

CHAPTER 6

PARK, RECREATION, AND OPEN SPACE ELEMENT



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INTRODUCTION

The Park, Recreation and Open Space Element serves as an expression of the community's goals, objectives, needs and priorities for recreation planning. In all communities, recreation provides an important personal, as well as social, outlet. Park, recreation and open space facilities are common areas that Fircrest residents, as well as visitors, can enjoy. They can promote physical health and social/mental wellness by providing physical activity, making neighborhoods safer, building communities, and fostering social interactions. Parks provide places for exercise, sports, children's playgrounds, relaxation, and community gatherings. These areas also enhance the aesthetic qualities of the community. They serve as important community centers and are among the most heavily used and enjoyed places within Fircrest.

As with other facilities and services provided by the City, park, recreation and open space facilities must be planned for to meet the changing demands that occur with growth. When the population increases, the demand placed upon existing facilities may increase, as well. As such, park, recreation and open space areas and facilities may need to be enhanced or expanded to meet the growing needs. Adequate land must be set aside for these purposes, and capital funds must be made available to develop the facilities. This Element is intended to ensure that provisions will be made to prepare for future needs so that the citizens of Fircrest will continue to enjoy a high level of park, recreation and open space services into the future.

ORGANIZATION OF THE PARK, RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE ELEMENT

This Park, Recreation and Open Space Element is divided into three sections. The first section summarizes the intent for the Element, its relationship to the Park, Recreation and Open Space Plan, and applicable planning requirements. The second section provides a summary of existing facilities and references proposed facilities explored in detail in the City's Park, Recreation and Open Space (PROS) Plan. The final section provides goals and policies supportive of meeting Fircrest's long-term park, recreation and open space needs.

RELATIONSHIP TO PARK, RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE PLAN

On February 25, 2014, the Fircrest City Council adopted Ordinance No. 1547, thereby adopting the Fircrest Comprehensive Park, Recreation and Open Space (PROS) Plan. The 2014 PROS Plan and amendments thereto are hereby incorporated by reference and considered to be a component of this PROS Element and Comprehensive Plan.

The PROS Plan provides specific guidelines for meeting the recreational needs of a changing community, and makes recommendations concerning property and facility improvements necessary to provide recreational opportunities in the future.

It serves as a strategic planning tool for making parks, open space, facility and recreational program decisions over a twenty-year period. The PROS Plan identifies

the actions the City should implement to satisfy the expectations of the community. It includes recommendations that provide guidance for making land acquisitions and protecting open spaces, and improving and establishing new facilities.

The PROS Plan is divided into five chapters:

- Vision, Goals & Objectives;
- Existing Parks, Facilities & Program Resources;
- Public Involvement;
- Needs Assessment, including Level of Service Recommendations; and
- Capital Facilities Plan & Implementation Measures.

Rather than repeat the information contained in the PROS Plan, this Element will reference the PROS Plan and focus primarily on goals and policies.

STATE PLANNING CONTEXT

GROWTH MANAGEMENT ACT

The Washington State Growth Management Act identifies the following planning goal:

“Encourage the retention of open space and development of recreational opportunities, conserve fish and wildlife habitat, increase access to natural resource lands and water, and develop parks.” [RCW 36.70A.020(9)]

The GMA also identifies mandatory and optional plan elements. [RCW 36.70A.070 and.80]. A Park and Recreation Element is a mandatory plan element that must, at a minimum, implement, and be consistent with, the capital facilities plan element as it relates to park and recreation facilities. [RCW 36.70A.070(8)]. The element shall include:

- Estimates of park and recreation demand for at least a ten-year period;
- An evaluation of facilities and service needs; and
- An evaluation of intergovernmental coordination opportunities to provide regional approaches for meeting park and recreational demand.

REGIONAL PLANNING CONTEXT

PIERCE COUNTY COUNTYWIDE PLANNING POLICIES

The Countywide Planning Policies for Pierce County include a *Countywide Planning Policy on Natural Resources, Open Space, Protection of Environmentally-Sensitive Lands, and the Environment*. Open space, for the purpose of this policy, includes parks, recreation areas, greenbelts/natural buffers, scenic and natural amenities or unique geological features or unique resources.

This policy directs Fircrest to:

- Develop a plan for the provision and designation of open space considering a number of factors, including the following:
 - Open space is defined in conjunction with recreation and facilities;
 - Open space and environmentally sensitive lands that create linkages across jurisdictional boundaries and coordination with these entities;
 - Encourage open space cluster design; and
 - Encourage natural buffering as part of development design.
- Consider making the following uses of open space:
 - Recreational areas, including parks (golf courses, picnic areas, bicycle, equestrian, and walking trails) and general recreation;
 - Uses as considered on a case-by-case basis; and
 - Uses derived from community definition (i.e., greenbelts).
- Encourage new housing to locate in a compatible fashion (i.e., clustered design) with open space designations or outside of designated open spaces.
- Regulate open space through tools such as:
 - Zoning and subdivision ordinances, including but not limited to cluster and minimum lot size zoning, overlay zones and adequate off-site public facility regulations;
 - Development impact fees for park and open space acquisition;
 - Dedication of land or money in-lieu of land;
 - Designation of open space corridors;
 - Wetlands, shorelines, floodplain or other environmentally sensitive lands ordinances; and
 - Development agreements.
- Cooperatively inventory existing and potential open space by creating local and regional planning inventories.
- Authorize the following methods of retention of open space land or wildlife corridors:
 - Public acquisition of property in fee simple or through development easement acquisition;

- Private acquisition with covenants, conditions and/or restrictions limiting the use of the property to open space;
- Alternatives to public purchase;
- Retention of existing open space through:
 - Required open space preservation within and without Urban Growth Boundaries established by Pierce County;
 - Preserving, and enhancing significant regional open space networks and linkages across jurisdictional boundaries.

EXISTING AND PROPOSED PARK, RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE FACILITIES

Existing park, recreation and open space facilities are summarized below in **Table P-1**. The locations of these facilities are shown on the PROS Facility map (**Figure P-1**). Additional detail is provided in Chapter 2 of the PROS Plan, which summarizes *existing parks, facilities and program resources*.

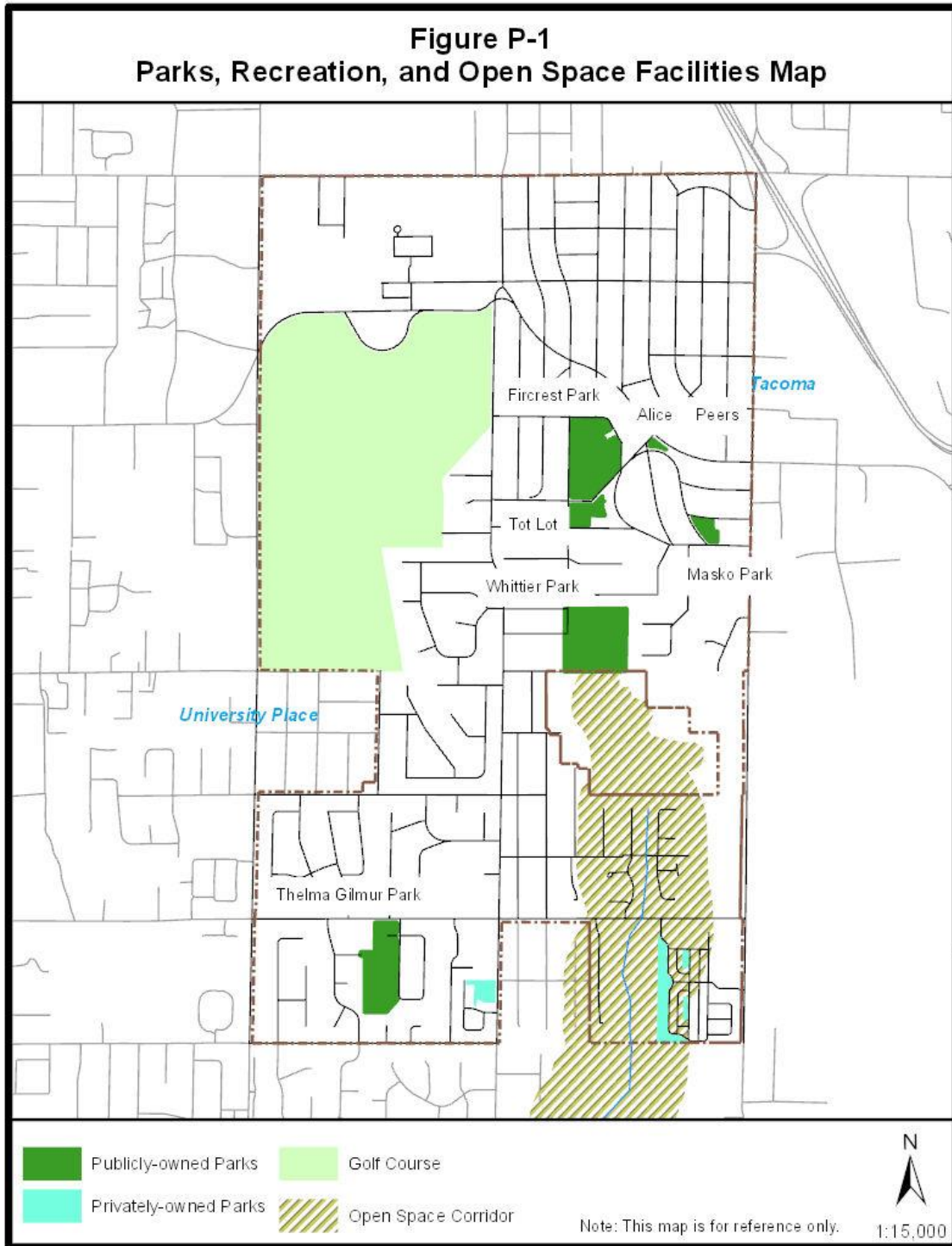
Table P-1
Existing Park, Recreation and Open Space Facilities

Park, Recreation or Open Space Site	Classification	Acres
Alice Peers Park – 601 San Juan Avenue	Pocket Park	0.2
Gene Goodwin Tot Lot – 611 Contra Costa	Neighborhood Park	1.4
Fircrest Park – 555 Contra Costa Avenue	Community Park	7.8
Whittier Park – 921 Contra Costa Avenue	Community Park	10.0
Thelma Gilmur Park – 1404 Evergreen Drive	Natural Open Space	6.5
Masko Park – 805 San Juan Avenue	Special Use Area	1.2
TOTAL		27.1

Proposed park, recreation and open space facilities, including specific recommended improvements to existing facilities, are addressed in detail in the *needs assessment* provided in Chapter 4 of the PROS Plan and in the *capital facilities plan and implementation measures* summarized in Chapter 5 of the PROS Plan. The Six-Year Capital Improvements Program for park, recreation and open space facilities is located in the Capital Facilities Element of this Comprehensive Plan. Finance options for recommended projects are explored in Appendix A to the PROS Plan.

Pursuant to RCW 36.70A.160, Fircrest has identified an open space corridor that

consists of lands in the vicinity of Leach Creek between Whittier Park and the City of University Place. Future pedestrian trails developed within this corridor would connect to the Chambers-Leach Creek trail system that the Cities of University Place and Lakewood, and Pierce County, are developing. The proposed trail system will reach its terminus at Chambers Bay and the Pierce County Chambers Creek Properties. The location of this proposed corridor is shown in **Figure P-1**.



GOAL AND POLICIES

This Element contains the park, recreation and open space goals and policies for the City of Fircrest. The following goals reflect the general direction of the City, while the policies provide more detail about the steps needed to meet the intent of each goal. Goals P1, P2, P3 and P4 and their respective policies reiterate goals and policies contained in the PROS Plan.

GOAL P1

Enhance a high quality, diversified system of parks, recreation facilities, and open spaces that are attractive, safe, functional, affordable and accessible to all segments of the population.

Policy P1.1

Provide parks with activities for all age groups and abilities.

Policy P1.2

Develop athletic facilities that meet the highest quality competitive playing standards and requirements for all age groups, skill levels, and recreational interests.

Policy P1.3

Develop new or improve existing multi-use facilities to increase flexibility of use for new activities, or other new trends, as there is a demonstrated need in the community.

Policy P1.4

Redevelop indoor community spaces that provide arts and crafts, music, video, classroom instruction, meeting facilities and other spaces for all age groups on a year-

Policy P1.5

Provide a blend of passive and active parks and open spaces that fulfil the recreational needs of the City's residents.

Policy P1.6

Design and manage park and recreational trails and facilities offering universal accessibility of residents of all physical capabilities, skill levels, ages, income, and activity interests.

Policy P1.7

Plan for the future so adequate open space, historical elements, recreation facilities and programs are provided for future generations.

GOAL P2

Provide adequate recreational opportunities to meet the leisure needs for all age and interest groups that engage a broad cross-section of the community.

Policy P2.1

Evaluate present use and demand of existing parks and facilities.

Policy P2.2

Initiate joint planning and operating programs with other public and private agencies to provide for special activities like basketball, baseball and soccer.

Policy P2.3

Provide programs, special events and facilities that promote a sense of community and stimulate socialization for the individuals and family.

Policy P2.4

Ensure a broad range of programs to stimulate good health and physical development for all ages,

Policy P2.5

Support the development of athletic facilities that meet quality playing standards and requirements for all age groups and recreational interests, concentrating on field and court activities that provide for the largest number of participants.

Policy P2.6

Offer programs at a range of costs and implement strategies to ensure program affordability, while meeting financial goals.

Policy P2.7

Evaluate opportunities to produce revenues in excess of expenditures in appropriate areas to help fund other programs.

Policy P2.8

Continue to be innovative in offering and providing a broad and varied program of leisure activities, recreation programs and services relevant to the needs, interests and abilities of all citizens.

GOAL P3

Provide a park, recreation and open space system that is efficient to administer and maintain.

Policy P3.1

Develop parks and recreational facilities only when adequate maintenance and operation funding are available to maximize maintenance efficiency, safety and public enjoyment.

Policy P3.2

Prepare master plans for parks and facilities prior to development, major improvement or renovation to promote cohesive, quality designs and ensure consistency with community needs.

Policy P3.3

Incorporate sustainable standards and best management practices into planning and design of new parks and rehabilitation of existing facilities.

Policy P3.4

Preserve and protect significant environmental features for parkland open space use, including unique wetland, open spaces, and woodlands, which reflect Fircrest's natural heritage.

GOAL P4

Develop, staff, train and support a professional Parks and Recreation Department that effectively serves the community in the realization of Goals P1, P2 and P3.

Policy P4.1

Employ a diverse, well-trained work force that is knowledgeable, productive, courteous, responsive and motivated to achieve department and citywide goals.

Policy P4.2

Where appropriate, provide staff with education, training, and modern equipment and supplies to increase personal productivity, efficiency, and pride.

Policy P4.3

Monitor workload and staffing needs to maintain an adequate and efficient work force.

GOAL P5

Enhance Fircrest's landscape and provide habitat for wildlife by increasing the amount of property permanently dedicated for open space uses with preference given to properties having the greatest significance as critical areas, properties that can act as buffers between different land use types and intensities, and properties that represent a valuable natural or aesthetic asset to the community.

Policy P5.1

Consistent with Countywide Planning Policy Environment-15, methods that the City may use to increase public open space include, but are not limited to:

- Public acquisition of property in fee simple or through development easement acquisition;

- Private acquisition with covenants, conditions and/or restrictions limiting the use of the property to open space;
- Alternatives to public purchase, including, but not limited to:
 - Flexible zoning, subdivision and regulatory approaches designed for protection or preservation;
 - Land trust;
 - Conservation easement;
 - Transfer of development rights, purchase of development rights, and other compensable regulatory approaches;
 - Donations;
 - Preferential assessments;
 - Planned developments;
 - Dedications;
 - Impact fees;
 - View easements; and
 - Use value assessments.

GOAL P6

Conduct appropriate long range and current planning analyses that will support the preservation, development, maintenance and expansion of park, recreation and open space facilities to meet the long-term needs of the community.

Policy P6.1

Fircrest should review, amend and adopt, as appropriate, development regulations that will achieve the intent of the Countywide Planning Policies relating to *Natural Resources, Open Space, Protection of Environmentally-Sensitive Lands, and the Environment*.

Policy P6.2

Park planning and use of facilities should be coordinated with other City projects and not-for-profit, private or public groups to assure maximum use of recreational facilities. Fircrest should encourage a variety of uses in public schools and facilities to efficiently help meet the recreational needs of the community. The City should cooperate and coordinate with other jurisdictions in the planning and development of regional parks and recreational facilities.

Policy P6.3

To ensure adequate park and open space land is dedicated within Fircrest, the City should ensure that park or open space land has been dedicated or impact fees

collected to contribute to park land acquisition and facility development before granting development or redevelopment approvals for residential projects.

Policy P6.4

Improvements to dedicated open space should be appropriate for the natural constraints imposed by the open space area. Proposed improvements in critical areas designated as open space should be subject to review under the critical areas ordinance.