

# Olympia

## Parks, Arts & Recreation Plan

### Public Engagement – DRAFT

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Community engagement is an essential component of the Parks Plan to ensure that the planning process reflects the needs, priorities, and values of residents, park users, and community partners. Because parks, arts and recreation facilities serve the entire community, meaningful public participation helps ensure that the plan is responsive, equitable, and grounded in local knowledge.

#### **Engagement Approach**

##### Community-Driven Planning Approach

The Parks Plan will be developed using a community-driven approach that combines technical analysis with extensive public input. Community engagement helps identify how residents currently use parks and recreation facilities, what improvements are most desired, and where gaps exist in access, programming, or amenities. This approach is consistent with park planning practices across Washington communities, where public participation is a key step in identifying needs, exploring alternatives, and shaping recommendations for park systems.

Public participation allows planners to understand both the strengths of the existing park system and the opportunities for improvement. Feedback gathered through surveys, open houses, focus groups, and community events provides important insights into local preferences and priorities, ensuring that the final plan reflects the community's vision for parks, arts and recreation spaces.

##### Importance of Diverse Participation

Efforts will be made to engage a broad and diverse range of community members throughout the planning process. Inclusive outreach helps ensure that the Parks Plan reflects the perspectives of residents of different ages and backgrounds, including individuals who may use parks in different ways.

Many park planning processes prioritize meeting residents where they are—through community events, engagement with local organizations, and accessible engagement tools—to reach a wide range of participants. For example, park planning efforts will include surveys, interactive mapping tools, focus groups, and outreach through day camps and community organizations to gather input from residents.

Engaging a wide cross-section of the community helps ensure that park investments promote equitable access to recreation, address community recreation and park needs, and support facilities and programs that benefit the entire population.

## Informing Goals, Priorities, and Capital Projects

Input collected through the engagement process will directly inform the development of the Parks Plan's goals, priorities, and recommended capital projects. Community feedback will help identify desired park and art amenities, priorities for maintenance and safety, opportunities for expanded trails and recreation facilities, and strategies to enhance natural areas and environmental stewardship.

Community perspectives are considered alongside demographic trends, park system inventories, and best practices in park planning. This integrated approach helps ensure that recommendations are both community-supported and feasible from a planning and operational standpoint.

### **Communication goals:**

- **Transparency:** Clearly explain the planning process, milestones, and decision points.
- **Participation:** Engage broad and diverse audiences, including historically underrepresented communities.
- **Accessibility:** Provide plain-language information and multiple engagement formats.

### **Community/Stakeholder Identification**

Key groups to be engaged:

- Olympia Residents (including Urban Growth Area)
- Recreation Program users
- Sports Leagues
- Park Stewards and Park Volunteers
- Youth and teens
- Seniors
- Historically underrepresented communities

Partners and Neighboring Jurisdictions:

- Internal Stakeholders: Public Works Transportation, CPED, Water Resources
- Olympia School District
- Port of Olympia
- Tribal government: Squaxin Island Tribe
- Senior Services of South Sound
- Neighborhood associations
- Arts & Cultural Organizations
- Neighboring Local Jurisdictions: Lacey, Tumwater, Thurston County
- Advisory Groups:

- PRAC
- Arts Commission
- Youth Council
- Social Justice & Equity Committee
- Others?

## **Equity & Inclusion Strategy**

Strategies to ensure inclusive participation:

- Focus groups:
  - Potential Audiences: Latinx, Vietnamese
  - Translation services / Multilingual engagement for surveys
- Partnerships with cultural organizations/events
- Youth-specific outreach:
  - Summer camps (SKIPP Free & Reduced Lunch Program, Camp Olywahoo)
  - Olympia Youth Council

## **Engagement Methods**

In-Person Engagement:

- Open House Listening Sessions
- Focus Groups
- Engagement with youth (Summer Camps, SKIPP)
- Pop-up displays in parks or locations around town:
  - Arts Walk, Music in the Park, festivals, etc.
  - Library
  - Senior Center
- City Advisory Committees

Digital Engagement:

- Engage Olympia:
  - Online Surveys
  - Ideas Tool – brainstorming tool for crowdsourcing ideas from the public

- Mapping Tool – allows people to pin areas on map for new park amenities, maintenance, security concerns, etc.
- Statistically valid / random sample survey
- Biannual Community Survey on Satisfaction with City Services (upcoming survey results available in May 2026)

### **Evaluation & Reporting**

Compile a “What We Heard” summary following first phase of public engagement, including:

- Number of participants
- Diversity of participants
- What we heard, what’s missing, what’s important to you, priorities, etc.