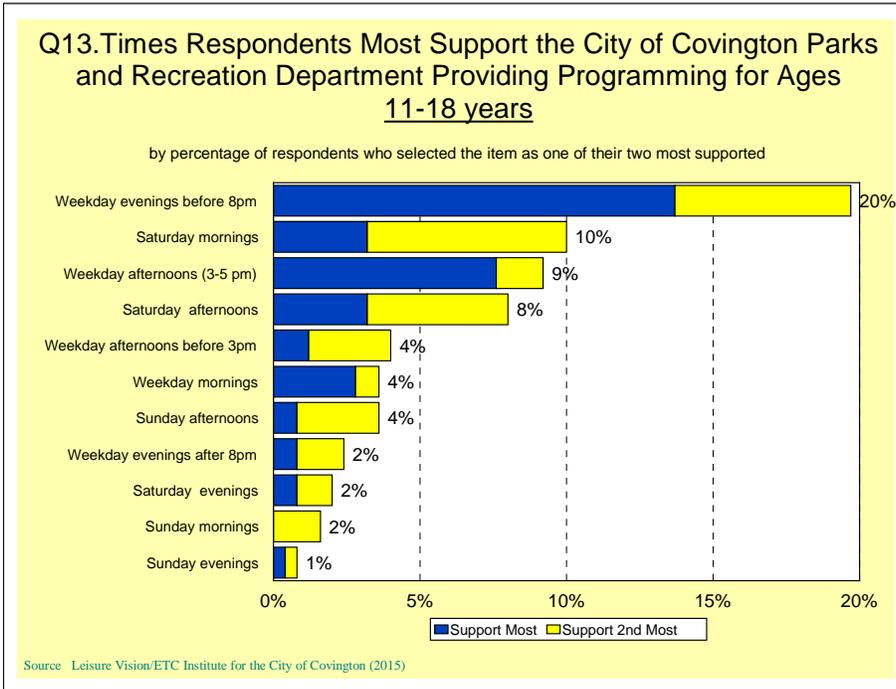
Source: Leisure Vision/ETC Institute for the City of Covington (2015)

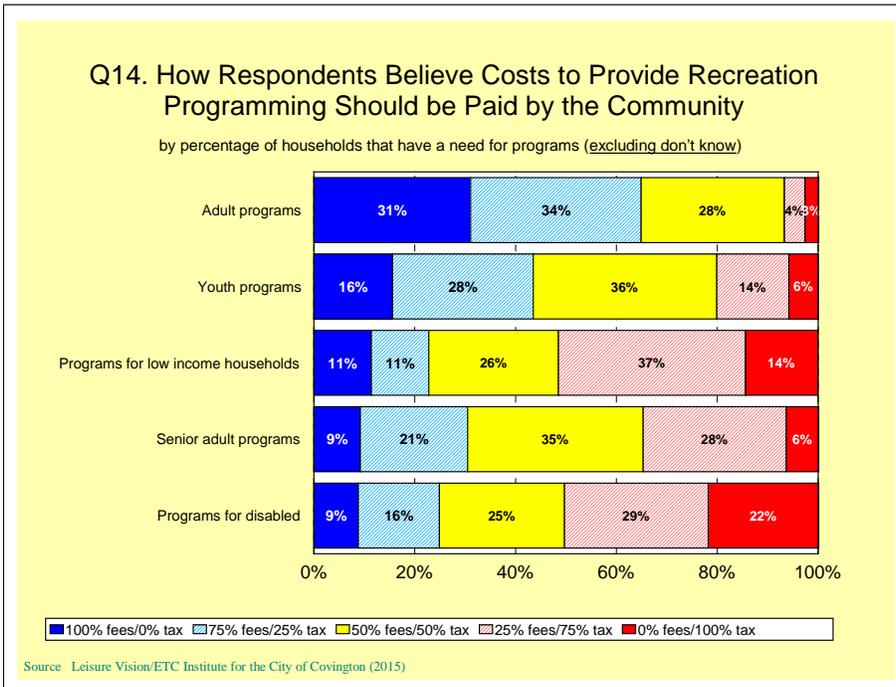
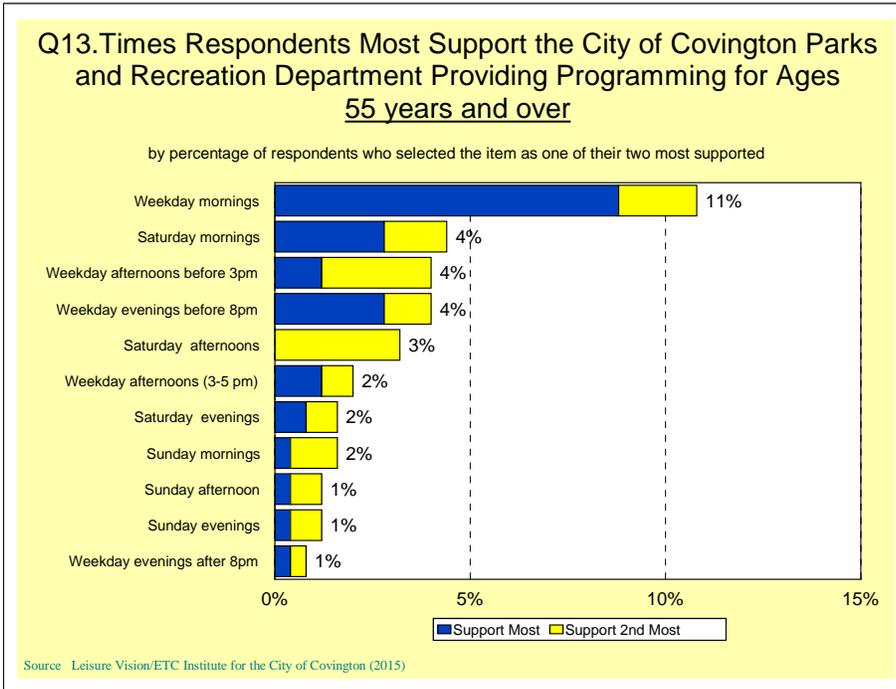


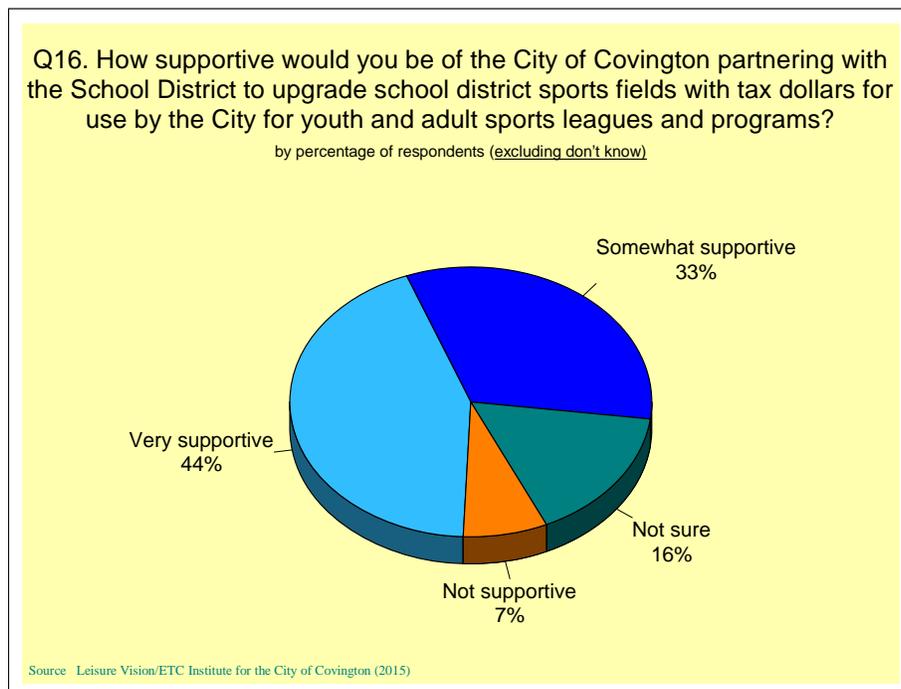
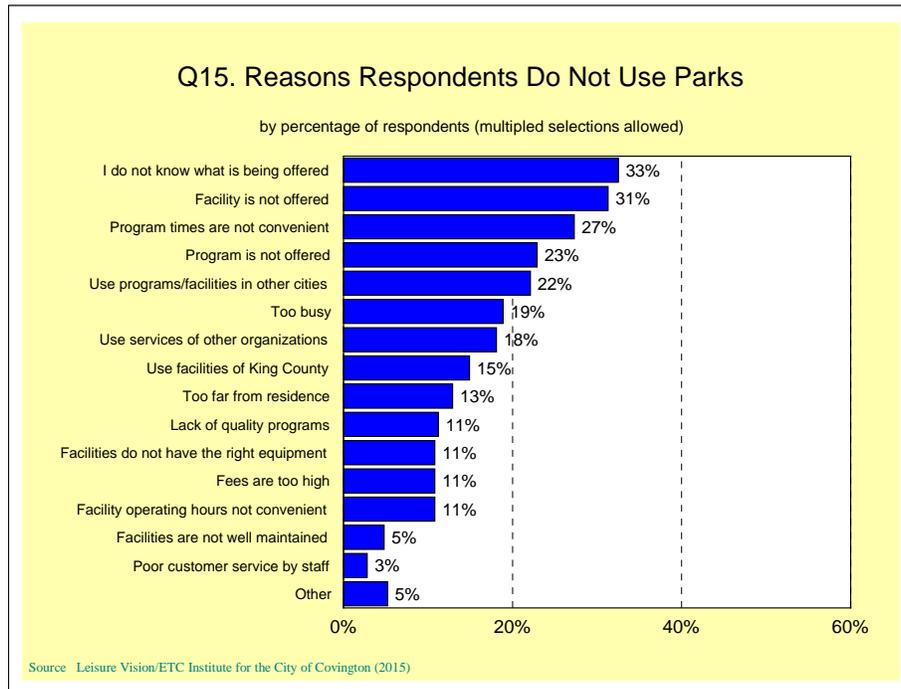


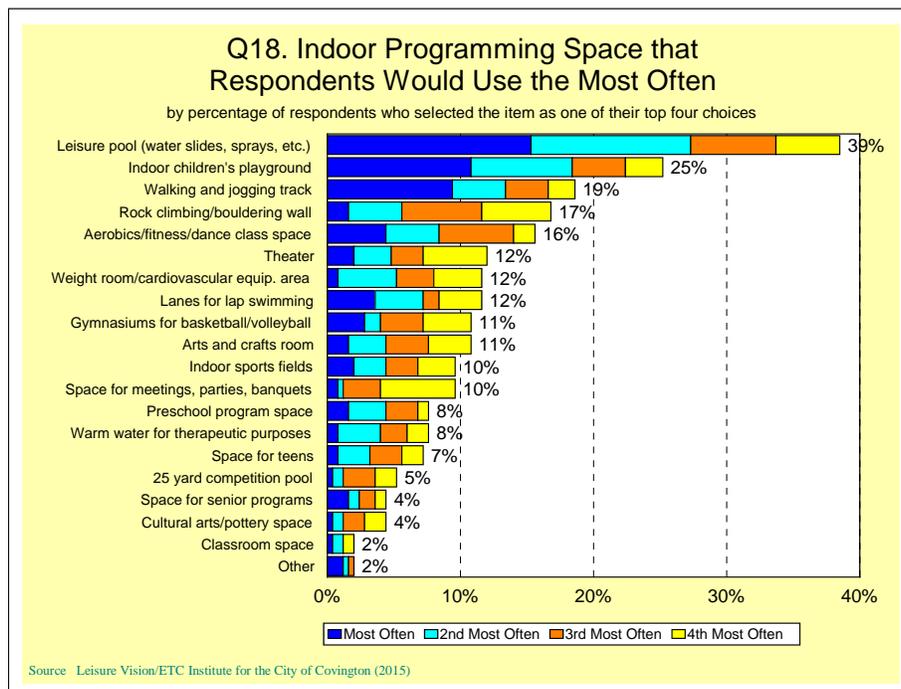
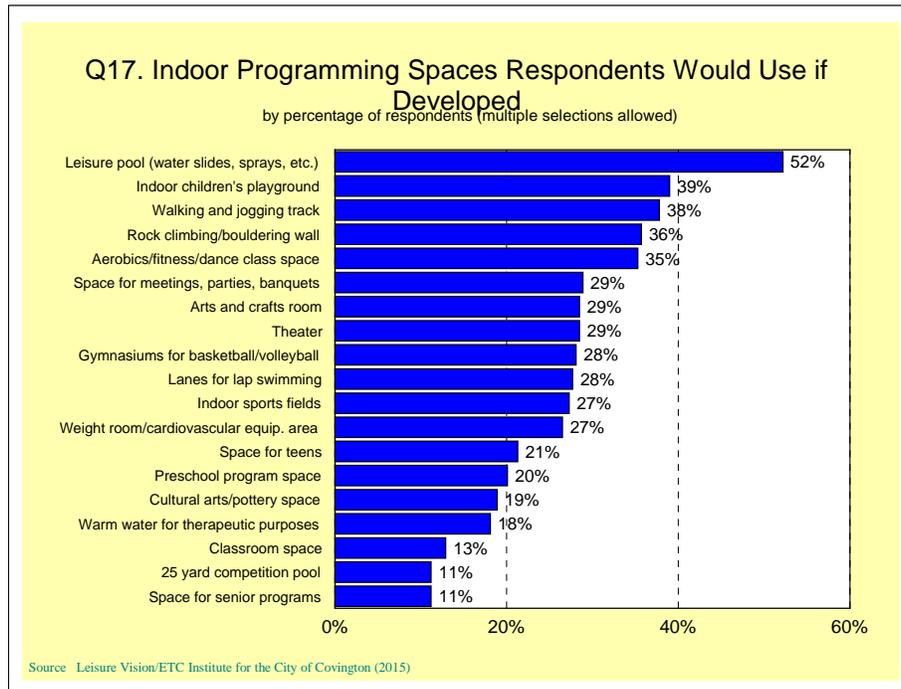






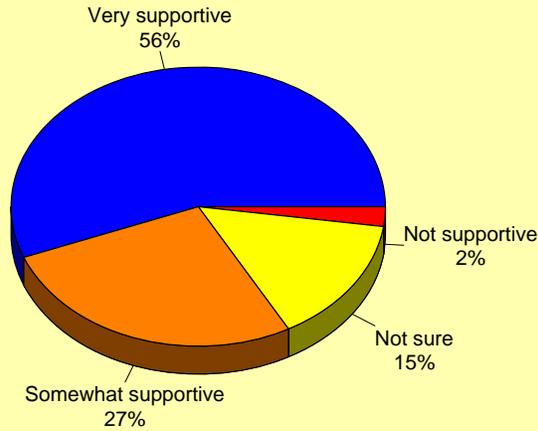






**Q19. How supportive would you be of creating a special recreation district to be composed of Respondents of the City of Covington and neighboring communities?**

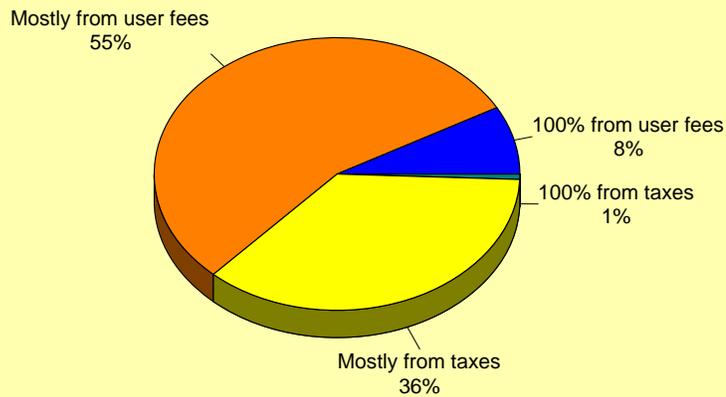
by percentage of respondents (excluding don't know)



Source Leisure Vision/ETC Institute for the City of Covington (2015)

**Q20. If a Multi-Use Facility Was Developed, Respondents Feel the Facility Should be Paid for by the Following Means:**

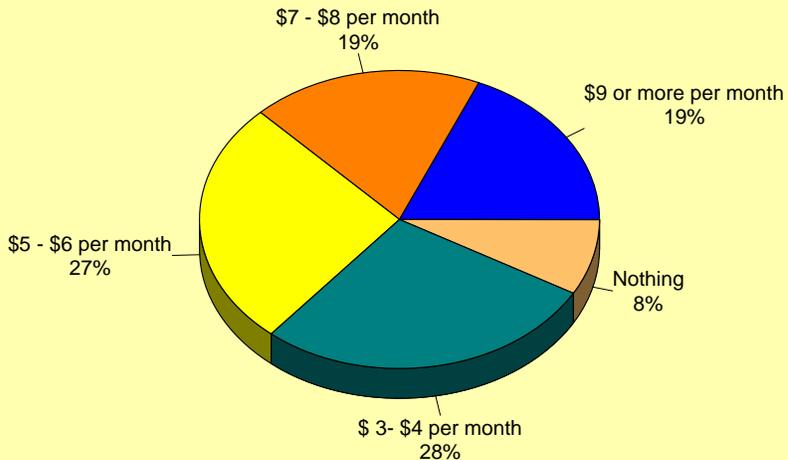
by percentage of respondents (excluding don't know)



Source Leisure Vision/ETC Institute for the City of Covington (2015)

Q21. What is the maximum amount of additional tax revenue you would be willing to pay to develop and operate the types of indoor programming spaces that are most important to you and your household?

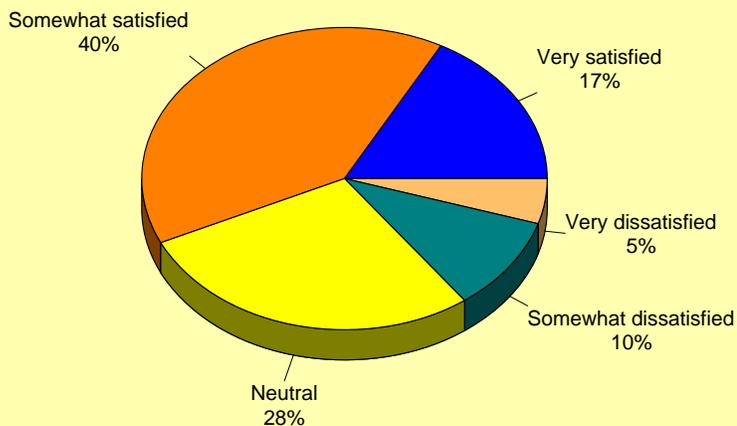
by percentage of respondents (excluding don't know)



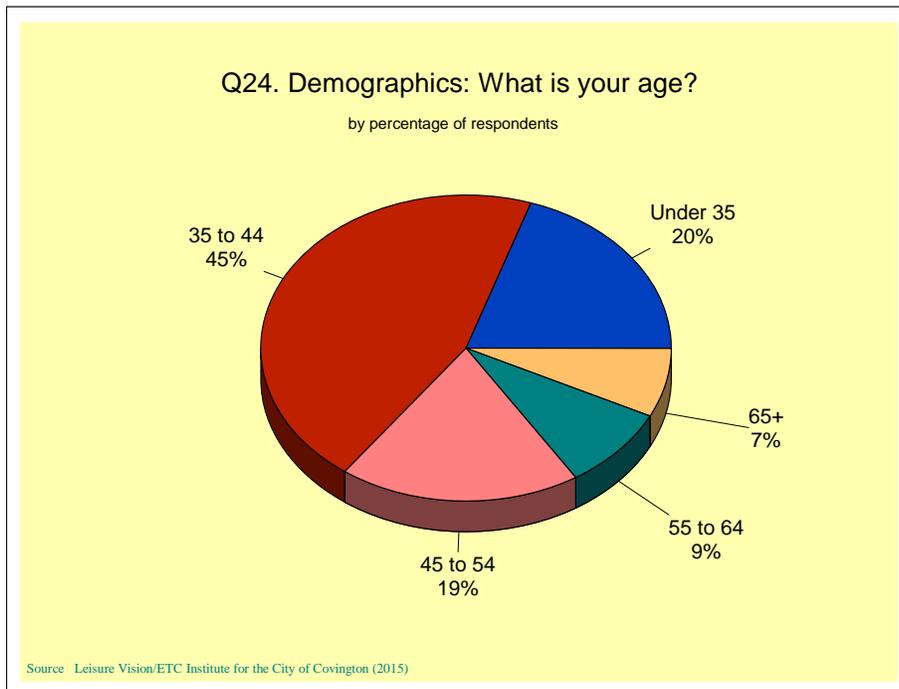
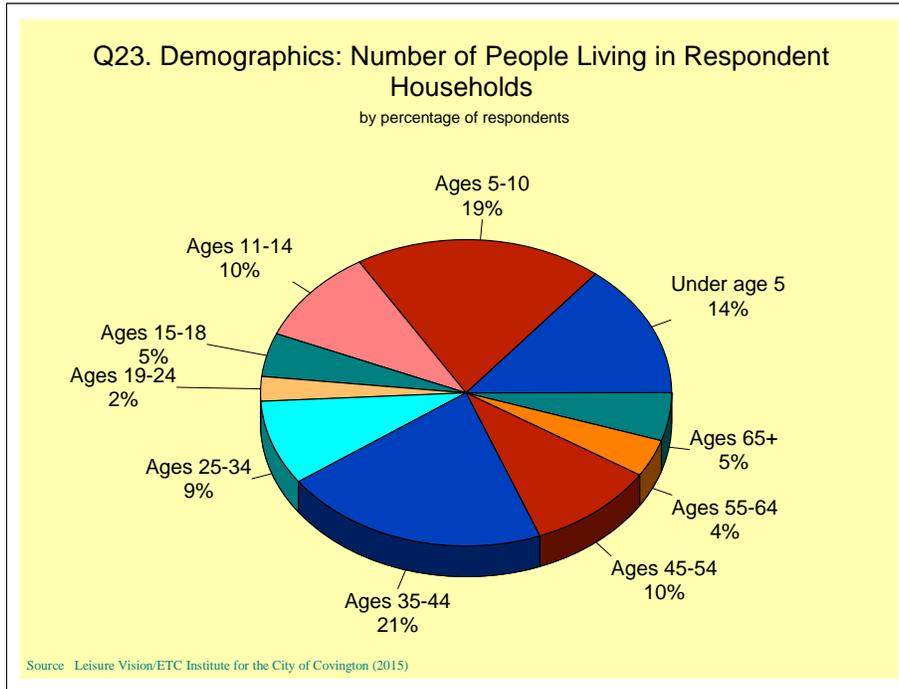
Source Leisure Vision/ETC Institute for the City of Covington (2015)

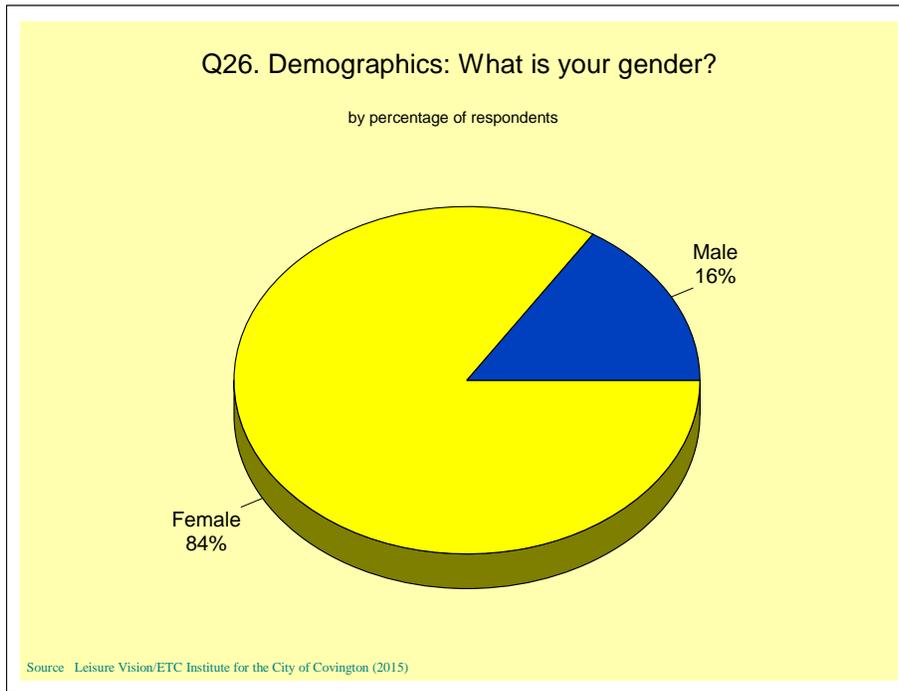
Q22. Please rate your level of satisfaction with the overall value that your household receives from the City of Covington Parks and Recreation Department

by percentage of respondents (excluding don't know)



Source Leisure Vision/ETC Institute for the City of Covington (2015)





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# APPENDIX E: Public Meeting Notes



## MEETING NOTES

PROJECT NUMBER: # 15-068PLN      ISSUE DATE: May 15, 2015  
PROJECT NAME: Covington Parks, Recreation & Open Space Plan

RECORDED BY: Steve Duh / Jean Akers  
TO: FILE  
PRESENT: Members of the Public  
Staff from City of Covington  
Project Team Members from Conservation Technix & MacLeod Reckord

**SUBJECT:      PROS Plan: Open House Meeting Notes (05/13/15)**

Community members were invited to an open house on Wednesday, May 13, 2015 from 4:00 - 8:00 p.m. at City Hall. As the first of three public meetings for the PROS Plan, the project team prepared informational displays covering three major themes for parks and recreation. These display stations included Recreation Programming, Trails & Linkages and Parks & Outdoor Recreation. Attendees were encouraged to talk with staff, record their comments and complete a written comment card.

City staff and project team staff engaged with participants to explore current issues, needs and interests related to park, trail and recreation opportunities and needs.

### COMMENTS PER DISPLAY STATION

The following represents a summary of the comments received at each display station.

#### Parks & Outdoor Recreation Station

**How satisfied are you with your neighborhood park? Is there a demand for more park space in your neighborhood?**

- Definitely a demand for a playground and more structure play areas
- Demand for better maintenance of existing parks

**What outdoor recreation opportunities are too limited or missing in Covington?**

- Missing general purpose fields; there is too much emphasis on scheduled-use fields
- Need an interconnected trail system so people can get place to place on foot
- Indoor basketball courts at a multi-use facility with waterpark features
- Ice rink
- Food bank
- Outdoor pool
- Love the idea of community gardens

**Are there enough playgrounds available for younger kids? Older kids?**

- No! We need a playground

**PROS Plan: Open House Meeting Notes (05/13/15)**

Covington Parks, Recreation & Open Space Plan

Project Number # 15-068PLN

Page 2

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- We need at least one, hopefully two, huge playgrounds where families that have younger and older kids can all play together
  - Playground
  - Splash park
  - Dog park

**Are there enough outdoor recreational opportunities for teens? Seniors? Special needs groups?**

- Not for seniors; they go to Maple Valley. Need a senior center

**What do you want kids to remember about growing up in Covington?**

- Walkability - getting to places on foot
- Playing on really cool playgrounds
- Participating in community sports
- Being proud to live here

**-- Priorities Voting Board (tally of dots)**

- 10 – Expand and/or Renovate the Aquatic Center
- 9 – Multi-Use Community Recreation Center
- 8 – Water Spray Park or Splash Pad
- 8 – Improve and/or Enhance Existing Parks
- 7 – Additional or Synthetic Turf Sport Fields
- 5 – Multi-Use, Paved Trails
- 5 – Picnic Shelters & Playgrounds
- 5 – Land Acquisition for Future Parks
- 3 – Off-Leash Dog Areas

**-- Map Board & Chart Pad (sticky note comments)**

- Consider if HOA Timberlane eliminates pool - convert to a public splashpad / water park
- Don't ignore the existing facilities to build shiny new stuff only
- Jenkins Creek Park - what are plans for future? Play area is desired
- CCP - we leave the City for soccer!
- CCP - parking needed
- Local rock climbing facilities, especially for kids

**Trails & Linkages Station**

**What are the key routes you would take, but don't because of access restrictions or other concerns?**

**Where are the missing links?**

- Neighborhood access to the library from the west
- Walking along 516/Kent Kanglely is unpleasant
- Sidewalk on 164th by library

**PROS Plan: Open House Meeting Notes (05/13/15)**

Covington Parks, Recreation &amp; Open Space Plan

Project Number # 15-068PLN

Page 3

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- Sidewalk and lights on 156th
  - 262nd desperately needs sidewalks \*\*
  - Sidewalk over SR-18 on 180th Ave SE - no shoulder to walk on, 35 mph plus speeders
  - Sidewalks or connecting trails along 156th, 256th & 240th, etc

**What trail improvements would encourage you to walk or bike more frequently?**

- Connect the bits of trails that now exist, so I could actually get somewhere \*\*

**What other community destinations would be well served by direct and safe bicycle and pedestrian trails?**

- Connect commercial and residential areas, so people have the option to walk \*\*

**What is the average distance you prefer to cover when you use trails?**

- Any distance - I usually choose to walk over drive, but I like to walk somewhere with a purpose (i.e., going to the store)

**-- Map Board & Chart Pad (sticky note comments)**

- More continuous multi-use trails
- Better and safer pedestrian route along 272nd \*\*
- Sidewalk from high school to library (along 164th)
- Walkable downtown
- Summer events for families
- Farmers market
- Recreation facility in town - walkability to town center
- Need to advertise where there are trails
- Turf sport fields

**Recreation Programming Station****What are the key routes you would take, but don't because of access restrictions or other concerns?****Where are the missing links?**

- Neighborhood access to the library from the west
- Walking along 516/Kent Kanglely is unpleasant
- Sidewalk on 1664th by library
- Sidewalk and lights on 156th
- 262nd desperately needs sidewalks \*\*
- Sidewalk over SR-18 on 180th Ave SE - no shoulder to walk on, 35 mph plus speeders
- Sidewalks or connecting trails along 156th, 256th & 240th, etc

**PROS Plan: Open House Meeting Notes (05/13/15)**

Covington Parks, Recreation & Open Space Plan

Project Number # 15-068PLN

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**What recreation opportunities are missing?**

- Adult softball
- More adult fitness programs - adult dance and other classes

**What kinds of recreation programs, activities or classes would you or your family use?**

- Public racquetball courts
- Soccer, volleyball, baseball - already use these through Covington Sports

**Are there specific age groups that need access to additional programs? What types of activities or programs should be offered?**

- Adult soccer league
- Rowing

**Aquatics**

**As the community continues to grow, are there other improvements you would suggest?**

- Hot tub, steam room, sauna
- Play area for small kids (siblings waiting for older kids)
- Moving water (lazy river, etc)
- More pool space

**Are there other aquatic programs the City should offer or schedule more time slots for?**

- Schedule more of everything

**What blend of facilities would encourage you to visit more often or stay longer?**

- Waterpark features
- Multi-use space (work-out rooms)

**-- Priorities Voting Board (tally of dots)**

- 9 – Youth sports
- 6 – Adult sports programs
- 6 – Outdoor education / nature programs
- 5 – Youth summer camps
- 5 – Adult fitness and wellness programs
- 2 – Youth fitness and wellness programs
- 2 – Before and after school programs
- 2 – Other? (write-in: Senior center)
- 1 – Gymnastics and tumbling programs
- 0 – Martial arts programs

**-- Map Board & Chart Pad (sticky note comments)**

**PROS Plan: Open House Meeting Notes (05/13/15)**

Covington Parks, Recreation &amp; Open Space Plan

Project Number # 15-068PLN

**Page 5**

- 
- Food bank? Available in Covington?
  - Senior center
  - Future town center should include recreation civic center
  - Pool should be like the Federal Way pool; need to mix young/older kids
  - Good range of recreation programs currently offered
  - Teen center needed
  - Smaller youth sports/summer camps with 2 adults (like CCS - Eric & Trudy Shrug) better than larger organizations (Skyhawks)

Every effort has been made to accurately record this meeting. If any errors or omissions are noted, please provide written response within five days of receipt.

-- *End of Notes* --

cc: Angie Feser  
File

**Covington Days Public Input (July 18-19, 2015)**

**Ideas for Covington Parks and Recreation**

- Community Center
- Vandalism prevention in Jenkins Creek Park
- (2) Climbing wall
- Map of parks and facilities
- Bike trail map with G.P.S.
- Longer trails connecting to CCP
- Morning public swim

**Most Popular Overall**

- (8) Downtown community park/town center
- (7) Community Center
- (7) Walking/biking trails
- (6) Dog park
- (5) Spray park

**What do you think of Covington Parks and Recreation?**

- (2) Need off-leash dog park
- Better access to Jenkins Creek Park
- Art park
- (2) More public swim time (greater than 1 hour)
- Centrally located (downtown) park/playground/spray park
- In Friendship Park, replace some baby swings with “big kid” swings
- (2) Tennis courts
- Bike trails and ball fields
- More lighting
- More trail connectivity/improvement
- Like music at the lake, would like to see Idol Eyez (band)
- Dance groups for kids/teens (ballet, jazz, hip-hop)
- Adult sport programs
- Senior center of equal quality as surrounding cities
- More parks
- Change pricing for public swim, don’t have to pay for sessions individually
- Sports for teens (volleyball)
- (6) Community center
- Playground and spray park at new park
- Trails
- Concerts
- Covered basketball court
- Soccer
- (2) Town center
- (2) Great water exercise classes for adults, love the pool
- (2) Affordable family membership at aquatic center
- (2) Community gathering/picnic/potluck
- (2) More adult programs at aquatic center

**What can Covington Parks and Recreation do for you?**

- (3) Large community playground, handicap accessible
- Bocce ball
- (2) Disc golf
- (2) Walking trails
- (2) Water feature/park
- Adult men's softball
- Rollerblade
- Special needs soccer
- Adaptive gymnastics (special needs)
- Lunch in the park for kids (summer)
- (2) Dog park
- Bus transportation

**Post-It Notes**

- Need children's play structures with shade
- Tennis courts and coaching
- Fix bridge to Jenkins Creek Park
- Take ownership of Sun Crest to develop as a park
- We love Jenkins Creek Park!
- Need a map of parks
- Salt water bromine water pool
- Add signs to Jenkins Creek Park – hard to find
- They're perfect!
- Off-leash dog park
- Didn't know we had a parks and recreation department



## MEETING NOTES

PROJECT NUMBER: # 15-068PLN                      ISSUE DATE: September 9, 2015  
PROJECT NAME: Covington Parks, Recreation & Open Space Plan

RECORDED BY: Steve Duh / Jean Akers  
TO: FILE  
PRESENT: Members of the public  
City Council and Parks & Recreation Commission members  
Staff from City of Covington  
Project Team Members from Conservation Technix

**SUBJECT: PROS Plan: Open House #3 - Meeting Notes (09/08/15)**

Community members were invited to an open house on Tuesday, September 8, 2015 from 4:30 - 7:00 p.m. at City Hall. Eleven informational displays were provided covering three major themes for parks and recreation. These display stations included sample draft recommendations for Recreation Programming, Trails & Linkages and Parks & Outdoor Recreation. Attendees were encouraged to talk with staff, record their comments and complete a written comment card. City staff and project team staff engaged with participants to explore needs and interests related to park, trail and recreation.

### COMMENTS PER DISPLAY STATION

The following represents a summary of the comments received.

#### Display Stations

- Improving the skatepark is a good idea for teenagers
- Sprayground / Spray park (3)
- Spray park at the Town Center
- Teen activities / Bike / Skatepark
- Use rubberized surfacing at playgrounds (i.e., poured in place rubber)
- More signs to parks / More visible
- Playground at Jenkins Creek Park (2)
- Need good play structures
- Safe routes to parks, especially along 180th Avenue SE south of the community park
- Indoor recreation center with basketball, volleyball, racquetball, etc

#### -- Map Board (sticky note comments)

- The area south and east of SR-18 does not have any playgrounds on public parkland - only at schools and private HOA parks
- Add a safe ped/bike connection along SE 262nd Place to SE Wax Road
- Realign proposed trail connection east of Jenkins Creek Elementary School

**PROS Plan: Open House #3 - Meeting Notes (09/08/15)**

Covington Parks, Recreation &amp; Open Space Plan

Project Number # 15-068PLN

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Every effort has been made to accurately record this meeting. If any errors or omissions are noted, please provide written response within five days of receipt.

-- *End of Notes* --

cc: Angie Feser  
File

# APPENDIX F: Stakeholder Meeting Notes



## MEETING NOTES

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PROJECT NUMBER: # 15-068PLN                      ISSUE DATE: June 3, 2015  
PROJECT NAME: Covington Parks, Recreation & Open Space Plan

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RECORDED BY: Steve Duh  
TO: FILE  
PRESENT: 11 Teens from Kentlake High School  
Angie Feser - City of Covington  
Steve Duh - Conservation Technix

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**SUBJECT: Stakeholder Session: Teen Meeting Notes (06/01/15)**

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A group of teenagers attending Kentlake High School who reside in Covington were invited to participate in a short discussion about their interests in Covington life. The meeting occurred on Monday, June 1st during their lunch break.

City staff and project team staff engaged with the teens to explore needs and interests related to parks, activities and recreation opportunities.

### COMMENTS

The following represents a summary of the comments received during the stakeholder discussion.

Things teens like about Covington

- Open spaces (e.g., live near middle school and that has basketball and field)
- Proximity - nothing is too far away - typically can get somewhere in seven minutes or less
- Good places to eat / good food
- Easy and close-by walking
- Covington Days and Tree Lighting

Interested in and want more places to shop and hang-out

- Clothes
- Food/cafes
- GameStop
- Laser tag
- Arcade
- Movie theater

Things to do - wish list

- Drive-in theater
- IMAX

**Stakeholder Session: Teen Meeting Notes (06/01/15)**

Covington Parks, Recreation & Open Space Plan

Project Number # 15-068PLN

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- Trail like the one in Maple Valley (Lake Wilderness Trail)
- Open field (unprogrammed) for hanging out with friends
- Free things to do, like hanging out at Lake Meridian or Lake Wilderness
- Amphitheater

Indoor space

- Gymnasium for volleyball
- Indoor track
- Pool - another one, more central
- Skating rink
- Bouldering

Pool

- Many have been to the Covington Aquatic Center
- Uses of the Aquatic Center were for open swim, swim lessons, competitive swim and party (young kids)
- Outdoor pool would be cool - like KSTC (Kent)

Teens - in general

- Their lives are planned and scheduled, so when with friends looking for unplanned things to do
- They don't want to be over-scheduled or over-programmed
- Want open-ended, free-form spaces to be in and with peers
- There are programming differences between middle school and high school-aged teens; high school teens don't necessarily want to attend events with middle school teens

Spreading the word

- TV ads
- Social media (Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter) - not Facebook
- Make use of in school resources - connect with "Leadership Teachers" for students to post announcements, posters or videos

Every effort has been made to accurately record this meeting. If any errors or omissions are noted, please provide written response within five days of receipt.

-- End of Notes --

cc: Angie Feser  
File



## MEETING NOTES

PROJECT NUMBER: # 15-068PLN                      ISSUE DATE: June 3, 2015  
 PROJECT NAME: Covington Parks, Recreation & Open Space Plan

RECORDED BY: Steve Duh  
 TO: FILE  
 PRESENT: Kevin Holland – CEDC  
             Ed Cook – CEDC  
             Rebecca Gourley – Covington Reporter  
             Colleen McMeen – MultiCare  
             Kristi Lewis – Valley Medical  
             Charles Agron – Kentwood High School Booster Club  
             Angie Feser – City of Covington  
             Steve Duh – Conservation Technix

**SUBJECT: Stakeholder Session: Economic Development Meeting Notes (06/01/15)**

A group of local business and healthcare professionals attending were invited to participate in a discussion about their interests in Covington life. The meeting occurred on Monday, June 1st, from 3:00 - 4:00pm.

City staff and project team staff engaged with participants to explore current issues, interests and economic development potentials related to parks, trails and recreation opportunities in the City.

### COMMENTS

The following represents a summary of the comments received during the stakeholder discussion.

#### General / Introductory Comments

- There should be a priority of maintenance over new acquisition; we have enough land.
- Jenkins Creek Park - the church maintains upper sections, and there needs to be better access and parking to the park. Maybe one (some) of the parcels immediately west of the park can be acquired as a means to enhance access and/or provide parking.
- Businesses are getting smarter about wanting to be located where there workers can work, play and live in the same place. Covington needs to offer that full range of opportunity.
- Recreation center - it is an obvious funding challenge, but the City is good at working together with public and private partners and may be able to find a solution
- Recreation Center - some families don't have the resources to have bike or horse - need places for organized fitness or classes - that doesn't require a lot of parental participation and low/no cost
- A long time ago, people used to be able to go to the school for recreation - check out balls, use gym, tennis courts, etc.
- City should continue to explore ways to work with school districts for use of facilities
- Maple Valley school development is driving people toward Covington. Good schools.
- Ravensdale Field is example for a successful joint agreement, and the site is drawing more people to that area. In addition to sport field usage, also used by a walking group that does 20K steps/day

**Stakeholder Session: Economic Development Meeting Notes (06/01/15)**

Covington Parks, Recreation & Open Space Plan

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- Churches have shown interest in using some of their land for community uses -- Real Life Church - has 2 ball fields - Little League built the improvements with a \$1 lease annually for the use of the site
- Vineyard Church on 272nd has flat land that could be used for fields
- Covington has been referred to as a 'drive through' community - need better walking areas and trails, especially near schools - used for both travel and recreation - connect schools to business areas
- Having a FitBit wristband forces you to move and look for the safest way to walk
- Harder to run in Covington - too much traffic congestion
- There is no more big land for acquisitions for large parks

**Economic Development Considerations**

- Develop partnerships with big boxes (Costco, Home Depot) - sponsorships and other funding
- Healthy Wellness Program to businesses - MultiCare can offer free service, but has a paid version that could be used to further recruit businesses - maybe the City can help promote the benefits of the program in its marketing
- City center -- plaza space, food carts/pods for variety and convenience

**Near-Term Actions for the City to Pursue - Low Hanging Fruit**

- Covington Community Park - keep building it
- Jenkins Creek Park - improve and add play equipment, add land for parking/access
- Trails - open existing trails; add programming (i.e. 10K or 20K step programs); FYI, Maple Valley just got certified for a 5K run.

**Longer-Term Ideas Beyond the Next 5 years (2020)**

- City has to lead the conversation between public, private and NGOs
- something tangible and near-term -- provide a list of resources - where you can go and play. People don't know what's available or know places to play - info could be sent out via schools and health clinics -- could have an app
- Functioning recreation center for programs
- Focus on Covington Community Park - develop next phase
- Connected trails with parks and trailheads - connect to Soos Creek
- Maple Valley is looking at options for nature play at their Henry Switch site (look at earthplay.net for ideas)

**Other Interests / Ideas**

- Picnic shelters - city has only one in the entire city; need more (see Mud Mountain Dam as example)
- Maybe have water play feature or splash pad
- Have a space like the downtown park in Bellevue - also see Kent Station - plaza space
- Seattle - Beacon Food Forest - edible parks - not sure about the condition of the homeless population in Covington
- Covington Days needs a permanent location
- City focus - emphasize on young kids - get outside, healthy, active

**Stakeholder Session: Economic Development Meeting Notes (06/01/15)**

Covington Parks, Recreation & Open Space Plan

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- Nutrition and cooking classes - outdoor bbqs at parks
- Sport tournament space
- Mattson Middle School has two fields that aren't being used but are still maintained
- Mariners donated dirt and backstop for developed field at Life Center Church - maybe they would continue their support
- Consider rental mountain bikes to go from place to place
- Summer concerts in parks - yoga in parks
- Tahoma School District is working with the City of Maple Valley to do an interlocal agreement for indoor recreation space at new Tahoma HS to be located in Maple Valley
- Kent School District is interested in meeting with the City with regard to opportunities at Kentwood

Every effort has been made to accurately record this meeting. If any errors or omissions are noted, please provide written response within five days of receipt.

-- End of Notes --

cc: Angie Feser  
File



## MEETING NOTES

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PROJECT NUMBER: # 15-068PLN                      ISSUE DATE: July 23, 2015  
PROJECT NAME: Covington Parks, Recreation & Open Space Plan

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RECORDED BY: Steve Duh  
TO: FILE  
PRESENT: Jennifer  
          Kathy  
          Tom  
          Kathy  
          Donnella  
          Jane  
          Joan  
          Jerry  
          Irene  
          Kyle  
          Sean Conway – City of Covington  
          Heidi – City of Covington  
          Angie Feser – City of Covington  
          Steve Duh – Conservation Technix

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**SUBJECT: Stakeholder Session: Recreation Programming Meeting Notes (07/22/15)**

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A group of local residents attending were invited to participate in a discussion about recreation programming in Covington. The meeting occurred on Wednesday, July 22nd, from 9:30 - 10:30am.

City staff and project team staff engaged with participants to explore current issues, interests and programming ideas related to parks, trails and recreation opportunities in the City.

### COMMENTS

The following represents a summary of the comments received during the stakeholder discussion.

#### Recreation Programming

- There is not a whole lot for adults and seniors to do in Covington for recreation
- Some participants had never seen the City's recreation program guide
- Renton has entire guide for seniors that includes travel, exercise and classes
- As folks retire, there is little to motivate them to get out
- Specific program ideas include the following:
  - yoga
  - meditation
  - cooking classes
  - social activities
  - Zumba
  - gardening, pea patches

**Stakeholder Session: Recreation Programming Meeting Notes (07/22/15)**

Covington Parks, Recreation &amp; Open Space Plan

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- 
- organized/group walks on Soos Creek
  - organized trips
  - There is a preference to have local activities and stay in the community for recreation
  - There are many options available from surrounding communities of Kent, Renton, Auburn and Maple Valley. These are appealing both for programs and the specific venues. (Note - Kent and Maple Valley will close their senior centers)
  - There is a programming gap for teens too (not just adults/seniors). Athletics is covered well, but could use other activities for teens, including art, theater, acting classes, splash pad
  - Consider ways to serve residents with disabilities. Kent offers a strong adaptive recreation program for kids with special needs. Always fills fast with waitlist and is indication of demand.
  - Auburn has kids concerts and Friday night hang out for teens
  - At pool, there is sometimes conflict between senior users and youth classes, with seniors choosing to get out of the water when kid classes start due to mobility concerns, etc

**Getting the Word Out**

- Some attendees didn't know about the usage of the City Hall multi-use room for classes
- Reporter is not well distributed
- Use a mailer, be visible (it was good to be at Covington Days)
- Seniors like print material and place-based announcements work well; also word of mouth
- Not interested in seeking out info on the web, generally, the city website is not user friendly, especially the Aquatic Center registration. Several people said they would rather call the CAC rather than use the website to register for classes
- Older seniors need social activities and a place they can see other people and interact; play cards, have lunch/coffee, billiards, tai chi, etc
- Continue doing focus group discussions to seek out other opinions and perspectives, especially of teens and parents with young children
- Covington Days is great - people heard about it, even if they didn't attend

**Community Center Considerations**

- Covington only has two private gyms in town: LA Fitness and Cross Fit.
- Aquatics is good for older adults because it is low impact
- Maybe the City should look at the Timberlane HOA building as a possible rec/community center
- At 164th and 256th, there is an empty lot that could be a possible location for community center. Land adjacent might be available too
- Aquatic center is not very visible, not along a transit line, not in city center
- If the City were to pursue a new community center, it should be able to house spaces for teens, seniors and recreation programs/activities. Ideally, it would be located along a bus line and in city center, visible from freeway and have a cafe. It should be designed and planned for future growth of city, but watch the budget impact to the city.
- Be aware of retrofit and remodel costs if looking at existing structure (e.g., Timberlane)

**Stakeholder Session: Recreation Programming Meeting Notes (07/22/15)**

Covington Parks, Recreation & Open Space Plan

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**Facility Improvements**

- Trail improvement are needed along 256th between 164th and fire station - unsafe
- Address trail security, especially for women
- Trail across from Aquatic Center is short; would be nice to see it extended
- Gerry Crick Skatepark at 164th near Mattson has no supervision, no lighting, no parking. 164th is dangerous because people drive fast.

Every effort has been made to accurately record this meeting. If any errors or omissions are noted, please provide written response within five days of receipt.

-- End of Notes --

cc: Angie Feser  
File

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# APPENDIX G: Program Assessment

**City of Covington  
Parks, Recreation and Open Space  
Plan Update**

**Recreation Program Assessment**

1. Existing Recreation Programs & Services
2. Recreation Program & Services Trends
3. Recreation Programs & Services Future Needs
4. Recommendations and Roles of Other Providers

**User Fee Analysis**

1. Assessment of Current Fee Policy for Programs, Services and Facilities
2. Recommendations and Options

## Recreation Program Assessment

### Existing Recreation Programs and Services

This assessment of the existing recreation programs and services is based on information provided by the City of Covington Parks and Recreation Department.

Recreation programming is centered primary in four areas:

- General recreation
- Athletics
- Aquatics
- Special Events

### *General Observations:*

- Like many cities in the United States, Covington faces challenges in the delivery of recreation services in a cost effective and efficient manner.
- Recreation programming is affected by the general lack of indoor and outdoor spaces to support a wide variety of recreation services. The City relies heavily on school facilities (both indoor and outdoor fields) to support youth sports.
- Overall recreation programming is still being rebuilt from the elimination of the Parks & Recreation Department in the mid 2000's.
- Athletics was provided by a non-profit organization from 2007 through 2013 before it returned to parks and recreation.
- Programs serve a large number of non-residents. This is particularly true for aquatic programming as the Aquatic Center serves as a regional facility. Youth athletics also serves a significant number of non-residents.
- The vast majority of all general recreation programs are provided on a contract basis with the City of Covington working with other local providers. This is due in part to a lack of indoor recreation space in the city. Revenues are split with 20% to 30% going to the City and the balance to the contractor.
- The Department has strong tracking and record keeping regarding recreation programs and their registration and attendance numbers.

**Recreation Programs Participation Rates:** The following is an examination of the participation rates in programs in each of the four areas over the last 3 years. The 2015 figures are for a partial year only (winter and spring seasons).

General Recreation

2013 Recreation Programs	Winter	Sp/Sum	Fall
Alphabet Soup	0	0	0
Backyard Birds	0	0	0
Beginning Dance Combo	0	0	0
Beginning/Int. Dance Combo	0	0	0
Boating Safety	0	4	1
Dance Ballet 1	0	0	0
Dance Ballet 1/2	0	0	0
Dance: Ballet/Tap/Jazz Combo	0	0	0
Dance Beginning Ballet	0	1	0
Dance Beginning Hip Hop	0	1	0
Dance Beginning Jazz/Lyrical Combo	0	1	0
Dance Camp Disney Princesses & Friends	0	1	0
Dance Camp-Pop Stars	0	0	0
Dance-Boot Camp Teens	0	0	0
Dance: Creative Movement & Tap	0	0	0
Dance Hip Hop 1	0	0	1
Dance Hip Hop 2/3	0	0	0
Dance Jazz/Lyrical 1/2	0	0	0
Dance Jazz/Lyrical/Hip Hop Combo	0	0	0
Dance Pre-Ballet	0	0	0
Dance-Tap	0	0	0
Family Friendly Birding	0	0	0
Gymnastics Spring Break Camp	0	0	0
Gymnastics Summer Camp	0	0	0
Gymnastics Winter Break Camp	0	0	0
Gymnastics-Boys (3)	0	0	0
Gymnastics-Girls (18)	0	3	2
Gymnastics-Movement (3)	0	0	0
Gymnastics-Preschool (14)	0	5	4
Kentwood Youth Track & Field Summer Camp	0	0	0
Kids Cooking-Green Thumb Gardners & Budding Chefs	0	0	0
Kids Cooking-Sprouting Gardners & Seedling Chefs	0	0	0
Kidz Love Soccer 1	0	0	0

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Kidz Love Soccer 2: Skillz & Scrimmages	0	0	0
Kidz Love Soccer: Mommy/Daddy & Me	0	0	0
Kidz Love Soccer: Tot/Pre-Soccer	0	0	0
Little Athletes	0	0	0
Messy Time	0	0	0
My Gym Champions	0	0	0
My Gym Mighty Mite	0	0	0
My Gym Summer Camp	0	0	0
My Gym Waddler/Gymster	0	0	0
My Gym Whiz Kids	0	0	0
No Brain Drain Summer Math Day Camp	0	0	0
Rizzmic	0	0	0
Safe at Home	0	0	0
Stroller Striders	0	4	0
Super Sitters	16	0	15
Yoga	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>23</b>

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<b>2014 Recreation Programs</b>	<b>Winter</b>	<b>Spring</b>	<b>Summer</b>	<b>Fall</b>
Art Expeditions	0	0	0	0
Art Exploration/Teens-Batik	0	0	0	0
Art Exploration/Teens-Clay Printmaking	0	0	0	0
Art Exploration/Teens-Impasto Painting	0	0	0	0
Art Exploration/Teens-Sumi Ink	0	0	0	0
Boating Safety	0	9	0	0
Bricks 4 Kidz Animal Grossology	0	0	0	0
Bricks 4 Kidz Brick Olympics	0	0	0	0
Bricks 4 Kidz Gadgets and Gizmos	0	0	0	9
Bricks 4 Kidz Space Adventure	0	0	0	3
Dance Ballet 1	0	0	0	0
Dance Ballet 1/2	0	1	0	0
Dance: Ballet/Tap/Jazz Combo	1	0	0	0
Dance Camp Disney Princesses & Friends	0	0	3	0
Dance Camp-Pop Stars	0	0	0	0
Dance-Boot Camp	0	0	0	0
Dance: Creative Movement & Tap	0	0	0	0
Dance Hip Hop 1	0	1	0	0
Dance Hip Hop 2/3	0	0	0	0
Dance Jazz/Lyrical 1/2	0	0	0	0
Dance Jazz/Lyrical/Hip Hop Combo	0	0	0	0
Dance Pre-Ballet	0	0	0	0
Dance-Tap	0	0	0	0
Davinci's Playground Series	0	0	0	0
Engineering Challenge Fast & Furious	0	0	0	0
Engineering Challenge for Kids	0	0	0	0
Engineering Challenge Real World Addition	0	0	0	0
Dog Obedience Basic Manners	0	0	0	0
Gymnastics Spring Break Camp	1	0	0	0
Gymnastics Summer Camp	0	0	15	0
Gymnastics Winter Break Camp	0	0	0	0
Gymnastics-Boys (3)	0	0	2	1
Gymnastics-Girls (18)	0	4	0	9
Gymnastics-Movement (3)	3	0	0	2
Gymnastics-Preschool (14)	2	2	5	6
Hatha Yoga	0	0	0	0
K-6 Arts and Crafts Time	0	0	0	0
Kentwood Youth Track & Field Summer Camp	0	0	55	0

City of Covington PROS Plan Update

Kidz Love Soccer 1	4	6	13	0
Kidz Love Soccer 2: Skillz & Scrimmages	0	6	5	0
Kidz Love Soccer: Mommy/Daddy & Me	0	0	4	0
Kidz Love Soccer: Soccer 1 Techniques and Teamwork	0	0	0	0
Kidz Love Soccer: Tot/Pre-Soccer	7	8	7	0
Martial Arts (13)	0	0	0	0
Passport to Art and Culture	0	0	0	0
Skyhawks Basketball Camp	0	0	0	0
Skyhawks Flag Football Camp	0	0	0	0
Skyhawks Soccer Camp	0	0	0	0
Safe at Home	8	0	0	10
Steve Goucher Baseball Clinic	0	0	0	0
Stroller Striders	0	0	0	0
Super Sitters	9	8	0	6
Teen Art Studio	0	0	0	0
Teen Time Travel: Ancient Art & Culture	0	0	0	0
Vinyasa Flow Yoga All Levels	0	0	0	0
Watercolor Painting	0	0	0	0
Yinyasa Flow Yoga All Levels	0	0	0	0
Yoga	0	0	0	0
Yoga Playdate	0	0	0	0
Zumba	0	8	8	23
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>69</b>

City of Covington PROS Plan Update

<b>2015 Recreation Programs (two seasons only)</b>	<b>Winter</b>	<b>Spring</b>	<b>Summer</b>	<b>Fall</b>
Acting 4 Kidz (8)	0	2		
Bootcamp-Outdoor Group Fitness (9)	0	0		
Bricks 4 Kidz Cranium Contraptions (3)	21	1		
Bricks 4 Kidz Planes, Trains, and Automobiles! (3)	2	0		
Bricks 4 Kidz President's Break Camp	0	0		
Bricks 4 Kidz Spring Break Camp	0	0		
Bricks For Kidz Spring Package	0	0		
Daddy Daughter Spring Fling	0	5		
Dance: Ballet & Tap	5	4		
Dance: Ballet/Tap/Jazz Combo	7	3		
Dance: Creative Movement & Tap	0	0		
Dance: Creative Movement/Pre-Ballet & Tap	6	4		
Dog Obedience Basic Manners	0	0		
Fitness Bootcamp	0	0		
Go, Grow, and Glow Nutrition Education Camp	0	0		
Green Thumb Gardeners and Budding Chefs	0	0		
Gymnastics Spring Break Camp	0	6		
Gymnastics-Boys (3)	0	0		
Gymnastics-Girls (18)	13	6		
Gymnastics-Movement (3)	1	1		
Gymnastics-Preschool (14)	12	2		
Kidz Love Soccer 2: Skillz & Scrimmages	5	1		
Kidz Love Soccer: Mommy/Daddy & Me	7	2		
Kidz Love Soccer: Soccer 1 Techniques and Teamwork	5	0		
Kidz Love Soccer: Tot/Pre-Soccer	3	0		
Martial Arts (13)	2	1		
Parenting the Love and Logic Way	11	0		
Safe at Home	5	4		
Steve Goucher Baseball Camp	0	0		
Steve Goucher Spring Break Baseball Camp	0	0		
Super Sitters	8	1		
Zumba	22	0		
<b>Total</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>43</b>		

2015 figures are for the winter and spring seasons only. It is interesting to note the high cancellation rate among General Recreation Programs. The number for the last three years has averaged approximately 60%, with the best rate occurring in 2015 (only 19%). The reason for

the high cancellation rate is due in part to programs that are being offered by contractors not reaching their minimum registration numbers.

Athletics

<b>Athletics</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>
Basketball	663	423	528
Spring Soccer	420	0	439
Spring Baseball	317	0	238
Flag Football	121	83	14
Fall Soccer	520	376	
Volleyball	205	201	
Summer Camps	206		
Adult Softball	72		
Spring Basketball	132		
<b>Totals</b>	<b>2,656</b>	<b>1,083</b>	<b>1,219</b>

It should be noted that from 2007 through 2013 Athletics was provided by Covington Community Sports, a non-profit youth sports organization. 2015 figures are only for the winter and spring seasons only.

Aquatics Attendance

<b>Aquatics</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>
Rec Swim Attendance	26,523	25,376	7,567
Activities (Lessons, etc.)	44,857	43,689	9,259
Water Exercise	6,602	6,856	2,312
Rentals	32,490	35,360	8,580
<b>Totals</b>	<b>110,472</b>	<b>111,281</b>	<b>27,718</b>

Rentals include private parties and user groups. The Covington Aquatic Center is close to capacity on its programming capabilities.

Special Events

<b>Special Events</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>
Student Art Show	860	680	582
Covington Days	N/A	3,000	
Covington KidsFest	500	750	
Summer Concerts	590	480	
Tree Lighting	N/A	500	
<b>Totals</b>	<b>1,950</b>	<b>5,410</b>	<b>582</b>

**Programs by Classifications:** The following is a classification of current Covington recreation programs and services by classifications commonly found in parks and recreation agencies nationally.

**Note:** Program lists are based on a review of class and program offerings for 2013-2015.

<b>Area</b>	<b>Focus</b>	<b>Programs</b>
<b>Sports</b>	Youth Sports	Basketball, Baseball, Flag Football, Soccer, Volleyball, Gymnastics, Camps, Martial Arts
	Adult Sports	Softball, Basketball
<b>Fitness</b>	Youth Fitness	N/A
	Adult	Zumba, Yoga, Bootcamp
<b>Cultural Arts</b>	Youth	Ballet, Tap & Jazz, Hip Hop, Art, Acting
	Adult	N/A
<b>Education</b>	Youth	Math Camp, Bricks for Kidz, Engineering Challenge
	Adult	N/A
<b>Aquatics</b>	Youth	Swim Lessons, Swim Teams, Water Polo, Dash & Splash Camp, Recreation Swimming
	Adult	Water Exercise, Masters, Triathlon Adult Swim Training, Aqua Zumba, Recreation Swimming, Lap Swimming
<b>General Interest</b>	Youth	Cooking, Super Sitters, Safe at Home
	Adult	Parenting, Dog Obedience

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Area	Focus	Programs
<b>Special Needs</b>	Youth	Swimming Special Olympics
	Adult	N/A
<b>Special Events</b>		Sweetheart Swim, Underwater Egg Hunt, Daddy Daughter Dance, April Pool's Day, Moms Swim Free for Mother's Day, Relay for Life, Dad Swim Free for Father's Day, Summer Splashtacular, Covington Days Festival, Summer Concerts in the Park, Outdoor Family Concert, Outdoor Family Movie, Covington KidsFest, Summer's End Fun Run, Purple Light Nights, Harvest Festival, Spooky Swim, Halloween Swim, Veterans Swim Free for Veteran's Day, Holiday Tree Lighting and Hollydaze, Hollydaze Float-in Movie
<b>Outdoor Recreation</b>		Birding, Boating Safety,
<b>Seniors</b>		N/A
<b>Teens</b>		Art, Time Travel
<b>Self Directed</b>	Youth	Swimming
	Adult	Swimming

***Existing Programs and Services Assessment:*** The following assessment examines the strengths and weaknesses of the current Covington Parks and Recreation Department program offerings.

*Strengths -*

- The majority of recreation programming focuses on youth.
- The Department has a strong aquatic programming emphasis with a lesson and water exercise program. There is also strong competitive swim team utilization from school district teams as well as a USA Swimming Team.
- There is a significant Athletics Division that conducts most all of the youth team sports offered in the community.
- Special events is another strength of the Parks and Recreation Department with a wide variety of events offered throughout the year. A significant number of these events are aquatic based.
- There are other programs spread over a variety of categories from cultural arts to fitness, education and general interest.

*Weaknesses –*

- No programs are offered for seniors.
- There are a very limited number of outdoor recreation and special needs programs that are offered.
- Teen programming is minimal.
- There are a limited number of programs for adults and families.
- There are minimal changes in program and service offerings on a seasonal basis.
- There does not appear to be a long range program plan in place to guide future programming decisions.

The Parks and Recreation Department will need to determine if the focus on the current program areas should continue into the future or should move in another direction. The following is a general assessment of the major program areas.

- *Youth Sports* – Currently the City provides programs for a number of team sports. With the general lack of youth sports organizations (and a reduction in middle school sports programs) in the area taking on the responsibility for some organized youth team sports activities, the Parks and Recreation Department will need to continue to have a role in the future. There may also be opportunities to expand youth sports camps and clinics.

The City also has some programming available in individual and lifetime sports such as tennis, gymnastics and martial arts. It will probably be necessary to expand these types of programs in concert with other community organizations that focus on sports. In addition, the Department may need to increase its focus on the development of adventure sports (skateboarding, climbing, fencing, Ultimate Frisbee, BMX, etc.)

- *Adult Sports* – The City is not currently a provider of adult sports leagues or individual sports. This is due in part to the fact that there are limited facilities available for sports activities and the priority is youth sports. Since adult sports can often generate significant revenue, there may need to be an increased emphasis in this area in the future. Designating certain facilities or time periods for adult sports may be necessary if greater focus is going to be placed on this program area. The Athletics Division may also want to concentrate on developing more individual and adventure sports for adults.
- *Fitness* – Without a doubt, this is one of the greatest areas of growth in public recreation programming. With a society that has an increasing awareness of the benefits of good health and a realization that obesity (especially among children) is a major risk for Americans, there is a much higher demand for programming in this area. The Parks and Recreation Department currently has few fitness program due in part to limited facilities, but this area may need additional focus in the future. The Department should also emphasize the importance of integrating wellness initiatives into other program areas as well. Partnering with health care providers for more medically based services will be essential.
- *Cultural Arts* – This is currently a rather small program area for the Department and it is anticipated that additional emphasis in this area is probably going to be needed. Any expansion in this area will likely require coordination with other non-profit cultural arts organizations and for-profit firms present in the Covington area.
- *Education* – Currently the Department’s educational focus is primarily in the area of youth programming. This type of programming is most often being provided by the school district or specialized non-profit or private providers. It is not anticipated that the City will grow its educational programming much in the future in this area.
- *Aquatics* – With a significant aquatic center, the Department will need to continue to stress aquatic programming, especially learn to swim classes for children, as a primary program area. Aquatic exercise programs should also continue to be emphasized. With the competitive orientation of the pool, continuing to encourage swim and water polo team use will be critical.
- *General Interest* – Currently one of the smaller program areas, this is often one of the important areas of focus for recreation departments with an emphasis on youth summer camps and after school programs. This area will likely need greater emphasis in the future.

- *Special Needs* – It appears that the Department’s only special needs programming is hosting Special Olympics in relation to aquatics. It is difficult for most recreation agencies to have a significant special needs program on their own. As a result many departments in a region will often band together to provide these services in a more cost effective manner. The Department should consider partnering with other organizations for special needs programming.
- *Special Events* – The Parks & Recreation Department has a major focus on special events not only on a city wide basis but also at the Aquatic Center. Increasingly recreation departments across the United States are seeing a greater emphasis placed on special events that draw communities together as well as attract individuals from outside the community. At times the focus on special events has resulted in other traditional recreation programming being neglected. Special events will certainly remain an important program area for the Department but the number and variety of events may need to be controlled. Other community groups should be encouraged to be the primary funders and organizers of as many community wide events as possible.
- *Outdoor Recreation* - There does not appear to be much emphasis given to this program area by the Department. With outdoor areas and resources available, there will need to be a greater emphasis on these activities. This could include such programs as environmental day camps, nature hikes, bird watching, etc. Specific programs could still be offered primarily by other community based organizations with some coordination by the City.
- *Seniors* – The Parks and Recreation Department currently does not offer any senior programming. It should be noted that as the Baby Boomer generation ages they are bringing new needs and expectations to senior services that is more in line with active recreation pursuits that they have grown up with. This will require different types of senior services and a change in facilities as well. The younger senior (55 to 65) generally has a greater interest in fitness, sports, and travel. They are also willing to spend money for these activities. The older senior should not be forgotten either. Much of their needs tend to focus more on socialization, nutrition, and other life skill needs. Partnering with other senior agencies and providers is strongly recommended.
- *Teens* – There are very few programs offered in this area. In the future additional services and programs will need to be targeted to this age group. It is anticipated that these will primarily be offered by other providers with experience with this age group.
- *Self Directed* – Even though these types of activities are not formal programs they do require that the City provide the opportunities and time in facilities for this to occur. This includes recreational and lap swimming, open gym, playground use, walking/running and other activities that are taking place in parks and recreation areas and facilities that are not organized.

**Recreation Program & Services Trends**

To assist in the process of developing a recreation programs direction for the City of Covington Parks & Recreation Department, it is important to understand some of the trends that are being seen nationally with recreation programming over the last 10 years. However, it should be noted that each community is unique and the region of the country has a strong bearing on trends and other operational factors.

***General Program and Services Trends by Area:***

<b>Area</b>	<b>Programs</b>
Sports	Youth
	Adult
	Team
	Individual
	Camps and Clinics
	Tournaments
	Adventure/Non-Traditional
Fitness/Wellness	Sports Specific Training
	Group Fitness Classes
	Personal/Small Group Training
	Education
	Nutrition
Cultural Arts	Wellness Special Events
	Performing Arts (dance, theater, music, etc.)
	Visual Arts (painting, ceramics, pottery, etc.)
	Arts Events
Youth	Before and After School
	Summer Camps/School Break Camps
	Preschool
Education	Teen
	Language
	Tutoring
	ESL
	Science
Outdoor	Camps
	Outdoor Education
	Outdoor Adventure
	Environmental Events

<b>Area</b>	<b>Programs</b>
Seniors	Fitness/Wellness
	Cultural Arts
	Self Improvement
	Education
	Trip Programs
Aquatics	Lessons
	Fitness
	Competitive (Swim/Dive/Water Polo)
	Therapy
	Specialty Classes
General Interest	Personal Development
	Specialty
Special Needs	Inclusion Programs
Special Events	Community Wide Events
	Facility Based Events
Self Directed	Activities organized and conducted by the participant themselves

Recreation departments now often serve as a coordinating agency and a clearinghouse for multiple recreation organizations and providers, in an effort to bring a comprehensive scope of recreation programs to a community. This has also increased the number of partnerships that are in place to deliver a broader base of programs in a more cost effective manner. There is also a much stronger emphasis on revenue production and raising the level of cost recovery to minimize tax dollar use to offset recreation programming.

Many programs are now offered with shorter sessions (two to three classes) or on a drop-in pay as you go basis (especially fitness). In addition, there has also been a concerted effort to integrate conventional recreation programming with community based social service programs and education. Most of the social service programs are offered by other community based agencies and education is often coordinated with school districts.

***Specific Recreation Program and Service Trends:***

<b>Area</b>	<b>Specific Programs</b>
Sports	Youth Lacrosse
	Adult Soccer
	Adult Cricket
	Youth & Adult Rugby
	Senior Pickleball
	Youth Camps and Clinics
	Individual Sports (Fencing)
	Adventure/Non-Traditional (BMX, Mountain Biking, Disc Golf, Ultimate Frisbee)
	Youth Sports Specific Training
Fitness/Wellness	Functional Training Classes
	Personal/Small Group Training
	Yoga
	Nutrition
Cultural Arts	Healthy Lifestyle Education
	Music Production for Youth
Youth	Digital Media
	Before and After School Programs at Recreation Centers
Education	Camps
Outdoor	Eco-Tourism
	Environmental Education
Seniors	Fitness/Wellness
	Baby Boomer Focused Activities
Aquatics	Therapy
	Triathlon Training
General Interest	Personal Finance
Special Events	Community Wide Events

***Keys to Providing Recreation Programs and Services in the Future:***

**Fee Setting:** In order to accomplish a high level of recreation services, recreation departments have been much more aggressive in their fee setting with the goal of covering more operational expenses for most programs. However, with a more entrepreneurial approach to assessing fees for activities comes the need to develop a broad based scholarship program that allows for those individuals that cannot afford to pay the opportunity to participate in recreation activities. Such programs usually have a limited budget and do require the user to pay at least something for service.

**Use of Other Service Providers:** There has also been a movement away from the principle of public recreation departments having to be the actual provider of all recreation programs and services, to the concept of public agencies being the general coordinator and enabler of overall community recreation needs and resources. This has resulted in a great deal of programming now being conducted by volunteer youth sports organizations, adult sports associations, non-profit groups such as the YMCA and other social service organizations, as well as the private sector. This has reduced the financial obligations of the public sector, placed programming in the hands of organizations with the specific expertise (and often the facilities as well), and allowed the private sector to have a more active role in public recreation. There has also been an increase in the number of public agencies collaborating to bring a higher level of recreation service on more of a regional basis especially for more specialized services (special needs, outdoor education, etc.). This concept has become much more prevalent across the country with recreation departments being a clearinghouse of information and services offered by others while providing more basic recreation services itself.

**Facilities:** The vast majority of outdoor related recreation programming takes place in public parks with school facilities providing the other main venue. For indoor programs, school buildings are still the primary location for most activities with public recreation centers and other provider's facilities being the additional sites. With the demand for recreation programs and services continuing to expand at phenomenal rates, a new more innovative approach has been undertaken to find appropriate sites for many activities. This has resulted in partnering with private facilities (fitness centers, dance studios, outdoor aquatic clubs, etc.), non-profits (YMCA's, Boys & Girls Clubs, cultural arts centers, etc.) and even private schools for certain activities. With the demand for youth sports fields continuing to grow, it is not unusual for youth sports organizations to build and operate their own fields on their own property or on leased undeveloped public land.

**Staffing:** In order to continue to grow the number of recreation programs and services that are offered to a community, adequate staffing is necessary to not only conduct the program itself but also to supervise and administer the activities. With staffing costs being the single greatest expense item for parks and recreation departments, many agencies have attempted to minimize the number of full-time staff by contracting for certain programs or partnering with other providers for services (see other service providers above). The need to reduce full-time staff became even more acute with the poor financial condition of most municipal governments during the recent recession. However, even with this approach there still needs to be adequate full-time staff to oversee and coordinate such efforts. Part-time staff is still the backbone of most

recreation departments and make up the vast majority of program leaders and instructors. Many departments have converted program instructors to contract employees with a split of gross revenues (usually 70% to the instructor and 30% to the city) or developed a truer contract for services that either rents facilities and/or takes a percentage of the gross from another organization. The use of volunteers can help to augment paid staff but should not be seen as a substitute for them.

**Funding:** The basic requirement for the provision of recreation programs and services is a funding commitment associated with the development of facilities to support programs and staff to manage and provide the programming. This usually requires a tax dollar commitment but also other sources of funding including program fees, grants, and partnering with other agencies can also help with additional funding. In many recreation departments, funding limits have been the greatest single challenge to continuing to provide not only existing programs but also bringing on any new services.

**Administration:** Essential to developing a comprehensive recreation program is strong administrative oversight of the process. It starts with the development of an overall philosophy that will direct programming efforts by the public organization and determine the role of other providers. The philosophy should emphasize areas of focus by age group as well as program areas and also prioritize future program development options.

Key aspects of administration include:

In-house vs. contracted – As part of the programming philosophy a determination of what programs and services will be offered directly by the recreation staff and which will be contracted to other individuals or organizations must be determined. Increasingly recreation departments are turning to contracted services or the outright rental of facilities to other providers to broaden programming and limit the role of in-house employees.

Before determining which programs, and services to contract or have provided by others, an assessment of the specific pros and cons of such a move needs to be completed. A major aspect of this analysis should be to determine the financial impacts and quality of the services that will be provided. Key questions to be asked include:

- Are there public facilities available to support the program or service?
- Will this be the most cost effective method to obtain the program, service or function?
- Does the department have the knowledge and equipment to provide the program, service or function?
- Will the quality of the program, service or function suffer if it is contracted to other organizations?
- Are there other more qualified organizations that should provide the program, service or function?
- Is the service, program or function only available from a contract provider?
- Are the safety and liability risks too high to provide the program or service in house?

Marketing – There has to be the realization that recreation programming is a discretionary use of people’s time and money and as a result it is critical that there is a strong marketing effort to promote the recreation activities that are offered by public providers.

Registration - An aspect of marketing for recreation services is the ease of being able to register for these activities. This requires a fully computerized registration software package, the ability to register on-line, the acceptance of credit cards for service, and the ability to make payments over time. Covington has already adopted all of these recommendations

Record keeping – To determine the relative success of programming and the markets being served, accurate and timely record keeping is necessary. Registration numbers by class and activity area need to be kept and comparisons by programming season conducted. In addition expense and revenue numbers for each activity must be noted and compared to determine financial viability. Demographic records of who are taking recreation programs and where they live will determine specific markets that are being served and more importantly ones that may be overlooked. The only way to adequately keep such records is through complete computerization of not only registration but all records associated with programming.

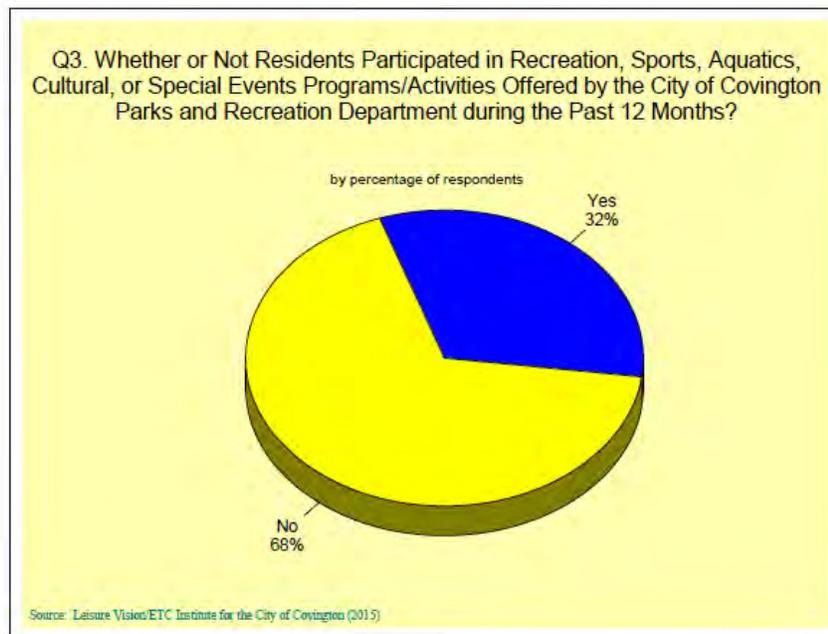
Evaluation – Ultimately the success of recreation programming must be measured by the community it serves. A determination of the satisfaction with existing programs and services as well as the needs and expectations for future programming must be measured through a formal evaluation process.

**Recreation Programs & Services Future Needs**

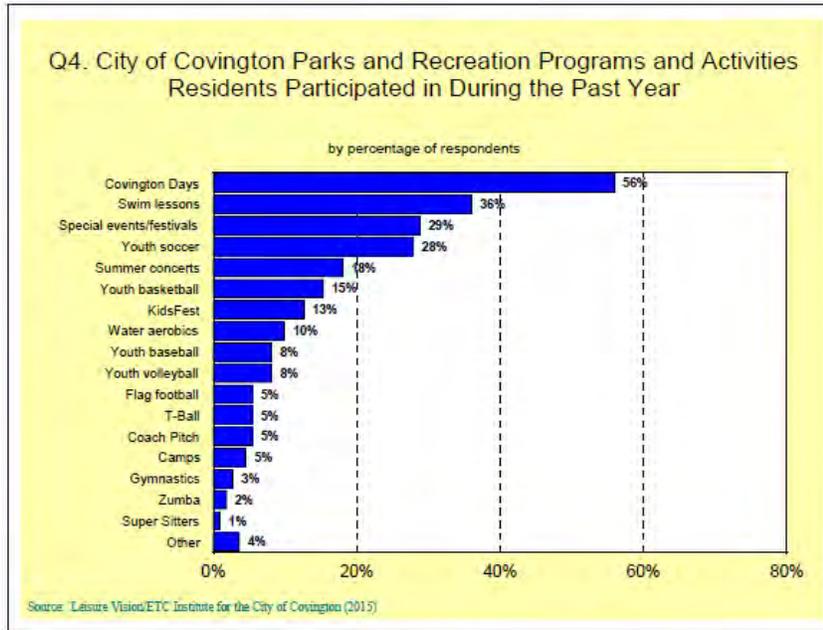
The key to determining the future direction for recreation programs and services to be delivered by the City of Covington’s Parks and Recreation Department, is through a public input process that identifies community needs and expectations.

The primary source of public input was the statistically valid survey that was administered to the residents of Covington during the summer of 2015. A total of 346 households completed the survey and the following were the results that have an impact on recreation programs and services.

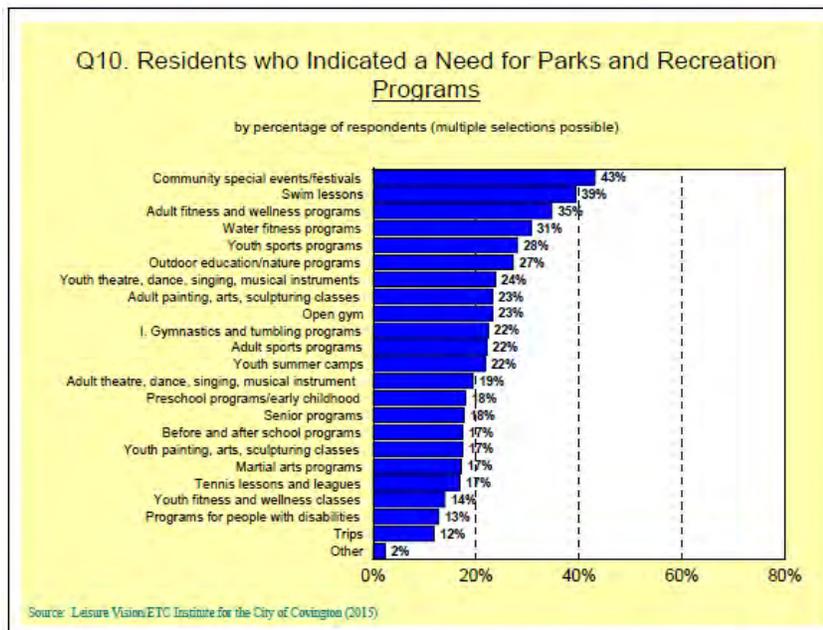
- Thirty-two percent of respondents indicated that they have participated in recreation, sports, aquatics, cultural or special events programs offered by the City of Covington in the last 12 months.



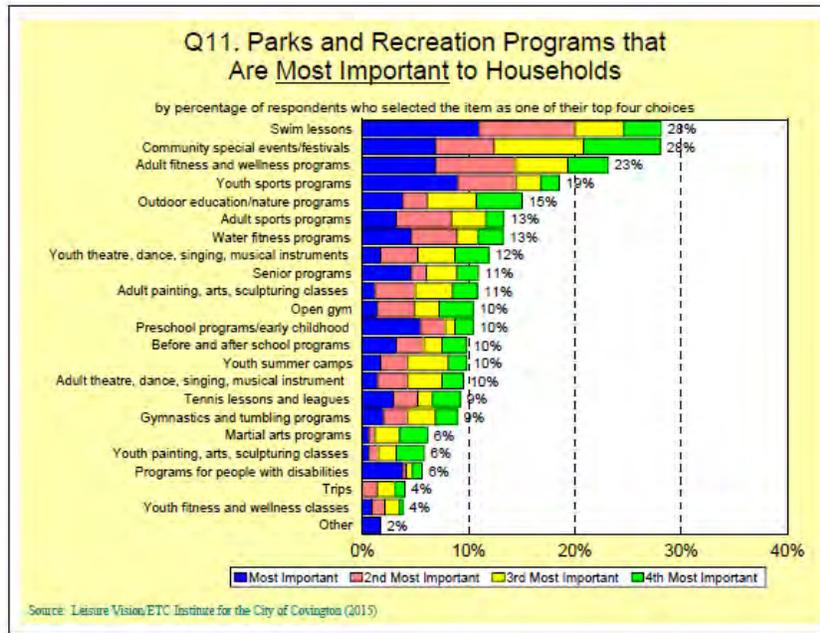
- Respondents participated in a variety of programs including Covington Days, swim lessons, special events/festivals and youth soccer.



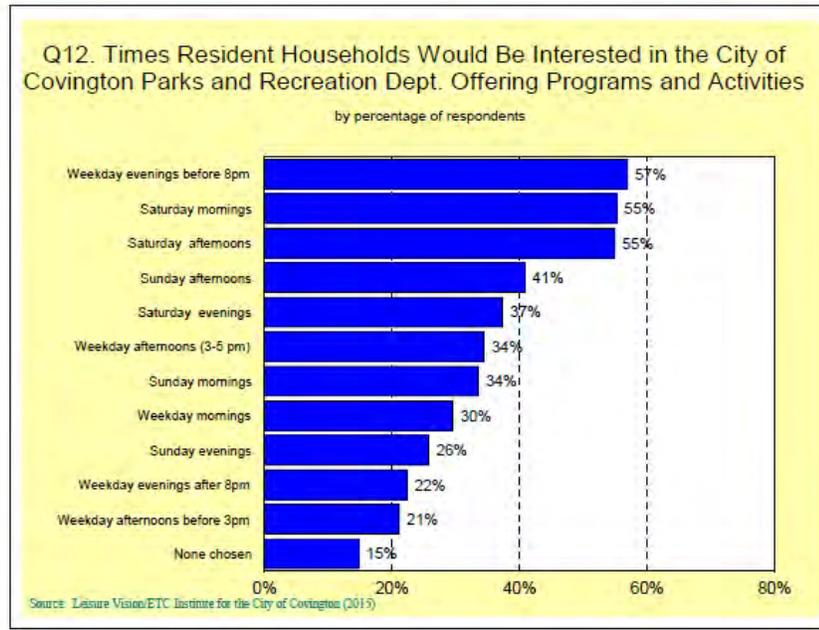
- Programs that households have a need for included, community special events/festivals, swim lessons, adult fitness and wellness program, water fitness programs, and youth sports programs.



- The most important programs were swim lessons, community special events/festivals, adult fitness and wellness programs, youth sports programs, and outdoor education/nature programs.



- The key times to offer programs included weekday evenings, Saturday mornings, and Saturday afternoons.



Responses to this question varied by the age group being served:

**Ages 0- 5** – preferred weekday mornings, Saturday mornings, and weekday afternoons.

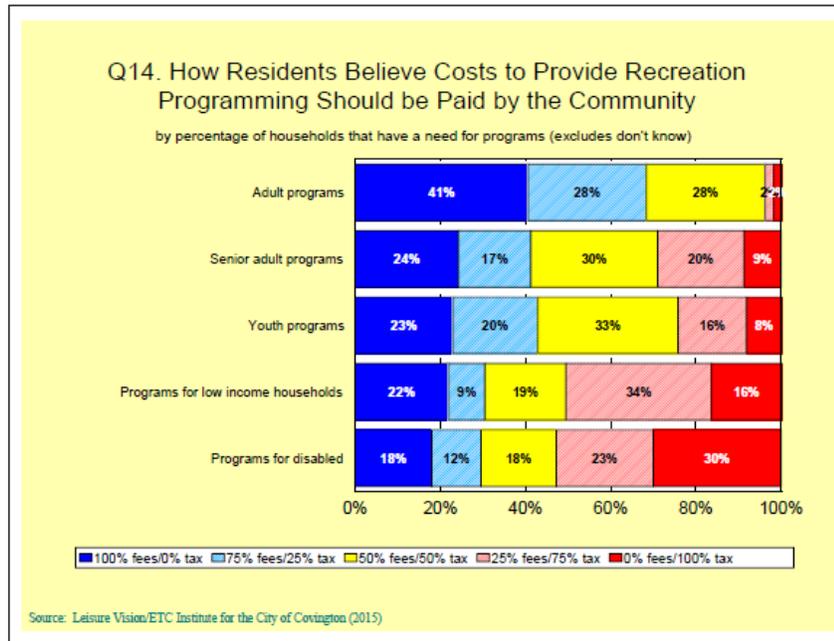
**Ages 6-10** – preferred weekday evenings, Saturday mornings and Sunday afternoons.

**Ages 11-18** – preferred weekday evenings, Saturday afternoons, and Saturday mornings.

**Ages 19-54** – preferred weekday evenings, Saturday afternoons, and Saturday mornings.

**Ages 55 and older** – preferred weekday mornings, weekday afternoons, and Saturday afternoons.

- Respondents generally supported the concept of user fees supporting at least 50% of the cost of programs and facility usage.



- In addition to questions regarding recreation programs, there were also questions about indoor program spaces that could impact programs and services. Indoor program spaces that people would use most often included:
  - Walk/jog track
  - Leisure pool
  - Indoor playground
  - Aerobics/fitness space
  - Weight/cardio space

Beyond the survey, a series of open houses and focus group meetings were held in the community. These included meetings with teens, economic development individuals, recreation programming representatives, input gathered during Covington Days, and a general community open house. Some of the key findings included:

- Greater emphasis on fitness, youth sports, adult sports and outdoor education.
- Wellness programs for local businesses.
- An increase in teen and senior programming.
- Teen programming, with a separation between middle school and high school kids.
- A greater emphasis on serving people with special needs.
- A strong interest in a community center that can serve a cross section of needs in the community.
- An expanded aquatic center.

**Recommendations and Roles of Other Providers**

The following are a number of general recommendations regarding future recreation programming. This is based in large part on the information that has been derived from meetings with staff, the survey and other public input sources that are part of the master plan process.

- **Program Classifications:** The following chart identifies and summarizes possible core programs, secondary programs, and support program areas for the Parks & Recreation Department. The placement of programs into these three categories does not indicate the overall importance of these activities in the community but rather the role of the Department in providing these programs.
  - *Core Programs* – are those programs that are a primary responsibility of the Parks & Recreation Department to provide as City of Covington based activities.
  - *Secondary Programs* – are those programs that are a lower priority to be provided directly by the Parks & Recreation Department but may be offered by other organizations through contract with the City.
  - *Support Programs* – are programs that are not a priority for the Parks & Recreation Department to be providing directly to the community but where the City may provide support through facilities and promotion of activities for other organizations.
- In order to accomplish the designation of programming into the three categories of core, secondary, and support it is necessary to have specific criteria for placement.

**Criteria**

*Facilities* – does the City have the necessary facilities to support the program? Without the needed facilities the program would have to be in the support category.

*Number of People Served* – does the program or service serve a relatively large population base? The greater the number of people served, the more likely the program is to be in the core category.

*Cost/Revenue* – what is the cost of providing the program in relationship to revenues generated? The better the cost recovery level, the more likely the program is to be a core or secondary service.

*Demand* – is the program or service in high demand by the community? The higher the demand the greater the likelihood of the program being in the core area.

*Partnerships* – are there partners that can assist with the provision of programs and facilities? Partnerships place a program in the secondary or even support category.

*Other Providers* – are there other providers that are able to provide the program or service? If there are viable other providers then the program is probably in the support category.

*Economic Benefit* – does the activity provide an economic benefit to the community and attract visitors? The greater the economic benefit the more likely the program is to be in the core or secondary category.

- The following chart identifies and summarizes possible future core programs, secondary programs and support program areas for the Parks & Recreation Department.

<b>Programs</b>	<b>Core</b>	<b>Secondary</b>	<b>Support</b>
Youth Sports	√		
Adult Sports		√	
Fitness/Wellness	√		
Cultural Arts		√	
Education			√
Aquatics	√		
General Interest		√	
Special Needs			√
Special Events	√		
Outdoor Recreation			√
Seniors			√
Teens		√	
Self Directed		√	

*Description*

- The new distribution of program areas from Core to Secondary and Support changes very little from the current focus on recreation programs.
- Youth Sports should see continued growth with team sports continuing to be offered by the Department as well as other providers. The future focus for Parks and Recreation should also be on camps and clinics as well as individual sports and adventure sports.
- Adult Sports should be added to include leagues in selected team sports as well as individual sports. This may require these activities to be offered by other outside groups or organizations.
- Fitness/Wellness will need to receive increased emphasis (across all program areas) as a response to a renewed interest locally and nationally on improving the overall health and physical condition of people, especially youth. A greater focus will need to be placed on the wellness aspect of this program area. The lack of a

true recreation center will restrict overall growth however. Partnering with a local health care provider in this effort is strongly recommended.

- Cultural Arts programming will need to receive an increase in emphasis especially in the area of performing and visual arts. However, it is expected that most specialized cultural arts programming will ultimately come from other organizations.
  - Education programming will primarily be the role and responsibility of other providers.
  - Aquatics will not see a significant change in its program offerings and the majority of these services will be provided by the existing Aquatic Center.
  - General Interest programming will need a greater focus with an emphasis on summer camps.
  - Special Needs programming should be provided through contracts with other providers or as a consortium with other cities in the area.
  - Special Events will continue to be a primary area of emphasis for the Department but the overall growth in the number of events should be limited in the future.
  - Outdoor Recreation activities should be provided by other agencies and organizations in the Covington area.
  - Seniors programming will need to increase as the overall population ages with a greater emphasis on the Baby Boomer generation. Working with other senior oriented organizations should reduce the need for the City to be a major direct provider.
  - Teen programming will need to see a much greater emphasis in the coming years but it is expected that these services will be primarily provided by other organizations.
  - With a variety of parks and an aquatic center, the City will always be a primary provider of venues for Self Directed activities.
- One of the areas of focus for the City of Covington in the future may be the development of a community recreation center. The addition of this amenity could have a significant impact on recreation programs and services that are provided by Covington Parks and Recreation.
  - The Parks & Recreation Department will need to develop a well conceived plan for the delivery of recreation services to the citizens of Covington for the next 5 to 10 years. This plan should take into consideration the future Core and Secondary services of the

Department along with the role of other organizations and recreation providers in the area. There will need to be clearly identified areas of programmatic responsibility to ensure that there is not overlap in resource allocation. From this, the Department needs to establish a five year program plan that identifies the priorities for program development, the responsible staff member and the required resources. Each program area or facility (Aquatic Center) would then develop their own five year plan with a specific and detailed implementation plan for each year.

- Based on the findings from the public process, there should be a greater emphasis in the future on the following program areas:
  - Community special events
  - Aquatics (swim lessons and water fitness)
  - Adult fitness and wellness
  - Youth sports
  - Adult sports
  - Senior programs
  - Teen programs
- Every program or service should be required to develop a program proposal form to determine the direct cost of offering the activity as well as the minimum number of registrants needed to conduct the program. This proposal form should also evaluate the need for the program, its market focus, and the ability to support the program priorities of the Department.
- Once each program or service is completed a program report should be completed that itemizes the exact cost and revenues that were generated by the program and the number of individuals served. This will determine if the program or service met its financial goals and also its service goals.
- Each program should also have a calculation of the cost per participant to determine the value that is received for the cost.
- The Parks & Recreation Department should conduct a lifecycle analysis for major activities where program registrations by interest area are tracked and reviewed on a seasonal basis. Programs should be slotted into the following categories:
  - *New* – programs in the start-up phase that are just starting to build in popularity.
  - *Mature* – programs that have consistent high levels of registrations and are still growing in popularity.
  - *Old* – programs that are seeing a decline in popularity.

Ideally programming should be evenly split between the three categories to ensure a well-rounded and robust set of program offerings.

- On a seasonal basis all recreation programs offered should be tracked based on which were “a go”, which were cancelled due to low registration numbers, and the calculation of the fill rate for each class or program offered. The cancellation rate should be in the 20% range while the fill rate should ideally be between 65% and 75%.
- The Department should also track program trends on a regional and national basis to ensure that program offerings are current and reflect the opportunities that are available.
- As the demand for programs and services continues to grow the Parks & Recreation Department should expand opportunities for partnering with other organizations and providers in the community.
- The Department will need to develop programs that have not only an appeal for different age groups (youth, teen, adult and seniors) but also to the family unit and the different ethnic groups in the city. Establishing events and programs that will attract visitors to the City will be important as well.
- All contract programs and service providers should be on a 70%-30% split of revenues (or 60%-40% if possible) to provide the City with a strong revenue stream.
- A basic marketing plan for recreation facilities and programs should be developed on the Department level. This document needs to be a simple, easy to implement, document that serves as a guideline for specific marketing efforts. There should be a more visionary 5 year plan as well as a very specific yearly plan that outlines areas of focus, specific marketing tools and tasks, as well as the responsible staff member for implementation, financial resources that are required and a thorough evaluation process.
- Survey the community and existing parks and recreation users every other year to determine overall levels of satisfaction as well as future needs and expectations for facilities and services.
- Conduct a series of focus groups for residents who do not use parks and recreation facilities and services to determine what can be done to attract these individuals.
- Continue to promote the use of on-line program registration. This should help to increase program registrations and will reduce staffing needs to cover registration functions. Measure the percentage of program and service registrations that are completed on-line annually and work to push the percentage above 70% within the next 5 years.
- Role of Other Providers - With limited resources and facilities, the City of Covington will need to continue to rely on other groups and organizations to provide some recreation programs and services for the community.
  - The City needs to take on more of a regional approach to providing recreation programs and services for the community.

- The Department will need to be a “clearinghouse” for recreation programs and services provided by others. This may involve promotion of their activities, coordinating of some programs, and scheduling of facilities.
- The Parks & Recreation Department will still need to be a provider of many of the facilities (especially outdoor parks) for other organizations to use.
- Partnerships with other organizations and entities will be necessary to develop and expand recreation programs. This is particularly true of the neighboring communities.
- Other organizations that could provide activities include:
  - *Youth Sports Organizations* – While the Parks & Recreation Department will continue to be the provider for most youth sports in the community, there are currently other youth sports organizations that have a presence in Covington (Kent Little League, Kent Youth Soccer Association) and some of the new emerging sports (lacrosse, rugby, ultimate Frisbee, etc.) may need to rely on the formation of non-profit youth organizations to start up these programs. However the Department will still need to provide most if not all the facilities for these new sports activities and will need to manage the process. This should include “sanctioning” only one organization per sport in the community and if there becomes more than 3 youth sports groups, it is highly recommended that the Department establish a youth athletics council that will meet monthly under the direction of the Athletics Specialist. This council would work to coordinate programs and activities, prioritize athletic facility usage, and promote coaches training.
  - *School Districts* – Coordinating with the Kent School District to provide youth recreation services, education classes for youth (and even adults), as well as youth sports (location for games and practices), will need to continue to be enhanced. The Kent School District has limited sports programming for middle school students which puts more pressure on the City to provide sports programs for this age group. The school’s facilities should continue to be a primary location for recreation programming to take place. The use of school district athletic fields has already been greatly improved with the City taking over most of the maintenance functions.

The City has limited interaction with the Tahoma School District since its boundaries are outside the City limits. However, since the Aquatic Center is next to Tahoma High School, there has been an effort to work more closely together for pool use. This arrangement should be expanded to encourage more use of school facilities that are in close proximity to the City’s boundaries.

- *Other Government Organizations* – There needs to be strong efforts to partner with other governmental agencies in the area to develop programs and services. This is most likely to occur with Maple Valley and Black Diamond. Program areas that could be provided by other organizations through a partnership include special needs, special events, outdoor recreation, and cultural arts events. It may also be necessary to partner to develop more regionally based facilities (indoor and outdoor) as well.
- *Non-Profit Providers* – Coordinating with a variety of non-profit providers to deliver recreation services needs to be strongly pursued. Organizations such as the Boys & Girls Club, YMCA cultural arts groups, etc. should be encouraged to develop facilities and provide programs in the greater Covington area. These types of organizations are well positioned to provide a variety of programs in different areas.
- *Private Providers* – Since there are a number of private recreation, sports and fitness providers located in the Covington market (health clubs, dance, martial studios, arts studios and gymnastics providers), these entities should continue to be counted on to provide more specialized activities that are not easy for the public sector to conduct due to a lack of facilities or expertise..
- *Residential Communities, Condos and HOA's* – In the future there could be more residential communities, condos and HOA's in the community. Some of these are likely to have social and recreation facilities that serve their residents and provide a base level of programs. Their role in providing recreation services needs to be recognized.
- *Faith Based Organizations* – With a number of churches in the Covington area as well as other organizations (Berachah Christian Camp), they often provide some social and recreation services for their congregation and community. These organizations should be seen as possible providers of some basic community based recreation services and facilities as well.
- *Parks & Recreation District* – If there is a commitment to a more regional approach to providing recreation programs and services, it may be wise to explore the possibility of establishing a recreation district to not only develop and operate recreation facilities but also the programs and services that would take place in these facilities. There are several options regarding the type of district that can be established including a Metropolitan Park District and a Recreation Service Area.

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# APPENDIX H: User Fee Study

## **User Fee Analysis**

One of the more critical aspects of a parks and recreation agencies operation is how recreation programs and services establish their fees for not only programs and services but also for facility use.

### **Assessment of Current Fee Policy for Programs, Services and Facilities**

The City of Covington does not currently have an actual fee policy to guide overall fee setting for programs, services and facilities. By ordinance, the City Manager reviews annually the current rates, fees and charges for facilities and programs, amending as necessary to meet City goals and expectations. User fees are currently determined based on the following:

- The Parks & Recreation Department recommends recreation programs and services fees with the idea of being financially sustainable.
- Proposed fees are presented to the City Manager for his/her approval.
- There is a fee waiver program in place for Athletics and Aquatics has a scholarship fund but no dedicated funding source. No other programs have a fee assistance plan.
- There is a resident/non-resident fee differential (listed as the General Fee and Covington Resident Fee) for use of the Aquatic Center but not for other programs and services as they are funded in part from sales tax revenue.
- A discount for multiple members of the same family participating in Aquatic Center programs has been established.
- There is a fee differential for youth, seniors, the disabled, and families for Aquatic Center user fees. There are also extended visit rates (10 visit, 3 month and 12 month memberships).
- This is a traditional method of establishing fees for parks and recreation programs and services.

### **Recommendations and Options**

The City of Covington should establish a formal parks and recreation fee philosophy and policy to guide the process and provide a rational reason for establishing specific fees for service.

#### **Fee Philosophy:**

The first step in developing a clear user fee policy is to adopt a general philosophy for setting fees. The following must take place.

- Establish a standardized approach to setting fees for all divisions (Aquatics, Athletics, and Recreation).
- Determine the overall cost recovery goal for programs, services and facilities. This will need to be based on a determination of what constitutes direct and indirect expenses for programs and facilities.
- Ensure general access to recreation programs and services is not denied simply based on the ability to pay.
- Require that exclusive use of any public parks, facilities or services by individuals or organizations results in the compensation for the full costs associated with such use.
- Require that users pay for programs and services when there is an instructor, official or other personnel associated directly with the provision of the service.
- Require that at least a portion of other direct and indirect expenses associated with the delivery of a program or service to the user be recovered through fees.

***General Fee Guidelines:***

- Programs, services and facilities should be priced in part based on supply and demand.
- Contract directed programs should have pricing based on market demand and an agreement between the City and contract provider that assures a fair rate of compensation for both.
- For Parks & Recreation directed programs differential pricing based on age, type of organization, resident status and other factors such as seasons or time is acceptable.
  - Youth activities, programs and facility access should be priced lower than for adults. There should be an approximate 50% recovery rate of direct costs.
  - Senior and disabled activities, programs and facility access should be priced similar to youth. There should be an approximate 50% recovery rate of direct costs.
  - If the City is going to assess non-resident fees for certain facilities or services, there should be a consistent price mark-up of no less than 25% and no more than 50% for non-City resident use of facilities, programs and services. This is based on the fact that residents as tax payers already fund certain services but it is recognized that non-residents can be valuable users of facilities and programs and can help lower the cost to residents to provide services. They also may be contributing tax dollars through the City's sales tax assessment.
- Age classifications include:

- Adult – age 18 and over
- Youth/Teen – age 4 to 17
- Child – Under 4
- Senior – age 60 and over
  
- User group classifications for rental of facilities include:
  - Non-Commercial – City activities, non-profits, private residents.
  - Commercial - for profit groups that utilize City facilities.
  
- Program and facility discounts based on volume are acceptable but should never exceed 25% of the full fee.
  
- Fee comparisons should be completed at least every two years with other recreation service providers in the area. City fees should be within 20% of average established fees from Kent, Maple Valley, Renton and Auburn.
  
- A fee assistance program (scholarship) for residents that cannot afford basic recreation services should continue but needs to be updated and expanded. It is recognized that the City has determined that it cannot directly fund such a program so this effort will require outside funding sources (primarily donations). This program should be based on an existing measurable definition of “low income” from a local social service agency. Use and funding must be tracked and there should be a requirement that at least 50% of the fee be paid by the user. An annual total cap of benefits should be established for each individual or family in the program. Only basic programs and services should be eligible for the fee assistance program. The fee assistance program will be limited by the ability to fund the program.
  
- Fee assistance should only be granted under the following guidelines:
  - A program or service offered directly by Covington Parks & Recreation Department.
  - City of Covington official functions.
  - In accordance with intergovernmental agreements developed with other governmental agencies.
  - By resolution of the Covington City Council or approval by the City Manager.
  
- The Covington City Manager will approve the general fee policy on an annual basis. From this specific guidelines should be developed by staff which would form the foundation for fee setting for each program and service offered by the department.
  
- A determination of taxability for various parks and recreation fees collected will be the responsibility of the City’s Finance Department. Any taxes collected should be in addition to the established rate for the program or facility.

***Fee Continuum:***

***Programs and Services:***

Programs and services should be categorized into four levels of offerings that are divided by the level of instruction, expertise, or importance to the community’s well-being. Priority for funding and facility usage should be based on the category in which they fall, with fees being set accordingly. The four categories should include.

*Community events* – special community wide events, activities or festivals that are one-time events. It should be expected that there will be little to no fees for these activities. Some revenues may be collected from sponsorships and sales of goods and services but the general rate of recovery would be less than 100%.

*Basic or core programs* – those that are essential to recreation and community needs (such as teen activities, senior programs, youth sports activities, special populations, etc.). These programs direct costs are usually subsidized. The overall goal should be to recover at least 100% of all direct program costs in this area.

*Enhanced* – those that are beyond basic and are focused on an audience that has the ability to pay. Programs in this area could include adult fitness and sports, or general programs. The suggested minimum recovery rate is 100% of direct costs and 50% of indirect costs.

*Specialized* – these are activities that are very specialized in nature. These would include activities such as private swim lessons, fitness assessments, trip programs, facility rentals and the like. Fees are set based on what the market will bear but at minimum would require 100% of direct costs and 100% of all indirect costs.



## FEE CONTINUUM

Programs and services should be placed in the different categories based on a pre-determined set of criteria developed by staff, reviewed by the Parks and Recreation Commission and endorsed by council.

In addition to the classifications noted above it is probable that there will continue to be a number of programs and services offered by outside contractors.

*Contract* – any programs offered by outside contractors should be required to pay a minimum of 30% of their gross revenues to the department. All direct costs to the City must be covered at minimum.

*Facilities:*

*Outdoor Facilities* - need to be sorted into three categories for fee assessment.

*Drop-in Outdoor Facilities* – drop-in use of basic park amenities should remain free. Examples would be open park areas, playgrounds, trails, picnic areas, outdoor courts, skate parks, etc.

*Specialized Outdoor Facilities* - such as swimming pools, lighted/organized sports fields, and similar facilities should have market rates established for use. There should be a rate differential for youth, adult and senior users.

*Rental of Facilities* – rentals of specialized facilities should require a fee for use based on the categories of non-commercial and commercial. Fees for non-commercial should be based at minimum on recovering all direct costs of renting the facility and commercial should be 50% higher. All field or facility maintenance fees required for a rental plus any other amenities not normally associated with the facility will be charged to the renter.

*Indoor Facilities* – need to be sorted in three categories for fee assessment.

*Drop-in Indoor Facilities* - drop-in use of basic indoor facilities such as youth game rooms, open lounge areas, community gathering spaces and similar areas should not require a fee for use.

*Specialized Indoor Facilities* - such as fitness areas, gyms, pools, racquetball courts, ice rinks, etc. should require a fee for use. Specific cost recovery goals need to be established for each specialized facility to determine the basic fee structure that needs to be developed. There should be a rate differential for youth, adult, disabled and senior users.

*Rental of Facilities* – rentals of specialized facilities shall require a fee for use based on the categories of non-commercial and commercial. Fees for non-commercial should be based at minimum on recovering all direct costs of renting the facility and commercial should be 50% higher. All facility maintenance fees required for a rental plus any other amenities not normally associated with the facility will be charged to the renter.

*Other:*

*Resale/concessions* – the sale of any goods should result in at least 125% of the total direct cost of the item being recovered. If the resale of goods or concessions is contracted to an outside vendor, revenues should be set by either a flat monthly lease rate for space and/or a percentage of gross revenues collected. These services should be put out for bid and contracts should only be for a period not to exceed 3 years unless there is a capital investment in the facility.

*Youth sports organizations* – youth sports organizations should be expected to pay a fee for use of facilities for games or practices. Fees should either be calculated on a cost per hour basis (with a differential for lights) or on a cost per player per season basis. Any organization that utilizes Covington facilities on an on-going basis should be required to show that at least 50% of the participants are from Covington (unless there is an agreement with other neighboring communities). Long term rentals to organizations outside of Covington should only be permitted after City organizations have been accommodated and should only be on a year to year basis.

***Background Information:***

In order to implement and maintain a sound fee policy the following will need to be accomplished.

- Establish the definition of “direct costs” to include costs that are directly related to the provision of the activity. This would include instructor, officials, leaders and direct supervisors (plus benefits), supplies associated with the activity, contractual service obligations, and any internal service fund charges.
- Establish the definition of “indirect costs” to include costs that are not directly related to the delivery of the activity or service. This would include administrative personnel and other staffing overhead, facility maintenance, utilities, insurance, marketing, registration, capital replacement and Central Services overhead charges.
- To implement the “indirect cost” calculation for pricing, determine a consistent percentage mark-up of direct costs. This percentage should simplify the process for determining price points.
- Develop clear budget projections for each program and service offered. Every program or service should be required to develop a program proposal sheet to determine the direct cost of offering the activity as well as the minimum number of registrants needed to conduct the program. The fees for programs should be established based on these projections. For enhanced or specialized programs a mark-up by percentage for in-direct costs must be determined and added to the cost estimate before determining the fee schedule.

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City of Covington PROS Plan Update

- Once each program or service is completed a program report should be completed that itemizes the exact cost and revenues that were generated by the program. This will determine if the program or service met its financial goals.

# APPENDIX I: Maintenance & Operations Considerations

## Park and Trail Design Considerations

The following is informational only and does not constitute specific requirements of the City on private developers. It is intended to offer direction and guidance toward the future design, development, re-development and maintenance of privately-operated park and trail facilities.

The following are consistent with the park development standards outlined in the PROS Plan and can provide guidance for negotiating facility development opportunities in situations when private entities propose park development in-lieu of payment or for other, alternative arrangements.

### Neighborhood Park Design Considerations

#### Minimum Suggested Amenities

Amenity	Considerations
Playground	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Minimum of 4,000 sq.ft. play area</li> <li>▪ Equipment should be suitable for and developmentally-appropriate for toddlers and elementary school-aged children</li> <li>▪ Playground should be ADA Accessible and play equipment should be ADA Compliant</li> </ul>
Loop Walking Path	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Minimum 6' wide</li> <li>▪ ADA-compliant surface to accessible elements (benches, tables, play area)</li> <li>▪ Pathway slope not to exceed 5% grade or no more than 8% for more than 30 lineal feet without switchbacks or railings</li> </ul>
Picnic Tables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Minimum of 2, with 1 meeting ADA-compliance as outlined by ADAAG for access, height, type, etc.</li> </ul>
Benches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Minimum of 2, with 1 meeting ADA-compliance as outlined by ADAAG for access, height, type, etc.</li> </ul>
Open turf area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provide at least 15% of total lawn area with irrigation, preferably adjacent to the play area</li> </ul>
Landscaping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provide at least 2 shade trees near play area</li> <li>▪ New trees and shrubs should be irrigated for a minimum of 2 years until established</li> </ul>
Bicycle Racks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Minimum of 2, with capacity to serve 4 bikes</li> </ul>
Trash Receptacles & Dog Waste Disposal Stations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Minimum of 1</li> </ul>

Additional, Acceptable Amenities

Amenity	Considerations
Pavilion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minimum of 400 sq.ft.</li> </ul>
Sport field	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Practice level for youth soccer, T-ball, baseball and/or softball</li> </ul>
Sport court	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>½ court basketball court</li> </ul>
Tennis court	
Alternative recreation court	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Such as bocce ball, pickleball, horseshoes, lawn bowling</li> </ul>
Skate spot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>600 to 1,200 sq.ft. with small ramps, bowls or features for beginners</li> </ul>
Disc golf course	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minimum 9 baskets</li> </ul>
Sprayground	
Natural area	
Water feature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Such as a passive water-based amenity that provides a visual focal point, i.e. fountains, ponds, or waterfalls</li> </ul>
Restroom	
Drinking fountain	
Utilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Automatic Irrigation, Electricity, Water</li> </ul>
Parking	

## Trail Development Standards

Trails should be constructed according to City specifications. It is recommended that trail layout and surfacing materials be approved by the City and meet the following requirements:

- Trail width should be a minimum of 8 feet wide
- Surfacing should be appropriate to the location; paved asphalt or concrete is recommended for upland areas, and wood chip, crusher waste or boardwalks are appropriate in lowland, wet or sensitive areas (City codes shall apply)
- Hard-surfaced trails should comply with ADAAG guidelines for slope and cross-slope; soft-surfaced trails should include properly placed and designed water bars or other surface water management techniques to minimize run-off and erosion.
- Entry signage should be provided at trailheads or access points, and boundary signage should be placed, as appropriate, to demarcate sensitive edges or private property boundaries.
- Trash receptacles should be provided at trailheads

## Maintenance and Operations Standards

### General Standards

#### Grounds

- Grounds are mowed and trimmed.
- Park is free of litter, debris and hazards.

#### Walkways & Paths

- Walkways have a uniform surface and are level with the ground and free of trip

hazards.

- Walkways are free of litter and debris.
- Walkways have unobstructed accessibility, i.e. free from low and protruding limbs, guide wires, etc.
- Walkways are neatly edged.
- Walkways are clear of weeds and grass growth in cracks and expansion joints.

### Signage

- Park identification signs are secure and properly installed in a noticeable location.
- Handicap parking signs (as applicable) are secure, visible and to city code.
- Signs are clean, painted and free of protrusions.

### Ornamental Plants & Landscaping

- Plants are healthy.
- Plant beds are free of litter, debris, and weeds.
- Plant selection is appropriate for season and area usage.

## **Playgrounds**

### Play Equipment

- Play equipment and surrounding play areas meet ASTM and National Playground Safety Institute standards.
- Play equipment and hardware is intact.
- Play equipment is free of graffiti.
- Age appropriateness for the play equipment is noted with proper signage.
- Shade structure is secure and free from tears, if applicable.

### Surfacing

- Fall surface is clean, level and free of litter and debris.
- Fall surface meets ASTM and National Playground Safety Institute standards.
- Fall surface is well drained.
- Rubber cushion surfaces are free of holes and tears.
- Rubber cushion surfaces are secure to the base material and curbing.

### Borders

- Playground borders are well defined and intact.
- Playground borders meet ASTM and National Playground Safety Institute standards.

### Decks

- Planks are intact, smooth, structurally sound, free of splinters and have no cracks greater than 1/4 inch.
- Nails, bolts or screws are flush with the surface.
- Planks are level with no excessive warping.

## Fixtures

### Benches

- Slats are smooth and structurally sound.
- Hardware is intact and structurally sound.
- Nails, bolts or screws are flush with the surface.
- Seats and backing are smooth with no protrusions and have no exposed sharp edges or pointed corners.

### Tables

- Tables are clean, free of rust, mildew and graffiti.
- Table hardware is intact.
- Table frames are intact and slats are properly secured.
- Table seats and tops are smooth with no protrusions and have no exposed sharp edges or pointed corners.

### Trash Receptacles

- Receptacles are clean; Area around trash receptacles is clean and free of trash and debris.
- Wood receptacles are painted and free of damage or missing parts; hardware for wood receptacles is intact.
- Concrete receptacles are intact and free of cracks or damage.

## Sport Courts

### Surfacing

- Surface is smooth, level and well drained with no standing water.
- Surface is free of large cracks, holes and trip hazards.
- Surface is painted and striped as per court specifications.
- Worn painted surfaces do not exceed 20% of total court surface.
- Surface is free of litter, debris, gravel and graffiti.

### Goals and Backboards

- Goals and backboards are level with hardware intact and painted as appropriate.
- Nylon nets are properly hung and are not torn or tattered.
- Support poles are secure in the ground and straight.

## Restrooms

- Restrooms are clean, sanitary and properly stocked with paper products.
- Lights and ventilation systems are operational.
- Toilets, water faucets, stall doors and hand air dryers are operational.
- Restrooms are free of graffiti.

- Restroom doors are properly marked according to gender.
- Restrooms have clean trash receptacles.
- Restroom doors and locks are operational.
- Restrooms are in compliance with the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

## Additional Resources

Consultant's Guide to Park Design and Development; Park and Recreation Department, City of San Diego, CA

<http://www.sandiego.gov/park-and-recreation/pdf/consultantguide.pdf>

Design Standards for Park and Trail Development (Specifications); Park and Recreation Department, City of Bellingham, WA

<http://www.cob.org/government/rules/guidelines/park-design-standards.aspx>

Accessible Recreation Facilities Guidelines - Access Board

<http://www.access-board.gov/news/rec-guides.htm>

Handbook for Public Playground Safety - National Product Safety Commission

<http://www.cpsc.gov/cpscpub/pubs/325.pdf>



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