

Hood River Planning Commission 10/21/19

During public hearings on July 29, August 19, September 16 and October 21, 2019, the Planning Commission sought feedback from the public regarding the Westside Area Concept Plan Report's "Park & Open Space Framework." After review and deliberation, the Planning Commission submits the following recommendations to the City Council.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Parks, Trails and Open Space Planning Strategy—

The foundation of the planning strategy is to create an "emerald network": an interconnected system of neighborhoods, parks, and open spaces linked together with trails and multi-use paths. Such a system provides welcome opportunities for public enjoyment, recreation and alternative transportation. It encourages improvements in public health, benefits the environment, and reduces dependence on motor vehicles.

Trails: Link neighborhoods, parks and open spaces with trails or multi-use paths for transportation and recreation. Top priorities for trails are:

- Henderson Creek Trail.** Develop an off-street path and riparian corridor adjacent to Henderson Creek from West Cascade Avenue to Belmont Avenue. Preliminary recommendation is a 25-foot-wide corridor on both sides of the creek, measured from the centerline, with a surface appropriate for bicycles and pedestrians. This trail would link to and/or incorporate the existing Westside Community Trail.
- Ridgeline Corridor Trail.** Develop an east-west off-street path from Frankton Road to Rand Road. Because of steep terrain, this trail will be most appropriate for pedestrian use with a firm and stable surface.

Neighborhood parks: Plan for three parks, each approximately 3-4 acres in size, in each new Westside neighborhood as defined in the Westside Concept Plan. Prioritize centrally located neighborhood parks where zoning facilitates greater housing capacity. Precise locations to be determined.*

Community Park: Plan for one larger community park of 20-30 acres, in or adjacent to the Westside study area. This park may or may not replace one of the neighborhood parks recommended above. The specific location would be determined in a future update of the Park and Recreation District's Master Plan.

Additional Open Spaces: Consider other open space areas that can be part of the emerald network, and provide connectivity to them.

- Public school ball fields and other recreational facilities should be considered as nodes on the emerald network. Coordinate with the Hood River County School District to establish guidelines for public use of these facilities, while recognizing the need for security and safety on school grounds. At a minimum, ensure connectivity of the trail system with a trail easement along the perimeter of the property.
- Open space tracts and community gathering spaces that are part of Planned Unit Developments, higher-density and mixed-use projects should be included in the emerald network. To ensure trail connectivity, require dedicated public trail easements through these properties as they are established.

Criteria for Park/Trail/Open Space Acquisition—

Establish a park acquisition formula: Develop specific criteria to guide park planning and land acquisition. Planning Commission believes it is critical that the level-of-service formula include an acreage-per-capita component, as well as proximity to existing and future residents, and minimum standards for park amenities.

Establish a land acquisition plan: In order to ensure land for parks is secured before it is committed to other uses, create a specific plan for when land should be purchased. Planning Commission recommends acquiring land for a neighborhood park by the time 50 percent of residential units have been built in that neighborhood. *To enable connectivity, timely land acquisition is even more critical for trail corridors.*

Funding—

Funding mechanisms: The Planning Commission supports accelerating mechanisms to acquire land for parks and trails, such as a system development charge (SDC) rate increase. It also supports exploring alternative funding options, such as an in-lieu parking fee program.

Public donations: Establish a fund for public donations to support the acquisition of land for parks, trails and open space, and related improvements.

Environmental Considerations—

Retention of tree groves. Significant tree groves are desirable features of an emerald network. Work with the City of Hood River Tree Committee to establish criteria for what constitutes significant trees and tree groves, and determine how they can be protected.

Limit development of terraced areas. Limit development of terraced areas that are 25% slope and greater, except where needed for street connections and pedestrian connections. This helps broaden the network of public and private open spaces that can benefit birds and other wildlife.

Stormwater management. Seek opportunities to naturalize stormwater management areas so they can be enjoyed as green spaces along the emerald network. Also leverage stormwater management techniques as a way to acquire land for trails, parks and open space (e.g., setting aside lands in a floodplain).

Implementation—

Adopt a Parks Master Plan in coordination with the Parks District and other affected local agencies.

Adopt a parkland and open space dedication ordinance to help implement the plan. Such an ordinance would provide the City with the opportunity to acquire real estate or fees-in-lieu to satisfy its future park demand and obligation.

Coordination with other City plans and frameworks. The Park & Open Space Framework should complement the Bicycle & Pedestrian Framework as well as the Streets & Transit Framework. The Henderson Creek and Westside trails should be included in the Transportation System Plan.

ADDITIONAL NOTES

The Park and Open Space Framework is intended to be flexibly applied, and to help inform future efforts by the Hood River Valley Park and Recreation District to develop an updated Parks Master Plan.

*The neighborhood park target areas are preferred locations; they are not intended to be mandatory locations. Planning Commission recognizes that flexibility will be needed to acquire land for parks through a variety of means including advance acquisition, dedication during the development review process, gifting, etc.