

# 2026 PROS Plan Summary

*Access to recreation,  
nature, and play*

Public Draft Release  
April 1, 2026

City of Bellingham  
PROS Plan Update

---

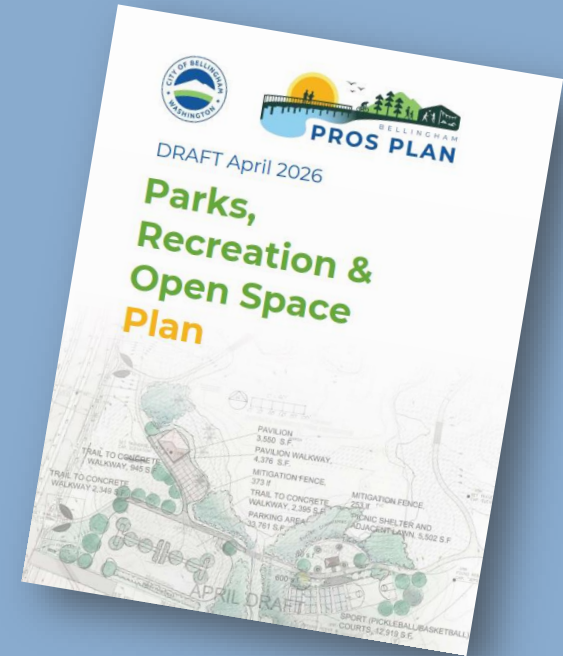
[engagebellingham.org](https://engagebellingham.org)



# Plan purpose

Guides park, recreation & open space system for next 20 years and is updated every six years

Maintains the City's eligibility for Recreation and Conservation Office grants



# Goals

## Connect

Utilize trails to interconnect the City's parks and open spaces

## Design

Create environments to support wellness and a sense of safety, connect people and nature, and provide a sense of place

## Play

Develop innovative and diverse programs, services, and strategies for improving recreational opportunities

## Equity

Provide high-quality park facilities and services that are accessible, inclusive, and distributed equitably across Bellingham

## Partnerships

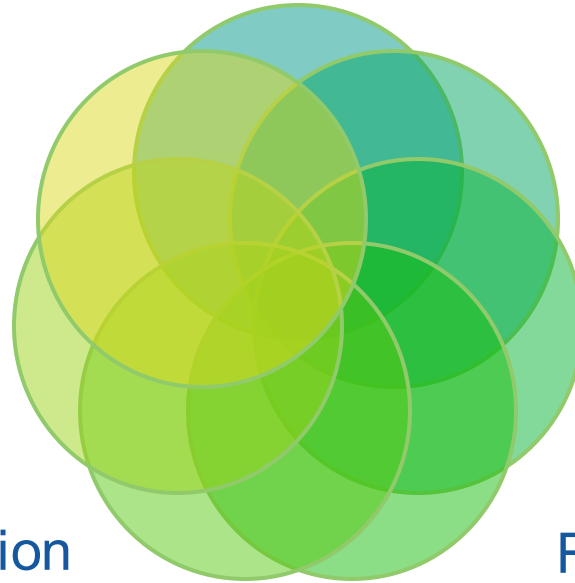
Cultivate strong partnerships and community collaboration to enhance recreational opportunities

## Conservation

Conserve nature and enhance climate resilience within the park system

## System Resilience

Operate and maintain parks, trails, and facilities effectively and sustainably



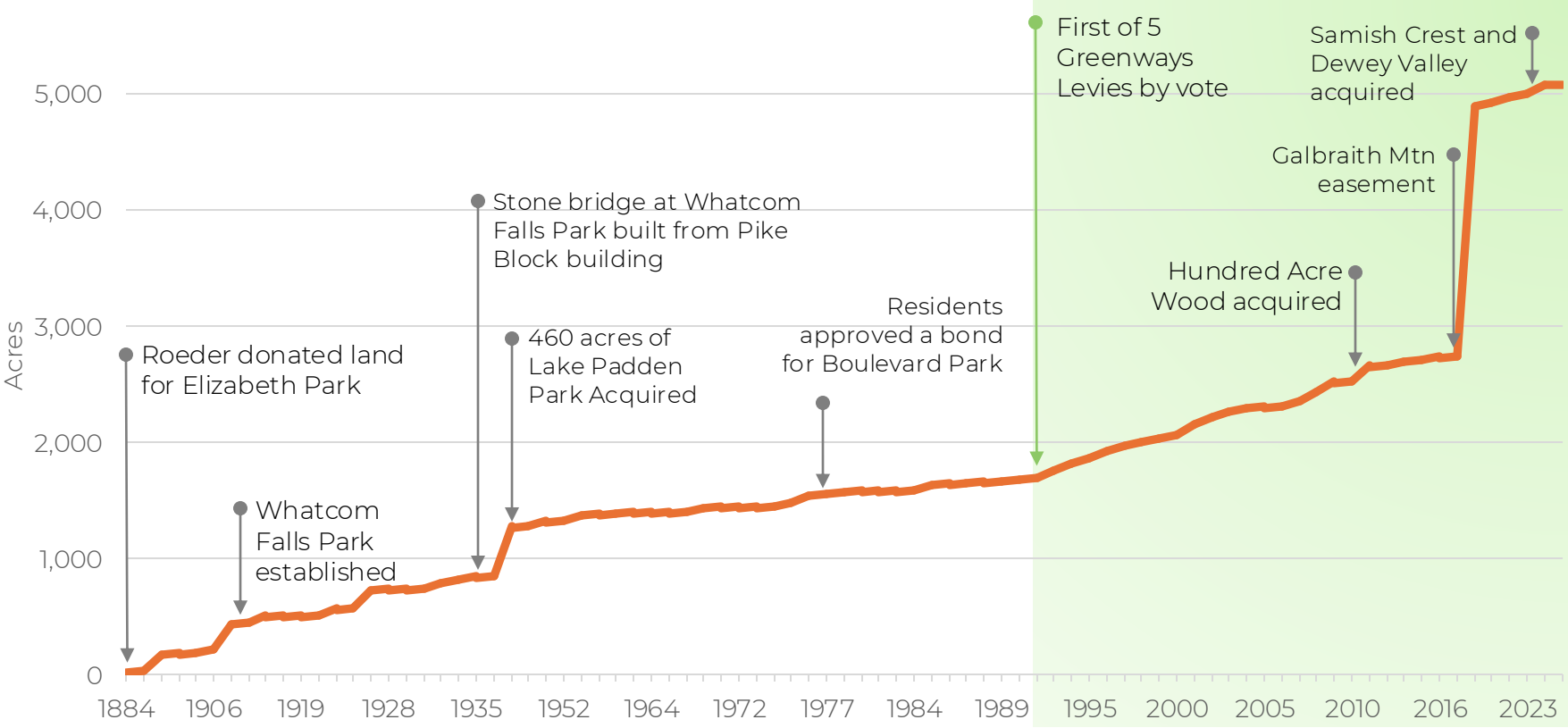
# Park Legacy

*Bellingham has long taken a pardonable pride in its parks. No city of its size in the Northwest has a finer system of public playgrounds*

– Bellingham Herald,  
February 6, 1935



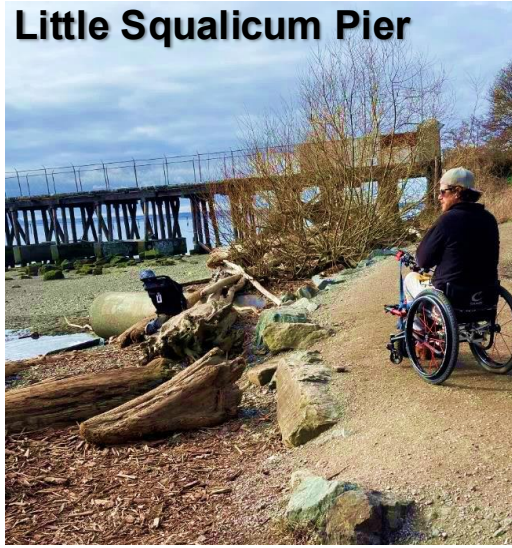
# Park Lands Over Time\*



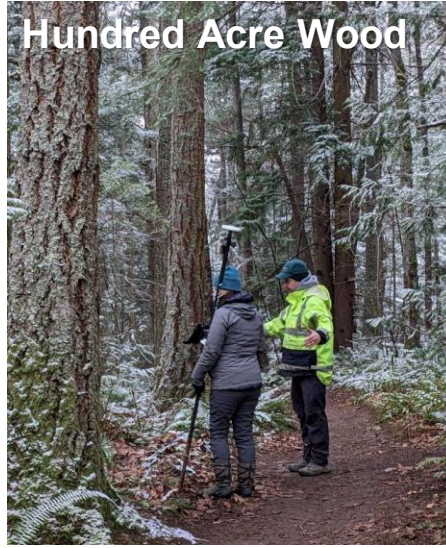
— Total Acres

\*Events source: Aaron Joy, A History of Bellingham's Parks 1999

**Little Squalicum Pier**



**Hundred Acre Wood**



# Recent growth Parks, trails, and restoration



**Sunset Pond trail loop**



**Storybrook Park**



**Cordata Park**



# Plan focus

- Improve what we have
- New year-round amenities
- Fill park gaps and key trail links to improve access for all
- Service improvements



# Public feedback summary

## What Do We Like?



### Trails



### Access to Nature



There is strong interest in safe and connected trails, access to water, street trees, and connecting with nature. Favorite parks have a blend of nature and recreation.

“ I like the access and beauty of the parks. I love that there is green space throughout the city so people can get to a green space relatively easily. A big part of what makes Bellingham special is the nature surrounding and within it. ”

## How Can We Improve?



### Completing Features



### Accessibility



Features such as restrooms, lighting, parking, accessible signage, ramps, and wayfinding are completing features that can take facilities to the next level for all users.

“ It would be nice if restrooms were open(unlocked) throughout the night so I can use them when I run through the parks in the early morning. ”

# Public Feedback Summary (Cont.)

## How Do We Use It?



### Special Events

“ Would love to try mountain biking with my family, but would be nice if there was a way to do a beginner lesson with all equipment provided, this would be a great option for people who may not have the budget for the initial outlay for all the equipment. ”



### Outdoor & Sports Programs



The community noted that they enjoy family events in parks, access to water, and passive and active recreation.

## What Are we Missing?



### Aquatics

“ We desperately need indoor recreation and ESPECIALLY aquatics. Kids in our area absolutely must be not just water safe but accomplished swimmers and that's impossible to do when pool access is so limited. ”



### Community Rec Center



Due to weather conditions in Bellingham, the community expressed desire for indoor spaces for sports, swimming, and community building.

# Plan TOC

Chapter 1: Purpose & Background

Chapter 2: Planning & Policy Framework

Chapter 3: Parks & Open Space

Chapter 4: Trails

Chapter 5: Recreation Programs & Events

Chapter 6: Operations

Chapter 7: Implementation and Funding

Engagement results

Inventory

Recommendations

# Level of Service comparison relative to other cities



## Quantity

Existing condition

1,751

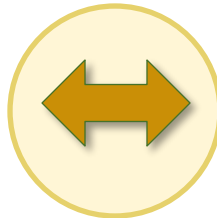
Developed parks (ac)

85

Trails (mi)

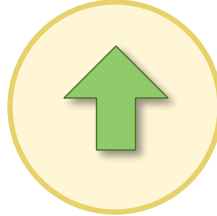
1,428

Open space (ac)



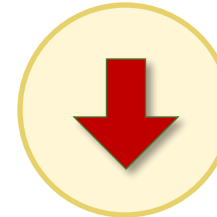
## Distribution

Where are the parks and trails relative to housing



## Condition

What is the condition of parks, facilities, and trails



## Amenities

Indoor and outdoor recreational facilities

# Parks

## 10-Minute Walk Service Area

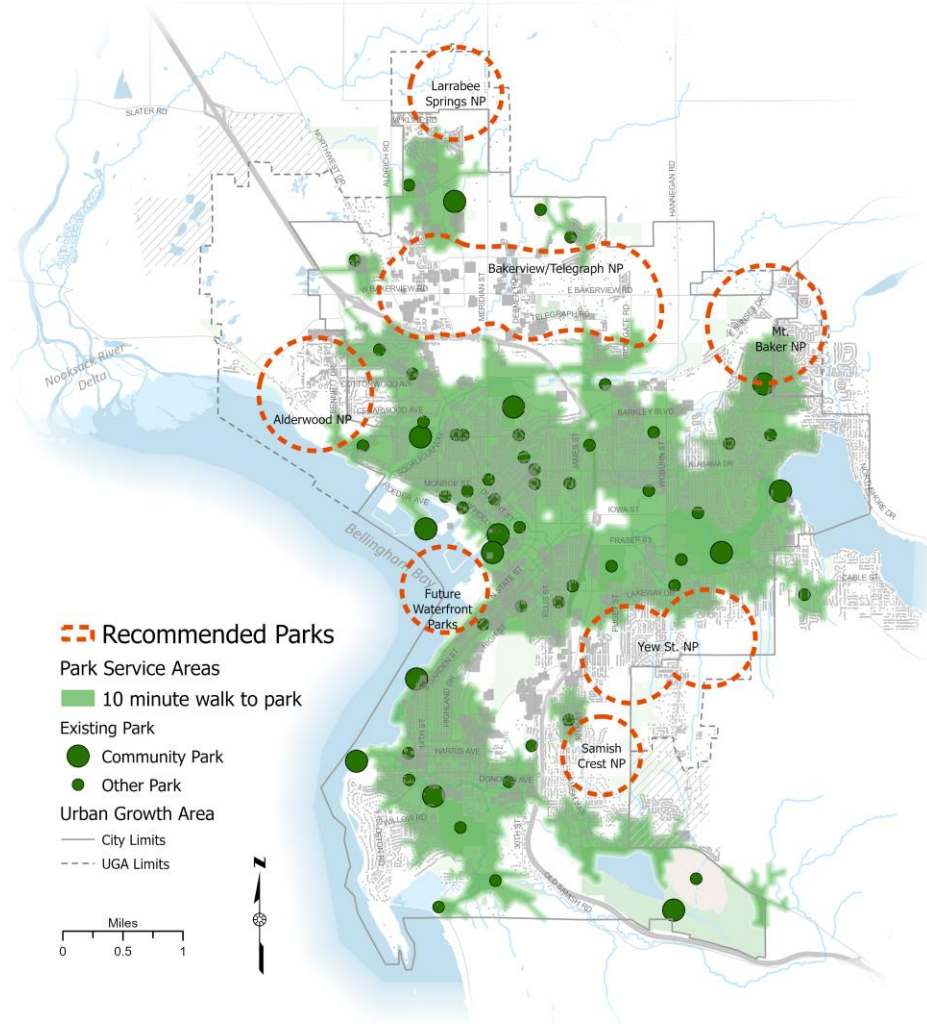
- 70% pop. can walk to parks

Propose to add:

- 4 - Neighborhood/pocket parks
- 1 - Community park

Significant Gaps:

- North Bellingham
- Samish

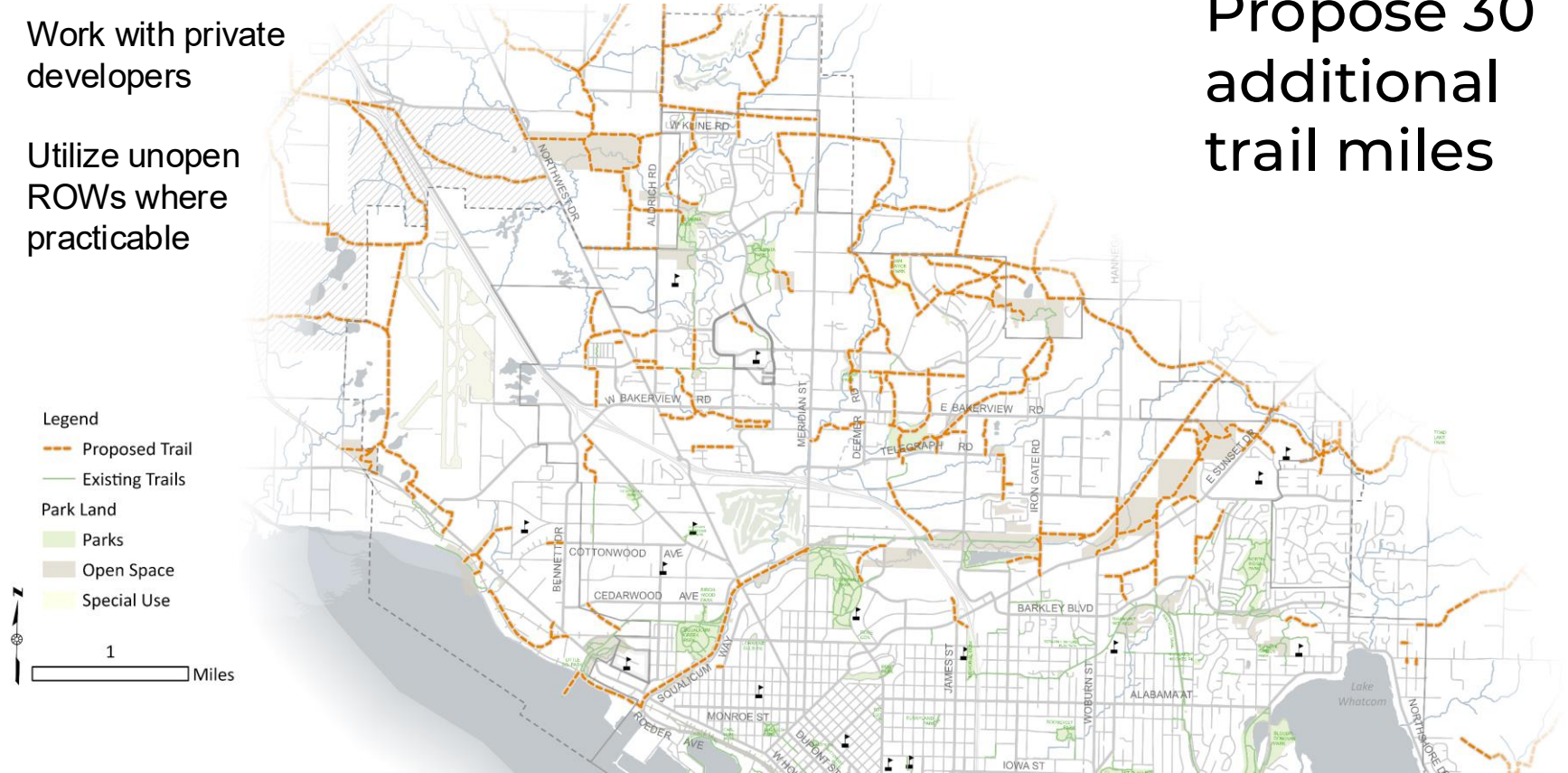




# Public trail facilities map

- Work with private developers
- Utilize unopen ROWs where practicable

Propose 30 additional trail miles



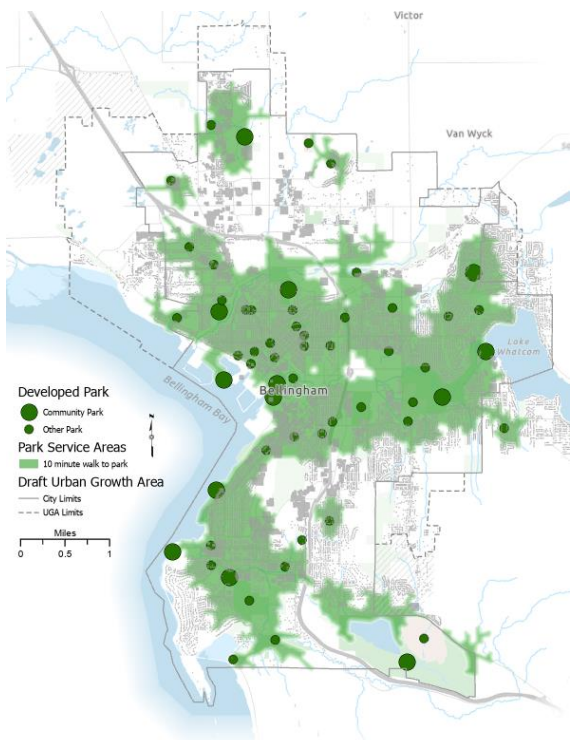
# Projects and Actions

# Selection and prioritization of projects and actions

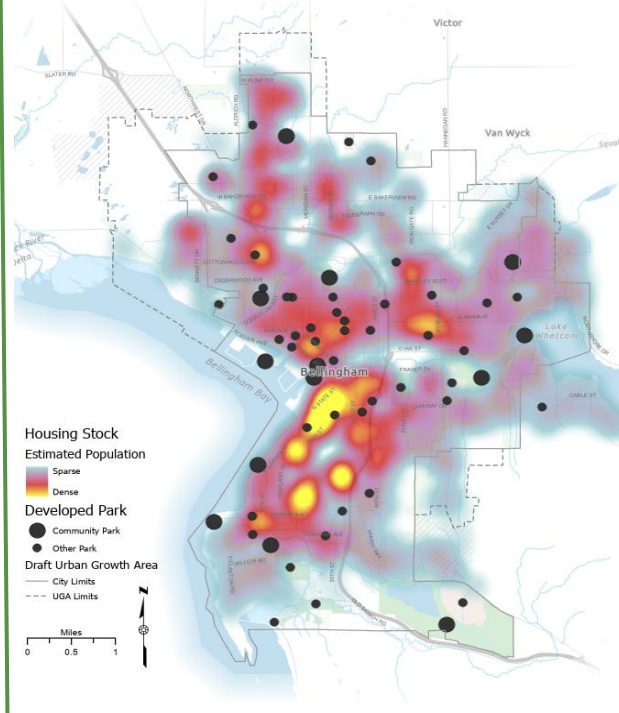


# Score projects with a specific location based on:

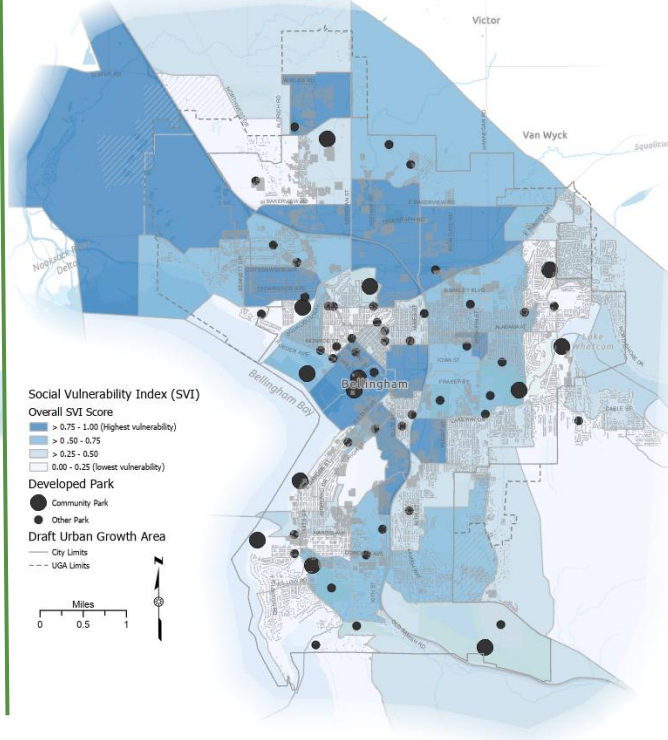
## Service level gap



## Population or visitors served



## Does it promote equity?



## Projects in process

---

- **Salish Landing** – Construct Phase I
- **Cordata Connector Trail** – Cordata park to Meridian St.
- **Waterfront Skate Park** – Partner to design, fund, and develop
- **Bear Creek Open Space** – Develop access, trailhead, parking, and trails
- **Waterfront District** – Coordinate with Port of Bellingham for Waterfront District park development

# Recommended short-term projects

---

- East Bakerview Neighborhood Park – Recreational amenities
- Samish Crest O.S. Improvements - Trailhead and trails completion
- Lee Memorial Park – Master Plan
- Happy Valley Park – Improvements and playground replacement
- Sunset Pond to Telegraph Road trail – Jill's Ct.

## Recommended mid-term projects

---

- **Lake Padden Park** – Recreational Assessment Plan improvements (field redevelopment, beach rehab, and erosion management)
- **Squalicum Creek Park** – Improve usability of athletic fields
- **Little Squalicum Park** – Bathrooms and accessibility improvements
- **Bloedel Donovan Park** – Accessible non-motorized boat dock
- **Bay-to-Baker Trail** – Squalicum Parkway

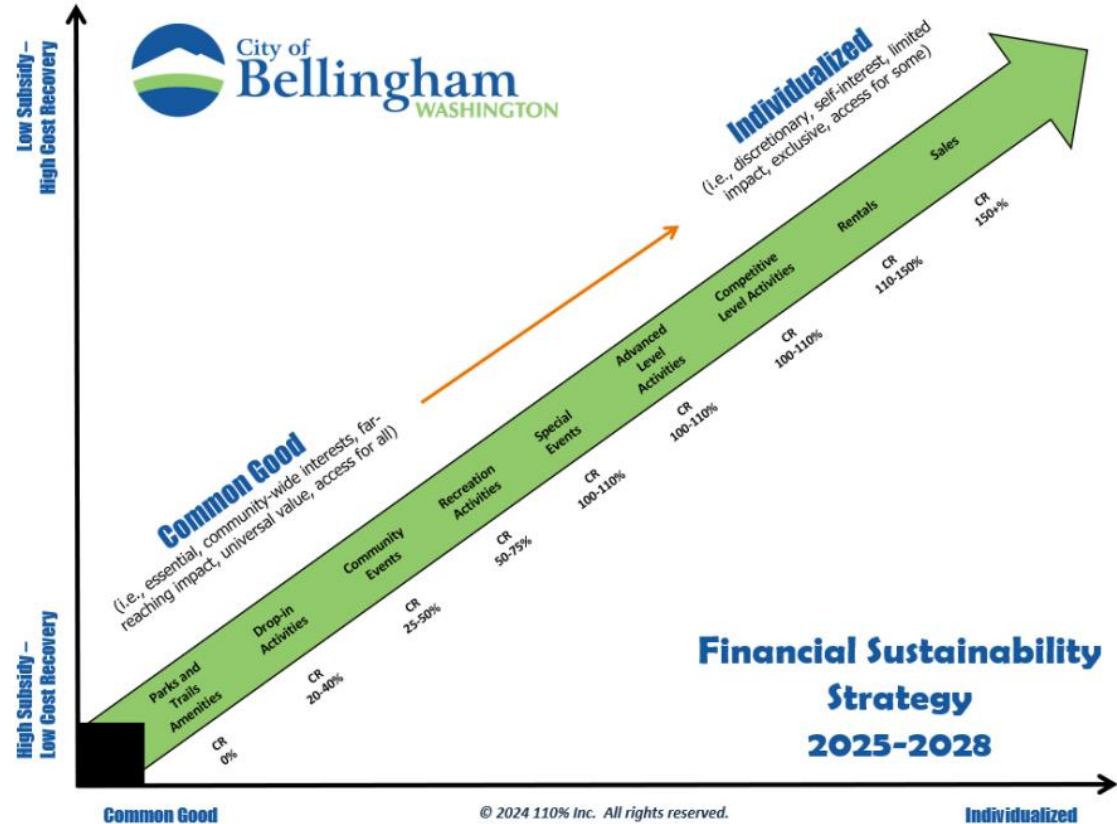
## Recommended long-term projects

---

- **Civic Athletic Complex** – Design and develop a full recreation center; redevelop aquatic center (one of the biggest capital projects)
- **Dewey Valley Open Space** – Master plan, develop trails and trailhead
- **New neighborhood park** – Acquire property and develop a walkable park near the Puget neighborhood
- **Pocket parks** – Develop park/plaza near Samish Way and Happy Valley

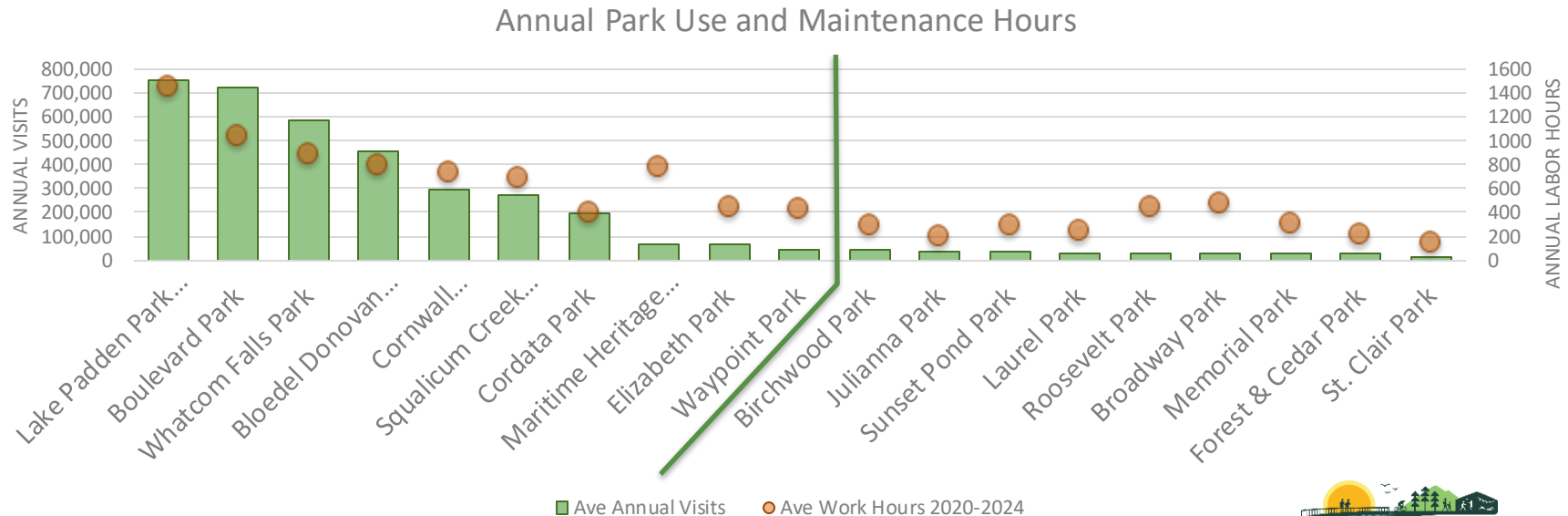
# Service improvements

- Cost Recovery Continuum
- “Right sized” programming areas



# Service improvements

- Staffing based on demand
  - Use visitation, condition, and maintenance data to allocate labor



# 20-Year Cost Estimates

Project Costs\* \$225,000,000

- \$122,000,000 – Growth
- \$80,000,000 – Recreation Center
- \$24,000,000 – Repair and maintenance

Staffing: 19 employees

- 14.3 – Operations
- 5 – Recreation

*\*All costs in 2025 dollars*

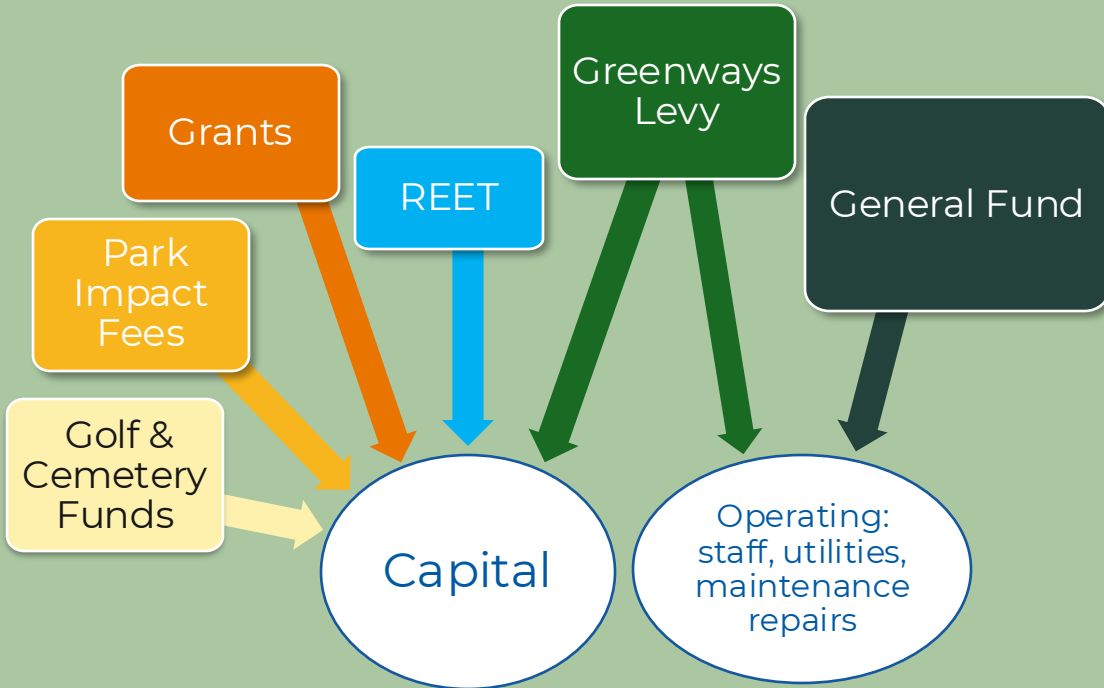


# Parks & Recreation funding

109 Benefited employees  
12,000 Volunteer hours  
90 Park Stewards

Annual costs:

**\$18M**



[engagebellingham.org/pros-plan](https://engagebellingham.org/pros-plan)

