

## **Chapter 4: Partnerships, Public Involvement, And Outreach**

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### **4.1 Partnerships**

In addition to collaboration with other King County agencies such as the Water and Land Resources Division, the Parks and Recreation Division works to establish strategic community and corporate partnerships, which enhance its ability to acquire sites, develop recreational opportunities and amenities, and maintain and operate facilities. As the Parks and Recreation Division is not fully funded by tax revenue, development of strategic revenue-generating partnerships are a core component to ensuring that the open space system remains available to the public, even in difficult economic times.

Moreover, partnerships maximize the value of public funds and are often a catalyst for substantial levels of additional community-based investments and resources. Partnerships can ultimately result in a greater scope and number of recreational and conservation opportunities than any one entity can achieve alone. Partnerships can also nurture a sense of ownership and stewardship, which contributes to the open space system's long-term health and vitality.

Presently, and for the foreseeable future, entrepreneurial, community based, and inter-jurisdictional partnerships are important tools by which King County's open space and recreation facilities are acquired, developed, operated and maintained.

#### **4.1.1 Values and Benefits of Partnerships**

The value and benefits of partnerships are recognized throughout the Open Space Plan. There are many benefits to King County, its partners and county residents in establishing these partnerships.

- Partnerships enable King County and its partners to leverage their fiscal and human resources to provide facilities and services greater than any one partner could achieve.
- Partnerships, such as those with schools, athletic organizations, user groups, and community-based organizations, encourage optimal use of public facilities.
- Partnerships enable King County and its partners to draw on the expertise of each other to steward and maintain the region's open space resources and recreation facilities.
- Partnerships provide opportunities to bring together agencies, individuals, and interests to work toward achieving common goals.
- Partnerships empower community groups to invest in their open space system.
- Partnerships can generate non-tax revenue designed to support maintenance and operations of the system.

As a regional government, King County is committed to providing leadership and actively pursuing and facilitating partnerships to provide regional open space sites, recreation facilities, programs and services throughout the county. The following policies provide a solid foundation on which to build these partnerships.

**PIO-101 King County will encourage and pursue partnerships with public agencies and jurisdictions, private organizations and businesses for support and funding of the open space system and its resources to increase the range of sites, facilities and programs available to the public.**

**PIO-102 King County will encourage and promote mutually beneficial agreements with school districts, other agencies and private groups for the joint use, stewardship and management of sites and facilities for public recreation and natural resource protection consistent with the planned purposes for each site and facility.**

**PIO-103 King County will encourage and pursue partnerships with public agencies, organizations and individuals to increase the range and scope of recreational, interpretive and educational opportunities of the open space system.**

#### **4.1.2 Types of Partnerships**

Agreements and partnerships are varied and site specific, depending upon the parties involved and the type of acquisition, development, use, and stewardship being considered. However, partnerships may generally be categorized within the following areas:

##### **4.1.2.1 Fund Development**

Through the *Partnerships for Parks* initiative, the Parks and Recreation Division cultivates and establishes corporate partnerships that increase recreational opportunities for King County residents and generate new non-tax revenue to support the operations and maintenance of the open space system. The division strives to ensure that corporate partnerships and agreements reflect the aesthetics and values of the division in supporting vibrant communities and healthy lifestyles.

The Parks Omnibus Ordinance 14509 provides the statutory framework for the Parks and Recreation Division's financial structure, offering flexibility in negotiating partnerships for fund development. These partnerships generally generate business revenues for the division and can take a variety of forms, including concessions, naming rights, event sponsorships, legacy gifts and grants, marketing and advertising, parking, facility rentals, utilities and lease agreements, and public/private real estate development, among others.

In 2009, business revenues represented approximately 21 percent of the Parks and Recreation Division's operating expenditures, and the division's financial plan considers that this amount should increase five percent each year, holding constant for transferred facilities. Future revenues necessary for maintaining a status quo system are dependent on the successful cultivation of fund development partnerships and strategic use of capital investments that balance recreation, stewardship and revenue objectives.

To date, some examples of this type of partnership have included:

- \$610,000 5 year naming right for Group Health Velodrome
- \$100,000 1 year naming right for MSN Wi-Fi Hotspots
- \$300,000 3 year title sponsorship of US Bank Concerts at Marymoor
- \$250,000 1 year trails project with Starbucks
- \$550,000 Starbucks Ultimate Park Makeover of White Center Heights Park
- \$1.3 Million Cirque de Soleil at Marymoor Park (Bi-annual lease agreement and related parking revenue - 2006, 2008)
- \$5,000 monthly average for Subway concession
- \$12,000 annually from small concessions
- \$105,000 annually from gravel agreement
- \$400,000 annually from parking at Marymoor
- \$90,000 annually from cell towers and other utility agreements

##### **4.1.2.2 Community Partnerships and Grants Program (CPG)**

The Community Partnerships and Grants Program (CPG) is a public/private partnership initiative that empowers user groups, sports associations, recreation clubs, and other types of non-profit organizations to construct, develop, program, and/or maintain new or enhanced public recreation facilities on King County land in a manner that does not result in new publicly funded operations and maintenance costs.

King County contributes use of land and capital improvement seed grants, while community partners

contribute the necessary additional capital and in-kind resources to develop the new or enhanced facility. Community partners also sign a long-term agreement with the Parks and Recreation Division to manage operations, maintenance, and programming, which is typically carried out by volunteers and/or through revenue-based programs or other resources.

As of 2009, more than 40 projects were in a stage of development or implementation or had been completed, representing \$13 million in King County commitments and an estimated \$64 million in new or enhanced recreation facilities for citizens of King County.

Some examples of completed projects resulting from this type of partnership include:

- *Audubon Birdloop at Marymoor Park* – A 2.1 mile birdloop and interpretive kiosks/signage constructed with the Eastside Audubon
- *Hollywood Hills Equestrian Arena* – Redevelopment of a seven-acre youth equestrian arena with the Hollywood Hills Saddle Club
- *Mel Olson Stadium Renovation* – Synthetic conversion and stadium upgrade developed and installed with Seattle Preparatory School and White Center Community Development Association at Steve Cox Memorial Park
- *Mirrormont Park* – A new twelve-acre park planned and constructed with the Mirrormont Community
- *Preston Athletic Fields and Community Park* – Ballfield complex and community park designed and constructed with Eastside Football Club, Preston Community Club, and Issaquah Little League

A complete list of CPG projects is included in Appendix IV.

#### **4.1.2.3 Youth Sports Facilities Grant Program (YSFG)**

The Youth Sports Facilities Grant (YSFG) program provides matching grant funds to rehabilitate or develop sports fields and facilities serving youth in King County. Initiated in 1993, the program strives to facilitate new athletic opportunities for as many youth in King County as possible. Eligible public sector entities include: school districts, park districts, utility districts, cities, or King County. Non-profit organizations, such as youth sports leagues or community organizations, are also eligible, but must partner with the public entity on whose land the field or facility is or will be located. Only projects located in King County are eligible for funding. Past projects include athletic fields, sports courts, skateboard parks, climbing walls, running tracks, and gymnasiums, among others.

The YSFG program is funded and sustained through a one-quarter of one percent car rental tax and interest on the program's \$2.6 million endowment. Program funds can only be used for developing and constructing facilities and not for maintaining or operating them. During the program's first fifteen years, nearly \$10 million in grants has been awarded, funding more than 250 projects in jurisdictions throughout the county.

Some recent examples of this type of partnership include:

- *Central Park Turf Fields*, Issaquah Parks and Recreation and Issaquah Youth Football
- *Duthie Hill Mountain Bike Park*, King County Parks and Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance
- *Evergreen High School Track*, Highline School District and Evergreen High School Track Club
- *Gymnasium Renovation*, Boys & Girls Clubs of King County
- *Les Gove Park Barrier-Free Playground*, Auburn Parks & Recreation and Rotary Club of Auburn
- *Magnuson Park Ultimate Frisbee Field*, Seattle Parks and Recreation and Disc NW

A list of recent YSFG awards is included in Appendix V.

#### 4.1.2.4 Inter-agency and Inter-jurisdictional Coordination

The Parks and Recreation Division has formed several partnerships with other public entities, such as school districts and cities, to coordinate planning, acquisition, and/or development of open space sites and recreational amenities.

**PIO-104 King County will provide regional leadership in open space efforts and encourage public understanding, involvement and commitment to regional open space preservation and recreation goals.**

**PIO-105 King County will work to bring together a diversity of agencies, groups and individuals to advocate for and support the region's open space goals.**

Some examples of these types of partnerships include:

- *Bellevue ballfields at Marymoor Park* – Jointly funded the development of and share responsibilities for maintenance and operations
- *Middle Green River* – Participating in the Mid-Green River Coalition, with local and state entities, recreationists, landowners, and citizens to protect and enhance open space along the Middle Green River and its tributaries
- *Mountains to Sound Greenway* – Collaboratively planning and implementing the Greenway vision with local and state entities, non-profit organizations, the private sector, and citizens
- *Rattlesnake Ridge* – Purchased and managed jointly by King County and the Washington State Department of Natural Resources

#### 4.1.2.5 Recreation Partnerships

The Parks and Recreation Division has a variety of partnerships with other organizations that increase the range and scope of recreational activities taking place on properties throughout the system. Often growing out of CPG projects, these partnerships involve cooperative arrangements with other public agencies, user groups, community-based organizations, or other entities to provide and schedule a variety of recreational program activities.

Some examples of this type of partnership include:

- *S.O.D.A* – stewards, advocates for, and manages the off-leash dog area at Marymoor Park
- *Northshore YMCA* – offers summer youth day camps at Cottage Lake Park
- *Lake Washington Youth Soccer Association* - maintains and schedules Sixty Acres Park
- *Sammamish Rowing Club* – offers rowing lessons and programming based out of Marymoor Park
- *Rock Creek Sports* – developed indoor baseball training facilities at Gracie Hansen Community Center in Ravensdale Park and schedules and maintains the community center facility

#### 4.1.2.6 Community-based Partnerships

In planning, developing and stewarding King County's large and complex open space system, the Parks and Recreation Division often develops relationships with community-based organizations that represent constituencies concerned with a particular community, recreational asset, wildlife species, or ecosystem. These partnerships vary in nature and complexity, depending upon the issue, and often involve some level of volunteer commitment on behalf of the group.

Some current partners include:

- *Cascade Land Conservancy* works collaboratively with government agencies and other

partners in achieving the vision of the Cascade Agenda, a long-term initiative for conservation and community in the Central Puget Sound region.

- *Enumclaw Forested Foothills Recreation Association* works cooperatively with public agencies and other groups to conserve and protect the multi-purpose use of forested foothills, aquifers, wetlands and wildlife habitat of southeast King County.
- *Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance* advocates and volunteers to build and maintain trails for mountain biking in Washington State, as well as educating people about the sport.
- *Friends of Island Center Forest* is a community-based coalition of stakeholders that actively stewards and advocates for the protection of Island Center Forest.
- *Friends of Marymoor Park* is made up of park users groups, park neighbors and others who want to share information and help enhance and better utilize the facilities and programs within the park.
- *Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust* is a coalition-based organization that collaborates with public agencies, non-profits, communities and individuals to promote conservation and preservation of the area along the I-90 corridor known as the Mountains to Sound Greenway.
- *Vashon-Maury Island Land Trust* works with King County to conserve lands to protect the natural ecosystems and rural character of Vashon-Maury Island.
- *Washington Trails Association*, which works to preserve and promote hiking opportunities across the state, constructs and maintains backcountry trails at multiple sites on King County's open space lands.
- *Water Tenders* is a group of citizens who work to protect, preserve and restore the wetlands and streams in the Bear Creek watershed.

### **4.1.3 Future Partnerships**

The Parks and Recreation Division will continue to establish partnerships for planning, acquisition, development, preservation, maintenance, and stewardship of the open space system by actively identifying and cultivating potential opportunities for the formation of partnerships. These relationships will be pursued through a variety of activities including community outreach, requests for proposals, and direct cultivation of other agencies and groups to identify opportunities for collaboration.

#### **4.1.3.1 Evaluating Partnership Opportunities**

Several considerations must be addressed in the evaluation and prioritization of potential partnerships. These include public benefits and costs (human resources, financial resources, opportunity costs, direct and indirect costs), as well as the legal framework which defines King County's ability to enter into partnership agreements and the conditions of those agreements. This framework includes federal laws, Washington State laws, and the King County Code and ordinances, such as land use zoning codes and development regulations, deed restrictions, and funding source restrictions.

**PIO-106 King County will evaluate partnerships to ensure the success for each of the partners and provision of the greatest public benefit.**

The Parks Omnibus Ordinance (14509), which was approved by the King County Council in 2003, gave the Parks and Recreation Division the authority and flexibility to evaluate, pursue and enter into strategic partnerships that contribute to and enhance the public benefits of the open space system.

## 4.2 Public Involvement

King County views public involvement and coordination in open space planning, acquisition, restoration, development and management as an on-going practice, not limited to one specific planning or outreach process. The following policies encourage public participation in the planning and delivery of services and programs to balance the diverse and competing needs and priorities of King County residents:

- PIO-107** King County will seek and encourage public input, advice and participation in open space system issues.
- PIO-108** King County will design and conduct a public participation process appropriate to the site when preparing master plans, park project program plans, site development or management plans.
- PIO-109** New funding initiatives for open space should be based on a county-wide planning and public involvement process that identifies community needs and regional opportunities.
- PIO-110** King County will use a variety of methods to encourage public involvement, including public meetings, focus groups, surveys, email and other electronic tools, and advisory committees, and when appropriate, will establish park advisory committees appropriate to the size and complexity of the site or issue.

### 4.2.1 Advisory Committees

King County establishes advisory committees to provide input and recommendations on a variety of issues affecting King County residents and the services they receive from their county government agencies. Over the years, there have been a variety of advisory committees that have helped shape the open space system in King County.

Examples of current advisory committees include:

- *Cedar River Council (CR)* is a group of citizens and local, state, federal and tribal government representatives and elected officials working to preserve and restore the health and public benefit of the Cedar River.
- *The Conservation Futures Citizens Committee (CFT Committee)* makes annual recommendations for allocation of CFT levy funds to King County jurisdictions. The Conservation Futures Tax collected from property taxes levied throughout King County is dedicated to the acquisition of open space in cities and rural areas.
- *The King County Rural Forest Commission* represents a variety of rural forest interests and advises King County on policies and programs affecting rural forestry. It also works to identify strategies to conserve forestlands and promotes the practice of forestry in rural areas of the county.
- *The Parks Levy Citizen Oversight Board*, which was created as part of the 2003-2007 Parks Levy and renewed with the second Parks Levy (2008-2013), plays an integral role in ensuring citizen input and oversight of the expenditure of levy proceeds per guidance provided in the levy ordinances.
- *Unincorporated Area Councils (UACs)* are independent entities formed to improve communication between county government and the residents of the unincorporated areas. The volunteer members of the six county-recognized councils are elected by local area residents.

#### **4.2.2 Volunteers**

From one-day events to years of stewardship, the individuals who volunteer their time, energy, and passion in King County's parks and on its trails play an important role in protecting and preserving the county's natural heritage and recreational assets. While providing invaluable assistance with tasks such as weeding flower beds, removing invasive species, constructing interpretive signage, and maintaining hiking trails, volunteers become involved with and invested in King County's open space system, in turn contributing to and ensuring resources for the long-term stewardship of the system.

**PIO-111 King County will encourage and support volunteer efforts to maintain and enhance programs and facilities.**

There are multiple ways volunteers are involved with King County's open space, such as:

- *Parks and Trails Ambassadors* – these volunteers commit to providing 100 hours annually of their time to carry out tasks such as educating and assisting visitors, reporting on trail conditions, monitoring restoration efforts, assisting with volunteer work parties, and clearing litter on park properties.
- *Adopt-a-Park or Trail* – these volunteers often form formal or informal “Friends of...” types of associations and provide volunteer service at least four times annually in a specific park or trail.
- *Service Volunteers* – these volunteers, which come from local businesses, schools, scout troops, religious institutions, community-based organizations, and other groups and individuals, are interested in participating in community service projects, with commitments extending from one day to many years' involvement over multiple sites. They are matched with volunteer opportunities throughout the system, appropriate to their availability, geographic preference, age levels, and other factors.

### **4.3 Public Outreach**

The Parks and Recreation Division continually seeks ways to encourage the public to explore and enjoy King County's open space system and the recreational assets and amenities provided by the division and its partners.

**PIO-112 King County will encourage appropriate public use of the open space system, provide awareness of the opportunities it offers and increase public knowledge of the system.**

**PIO-113 King County will utilize clear, concise and timely communication with the public.**

In addition to public meetings and other public events, the division utilizes a variety of communication channels that employ best practices and the latest technology and through which the public can engage with King County. Some examples of these efforts include:

- *Parksfeedback.com* – a survey tool that allows park users to respond to questions and write comments about their experiences – both positive and negative - in King County's open space system, which is then "red flagged" in the email inboxes of key agency staff.
- *King County Parks electronic media presence* – through its website, blog, and other multi-media tools, the agency frequently disseminates information to the public about its services and operations using channels that encourage interaction with and the involvement of readers.
- *Outreach Events* – throughout the year, agency staff attend fairs, festivals, and other gatherings, which provide opportunities to interact directly with the public, answer questions, and distribute information about King County's parks, trails, and open space system.