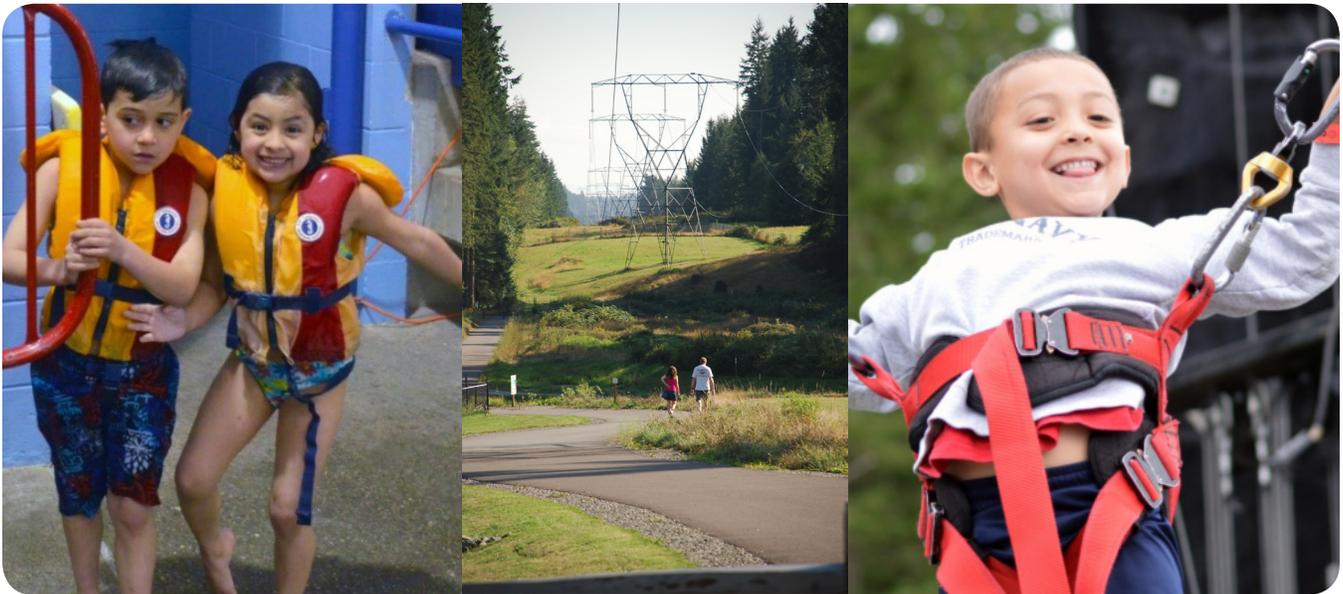


# PARKS, RECREATION, AND OPEN SPACE



## WHAT YOU WILL FIND IN THIS CHAPTER

- ▶ A description of Covington's parks, recreation facilities, and open spaces.
- ▶ An assessment of how well the City is meeting the park and recreation needs of its residents.
- ▶ Goals that meet the City's vision for Parks and Recreation.

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this Element is to provide goals that guide the acquisition, development, and management of parks, natural areas, trails, and recreation facilities and programs for the City of Covington. This Element works in conjunction with the City of Covington's Parks, Recreation, and Open Space (PROS) plan, being updated in 2015-2016. The PROS Plan establishes a road map for providing high quality, community-driven parks, trails, natural areas, and recreation services throughout Covington.



Crystal View Park

Source: City of Covington, 2015

Quality of life is vital to the residents of Covington. From Covington’s beginning, parks and recreational pursuits have been important to the community’s quality of life, and this tradition has endured.

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## PARKS ISSUES AND TRENDS

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### CONDITIONS AND TRENDS

#### *Covington’s Parks and Recreation Facilities Today*

Covington has over 700 acres of public and privately owned parks and recreation facilities, classified into seven categories: community parks, neighborhood and pocket parks, natural areas and greenspaces, trails and bikeways, special facilities, school playfields and playgrounds, and King County Parks and Trails. See Exhibits P-1 and P-2.

The Covington Parks and Recreation Department offers athletics, fitness and wellness, cultural arts, special events, recreation, and aquatic programs – these are the foundation of residents’ opportunities to be active and connect with their community. Covington’s recreation programming is centered in four areas:

- **General Recreation:** The majority of the City’s recreation programming focuses on youth.
  - › Fitness: Youth Nutrition, Adult Zumba, Yoga, and Bootcamp.
  - › Cultural Arts: Youth Ballet, Tap & Jazz, Hip Hop, Art, and Acting.
  - › Education: Youth Math Camp, Bricks for Kidz, and Engineering Challenge.
  - › General interest: Youth Cooking, Super Sitters, Safe at Home, Adult Parenting, and Dog Obedience.
  - › Outdoor Recreation: Birding and Boating Safety.



- **Aquatics:** Covington's Aquatic Center (formerly the King County Tahoma Pool) is a year-round indoor public pool that attracts visitors from the greater Covington area. The City offers youth swim lessons, swim teams, water polo, Dash & Splash Camp, water exercise, lap swimming, Masters Swim, Aqua Zumba, Triathlon adult swim training, and recreation swimming. The Aquatic Center averages approximately 110,000 pool users per year through general attendance, activity participants, and rental groups.
- **Athletics:** The City has been the primary provider of youth sports since 2014 and currently serves more than 2,000 youth per year through team sports, including basketball, baseball, flag football, soccer, and volleyball in addition to gymnastics, camps, track & field, and martial arts.
- **Special Events:** The City puts on more than 20 special events throughout the year, including those hosted at the Aquatic Center and in City parks. In 2014, over 5,400 people (combined) attended the five most popular events.

### *Planning For the Future*

New projects are being planned in Covington to expand parks and recreation opportunities for local residents. This includes acquiring and developing new parks, renovating or repairing existing facilities, and expanding trail corridors. Priority projects include renovation of the Covington Aquatic Center and Gerry Crick Skate Park, expansion of the Covington Community Park (Phase 2), land acquisition for new South Covington (SoCo) Park, and preliminary planning for Town Center Park Plaza, Jenkins Creek Park improvements. See Exhibit P-3.

### **WHAT DOES IT MEAN**

- ▶ Covington's population has grown rapidly, while parks and recreation facilities have not increased at a commensurate level, leading to a deficit of facilities.
- ▶ Projected future population growth will require a larger investment to provide adequate parks and recreation for residents.
- ▶ New projects are planned to expand parks and recreation, including acquisition and development of new parks, renovation or repair of existing facilities, and expanding trail corridors.







## Service Standards

The City has established service standards for parks and recreation facilities, which helps the City plan facilities to serve expected population growth. The standards based on the City's PROS Plan (draft 2015) are:

- Community Park (City-owned): 5 acres per 1,000 people
- Neighborhood Parks (City-owned and private): 3 acres per 1,000 people
- Natural Areas and Greenspace (City-owned and private): 6 acres per 1,000 people
- Trails (City-owned and private): 0.75 miles per 1,000 people
- Bikeways (City-owned): 0.75 miles per 1,000 people

Today Covington has a deficit of parks and recreation facilities to meet community demand. Meeting service standards today would require approximately 42 additional acres of parks and 16 additional miles of trails and bikeways. The deficit of parks and recreation facilities will increase to approximately 109 acres of park land and 30 miles of trails and bikeways in 2035, unless additional facilities are added. Exhibit P-4 shows the current and future level of service for each type of park facility.



Flag Football Team

Source: City of Covington, 2015

**Exhibit P-4. Level of Service (LOS) Analysis**

Time Period	Population	Acres Needed to Meet LOS Standard	Current 2015 Acres/Mile Available	Net Reserve or Deficit
<b>Community Park (City-owned) LOS Standard: 5 acres/ 1, 000 people</b>				
2015	18,520	92.60	50.20	(42.40)
2021	21,257	106.29	50.20	(56.09)
2035	27,645	138.22	50.20	(88.02)
<b>Neighborhood Parks (City-owned and private) LOS Standard: 3 acres/ 1,000 people</b>				
2015	18,520	55.56	61.12	5.56
2021	21,257	63.77	61.12	(2.65)
2035	27,645	82.93	61.12	(21.81)
<b>Natural Areas &amp; Greenspace (City-owned and private) LOS Standard: 6 acres/ 1,000 people</b>				
2015	18,520	111.12	206.97	95.85
2021	21,257	127.54	206.97	79.43
2035	27,645	165.87	206.97	41.10
<b>Trails (City-owned and private) LOS Standard: 0.75 miles/ 1,000 people</b>				
2015	18,520	13.89	7.34	(6.55)
2021	21,257	15.94	7.34	(8.60)
2035	27,645	20.73	7.34	(13.39)
<b>Bikeways (City-owned) LOS Standard: 0.75 miles/ 1,000 people</b>				
2015	18,520	13.89	5.03	(8.86)
2021	21,257	15.94	5.03	(10.91)
2035	27,645	20.73	5.03	(15.70)

**CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES**

*Growing Population and Limited Funding*

The population of Covington is expected to grow 50 percent between 2015 and 2035, creating a challenge for the City to acquire new parks to serve the growing population. To meet service standards in 2035 would require an additional 30 miles of trails and bikeways and more than 109 acres of new parks.



The 2015 LOS is:

- Community Parks: 2.71 acres per 1,000 population
- Neighborhood Parks: 3.30 acres per 1,000 population
- Trails: 0.40 miles per 1,000 population
- Bikeways: 0.27 miles per 1,000 population

In an environment of limited resources and competing needs for City funds, a strong community commitment will be needed to implement many of the identified projects and meet service standards. New funding sources, such as a bond, levy, or special assessment, backed by voters, may be needed to make these projects a reality.

### ***Limited Land Available***

As a City with a defined planning area and growing population, Covington's ability to significantly add land to its holdings is limited. More attention will be paid to investing in existing parks, creating linkages between existing and planned parks and trails, leveraging regional parks and trails systems, and to ensuring new growth provides for appropriate gathering and recreation space onsite.

### ***Partnerships***

Regional trails plans have been developed by King County in coordination with Covington and neighboring communities. Inter-agency partnerships and master planned developments such as the Lakepointe Urban Village will help ensure connected facilities that serve the broader Covington community. Partnerships with the School District is also an opportunity as the District has undeveloped and underdeveloped facilities that could be improved by the City.

## **VISION CONNECTION**

The Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Element supports Covington's vision for an unmatched quality of life and framework goals for integrating nature in neighborhoods, promoting mobility, supporting active and healthy living, supporting economic development, the development of the Town Center, supporting youth and families, and promoting community arts, recreation, and education.

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## COVINGTON'S PARKS AND RECREATION PLAN

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Covington's parks and recreation plan is based on the following principles:

Covington is responsive to community needs. The City will establish specialized recreation programs 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 strives 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 multi-purpose 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. The City's parks maintenance and operations activities as well as capital investments are important to meeting this principle. 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.



Concert in the Park

Source: City of Covington, 2015



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## GOALS

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The following goals for Covington's parks, recreation, and open spaces have been developed through a community planning process.

- Goal-I. Encourage meaningful public involvement in park and recreation planning and inform residents through department communications.**
- Goal-II. Establish a varied and inclusive suite of recreation programs that accommodate a spectrum of ages, interests, and abilities.**
- Goal-III. Acquire and develop a high-quality, diversified system of parks, recreation facilities, and open spaces and trails that is attractive, functional, accessible, and safe – providing equitable access to all residents.**
- Goal-IV. 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.**
- Goal-V. Develop a high-quality system of multi-use parks, trails, and bicycle and pedestrian corridors that connect to regional trails and provides access to significant local landscapes, public facilities, neighborhoods, and businesses.**
- Goal-VII. Provide a parks, trails, recreational facilities, and open space system that is efficient to administer and operate, while protecting capital investment.**

The goals and objectives from the Covington Parks, Recreation, and Open Space (PROS) Plan are incorporated by reference as amended.

### LEVELS OF SERVICE

The City adopts levels of service standards in the PROS Plan as LOS standards (see below), hereby incorporated by reference as amended.

#### Exhibit P-5. Parks LOS

Facility Type	Unit of Measure	Existing LOS	Target LOS
Community Park (City-owned)	Acres per 1,000 population	2.71	5.00
Neighborhood Park (City-owned and private)	Acres per 1,000 population	3.30	3.00
Natural Areas & Green Space (City-owned and private)	Acres per 1,000 population	11.18	6.00
Trails (City-owned and private)	Miles per 1,000 population	0.40	0.75
Bikeways (City-owned)	Miles per 1,000 population	0.27	0.75

### ACTION PLAN

Implementation of this Element will be spelled out in the updated Covington PROS Plan, which includes a list of proposed parks and recreation projects, estimated costs, and a discussion of funding sources and options. Because current funding sources are inadequate to meet the need for new parks and recreation facilities, projects in the PROS Plan have been prioritized into high, medium, and low categories, through consideration of community need, population distribution, project opportunities, and potential funding.