Principles

These six principles demonstrate the collective community values regarding Bellingham’s park system:

- **Protective**: Preserves habitat and open space, enhances native species and creates opportunities to learn about and interact with nature.
- **Connected**: Supports connectedness and cohesion of the community by enhancing physical and mental health and well-being and protecting natural corridors.
- **Playful**: Inspires imagination and joy.
- **Equitable**: Quality and quantity of amenities equally distributed and easy to safely use year-round and access by all modes of travel.
- **Sustainable**: Stewards a park system that endures for the long term and supports adaptable spaces that accommodate traditional, emerging and future uses.
- **Inclusive**: Responsive to the entire Bellingham community: all ages, abilities, languages, genders, cultures and levels of income.

Goals and Objectives

These seven goals and their corresponding objectives reflect the community’s desired outcomes and provide a strategic framework for recommendations in the PRO Plan.

**Goal 1: Provide high-quality facilities and services that are accessible, inclusive and distributed equitably across Bellingham.**

Objectives:

- a. Provide a system of parks, trails and open space so that all residents live within one half mile safe walking distance of a developed park or trail.
- b. Proactively upgrade and restore existing facilities to improve resiliency and protect long-term health of park assets.
- c. Provide adequate staff year-round to maintain and enhance park facilities and services.
- d. Target new park acquisition and development in areas that are under-served.

**Goal 2: Enhance the capacity, quality and variety of uses of the existing system of parks, recreation and open space facilities and services.**

Objectives:

- a. Evaluate park facilities and infrastructure to ensure adequate capacity is available to support appropriate uses.
b. Incorporate art into park facilities as funding and opportunities arise.
c. Design system upgrades that respond to community vision and preferences and use best available science to protect the environment.

Goal 3: Create environments that encourage regular active and passive activities to support health, sense of safety, wellness and social connections.

Objectives:

a. Conduct a Community Recreation Needs Assessment and implement recommendations.
b. Participate in Parkscriptions programs and other organized activities that activate underserved populations.
c. Work with other City departments and organizations to discourage illegal camping.

Goal 4: Preserve and integrate nature, natural systems and ecological principles throughout Bellingham.

Objectives:

a. Preserve and enhance a system of open space, habitat corridors and trails.
b. Protect environmental features that reflect Bellingham’s natural character.
c. Participate in development of Urban Forestry Master Plan to proactively assess and protect urban tree canopy.
d. Expand dog-waste program and provide additional trash receptacles to improve self-maintenance and litter control.
e. Implement low impact development measures and integrated pest management to reduce environmental impacts.
f. Steward and protect open spaces from invasive species, illegal activity, and inappropriate use.

Goal 5: Develop innovative programs, services and strategies for expanding the system and improving accessibility.

Objectives:

a. Involve the community in habitat restoration and maintenance activities through the Parks Volunteer Program.
b. Explore partnerships that expand services or leverage support for specific projects.
c. Evaluate scholarship program for low income families with the goal of expanding participation.
d. Ensure new development invests in and dedicates new parks, trails, street trees and open space.
e. Target improvements that connect trails with transit stops, key destinations, bike routes and sidewalks to improve non-motorized transportation options.

Goal 6: Connect and unify the community with trail and greenway corridors.
Objectives:

a. Provide an interconnected system of trails so that all residents are within a one-half mile safe walk of a trail.
b. Balance the demand for public access and interpretive education with protection of environmentally sensitive areas and historic sites.
c. Implement the Greenways Strategic Plan and pursue recommended future trails.
d. Provide safe street crossings and improve wayfinding.

Goal 7: Manage Bellingham’s park land and programs effectively, efficiently and sustainably utilizing quantitative and qualitative measures.

Objectives:

a. Design and develop facilities that reduce overall maintenance, operation requirements and costs, while improving resiliency and efficiency.
b. Establish baseline conditions and maintenance standards for park assets and evaluate progress towards meeting standards and improving conditions.
c. Prioritize capital improvements based on safety, condition, socio-economic factors and population served.
d. Analyze options for long-term financial sustainability.
e. Explore options to improve enforcement of park rules.
f. Provide staff with adequate training, resources and equipment to increase productivity and efficacy.