

Renew the Legacy... Fulfill the Vision

Renton Parks, Recreation, Open Space
and Natural Resources Plan



PLANNING CONTEXT

March 2011

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Introduction

In September 2010, the City of Renton began developing a Long Range Parks, Recreation, Open Space and Natural Resources (PROSNR) Plan to integrate planning for highly valued community resources within a unified framework. This systems-based approach will allow the City to develop successful policies, implementation strategies and an investment program to enhance parks, recreation programs, open space and natural resources as critical elements of a livable



community. This Plan will create a 20-year vision for a sustainable, interconnected system of parks, recreation facilities, open space and trails that responds to community needs and supports a diverse and integrated recreation system.

The PROSNR Plan is an update of previous parks and recreation plans. In 2002, the City completed a park, recreation and open space planning effort that provided a basis for the 2003 Park, Recreation and Open Space Implementation Plan, which was adopted by City Council. The current iteration of the PROSNR Plan will add a natural resources element, recognizing the key role that Community Services plays in managing and protecting the city's significant natural resources. The PROSNR Plan will also incorporate

recreation programs and special events in a stronger way to reflect their capacity to strengthen the community, enhance parks and provide quality recreation opportunities for Renton's diverse community.

Purpose of this Document

The purpose of this document is to describe the key factors that play a role in park system development. More specifically, the Planning Context Summary identifies changes in Renton since the 2003 plan, describes the planning area, provides an overview of key demographic trends that affect parks and recreation, reviews relevant planning documents and identifies key issues to address within the planning effort.

The Planning Context Summary is the first of several discussion papers that will be developed at key stages of the planning process. These documents are intended to consolidate available information and present policy directions for discussion. Draft documents will be created to allow City staff, the project Steering Committee and interested citizens the opportunity to increase their understanding of Renton's parks and recreation system and to help refine the planning process. Community input will be consolidated and considered, and then the discussion papers will be finalized. Later in the process, this document will inform the first sections of the full Parks, Recreation, Open Space and Natural Resources Plan.

This information presented in the Planning Context Summary provides a foundation for the analysis of the existing park system, which will be the next step in the planning process.

Changes: Renton 2003-2010

The City of Renton has grown and changed significantly since its previous parks plan was adopted in May 2003. Since then, the City has added land, people and major parks and programs. During this time frame, there has simultaneously been an increase in recreation opportunities as well as increased demands and needs for parks, recreation and open space. These changes create the context for many of the key issues to be addressed in this planning process.

Park and Program Development

Over the past few years, significant investments have been made in the park system in Renton. The City has completed 11 of the 20 capital projects identified in the 2003 parks plan. Approximately \$250,000 in state grant funding and \$1.2 million in local funding allowed the City to obtain new park sites and make improvements, including the following:

- Edlund/Korum Property Acquisition
- Heritage Park (Heather Downs) Property Acquisition and Development
- Henry Moses Aquatic Center
- Veterans Memorial Park
- Maplewood Golf Course Parking Improvements
- Tiffany Park Activity Building
- The Piazza
- Skate Park at Liberty Park
- Springbrook Trail Boardwalk



Similarly, the new PROSNR Plan will play an integral part in positioning Renton to obtain funding, adding parks and improving the park and open space system in order to meet growing recreation needs.

Despite the constraints of the current economic climate, the tightened focus on sustainability has led to several organizational improvements and planning successes. At the end of 2010, the City continues to prioritize resources to maintain critical investments in the community's health, green infrastructure and recreation opportunities. Renton is proud of its accomplishments in providing citizens with green open spaces. For example, the Maplewood Golf Course was recognized for environmental excellence by the National Audubon Society Cooperative Sanctuary Program. In addition, the Urban Forestry Development Plan and Program helped

Renton obtain Tree City USA recognition in 2008 and 2009. The Trails and Bicycle Master Plan is also allowing the community to become more pedestrian and bicycle-friendly, supporting community livability and health.

Budget Reductions

Although capital funding has been available for selected park improvements, the overall budget for parks and recreation has been declining as a part of the National Economic Downturn. For many years, the City of Renton relied on extensive commercial and residential development to keep up with the rising cost of providing public safety, parks, roads and other services. However, the current economic recession has led to a loss in these critical funds, necessitating cuts in services citywide and throughout the region. The City's 2010 proposed budget was 3.5% lower than the 2009 adopted budget, and the City's workforce was reduced by 12%. In 2011, the City incurred additional staff reductions. This has had a direct impact on City services. During these reductions, the City has focused primarily on maintaining existing facilities.

To be able to maintain core operations for the City, every department was asked to examine its service priorities and identify key programs. Within each broad core service area, service expectations, programs and priorities were established and ranked.

Fortunately, community livability and the environment were considered to be high priorities. As noted in the 2010 Budget Presentation, Mayor Denis Law noted, "Renton prides itself on its strong relationship with its neighborhoods, its beautiful parks and its robust pursuit of economic development opportunities . . . Our citizens want high quality facilities, services and public resources to make Renton a place where people choose to live, learn, work and play."

Parks and recreation are well recognized as integral elements of City services. Nevertheless, recent budget cuts have taken their toll. In the Community Services Department, seasonal/part time staff have been reduced by approximately 80 people, which equates to approximately seven full-time employees. These reductions have eliminated the Summer Teen Musical program and led to the closure of the five recreation activity buildings at Kennydale Lions, Kiwanis, Philip Arnold, Teasdale and Tiffany Parks. Free summer drop-in youth programs, volunteer recognition and holiday lights have also been compromised by program reductions or total elimination. Other effects for the Community Services Department have included staff reductions at the museum and reductions in geese control, tree removal and replacement, maintenance supplies, contract landscape maintenance and elimination of the hanging basket and flower pot program. Decreased custodial staffing has reduced the frequency of cleaning at public restrooms, including those in parks.

The integration of natural resources planning with parks and recreation planning within the Community Services Department is an opportunity created in part by the financial pressures of the current economy. The close association of these two functions due to streamlining of the organizational structure has helped this planning process to take on an important focus on the role and needs of natural systems within the city.

Annexations

While parks and recreation has struggled to maintain a high level of service despite budget cuts, the City of Renton has continued to grow through the annexation of several unincorporated areas of King County. When areas are annexed into the City of Renton, the City's population and service area increase.

The City is currently 23.3 square miles and has 7897.20 acres of Potential Annexation Areas (PAAs). PAAs are unincorporated urban areas in King County between city limit lines and the Urban Growth Boundary (UGB). The majority of the PAA area is concentrated in the West Hill, East Renton Plateau and Fairwood/Petrovitsky. The East Renton Plateau and Fairwood/Petrovitsky were designated as Renton PAAs in 1995. The West Hill area was added as a Renton PAA in 2005. King County's countywide planning policies call for these urban areas to be part of a city by 2012.

In November 2007, the voters in the Benson Hill/Cascade portion of the Fairwood/Petrovitsky PAA approved annexing to the City with the annexation becoming effective in March 2008. This area is also known as the Benson Hill Community. This annexation was 4.2 square miles and home to 16,272 additional residents. Also in 2007, residents of the Fairwood Community submitted a petition to the City for annexation. Annexation of this area was put forward to voters in 2009 (without the Red Mill area) and again in November 2010 (with the Red Mill and Fairview areas). This annexation would have added over 27,000 residents from neighborhoods south and east of the Renton city boundaries. In both cases the annexation was not approved.

Despite the rejection by voters, it is assumed that annexations within these PAAs will significantly increase the land area and population of Renton over the next ten years. If all three areas annexed to the City, Renton would be a city of 130,000 people – with as many or more residents as the nearby City of Bellevue. For residents of the annexed areas, annexation would make City recreation programs and services available at residents' rates for fees. For Renton's Community Service Department, this will clearly create an increased demand for services, as well as a need to provide programs and parks in these new areas.

Demographic Changes

In addition to the recent growth through annexations, Renton is a growing city with increasing racial and cultural diversity. As one of the fastest growing communities in the Puget Sound area, the city's population has increased approximately 72% in the last ten years to the current 2010 population of 86,230 residents.¹ Simultaneously, the City's population density has also increased, with approximately 5,000 people per square mile in most areas of the city. As noted by the Community and Economic Development Department, there are pockets within the City with population densities higher than 15,000 residents per square mile, such as near Union Avenue NE. Demand for recreation services is greater in these concentrated areas.

¹ Source: City of Renton. In 2000, Renton's population was 50,052 (U.S Census data).

What is interesting about this growth is the high level of racial diversity it has brought to the city. In 1990, 83.5% of Renton's population reported themselves as White. In 2000, this number had dropped to 69.4%. According to an October 2010 article in *Sightline Daily*, Renton is now the most diverse place in the Northwest, with only 55.3% of the city's population identifying themselves as White alone.² The Puget Sound is a point of entry for many refugees and immigrants from Asia. Not surprisingly, Renton is second in the Northwest (behind Bellevue) in the number of people self-identifying as Asian alone. As noted in the US Census Bureau's 2006-2008 American Community Survey, over 27% of total residents in Renton identified themselves as foreign born.

The increasing demographic diversity creates a need to reconsider how Renton provides recreation programs and services. More than 80 different languages are spoken in Renton³, making communication with residents about recreation opportunities a challenge. Other than English, the top languages spoken by students in the Renton School District are Spanish, Vietnamese, Chinese (Cantonese), Somali and Tagalog.⁴ In addition, recreation participation and interests can vary dramatically by culture, meaning the Community Services Department should consider diverse programming interests and demands.

In addition to its diverse residents, Renton welcomes approximately another 41,271 people, who are employed within the city limits.⁵ Renton is home to the Boeing Company (airplanes/defense systems) and PACCAR (premium commercial trucks), as well as the first IKEA store in the Pacific Northwest, TOPICS Entertainment, Brotherton Cadillac, Sam's Club and scores of other businesses. Non-resident employees create a large additional market for parks, green space, trails and recreation services. They also create great opportunities for partnerships and sponsorships, such as in the development of the Renton IKEA Performing Arts Center.⁶ In return, a good park and open space system can contribute to economic growth by helping to attract and retain businesses and support healthy, productive employees.

² <http://daily.sightline.org/>

³ 2010 State of the City Address

⁴ Email from Leslie Betlach, City of Renton Park planning and Natural Resources Director dated 8/20/10.

⁵ City of Renton Area Profile, <http://rentonwa.gov/visiting/>

⁶ The Performing Arts Center was developed with funding support from IKEA, the Renton School District, the City of Renton, the Washington Building for the Arts Program, the Boeing Company, Renton Rotary, Alexa and Norma Cugini, First Savings Bank, King County Journal Newspapers, King County Arts Commission, Kreielsheimer Foundation and the PACCAR Foundation.

Study Planning Area Description

The City of Renton, Washington, is located at the south end of Lake Washington in the Seattle/Puget Sound region of the Pacific Northwest. The city occupies 23.3 square miles within its city limits, which is considered to be the study planning area.⁷

Location in the Region

Renton enjoys a centralized location in the Puget Sound region. The city is 13 miles southeast of Seattle, 18 miles northeast of Tacoma and only 4 miles from the Seattle Tacoma International Airport (SeaTac).



Bordered by unincorporated King County, and the cities of Kent, Tukwila, Newcastle and Bellevue, Renton is situated at a key point in the regional transportation network. I-405 and State Routes 167, 169, 515 and 900 all intersect in Renton, creating both transportation and access opportunities as well as barriers for non-motorized transportation. The city's location provides easy access to Interstates 5, 405 and 90.

Landforms and Waterways

Renton is located on the south shore of Lake Washington in the Puget Sound area, which is surrounded by the Olympics, the Cascades and Mount Rainier. The Cedar River runs through the heart of downtown. A large portion of the city drains to the Green/Duwamish River via Springbrook Creek and remnants of the Black River. Both rivers and the lake are home to runs of Chinook, sockeye and coho salmon. In fact, the Cedar River includes the largest run of sockeye salmon in the continental United States.

The central portion of the city's lakeside location in the Cedar River Valley offers an expanse of flat, developable land near Lake Washington, which is about 15 feet above sea level. The topography of this watershed area is sloping, with hills draining into the creeks, river and lake. However, Renton is located in a geographically unique area, and the walls of the plateaus and river valleys contain both steep and erosive conditions. Due to the high annual rainfall and soil conditions, landslides and erosion damage can occur on relatively level areas as well as steep ones. Geologically, the area around Renton has a long history of coal mining. Although these operations have ceased, subterranean pockets exist that are often unnoticeable on the surface.

⁷ King County GIS Center (KCGIS)

Renton is also situated on top of an aquifer that supplies approximately 87 percent of the City's water. The Cedar Valley Aquifer is an underground layer of sand and gravel running 3 1/2 miles long and furnishes Renton residents with an average of 7.3 million gallons of water each day. At some points, the groundwater contained in the aquifer is only 23 feet below ground, making it very sensitive to pollutants. The aquifer has been designated a "sole source" by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, meaning that no federal financial assistance can be given to a project which might contaminate the aquifer thus creating a public health hazard. It also means that the City actively works to protect this water source from contamination, using the public natural areas and open spaces to filter the rainwater that feeds the aquifer. Renton's high water table also creates several wetlands in Renton, some of which have been protected as natural area parks. Examples of protected watersheds and wetlands include the Panther Creek Wetlands (76.66 acres), Renton Wetlands (125.00 acres) and Springbrook Watershed (38.00 acres).

Natural and Built Environment

The natural features that define the edges of the city and its neighborhoods include the lake, hills, plateaus, stream corridors and river valleys. While development over time has changed the appearance of the community, the natural features have generally remained constant.

Environmental Resources

The quality of Renton's environmental resources, such as wetlands or wildlife habitat, holds great importance for the citizens. Unlike many major Puget Sound cities, the City of Renton has several unique areas of habitat, many of which coincide with its wetlands and water resources. While the Cedar River supports major fish runs, Springbrook Creek, Honey Creek and May Creek also provide habitat for salmonids. The Black River Riparian Forest provides habitat for over 50 species of birds, including herons, eagles and many small mammals. The Cedar River, May Creek and Panther Creek corridors have forest, meadow and shrub habitats that provide shelter and food for many species. In the Environment Element of the City's Comprehensive Plan, policies that preserve these areas are noted, not only to preserve their unique features, but also to enhance the quality of life and provide recreational opportunities for Renton residents.

Besides its watersheds and salmon and wildlife habitat, Renton's history is steeped in forestry. From its early naming after Captain William Renton (a lumberman) to its present-day recognition as Tree City USA (2008 and 2009), the City of Renton values its trees. Renton has been practicing urban forestry for many years and in 2008 embarked upon a formal program. In 2009, City Council approved the 2009 *Urban and Community Forestry Development Plan*, a legacy program to guide the city's urban forestry efforts over the next ten years.

Three public property tree inventories have occurred recently, including the 2007 inventory of Renton, the 2008 Cascade Park inventory and the 2009 Benson Hill Neighborhood tree inventory. They reveal that the replacement and real estate value of Renton's trees is believed to be over \$22 million. An additional study of the value of Renton's forest resources is underway through a recently awarded grant program. These additional values include the stormwater retention value and the contribution to air quality.

Land Use and Development

Renton, historically, has been a small town and in many ways it still retains that character. But several factors place it on the threshold of change: the continuing transition of Renton's industrial sector; continuing regional and local population growth; and its location at the crossroads of local, national and international transportation. These factors foreshadow a new role for Renton as an important metropolitan center in the region.

Renton's industrial sector is undergoing a transition away from heavy industrial/manufacturing toward medium and light industrial uses. Although manufacturing is expected to remain stable and industrial jobs are expected to decline, the number of light and medium industrial jobs in wholesale/transportation/communications/utilities is projected to nearly double in the Renton area through 2020.

Renton, along with the rest of the Northwest, has been experiencing an increase in professional and service jobs over the past few years. Boeing's related research and development facilities in and around Renton were a major factor in the development of office parks south of the downtown and at the north end of the Green River Valley. At the same time, there has been an increased demand for goods and services as evidenced by the number and types of commercial businesses in the city. In addition, both the Valley Medical Center and Renton Technical College are anticipated to expand.

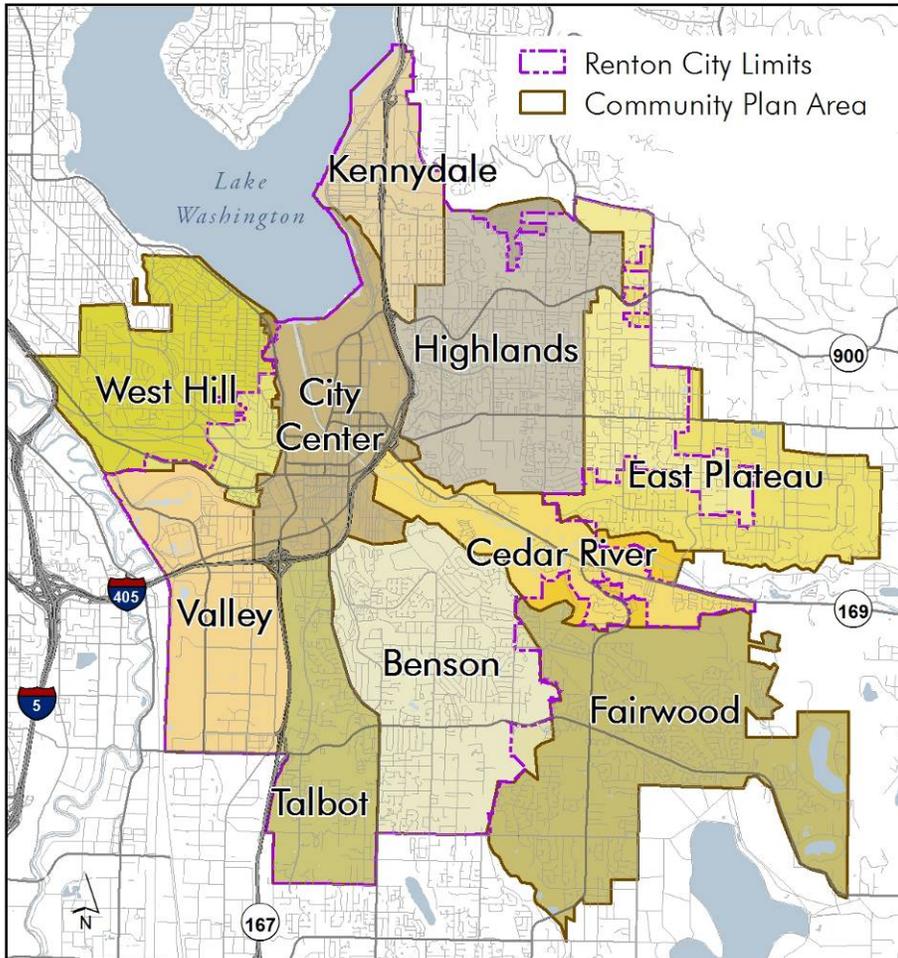
Renton's commercial corridors have attracted a number of low intensity, suburban-type commercial areas, such as the Rainier Avenue and NE 4th Street corridor. Strip commercial development also follows several principal and major arterial routes, such as along both sides of Benson Road, south of Carr/SE 176th. The City is undertaking several major corridor studies to promote more attractive vehicular corridors and connections between them to connect businesses and residential areas. Boulevard treatments are anticipated, encompassing improvements in transit accessibility, pedestrian and non-motorized use, traffic flow, efficient business access, expansion of the urban forest and corridor landscaping.

Renton's residential areas have traditionally been organized around schools, parks and other institutions. Both new and existing neighborhoods offer diverse housing stock that is wide-ranging in unit size, style, type and price. Although it is one of the older cities within the region, Renton still has vacant and underused land in many neighborhoods, including the downtown, that offer an opportunity for growth.

Vacant land remains scattered throughout Renton, but as infill development continues, land will become an increasingly scarce resource. Some vacant land, located outside of the Urban Center, may be environmentally sensitive and not suitable for full development. As annexations occur, more undeveloped land will become available. In 2005, there were approximately 975 acres of vacant and developable land within the City of Renton. Of this, the largest blocks of vacant land were generally found in Renton's outlying areas. Smaller parcels that are available for development can be found in the city's existing neighborhoods.

Community Planning Areas

Community Planning Areas were established by the Renton City Council in 2009 after a public outreach initiative to consider factors such as shared community identity, physical features, schools, data collection units, existing infrastructure, service areas, districts, boundaries and access to and from a community. Ten Community Planning Areas were identified through this process and are mapped and listed below.



Renton Community Planning Areas

- Benson
- Cedar River
- City Center
- East Plateau
- Fairwood
- Highlands
- Kennydale
- Talbot
- Valley
- West Hill

Community Planning provides an opportunity for participants to take a proactive role in shaping the way that their community moves forward in the future. In conjunction with residents,

business owners, property owners, community organizations and institutions, the City will develop plans for each of the ten Planning Areas. Plans will clearly identify the vision, priorities and needs of each community.

Community Plans will exemplify how the objectives and policies of the Comprehensive Plan play out when applied to detailed and specific conditions. Ideally, Community Plans will align the provision of City services and the allocation of infrastructure investments with community goals and priorities. They will indicate specific land use designations, appropriate densities and the design standards that should apply in individual Community Planning Areas. For parks and recreation, this gives the community power to help determine where new parks, open spaces and trails are needed, as well as how these areas can be developed to support the character of the community. It also allows communities to plan for the protection of unique local natural resources. Preserving and building community character while ensuring an efficient and predictable development approval process will be a central theme of all community plans.

The first plan in this process is the City Center Community Plan. However, there are ongoing planning efforts located in the Highlands Community Planning Area, which included the Sunset Area Community Investment Strategy and the Sunset Area Community Planned Action EIS (See Related Planning Documents in this document).

Demographics

Growth patterns and demographic characteristics of Renton's residents strongly influence recreation interests and levels of participation, affecting future needs. Age and income play a



major role in determining the types of needed facilities and ability to participate. To a lesser extent, race and ethnicity are also contributing factors.

The most recent demographic data available for the City comes from the City's Community and Economic Development Department, using forecasts through 2014.

Population Growth

The City of Renton is the 10th most populous city in Washington State and the fifth most populous in King County. As of 2010, the population of the entire city was approximately 86,230 people.⁸

Population growth is a primary factor in determining future needs for park and recreation services. From 1990 to 2000, the City gained 11,419 residents; an overall increase of 18.9%. In comparison, during the same time period the population in King County grew 15.2% (1990 – 2000). Since this time, the City's population has increased 19.9%, with a higher average annual growth rate of 1.84% (Table 1).

⁸ Source: City Center Community Plan (2010)

Table 1: Population Growth 1990-2030
City of Renton

Year	Population	Average Annual Growth Rate
1990	60,458	-
2000	71,877	1.75%
2010	86,230	1.84%
2017	97,950	1.84%
2030	124,106	1.84%

Source: 1990-2010 population based on Renton Demographics Report, City of Renton, Community and Economic Development Department (2010). 2017-2030 population based on 2000-2010 average annual growth rate.

Two time horizons are being discussed in this planning process. The first, 2017 is the effective life of this plan (the State of Washington’s Recreation and Conservation Office certifies plans for 6 years from the date of adoption for grant funding purposes) and the second is a longer-term horizon, 2030. The 2030 planning horizon reflects that this is truly a long-term plan, which will include recommendations that will take more than 6 years to complete. Throughout the process, public input questions and analysis will refer to both of these timelines. However, the available demographic analysis, detailed below, is projected to 2014. This information must be considered in light of the slightly different timelines.

By 2017, the population of the City of Renton is expected to grow by over 11,000 people; a 13.6% percent increase from 2010. Based on the same average annual growth rate (1.84%), the total population will be 124,106 by 2030.

Renton’s City Center is expected to experience considerable growth and change in the next six to 13 years (2017-2030), in part because of the anticipated growth of the Puget Sound region, but also because a significant portion of the area is a designated Regional Growth Center. A Regional Growth Center is at the center of the Puget Sound’s 2040 Regional Growth Strategy Vision. The Vision has identified regional growth centers for housing and employment growth, as well as for regional funding.

Age

Age distribution can illustrate Renton’s need for various recreation opportunities. Typically, youth tend to participate in and favor more active and competitive activities, such as traditional sports (e.g., basketball, baseball, and soccer) and extreme sports (e.g., mountain biking, skateboarding, rock climbing).

Table 2 summarizes the age breakdown in the City of Renton over the past 10 years and projected to 2014.

Table 2: Age 2000-2014
City of Renton

Age	2000 Population	2009 Population	2014 Population	Average Annual Change 2000-2009	Average Annual Change 2009-2014
0 - 4	7.1%	7.0%	6.9%	-0.2%	-0.3%
5 - 9	6.6%	6.4%	6.4%	-0.3%	0.0%
10 - 14	5.8%	6.1%	6.1%	0.6%	0.0%
15 - 19	5.7%	5.9%	5.7%	0.4%	-0.7%
20 - 24	7.1%	6.8%	7.1%	-0.5%	0.9%
25 - 34	18.5%	15.7%	15.9%	-1.7%	0.3%
35 - 44	17.5%	15.5%	14.1%	-1.3%	-1.8%
45 - 54	13.3%	15.0%	14.3%	1.4%	-0.9%
55 - 64	8.4%	10.8%	11.4%	3.2%	1.1%
65 - 74	4.9%	5.8%	7.2%	2.0%	4.8%
75 - 84	3.8%	3.4%	3.5%	-1.2%	0.6%
85 +	1.2%	1.7%	1.7%	4.6%	0.0%
18 and under	22.8%	22.9%	22.7%	0.05%	-0.2%
Average Age	34.6	36.4	36.5	0.6%	0.3%

Source: City of Renton, Community and Economic Development Department 2010.

Since 2000, the average age of the Renton population has increased from 34.6 to 36.4, and is expected to increase to 36.5 by 2014. The projections show this average age increase to be due largely to increases in the age groups over 55. The population under 18 is projected to be largely stable; the losses are primarily in the 35-54 age range.

Income

Recreation participation trends generally show that people with more disposable income tend to be more active and participate in a wider range of leisure activities, including higher cost activities such as golfing and competitive organized sports. On the other hand, many low-income families take advantage of free or low-cost recreation options, such as opportunities to play in parks. However, parents in low-income positions may also spend more of their time at work, leaving less time for recreational pursuits. Table 3 summarizes income levels in Renton. Median Household Income is expected to increase 6.5% between 2009 and 2014.

In Renton, the median household income has increased by four percent between 2000 and 2009, and is projected to increase 1.3 percent by 2014. Looking closer at the data, households earning less than \$50,000 will decrease while those making \$100,000 and greater will increase. When compared to the State of Washington average, Renton has historically had a higher median and per capita income. While this statistic is generally positive, further information is

needed to determine if this higher standard of living is shared across racial and ethnic lines or if there is a wider than average income gap.

Table 3: Household Income 2000-2014
City of Renton

Household Income Level	2000 Population	2009 Population	2014 Population	Average Annual Change 2000-2009	Average Annual Change 2009-2014
Median Household Income	\$48,356	\$65,861	\$70,141	4.0%	1.3%
(State average)*	(\$45,776)	(\$57,234)	(N/A)		
Per Capita Income	\$24,318	\$32,904	\$35,205	3.9%	1.4%
(State average)*	(\$22,973)	(\$29,927)	(N/A)		

Note: Income is expressed in current dollars, including adjustment for inflation.

Source: US Census and City of Renton, Community and Economic Development Department 2010. 2009 "state average" data based on 2006-2008 US Census estimates).

Race/Ethnicity

Culture and ethnicity often play a role in the recreation preferences and level of participation in various activities. As shown in Table 4, Renton has become increasingly more diverse since 2000. As of 2009, the population of Renton is 65.3% White. This is expected to continue through 2014, with a slight decrease in the White population and slight increase in the Asian/Pacific Islander population and the Hispanic Origin population.

Table 4: Race and Ethnicity 2000-2014
City of Renton

Race and Ethnicity	2000 Population	2009 Population	2014 Population	Average Annual Change 2000-2009	Average Annual Change 2009-2014
White	69.4%	65.3%	62.7%	-0.7%	-0.8%
Asian	13.2%	15.4%	16.8%	1.9%	1.8%
Black	7.9%	8.3%	8.5%	0.6%	0.5%
Hispanic Origin (Any Race)	6.8%	8.9%	10.2%	3.4%	2.9%
Two or More Races	4.5%	5.2%	5.6%	1.7%	1.5%
Other Race	3.7%	4.6%	5.3%	2.7%	3.0%
American Indian	0.7%	0.7%	0.7%	0.0%	0.0%
Pacific Islander	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%	0.0%	0.0%

Source: City of Renton, Community and Economic Development Department 2010.

As noted earlier in this document, according to the October 27th 2010, *Sightline Daily* article, Renton is one of the most racially diverse cities in the Pacific Northwest. The city has the lowest

percentage of “White” residents among Pacific Northwest cities, the highest percentage of “Black or African American” residents, and is ranked second for percentage of “Asian” residents.

Related Planning Efforts

As indicated in the previous pages, the City of Renton has initiated many successful planning efforts in the last several years to shape the design, development and operations of the city. These have ranged from tree inventories and salmon protection plans to investment and development strategies. The Long Range Parks, Recreation, Open Space and Natural Resources (PROSNR) Plan will integrate key findings from many of these planning efforts in order to identify needs, goals, policies, strategies and funding/ investment programs for parks and recreation, open space, trails and natural resources. These other plans will be addressed when needed as part of this planning process to support the direction identified by City staff, the Steering Committee and the Interdepartmental Team. For reference, some of these related plans are noted below.⁹



- *Comprehensive Plan (2010)*. The City of Renton has continued to update its Comprehensive Plan each year. The Parks, Recreation, Open Space and Trails Element and the Transportation Element of the Comprehensive Plan identify the policies and objectives needed to achieve their goal of providing a high quality comprehensive park, recreation, open space and trails system to meet the short and long-term needs of current and future Renton residents. The Transportation Element guides decisions that directly impact the ability of residents to reach parks and the modes of travel that are supported.

An Environment Element provides the policy background and basis for future environmental actions by the City of Renton as it attempts to balance urbanization, economic development and natural area protection. Environmental policies address substantive issues such as development within floodplains, wetlands and steep slopes and procedural issues such as how these areas should be mapped and regulated.

⁹ This is not a comprehensive list or discussion of all planning efforts. The purpose is to create a quick reference list of some of the key documents that will be referenced during the planning process.

- *Park, Recreation and Open Space Implementation (PROS) Plan (2003)*. The 2003 PROS plan is the most recent parks plan adopted by the city. It provided the basis for the development of the policies noted in the City's Comprehensive Plan, Parks Element. Both the plan and the policies/objectives noted in the Comprehensive Plan will be updated based on the current planning effort.
- *Sunset Area Community Investment Strategy (2009) and Sunset Area Community Planned Action EIS (2011)*. In 2005, the City of Renton began analyzing the economics of revitalizing the Highlands neighborhood. Recommendations suggested that commercial improvements would not be viable without improvements in the surrounding neighborhoods. As a result, the City examined alternatives to increase the number and range of options for housing in the Highlands. After a significant amount of public input and the development of several proposals, the City Council appointed the Highlands Task Force on Land use and Zoning to recommend a package of land use and zoning changes for the Renton Highlands and the Sunset Area in particular. The Task Force recommended changes to the City's land use policies and zoning codes that were adopted by the City Council in 2007.

Based on the Highlands Phase II Task Force recommendations, the City of Renton commissioned the 2009 Community Investment Strategy (CIS) study to prioritize additional public investment in the Sunset Area. It was timed in conjunction with redevelopment planning for Sunset Terrace, a Renton Housing Authority property of approximately 100 existing units on eight acres, as well as planning for an anticipated Renton School District bond measure. The goal was to maximize the opportunities held in both current and future investments to leverage benefit for the broader community. The Plan recommended a Community Investment Plan & Concept Plan Diagram for development.

The latest stage in this process is the Planned Action Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). This process has included refining the redevelopment concept for the Housing Authority properties into a preferred alternative. This alternative focuses around a new park site, encircled by Sunset Lane and NE 10th Street. The formal process includes public and regulatory review of the detailed analysis of the anticipated environmental impacts of the project.

- *Urban Forestry* Several studies have been conducted in Renton since 2008, providing policy direction and insights into public trees. These include:
 - Benson Hill Public Property Tree Inventory and Assessment Report (2009)
 - Renton Urban and Community Forestry Development Plan (2009)
 - Public Property Tree Inventory and Assessment Report (2007)
 - Urban Tree Canopy Assessment Report (2011)

- *Trails and Bikeways Plans.* The City of Renton has keen interest in trails and connectivity. Thirteen miles of trails (including bike lanes) are jointly managed and maintained by the Parks and Golf Division and the Public Works Maintenance Division. Plans for additional trails are noted below.

- *City of Renton Trails and Bicycle Master Plan (2009).* The Renton Trails and Bicycle Master Plan and Map Project provided a comprehensive update of the plan adopted in 1993, and the Draft Trails Plan, produced by the Citizen’s Non-motorized Transportation Committee in 2004. The 2009 Plan represents a collaborative effort between the Transportation and Parks Planning and Natural Resources Divisions to create an interconnected trails, water trails and non-motorized transportation network to accommodate both recreational and commuting uses. The Plan identifies and maps existing trails and bikeways, as well as makes recommendations for primary, secondary and minor routes to be developed in the future.

- *Lake to Sound Trail-Feasibility Study (2009).* This study was commissioned to examine the feasibility, timeline and routing for constructing a regional multi-purpose trail from Lake Washington to Puget Sound through Renton, Tukwila, SeaTac, Des Moines and Burien. To guide the process, the project team evaluated a range of alternative routes to meet several goals for the trail, including access by local communities. The report presents the recommendations for the regional trail by trail segment.

- *Sam Chastain Waterfront Trail-Connecting an Important Regional Trail System (2007).* This study details the connection of the Cedar River Trail to Gene Coulon Park. A key linkage in this trail is intended to be across the south end of Lake Washington but is on an indefinite hold due to concerns about impacts to Boeing facilities.



- *Demographic Studies.* As noted previously, Renton’s population has changed dramatically in recent years and is anticipated to continue to do so in the future. Several demographic studies have helped document these changes:

- *Demographic Summary Profile (June 2010).* Completed by Community & Economic Development Department, this study uses 2000 US Census data and ESRI projections to present population estimates for 2009 and 2014.
- *Population Density Map (October 2010).* This map, produced by the Community & Economic Development Department, indicates population density by area for the City of Renton.

- *Library Service Area Analysis (2010)*. In 2010, the Renton Public Library annexed to the King County Library System. A service area analysis was conducted to analyze the distribution of library services in the Greater Renton Area, including Forecast Analysis Zones for Soos Creek, Newcastle and Renton/Skyway.
- *City Center Community Plan (2011)*. Renton’s City Center is expected to experience considerable growth and change in the next 20 years as a Regional Growth Center. This Community Plan provides a framework to improve the livability of City Center neighborhoods, preserve the area’s unique identity, prioritize the provision of City services and investment in downtown infrastructure and provide the public and residents with the opportunity to participate in shaping the future of the City Center.

The City Center contains the Cedar River Trail and many public parks, works of art and facilities. The plan addresses park development in five residential neighborhoods, as well as parks such as Gene Coulon Memorial Beach Park and Piazza Park, which draw



visitors from around the region. The City Center also contains the city’s Skate Park, as well as some of the most iconic public art in the city, such as the statue “Interface” in Gene Coulon Memorial Beach Park. Additionally, the area is home to the Main Library, the Renton History Museum and City Hall. The framework of the City Center Plan, presented in chapter four, establishes goals and strategies for Economic and Community Development, Transportation and

Parks, Open Space and Recreation. The park, open space and recreation goals include expanding regional recreation trails as well as protecting, enhancing and improving access to natural features and parks.

- *South Renton Neighborhood Plan (2002)*. Pre-dating the Community Plan process, a plan was created for South Renton neighborhood as part of the City’s urban center redevelopment effort. The plan served as a policy guide for the transition of this area to an urban residential neighborhood to support employment and retail in Downtown Renton.
- *Arts and Culture Master Plan (2010)*. The City of Renton initiated a 5-year arts and culture master plan to explore the nexus between the arts and the attributes that make a vibrant community. The City tasked the Renton Municipal Arts Commission to undertake a planning process that would engage the community and set priorities for arts resources. This plan identifies strategies and actions for achieving the community’s vision of becoming a center for arts and culture where traditional and contemporary arts thrive and creative industries are cultivated.

- *Park Site Master Plans.* The City of Renton has continually evaluated options to improve several parks. Several site master plans have been completed so that the Community Services Department is poised to make upgrades when funding is available to do so.
 - *Tri-Park Master Plan (2006).* This master plan was completed to address impacts of planned improvements to Interstate 405 on the three park properties adjacent to the freeway (Liberty Park, Cedar River Park and the NARCO property). The master plan includes reconfigured and additional facilities on all three sites as well as linkages between the sites and on to the continuing Cedar River Trail. Improvements in the master plan are largely on hold until the decision to proceed with and fund the I-405 improvements. Also, to be developed as proposed, the NARCO site also requires negotiation with King County to purchase the development rights to this land (which was originally purchased in part using open space funding).
- *Museum Master Plan (2010).* In February of 2010 The City completed a new master plan for the Renton History Museum that set a strategic direction for the facility and the organizations affiliated with it. This new direction is called the Experimental History Project (EHP) and it focuses on regularly revisiting key questions and assumptions about history-making. The approach calls for regular experimenting with all aspects of the museum operations, targeting new audiences and partnerships and developing new assets. The infrastructure needed to support this will also have to be more flexible, including the building, exhibits and the technology utilized to help connect people to the museum.

Key Issues

Looking Forward

With most of the key identified projects from the recent park system plan completed and with new challenges brought to the table, the community of Renton will need to reexamine priorities and create a plan for the future. This plan will need to draw from not only the City's efforts but those of its neighbors and larger regional projects. The community input from this planning process will provide a strong basis for aligning efforts in a direction that the entire community can support. Recognizing that the situation will change over the years, this plan will also need to provide City staff with flexibility to adapt, while still staying true to the vision of the community.

Land, Facilities and Services for Annexation Areas

Annexation areas present several challenges for providing park land. As unincorporated County areas, the PAAs were developed and built to meet different (lower) standards and requirements than Renton's. This means that the newer areas of Renton are essentially built out yet lack the same level of access to parks that older areas of Renton enjoy. It also means that the park land that exists in the county may require different management and operational needs. For example, King County currently operates two parks in the recently annexed Benson Hill area (Boulevard Lane and Renton Park) and Soos Creek Regional Trail. King County and the City have

had early discussions on the possible transfer of these parks with the exception of the Soos Creek Trail, which would increase maintenance and operations responsibilities and costs for the Community Services Department, despite decreases in the current City budget. Details of the current level of service across the community will be summarized in the Existing Conditions Summary Report, and gaps and opportunities will be addressed in the Community Needs Assessment later in this process.

Adapting to a Diverse Audience

Similar to most diversifying communities, Renton is still finding the best ways to connect to and serve the needs of culturally diverse residents. This will likely include experimenting with new program types and locations and may also include adapting facilities to reflect cultural sensitivity. Creating space for this experimentation is especially challenging in an environment of declining resources. Any available diversity indicators in the program and user data collected by the City will be helpful in developing a better understanding of how existing programming is serving the entirety of Renton's communities.

Integrating Natural Resource Planning

Past park and recreation planning efforts have recognized the importance of open space in the park system. However, this plan takes on the challenge of directly planning for the capital projects, programming and management implications of improving the function of natural systems within the city. This effort will not be the responsibility of the Community Services Department alone and the goals will need to be shared and implemented by multiple entities within and outside of City Government. The first step in this process is to present a summary inventory of the existing natural resources, within the Existing Conditions Summary Report, and then to analyze the community's needs for improvements and programming alongside the recreational and other benefits Renton receives from its park land and other recreation programs.

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