SUBMITTED TO PLANNING COMMISSION 9/16/2019

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TO: Hood River Planning Commission
Kevin Liburdy

RE: Parks Master Plan draft
"Walkshed" standard problems

Both the existing draft Parks and Rec Master Plan ("Draft Plan") and the city have been moving forward on the assumption that what has been referred to as the "walkshed" standard can be used *alone* as an indication of whether or not the city is well provided with adequate parks. This creates serious problems that should be recognized before you make your recommendations to the Council.

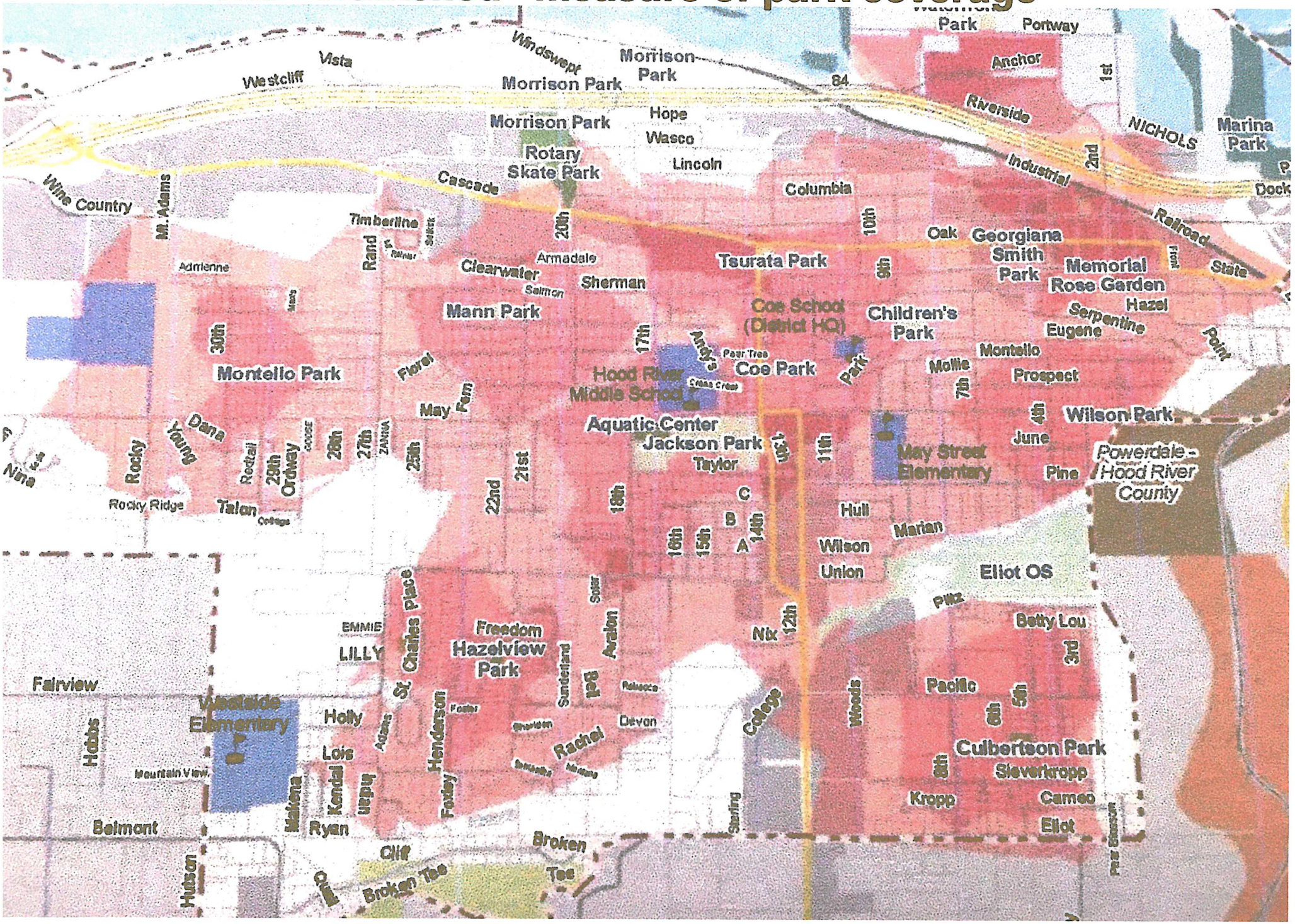
Under this standard, the distance assumed to be walkable around a park is inscribed as a circle around the park, and marked with some degree of a pink color, depending on the distance. Such a "walkshed" mapping analysis of the Westside done for the Draft Plan is attached. As you can see, a superficial glance at this map provides a misleading impression that the Westside – which is well "pinked" -- is actually quite well provided with parks. As we know, it has a few parks which are loved by neighbors and in the analysis have big pink rings around them, but they are quite small. There is no really meaningful park acreage in the Westside.

A walkshed analysis is a good thing, as long as combined with other standards. However, a serious problem is that conversations in recent public sessions indicate the Council is prematurely moving to a consensus that a "walkshed" standard ***all by itself*** is an adequate measure of how well a city is "parked." The idea taking hold is that the more classic standard of the number of park acres per thousand population can be abandoned in favor of the walkshed standard. The truth is that *both* are needed.

Nothing could be more damaging than abandoning the acres-per-thousand- standard as the city grows and its population rises. If it's abandoned, that significant additional park land will be assumed to not be needed. Tiny parks can be provided, little pocket parks or even less (like the one in the attached photo from Portland, to create an absurd but illustrative example). As long as they're in walking distance, a walkshed analysis without more will find a collection of tiny parks adequate. Is this what we want as a community?

Elimination of the acres-per-thousand-population standard would, of course, leave more land open for development. Perhaps that's the ultimate goal and subtext. But I am surprised that a master planning process for parks should be used as a vehicle for it. The Commission should recommend that both standards be used in the Master Plan.

# The "Walkshed" measure of park coverage

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