

PARKS, RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE ELEMENT

CP.260. Background Summary.

The City of Astoria, with its long history, has developed a system of parks, open space and recreation facilities; its setting at the mouth of the Columbia River offers many recreation opportunities. The City is surrounded by State parks, wildlife, refuges, forest lands, beaches and water areas.

Astoria contains about 90 acres of park facilities, or about 9 acres per 1,000 population. Among these are several proposed parks, including the landfill site, and the site west of the sewer lagoons. The City plans to relocate the ballfields to the former landfill site. Many small neighborhood parks are scattered around the community, with various levels of development or potential. The cities of Astoria and Seaside sponsor the only full public recreation programs in Clatsop County, and include softball, baseball, swimming, basketball, and volleyball. Clatsop Community College offers indoor recreation courses such as dance, tennis, and various exercise classes. The City's recreation program has expanded to its limit at the present time, placing a strain on facilities and personnel.

The inventory contains summaries and plot plans of each City park with recommendations of possible improvements. One project currently under study by the Parks Department and the Public Works Department is the closure of the former landfill site. The old landfill would then be converted to an active recreation facility, which would include ballfields and a stadium. Ideas for waterfront park or open space proposals are contained in the Astoria "Waterfront People Place System" prepared for the City in October, 1977. In addition, the "Astoria Waterfront Master Plan", commonly known as the "Murase Plan", was adopted in 1990. The "Astoria Riverfront Vision Plan" was adopted in 2009. Concepts for various improvements include a small fishing pier in the downtown area, places to sit at platted street ends, bike trails, and paths. Implementation of these Plans would require considerable discussion and additional planning at the time the ideas were pursued. Construction of a River Trail along the former railroad right-of-way began in 1988 with the construction of the 6th Street River Park and with the construction of the first two blocks of River Trail / River Walk between 15th and 17th Streets in 1991. By 2012, the River Trail has been constructed from Smith Point to 53rd Street. Sources of funding for park improvements are available through the U.S. Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the State Highway Division (bike trails), and the State Marine Board (motor-boat related facilities).

Bike and hiking trails are discussed in terms of linking various community facilities as part of a coordinated system. A Trails Master Plan was adopted in April 2006 which included mapping and an inventory of existing trails and potential new trails. The Plan made recommendations on multiple uses of the trail system and made suggestions for

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future studies concerning mapping and location of trail connections for the City's trails system. A large hurricane force storm in December 2007 damaged many of the existing trails and changed some of the problems, issues, and opportunities identified in the 2006 Plan. An updated Trails Master Plan was adopted in April 2013 and included mapping of existing and potential new trails as requested by the public. The Plan made recommendations on trail maintenance and improvements, new trail development, trail design standards and amenities, trail regulations and safety, and trail management and funding.

[CP.260 Amended by Ordinance 06-05, June 19, 2006; amended by Ordinance 13-04, May 6, 2013]

CP.265. Conclusions and Problems.

1. As a peninsular community between Youngs Bay and the Columbia River, water related recreation opportunities are abundant.
2. Coastal weather patterns operate as a deterrent to many year-round park usages; increased public demand for indoor facilities strain available resources.
3. The City's severe topography creates dramatic views and forested open space; it also limits the availability of large tracts of flat land for certain types of active recreation facilities such as ballfields. Park maintenance problems are also compounded in steep terrain areas.
4. Astoria's location offers many opportunities for recreation such as hiking, beachcombing, hunting, fishing, and sightseeing. Public transportation to these areas is non-existent, however.
5. The large publicly-owned tracts of forested open space within the City limits reduces the traditional need for major land acquisition programs often required in other communities. Much of the forested areas are not managed for multiple use, including recreation. However, sufficient land is available outside the City for activities such as hunting and hiking.
6. Although the City has many areas being used as parks, many of these areas are not formally dedicated as parks and may therefore be converted to other uses at some time in the future. Parks which are well established and not needed for other purposes need to be offered protection from conversion.
7. The City has limited funds for the construction of new parks and the maintenance of existing facilities. Consideration must be given to the maintenance costs of providing new park or recreation areas.

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8. Many persons who are not residents of the City are placing increasing demands on the City's recreation program. This is primarily due to the fact that the City operates the only public organized sports program in the County.
9. The shrinking enrollment of the Astoria School District may mean the reduction of school properties used for recreation facilities throughout the City.
10. Use of the trail system by motorized vehicles creates conflicts and problems that can be addressed by restricting vehicular uses on trails within the City limits.

[CP.265.10 added by Ordinance 06-05, June 19, 2006; amended by Ordinance 13-04, May 6, 2013]

CP.270. Goals.

The City of Astoria will work:

1. To develop a balanced park system.
2. To reflect Astoria's special qualities and characteristics.
3. To avoid duplication of facilities provided by other public and private agencies.
4. To develop additional parks by means of subdivision regulation.
5. To provide or encourage waterfront parks.
6. To provide a reasonable level of recreation program opportunities.
7. To promote general beautification.
8. To continue to plan for park programs.
9. To encourage a system of trails throughout the City.
10. To encourage downtown improvements.
11. To create a central downtown plaza on the site of the American Legion block (Heritage Square) bounded by 11th, 12th, Duane, and Exchange Streets.

[CP.270.11 added by Ordinance 12-04, 2-6-12]

CP.275. Policies.

1. Park planning will recognize the recreation needs of all segments of the population; provide a variety of year-round recreation opportunities, including indoor facilities; be safe, accessible and of aesthetic value to the City; and contribute to the economic and social well being of the community. To the extent possible, park and recreation planning to meet the particular needs of segments of the population should be coordinated with the School District, Community College, and other organizations and groups.
2. Astoria's steep topography operates as a limitation on "large" community-wide park acquisition and development. To the extent possible, large parks for active recreation, such as ballfields, should be integrated with schools grounds and other appropriate public facilities. Playgrounds and tot-lots should be provided to serve distinct neighborhoods, but specific sites need to be selected with care so as not to incur unreasonable maintenance and development costs.
3. The nearby ocean beaches, hiking, picnic and camping facilities along the coast are accessible to Astoria residents with automobile transportation. The plan does not include, therefore, provision of large, community-wide multipurpose facilities. Portions of the City's wooded areas may be appropriate for nature trails, hiking trails, and other natural uses within the City limits. To the extent possible, cooperative arrangements will be continued with such agencies as the Astoria School District, or Community College for shared uses of indoor facilities in lieu of large capital expenditures for separate facilities.

[CP.275.3 amended by Ordinance 06-05, June 19, 2006]

4. The City Planning Commission has the responsibility for subdivision approval. Where appropriate, necessary and feasible, the Planning Commission will apply density credits for the provision of common open space and recreation areas within the subdivisions. The Planning Commission may require that such areas be maintained by subdivision homeowners rather than by the public.
5. *[CP.275.5 Deleted by Ordinance 90-19, July 2, 1990.]*
6. The City of Astoria, through Parks and Community Services Department organizes and administers the only publicly sponsored recreation program in the area other than the program sponsored by the City of Seaside. Approximately 20% to 30% of the participants are non-Astoria residents. In view of the popularity of the recreation program, cooperative arrangements should be encouraged with Clatsop County and other jurisdictions for shared program maintenance and supervision costs as an alternative to curtailment of services to non-Astoria residents. Consideration should be given to the formation of a North County Recreation District.

[CP.275.6 amended by Ordinance 06-05, June 19, 2006]

7. Attractively maintained park and recreation areas contribute much to the aesthetics and livability of a community. The City supports the efforts of merchants or other persons to provide landscaping, street trees, or other improvements where feasible.
8. The Parks and Community Services Department, in cooperation with the City's Engineering Department and other agencies, should recommend, and periodically update, a long range park and trail maintenance and improvement program.

[CP.275.8 amended by Ordinance 06-05, June 19, 2006; amended by Ordinance 13-04, May 6, 2013]

9. Ways should be explored for the development of hiking and bike trails along appropriate City streets, railway rights-of-way, utility corridors, and park access routes as per recommendations in the Transportation System Plan and the Recreational Trail Master Plan. To the extent possible, such trails will utilize existing City maintained trails and provide linkages to major park lands and other public facilities. Planning for trails must consider such limitations as topography, climate, maintenance and development costs, adjacent landowner concerns, legal access to the trails, and should emphasize intensive use areas.

[CP.275.9 amended by Ordinance 06-05, June 19, 2006; amended by Ordinance 13-04, May 6, 2013]

10. To the extent possible, open space, park features and landscaping will be considered in specific downtown redevelopment projects and proposals. Pedestrian shelters, street furniture, and similar improvements can add to the appeal of the City's center.
11. The City of Astoria encourages the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Oregon Department of Forestry, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to establish an Eagle Nest Management Plan for the eagle nest that is located east of Emerald Heights on Federal property (not the same nest as that referred to as "Mill Creek nest").

[CP.275.11 added by Ordinance No. 81-16, Sec. 1, enacted November 16, 1981.]

12. The City will continue its efforts to improve public access to the shoreline through:
 - a. The construction of public access points, pathways, and street ends;

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- b. The encouragement of public access projects in conjunction with private waterfront development actions, possibly through the use of local improvement districts and/or grant funds; and
- c. The protection of street ends and other public lands from vacation or sale where there is the potential for public access to the water. The City will work with the Division of State Lands (DSL) to determine the status of submerged and submersible lands adjacent to the City street ends.

[CP.275.12 added by Ordinance No. 90-19, July 2, 1990.]

- 13. The City will review proposals for the vacation of public easements or rights-of-way which provide access to water areas. Existing rights-of-way and similar public easements which provide access to the shoreline shall be retained or replaced if they are sold, vacated, exchanged, or transferred. Rights-of-way may be vacated so long as equal or improved access is provided elsewhere. The Planning Commission will review proposals for street vacations in shoreland areas at a public hearing under the quasi-judicial hearings process.

[CP.275.13 added by Ordinance No. 90-19, July 2, 1990.]

- 14. The City will consider the improvement of a public access site on Youngs Bay in the vicinity of Tapiola Park. Any improvements must be coordinated with the Astoria Bypass project being proposed by the City and the Oregon Department of Transportation.

[CP.275.14 added by Ordinance No. 90-19, July 2, 1990.]

- 15. The City will cooperate with the Port of Astoria to provide public access in the Port Docks area consistent with security considerations. Efforts should be made to maintain vehicle access to the ships docked along Pier 2. A fishing access area should be provided on the breakwater of the mooring basin when it has been completed.

[CP.275.15 added by Ordinance No. 90-19, July 2, 1990.]

- 16. The City supports the efforts of the Alderbrook Community to develop a neighborhood park on the area west of the sewage lagoons. The park should be used for passive recreation only, including hiking, bicycling, bird watching, and other low intensity uses.

[CP.275.16 added by Ordinance No. 90-19, July 2, 1990.]

- 17. The City should consider the development of a mini-park at the 51st and Birch Streets site in Alderbrook.

[CP.275.17 added by Ordinance No. 90-19, July 2, 1990.]

18. The City should encourage the Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) to develop trails and routes on ODF lands for all users but particularly for mountain bike and motorized trail bike use.

[CP.275.18 added by Ordinance 06-05, June 19, 2006]

19. The Astoria Column Park should be used as the main trail head for the City trail system. However, additional designated parking areas considered should be located near the Cathedral Tree on Irving Avenue, at the ends of James Street, Franklin Avenue, Spruance Avenue, at Clatsop Community College, at the west end of the River Walk at Smith Point/Port area, and at the proposed new sports complex located at the former Transfer Station (1800 Williamsport Road).

[CP.275.19 added by Ordinance 06-05, June 19, 2006; amended by Ordinance 13-04, May 6, 2013]

20. The City trail system use should be limited as follows:

- A. Pedestrian Trails: Pedestrian trails in the City permit foot traffic only. Pedestrian trails include the Clatsop Community College Connector, Richard Fencsak Cathedral Tree Trail, City Water Reservoir Path, Middle School Path, and the Coast Guard Trail.
- B. Multiple-Use Trails:
 1. Soft Surface Trails: Bike and pedestrian use are the only allowed uses on soft-surface trails designated as multiple-use. Multiple-Use Soft Surface Trails include new trails that are developed within the Urban Forest.
 2. Hard Surface Trails: Multiple-use trails with hardened surfaces, such as the River Walk, also allow other non-motorized activities such as skateboarding and rollerblading. Multiple-Use Hard Surface Trails include the River Walk, Shively Park, Pipeline Road, and any new hard surfaced trails that are developed within the Urban Forest.
- C. Trail use classifications shall not exclude use by “wheelchairs” as defined in the American With Disabilities Act.

[CP.275.20 added by Ordinance 06-05, June 19, 2006; amended by Ordinance 13-04, May 6, 2013]

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21. Trail improvement projects and new trail developments should follow recommendations in the Trails Master Plan for trail design standards and amenities.

[CP.275.21 added by Ordinance 06-05, June 19, 2006; amended by Ordinance 13-04, May 6, 2013]

22. The City should develop trail user maps and informational signage for the City Trail System.

[CP.275.22 added by Ordinance 06-05, June 19, 2006]

23. The City will create an active, urban downtown park space that will incorporate a wide variety of uses for all downtown visitors and workers, including areas for uses such as picnics, outdoor concerts, movies, chess, workers to have lunch, and other activities.

[CP.275.23 added by Ordinance 12-04, 2-6-12]

24. Prohibited uses on all City trails includes the use of firearms, target practice, equestrian use, and use of motorized bikes or other motorized vehicles.

[CP.275.24 added by Ordinance 13-04, May 6, 2013]

25. The City should use the Astoria Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Master Plan, dated 2016, to guide future decisions for land use, public investment, and determining community needs.

[CP.275.25 added by Ordinance 16-04, July 18, 2016]