

CHAPTER 11

PARKS AND RECREATION ELEMENT

Overview

The Parks and Recreation Element of the Comprehensive Plan is designed to provide general policy guidance for the growth and development of parks and recreation facilities for the Town of La Conner. This element of the La Conner Comprehensive Plan is intended to update and replace the town's 2013 Parks Plan.

Parks, open space, and recreation planning is an opportunity to improve the quality of life of a community. It is also an opportunity to hear from residents regarding types of facilities they need and the types of recreational programs they desire. The planning process is also an opportunity to involve the public in responding to changing recreational needs, and to introduce a new vision.

This plan analyzes supply, demand, and need for park and recreation property and facilities within the La Conner service area. The inventory includes a comprehensive assessment of all public and private facilities and services within the Town's boundaries.

Development strategies presented in the Plan are the result of an analysis of need and opportunity. The proposed strategies recommend the Town focus resources where park, recreation, and open space needs are most critical and effective. The Plan provides representations of many of the Plan-recommended actions.

The La Conner Parks Commission was founded in 1915 and is responsible to "act as an advisory board for the Mayor, Town Administrator, and Town Council regarding the operations, policies, procedures, and improvements to the Town's parks, play fields, street ends, and open space". (See *Ord. 188 § 1, 1915*).

From the 2013 Parks Plan: "*The Town of La Conner is committed to enhancing our community's quality of life by providing well planned and managed leisure and recreational opportunities for the residents and guests of La Conner.*"

The Comprehensive Parks Plan recognizes and ensures that the natural human need for open spaces and places for outdoor activities be considered equally with the economy, housing and other services that the Town provides.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

In 2019, La Conner's Parks Commission undertook a survey to evaluate public responses to active and passive recreational facilities in the community. A total of 75 responses were received. Of those responses, the highest priorities were for walking trails (64), an off-leash dog park (61), and extensions of the boardwalk (south, 66; north, 67). Active recreation facilities that received the highest ratings (at least 2/3 positive responses) were soccer, basketball, and tennis. Those priorities are reflected in the Goals and Policies set forth in this document.

GOALS AND POLICIES

In order to ensure internal consistency between the different elements of this Comprehensive Plan, the following goals and policies are taken from the Land Use Element:

Open Space, Parks and Recreation

GOAL M

Encourage the retention of open space and development of recreational opportunities, conserve fish and wildlife habitat and increase public access to natural resource lands and the Swinomish Channel.

Policies

- 5M-1 Maintain and support existing and future recreational and cultural activities through the dedication of public properties to such uses.
- 5M-2 Maintain or set aside publicly owned land suitable for recreation purposes.
- 5M-3 Maintain or develop available street-ends and, undeveloped right-of-ways and to allow public access for viewing and recreation.
- 5M-4 Develop a pedestrian corridor along the shoreline to connect activity centers, open spaces, and parks.
- 5M-5 Acquire, preserve and develop land and waterfront areas for public recreation based on area demand, public support, and use potential.
- 5M-6 Maintain public access to publicly owned property.

GOAL N

Encourage the acquisition and development of parks, open space, and recreation facilities, both active and passive, that are attractive, safe,

functional, and available to all segments of the community.

Policies

- 5N-1 Pedestrian access to public spaces, pathways and facilities located within the commercial, residential, and industrial zone shall be safely accommodated to the greatest extent possible. Special emphasis shall be placed on establishing pedestrian corridors and vibrant, amenity-rich pathways along the water's edge.
- 5N-2 Maintain and update the Parks and Recreation Plan.
- 5N-3 Develop additional cultural resources, programs and activities at Maple Hall and Maple Center.
- 5N-4 Distribute parks and/or open spaces throughout commercial, residential, and industrial zones to more equitably serve the entire community.
- 5N-5 Use existing school district facilities or other public facilities to maximize recreational and cultural opportunities whenever possible.
- 5N-6 Identify and develop bicycle corridors on main streets where feasible.

GOAL O

Enhance the quality of life in the community by encouraging or providing recreation programs and events that are creative, productive, and responsive to the needs of the public.

Policies

- 5O-1 Encourage citizen participation in the design and development of public facilities and/or recreation areas.
- 5O-2 Encourage and promote cultural facilities and social services compatible with recreational use.
- 5O-3 Encourage opportunities for recreational and cultural activities for all ages.
- 5O-4 Maintain and support existing and future recreational and cultural activities through the dedication of properties for such uses.

The following Goals and Policies are intended as a management and council decision-making tool to help provide consistency and priority to park and recreation development and funding.

GOAL A.

Designate, retain, maintain, and enhance publicly owned lands and facilities for the purpose of parks and recreation for town residents, service area residents (school district) and visitors to town.

Policies

- 11A-1. Identify and create appropriate park, recreation, and open space facilities in the La Conner service area that preserve and enhance climatic, natural, wildlife, historic, cultural, and current developmental conditions, and ensure access to park facilities for persons with disabilities.
- 11A-2. Use creative economic methods for retaining public properties such as leasing and requiring open space incentives for new development.
- 11A-3. Develop public properties through private/public partnerships and grants.
- 11A-4. Encourage coordination and cooperation between the Town and other entities such as private enterprise, the County, State and Tribal agencies in exploring opportunities to share the development of park and recreational resources and facilities.
- 11A-5. Determine the costs involved in maintaining and/or improving park, recreation, and open space levels-of-service (LOS).

GOAL B

Provide, maintain, and enhance public access both physically and visually to publicly owned lands and facilities.

Policies

- 11B-1. Define an implementation program by outlining the actions necessary to realize the park, recreation, and open space plan's development.
- 11B-2. Acquire public spaces whenever appropriate and possible.
- 11B-3. Develop and implement a forest "Best Management Practices" maintenance program to enhance the Pioneer Park facilities.
- 11B-4. Enforce development standards in the Shoreline Master Program to require public access to shorelines.

- 11B-5. Work to coordinate efforts with the private sector to increase access to the waterfront
- 11B-6. Provide quality waterfront docks, floats, and boat launches for diverse public boating uses.
- 11B-7. Increase pedestrian and recreational trail opportunities on public right-of-ways and Town owned properties.
- 11B-8. Develop signage, maps and brochures to identify parks and other public spaces.
- 11B-9. Ensure that access to parks and other public facilities meet the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

GOAL C.

Protect and develop view corridors to waterways, farmlands and scenery of the community as public land locations permit.

Policies

- 11C-1. Connect waterfront access points with one another where feasible through the continued development and implementation of a plan to provide a waterfront “boardwalk” from North First Street to Connor Waterfront Park.
- 11C-2. Have viewing areas that display La Conner as an attractive community.
- 11C-3. Continue to develop waterfront open space for people to enjoy the waterfront.
- 11C-4. Coordinate with Skagit County and private property owners to develop a waterfront trail along the west side of Sullivan Slough.
- 11C-5. Enhance the use of walking trails, where applicable.

GOAL D

Provide recreational opportunities to areas and groups that are underserved

Policies

- 11D-1. Identify appropriate roles and responsibilities that should be undertaken by La Conner to meet critical recreational facility and programming needs, especially the needs of underserved communities including minorities and persons with disabilities.

11D-2. Survey public opinion on a regular basis to determine which issues are most important to La Conner residents, and the public desire for improved recreational opportunities.

11D-3. Ensure that planning efforts are consistent with neighboring communities.

GOAL E

Ensure safe usage of publicly owned lands and facilities

Policies

11E-1. Support and maintain park and recreational properties for their optimum use.

11E-2. Ensure American Disabilities Act compliance with access and usability.

11E-3. Ensure proper maintenance through the Town's budget and other secure funding sources.

11E-4. Maintain safety equipment and ladders from water on Town floats along the channel.

GOAL F

Provide diversity in parks and recreation for both active and passive opportunities for a wide range of users

Policies

11F-1. Identify and provide recreational opportunities to all ages.

11F-2. Tourism should be considered together with the needs of the community when planning for recreational facilities in the community.

11F-3. Continue to develop waterfront areas with a variety of waterfront facilities.

11F-4. Work with the local school district to ensure continued access to active recreational facilities such as soccer fields, and basketball and tennis courts.

GOAL G

Integrate wildlife habitat and conservation elements in parks planning

Policies

11G-1. Plan for wildlife habitat and conservation areas, open spaces and natural resource areas, trails, athletic fields and facilities.

- 11G-2. Survey the public to determine the need for future park, recreation, and open space facilities and services that may be provided by the Town.
- 11G-3. Encourage coordination and cooperation between the Town and other entities such as private enterprise, the county, state and tribal agencies in exploring opportunities to share the development of park and recreational resources and facilities.
- 11G-4. Encourage and develop habitat improvement programs.
- 11G-5. Provide appropriate habitat for pollinators, where possible.

GOAL H

Preserve the historical heritage of La Conner and the surrounding area

Policies

- 11H-1. Identify, maintain and enhance historic landmark structures and sites.
- 11H-2. Grant applications should emphasize the regional, state and national significance of many of La Conner's recreational lands and facilities to fund improvements to those properties.
- 11H-3. Review development standards with the goal of increasing open space.

GOAL I

Integrate parks and open spaces in the display of public art

Policies

- 11I-1. The La Conner Arts Commission shall have the authority to fulfill the Town Council mandate for public art inclusion in the Parks Plan in cooperation with the Parks Commission.
- 11I-2. Provide opportunities to include artwork in public spaces.
- 11I-3. Incorporate design elements that unify efforts to enhance parks and public spaces through creative signage, brickwork and the use of colors, with special attention paid to preserving the historic elements of the community.
- 11I-4. Encourage the use of public spaces for the use of active artists.

GOAL J

Promote healthy life styles through recreational opportunities in La Conner Parks

Policies

- 11J-1. Have a park system that provides a diverse level of physical activity.
- 11J-2. Develop park spaces with amenities for physical activities.
- 11J-3. Develop a La Conner cell phone app (QR technology) that will enable hearing brief descriptions of key public spaces, parks and points of historical interest.
- 11J-4. Promote the image of La Conner as a destination point for walking, cycling, kayaking, canoeing, and enjoying other outdoor activities.
- 11J-5. Seek and develop a location for an off-leash dog park.

TOWN PARK AND RECREATION INVENTORY

Overview

The Town of La Conner, La Conner School District, Skagit County, and other public and private agencies have assembled land devoted exclusively to park, recreation and open space uses within La Conner.

These lands provide a variety of park, recreation and open space activities including picnic facilities, athletic fields and playgrounds, community centers, and related park supporting administrative and maintenance facilities.

Approximately 22.5 acres (Pioneer Park and waterfront sites) of the total park, recreation and open space inventory is regionally significant sites. Town and County residents, regardless of where they reside within La Conner or the surrounding region, use these sites. Out-of-area visitors and tourists also use a significant portion of these regional sites and facilities.

The remaining 16 acres of the total park, recreation and open space inventory consists of locally significant sites and properties used by residents who reside within the immediate area.

Town of La Conner

La Conner owns many properties with approximately 38.5 acres of land for possible public park, recreation and open space use. The locations are shown in Appendix 11A.

Park	Features
North Pioneer Park	Undeveloped parkland with campsites and walking trail.
South Pioneer Park	Large parcel of property with a picnic shelter, barbecue pit, amphitheater and walking trails. Also the site of the water trails camp area. 
Sherman Avenue End	Public boat launch with trailer parking. 
Maple Avenue Park	This public park is the remainder of the ball fields previously leased from the Hedlin family. Its current use is open space, with potential future plans for more active use.
Caledonia Street End	Undeveloped street end with accompanying DNR waterfront lease.

Channel Passage

This waterfront walkway currently runs from Center Street to Douglas Street. Continued expansion of this walkway to the south and north is planned in the future.



Park	Features
Commercial Street End	<p>Undeveloped street end adjacent to channel. Excellent view of the Rainbow Bridge.</p> 
John Hammer Park	<p>Small neighborhood toddler park with play equipment. Donated by Kiwanis.</p> 
Magnus Anderson Cabin and Totem Pole	<p>Originally constructed in 1869. Relocated to this Historic Site located just below Town Hall.</p> 

Old Fire Hall Park	Located across from Catholic Church on Douglas Street. Landscaped area with picnic table.
Butterfly Garden	Adjacent to Civic Garden Club. Excellent views of the channel, bridge and downtown.
	
Civic Garden Club	Older historic structure used for town meetings and other civic events.
Maple Hall/Maple Center and Plaza	Community facility for theater, conferences, and other social events. Includes a barbecue, courtyard, and public art.



Park	Features
Dirty Biter Waterfront Park (Calhoun Street end)	<p>Street end on waterfront side of first street. Features benches, picnic tables, art work, and public boat moorage. Possible location for active artists.</p>
	
Old Log Park	<p>Old growth cross-section log, with historic timeline. Restroom provided for tourism use.</p> 
Swinomish Park (Benton Street End)	<p>Public boat moorage and waterfront viewing. Dock owned by Town. Information kiosk, benches, picnic tables, and art work.</p>

Benton Street Stairs	<p>Stairway leading from First Street to Second Street with excellent views of town and channel, connecting downtown with hilltop. Art work at Second Street entrance, with the possibility of adding additional artwork at the bottom of the staircase.</p>	
Peace Park	Quiet, comfortable public seating with art work.	
Washington Avenue	Landscaped area with public art on south side of Washington Street between 2 nd and 1 st Streets	
Washington Avenue and 3 rd Street Corner Triangle	Bench and planted area.	
Washington Avenue End	Public boat moorage, picnic tables, benches, art work, and views of the Channel. Gazebo donated by Rotary Club. Possible location for active artists.	

Gilkey Square (Morris Street End)	<p>Excellent channel views and focal point from Morris Street as visitors enter town. Summer music event site. This area is also the site for the town's Christmas tree.</p> 
Morris and 3 rd Street Stairs	Stairway connects Morris Street with hilltop. Public restrooms available on Morris Street.
Jordan Street	Undeveloped waterfront site with picnic table on North First Street. Future waterfront access is being considered.
Pioneer Monument	Not in Town limits, maintained in cooperation with the town's Public Works Department, the Rotary Club, Kiwanis Club, Soroptimists, and Pioneer Association.
Maple Avenue Triangle	Undeveloped, triangular piece of property.
Garden Street End	Undeveloped right-of-way in south residential area. Possible "pea-patch" garden and neighborhood park.
Orchard Street Right-of-Way	Undeveloped street between Park Street and Maple Avenue
4 th Street Right-of-Way, South Hill and North Hill	Green Space
1 st Street Right of Way between Commercial and Caledonia	Current half of the property is being used for public parking and the majority of this street portion is undeveloped.
Conner Waterfront Park	Dramatic open space waterfront beneath the Rainbow

	Bridge. Kayak launch site. Public picnic area with barbecues and public art. Access to camping area at Pioneer Park.
Skateboard Park	Opened in 2011. Located at the end of North Sixth Street.

La Conner School District

The La Conner School District owns a large amount of property dedicated to recreational facilities.



Site	Features
Tennis Courts	Two courts in need of reconstruction; possible adaptation for pickle ball.
Playgrounds	Elementary school playground contains swing sets, climbing structures, tetherball and blacktop for ball games. Also includes a toddler playground.
Basketball (outdoor)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Behind the Elementary School is a court with several hoops. Adjacent to the Braves Hub is an outdoor court (2 hoops).
Baseball Fields	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One permanent softball field behind the Middle School

	<p>playground with dugouts and a bleacher on one baseline.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One regulation baseball field behind the Elementary School with dugouts and bleachers on both baselines, and a field house.
Soccer Fields	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One soccer area adjacent to the softball field. • Two soccer fields adjacent to the baseball field.
Track	One ¼ mile track with high jump and pole vault areas.
Football Field	One football field in the center of the track with covered bleachers on one side.
Braves Club	A cement block field house behind the Administration Building and adjacent to Best Place.
	
Gymnasiums	Three gyms. One each at the Elementary, Middle and High Schools. The gyms also serve as a multi-purpose room (also serving as cafeterias).

State of Washington and the Port of Skagit County

These two entities have holdings that impact the Town of La Conner.

The Port of Skagit County maintains a large marina that is filled primarily with recreational boats. The Port also owns and manages a recreational vehicle park. In addition, the Port also has property adjacent to the Town that will be used as a dual use area. The primary use will be as a constructed wetland to process the storm water from the Town. This area will also function as an interpretive nature walk to demonstrate the importance of wetlands to our ecology and an innovative approach to storm water management.

The State of Washington does not own any recreational facilities in or near the Town, however, the Department of Natural Resources leases shoreline properties to the Town and to private entities that provide recreational

opportunities. In addition, the State has provided the Town with funding for several public recreation projects in the past.

Private Facilities for Public Use by Membership or Fee

Other nonprofit and private agencies own properties with land and buildings of possible use for recreational facilities for a membership or a fee within or adjacent to the Town of La Conner.

Park	Features
RV park	The port leases sites for temporary use by recreational vehicles.
Thousand Trails	Camping, boat launch, cabins, recreation center, RV park, waterfront beach, hiking, and picnicking. The Thousand Trails facility is located 3 miles west of La Conner.
Swinomish Yacht Club	Private facility located at the Port of Skagit County.

Inventory Implications

- The Town of La Conner, La Conner School District, Skagit County and other public and private agencies have significant amounts of acreage, including park, recreation, and open space land and recreational facilities in the La Conner area.
- A significant portion of the inventory are regional facilities that are used by populations who reside outside of the La Conner service area boundaries, even though the maintenance and operation of these sites has been financed by the city and school district.
- The La Conner School District has developed a significant percentage of the inventory of park and recreational related facilities, including outdoor playgrounds and athletic fields, indoor arts and crafts, meeting rooms, and gymnasiums. School facilities are competitive, higher quality, capacity sites.

DEMAND AND NEEDS ANALYSIS

OVERVIEW

The following proposals concerning elements of the park, recreation, and open space plan are based on the results of field analysis, inventories, demand analysis, and planning sessions.

Site descriptions are organized by the major type of land or activity to be provided. A particular park may include one or all of the following features.

The descriptions provided in this section describe the improvements that will be accomplished under each major type of plan element - see each element for a composite description for any particular site. Also see the chapters on existing land and facilities or opportunities for a description of each site's current conditions, ownership and other particulars.

CONSERVANCIES – HISTORICAL

Resource properties that retain and preserve significant historical and cultural sites and facilities throughout La Conner should be protected. Generally, historical conservancy properties may be acquired that conserve and provide interpretive access to significant sites. These include original homesteads or prominent building sites, commercial or public buildings with unique architectural characteristics, locations of important industrial or resource-oriented activities, and other culturally important areas. Lands may also be acquired that conserve significant man-made constructions on the land including bridges, dikes, dams, and other features.

To the extent possible and practical, historical sites and buildings will be linked with other parklands to create activity centers or facilities that reflect the original cultural use. In some instances, the buildings or sites may be adapted to provide supporting services such as trailheads, parking lots, restrooms, and utilities.

Whenever possible, historical buildings and structures will be preserved on their original sites. In some instances, however, the buildings or other

improvements may be relocated to other public properties in order to better conserve, display, or provide interpretive access.

To protect archaeological significance, historical or archaeological sites may be marked or use signage as part of the conservancy park element. Interpretive signs may be located off-site or in areas that do not risk exposure or possible vandalism of underlying archaeological resources or properties (including private lands).

Vision

As described herein, historical conservancies may be realized through:

- Acquisition of title and/or development rights of properties that would otherwise be destroyed or developed for other land uses;
- Provision for public access and interpretive use which would not be possible if the properties remained in private ownership; and
- Provisions for signing and interpretation subject to appropriate security measures and underlying property owner agreements.

EXISTING HISTORICAL/CULTURAL SITES¹

The following sites have been acquired and may be improved to provide historical or cultural exhibits and activities as part of surrounding park features.

Civic Garden Club	Formerly the Territorial Courthouse prior to statehood and has served as the county seat, school, Grange hall and general public meeting place.
Gaches Mansion	The home of one of the early Town pioneer families that is now a private quilt museum. 
Town Hall	The original bank for the Town which is now being used as the administration building and sheriff's office.

¹ Site includes portions providing historical resource value. Site may also include characteristics that may be listed under other plan element proposals.

Canoe Shed	<p>Authentic Native American Cedar Canoe housed under a cedar shed structure. Located on the North side of Moore Street below Town Hall.</p> 
Pioneer Homestead	<p>Original Magnus Anderson homestead relocated to the corner of Moore and Commercial below Town Hall. Surrounded by civic gardens.</p>
Louisa A. Conner Monument	<p>Monument to the founders of La Conner located in Pioneer Park.</p>
Log Cross Section	<p>Log cross-section located on the south side of the First Street public restrooms.</p> 
Pioneer Memorial	<p>Located at East entrance to town and in memorial to Pioneer Heritage.</p>

PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS TO HISTORIC/CULTURAL SITES

Maple Hall Plaza	Study potential improvements to display artwork. Discuss future of barbecue. Reconfigure the plaza space at the entrance to Maple Center to highlight the Town's heritage and founding families.
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PROPOSED HISTORICAL/CULTURAL SITES

The following sites may be provided conservancy protection through easements, land use agreements, or acquisitions.

Heritage Trees	Several trees in the community have reached maturity and are spectacular examples of their species. The Town should inventory, determine the health of, and provide special designation for such trees. Possibly create and display a map of these tree locations.
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RESOURCE LANDS AND ACTIVITY PARKS

Resource lands may be preserved in La Conner that provides public access to significant environmental features. Generally, resource lands provide access to the Swinomish Channel, woodlands (Pioneer Park), agricultural open space, and scenic areas.

To the extent practical, resource lands may also be traversed and linked by all types of pedestrian corridors, increasing access to significant and visually interesting features.

Resource and activity-oriented facilities may be developed that provide public use and enjoyment of environmental resource sites throughout La Conner. Water-oriented resource activities include fishing piers, docks, and boat launches.

Where appropriate, resource-oriented and outdoor activity sites may also be improved with a variety of outdoor facilities including group and individual campsites, picnic facilities, playgrounds, and open grassy playfields. Supporting services may also be developed including parking lots, restrooms, and utilities.

Resource activities may be located on independent properties or include portions of other sites provided for resource conservancies, trail corridors

or other public facilities. Resource activities may also be developed on other publicly owned lands subject to public use agreements or easements; or on lands acquired for other public purposes including stormwater management detention and retention ponds, and wastewater treatment sites.

Vision

As described herein, the resource activities vision will be realized through:

- Acquisition of resource lands - that would otherwise be developed for other land uses;
- Provision of public access - and use of natural features which would not be possible if the lands remained in private ownership; and
- Conservation for public access - and use of unique and available natural features that visually define and separate developed areas and neighborhoods.

BOAT LAUNCH POINTS

Sherman Avenue	Power and hand-carry boat launch ramp located on Sherman Avenue street end. Some conflicts exist between kayaks, power boats, and sailboats.
Port of Skagit County	Boat launch/lift facility. Equipped to handle large and small vessel launching.

PICNIC FACILITIES

Existing

Old Fire Hall Park	Picnic table located adjacent to the bluff near the Catholic Church. Corner of 4 th and Douglas.
Dirty Biter Park	Picnic tables located on Calhoun Street end. Waterfront picnic area.
Pioneer Park	Picnic tables throughout.
Swinomish Park	Waterfront picnic area at Benton Street End.
John Hammer Park	Picnic table with children's play area near historic canoe and below Town Hall.
Gilkey Square	Waterfront picnic area.
Butterfly Park	Picnic table overlooking the channel.
Conner Waterfront Park	Picnic facility with barbecues.
Washington Street End	Picnic facility.
Jordan Street Park	Picnic facility.

Proposed

Pioneer Park South	▪ Implement a forest Best Management Program to enhance and maintain the Park's tree and plant health.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continue to improve the trail system in the north section and connect to south section under Pioneer Parkway. ▪ Continue to improve water access camp areas for kayaks for inclusion as a Water trails park.
Pioneer Park North	Additional picnic tables and camping sites to be located in redeveloped park area.
Calhoun Street End - Whatcom	Develop as a picnic rest area and link for walking tour of the Town.
Jordan Street	Mini-park proposed to be developed, <u>with water access</u> .
Morris Street End - (Gilkey Square)	Enhance park and landscape features for pedestrian access and special events.
<u>Maple Street Park</u>	<u>Future plans may include picnic tables for public use.</u>

Picnic facilities – shelters/cook facilities

Existing

Pioneer Park	Large group facility
Maple Center Plaza	Covered outdoor cooking facility

WATER TRAILS

A water access system has been developed for canoes, kayaks, and other hand-carry or car-top boating activities. The water trails provide access to salt and freshwater bodies that are not readily accessible or suitable for powerboats or other larger watercraft.

Water trailheads are located adjacent to other trail corridors, resource conservancies, and other park and recreational facility services including parking lots, restrooms, and utilities. When provided on separate sites, water trailheads may be improved with launch ramps or landings, picnic tables, parking lots, restrooms, and other services.

Vision

As described, the water trail vision may:

- Increase and promote public access to the area's significant salt water resources - particularly for car-top boating enthusiasts.
- Provide access to scenic natural areas and features of interest that can not be accessed from other trail systems.
- Provide for boating enthusiasts of all skill levels.
- Provide for extended boating duration including overnight trips.

WATER TRAIL ACCESS SITES

Existing Launch Sites

The most popular spot for hand carry boat launches is from the Sherman Avenue float. There is an additional launch site at the south end of Conner Waterfront Park. Kayak clubs routinely launch from the Sherman Avenue site.

Sherman Avenue End	Power and hand-carry trailer boat launch ramp located on the east bank of the Swinomish Channel. 
Conner Waterfront Park	An open bay facility for kayaks and canoes.

Proposed launch sites

The following project will be considered for development and funding under a future RCO grant.

Sullivan Slough Wetland	The storm water treatment project may provide an opportunity for a kayak launch site in the future.
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WALKING AND HIKING TRAILS

Walking and hiking trails may be developed to link major environmental assets, park and recreational facilities, community centers, and historical features throughout La Conner. Generally, walking and hiking trails may be developed as dirt or bark surfaced routes on interior alignments through environmental features. Portions of the system within the more densely developed areas, however, may be developed as sidewalks or boardwalks with urban streetscape furnishings and amenities.

Wherever possible, walking and hiking trails may be developed in alignments separate from vehicular or other motorized forms of transportation. For example, walking and hiking trails may be located within natural drainage corridors, wooded ravines, utility easements, and undeveloped alleyways/right of ways. In some instances, and for short duration, walking and hiking trail systems may be developed as improvements within the right-of-way of established vehicular or other transportation corridors.

Generally, walking and hiking trails may be developed to class 2-5 walking trail standards providing 2-way travel on a crushed rock, bark or compacted dirt base varying between 2 and 5 feet in width. The trails may be of a slope not more than 1:12 unless stairs or other erosion controls are provided. Class 2-3 trail segments may be handicap accessible and usable by all age and skill groups.

Within the most urban alignments, walking and hiking trails may be developed to class 1 walking trail standards providing 2-way travel on an asphalt or concrete surface between 4 and 6 feet in width. Such sidewalk or boardwalk trails may be of a slope not more than 1:50. Class 1 trail segments may be handicap accessible and usable by all age and skill groups.

Walking and hiking trail corridors may be located to coincide with other park and recreational improvements or public facilities to access rest stops, parking lots, restrooms, and other services.

Walking and hiking trail corridors may be independent properties or include portions of other sites provided for resource activities, athletic facilities, and other park and recreational or public facility properties.

Walking and hiking trail corridors will not be available for use by motorized vehicles of any type.

Vision

As described, the walking and hiking trails vision may be realized by providing recreational trail opportunities in La Conner that:

- Access natural features that may not be available otherwise,
- Link park spaces and other areas into a greenway system,
- Serve persons with varied physical abilities and skills,
- Establish high visibility and volume pedestrian routes through the most developed urban areas, and
- Expand the park system to connect with public properties.

Wherever possible the Town should attempt to connect pedestrian corridors. Examples include establishing a walking waterfront connection between Pioneer Park and downtown, or a connection between the La Conner School grounds and the Marina along the drainage system. A pedestrian connection should be established between the top of the hill and Whatcom Street. An additional trail may be constructed through the constructed and natural wetlands associated with Sullivan Slough.

PARK WALKING TRAILS

Existing trails

The following sites have been identified as formal and informal trails:

Channel Passage from Center Street to Commercial Street	An over-water trail providing excellent water views, and providing access to South First Street businesses.
Benton Street Stairs	A significant pedestrian corridor linking downtown with the residential area on the hill.
Morris and 3 rd Street Stairs	A significant pedestrian corridor linking the Morris Street commercial area with the residential district on the hill.
Port Walk	A popular walk for exercise along Pearle Jensen Way.
Pioneer Park/Rainbow Bridge	A significant number of pedestrians travel through Pioneer Park and over the Rainbow Bridge.



Proposed trails and improvements to trails

Downtown Waterfront Boardwalk	Continue waterfront access both north (to the marina) and south (to Sherman Street) from the existing ends of the facility.
La Conner School to Port connection	Connect the Port property at Third Street with the north end of Sixth Street by providing a walking path along the drainage system.
East Hill Connector	Develop a pedestrian path linking the hill to Whatcom Street. Investigate developing stairs such as those located at Benton and 3 rd Street.
Sullivan Slough and Eastern Dike Trail	Work with the County and establish walking and hiking paths connecting to the County's Open Space Plan.

TRAILHEADS

Proposed

Parking, restroom, signage, and other biking services may be provided at the following sites.

North Port Area (Port of Skagit County)	Designate parking and restrooms, and install signage indicating beachfront walk north of the Port area.
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ON-ROAD BICYCLE TOURING ROUTES, IN-LINE SKATING, AND BIKING

Cross-county bicycle touring, commuter routes, bike and skate paths may be developed to access major environmental assets, park and recreational

facilities, historical features, scenic corridors and vistas, and other features of interest to experienced bicycle touring, skating and skateboard enthusiasts throughout La Conner.

Where appropriate, and to the extent practical and safe, bicycle touring routes may be extended into Town to create an integrated on-road bicycling system. The local on-road bicycling system may provide access to local park and recreational facilities, schools and public facilities, community centers and business districts, places of employment, and transit transfer centers for adult and youth bike riders from local areas.

To the extent possible, bicycling touring routes may be developed to class 1-3 AASHTO (American Association of State Highway & Transportation Officials) standards with expanded, designated or marked road shoulders and lanes. In the less congested areas, bicycle touring routes may be simply designated for joint vehicular/bicycle use of a class 4 AASHTO standard.

Bicycling enthusiasts working in conjunction with public agencies and other private cycling interest groups could identify most of the bicycle touring routes to be designated.

Vision

As described, the bicycle touring route vision may:

- Increase on-road bicycle touring access for experienced riders to scenic areas and features,
- Increase bicycle trail access for local residents, including commuters, to community facilities, schools, employment, and transit transfer centers,
- Improve access to service for persons with varied physical abilities and skills, and
- Expand roadway corridors and park features to provide recreational and commuter uses.

ON-ROAD BICYCLE TOURING ROUTES, IN-LINE SKATING, AND BIKING

Proposed

No routes have been proposed as a part of this plan. Skagit County is working to develop an integrated bicycling plan for the entire county.

STREETSCAPES

Streetscape improvements, which are a more urban form of multipurpose trail, may be developed to link community facilities, public buildings, commercial business districts, and other major activity centers within the La Conner business district. Streetscapes may provide for one or more modes of recreational and commuter travel use including biking, and, where appropriate, may be linked with public transit and other vehicular conveyance systems.

To the extent possible, streetscape improvements may be developed within the right-of-way of established vehicular or other transportation corridors. Where appropriate or necessary, however, the right-of-way or the streetscape improvement may be aligned off the roadway to incorporate gateways, parks, storefront boardwalks or plazas, and other pedestrian spaces.

Typically, the bikeway portion of streetscape corridors may be developed to a class 1 walking trail and to class 1 AASHTO (American Association of State Highway & Transportation Officials) bicycle trail standards. The trails may provide 2-way travel on concrete, brick, paved or asphalt base between 8 and 12 feet in width. The trails may be of a slope not more than 1:50, handicap accessible and usable by all age and skill groups.

Streetscape corridors may be improved with trailhead services including rest stops, parking lots, and transit connections. Where the streetscape is located in association with another park and recreational improvement or public facility, the corridor may be improved with active picnic, playgrounds, and play areas, restrooms, water, and air utilities. Where the streetscape is incorporated into adjacent retail spaces or plazas, the corridor may be improved with artworks and sculptures, water fountains, outdoor dining areas, amphitheaters and performing areas, and other activities of interest.

Streetscape corridors may be contained within, or extensions of the public road right-of-way, or include portions of other public sites acquired to define gateways or other linear park definitions. Streetscape improvements may also be developed and maintained on privately owned lands subject to public use agreements or public access easements.

Vision

As described, the streetscape vision may be realized by providing recreational and commuter trail opportunities within the most urban developed areas that:

- Conserve natural features,
- Define gateway and urban identities,
- Link public facilities and commercial business centers,
- Serve persons with varied physical abilities and skills,
- Promote commuter and other more functional transportation methods, and
- Create pedestrian-friendly access zones and activity areas that support urban core areas.

FUTURE GROWTH IMPLICATIONS

The Washington State Office of Financial Management (OFM) and the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) indicate that the current population of the town of La Conner is 985 persons. More accurate population projections will be available when the state releases the results of the 2020 census.

The Town has an estimated visitor rate of over 1,300 per day. This places specific pressure on facilities such as park areas, walking areas, boating facilities, and museums.

While the town has recently increased its capacity for new housing by reducing the required minimum lot size, the Level of Service standard established by the town would meet the needs for a population twice its size.

The information contained in this chapter documents that the town is fully capable of meeting and maintaining LoS standards with its current inventory of lands available for parks, recreation, and open space. However, attention must be given to maintaining the desired quality of parks and recreation facilities. Such attention would relate to improvements to existing facilities, in order to meet current and future needs. In addition, potential uses for the Maple Field park may require the expenditure of funds to create those uses, and to provide adequate public access to that facility.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

These levels of facility investment cannot be financed with the resources available to La Conner, Skagit County, and the La Conner School District, if each jurisdiction pursues an independent delivery approach or uses traditional methods of funding. The Town will not be financially able to develop, manage, and maintain a comprehensive, independent park, recreation, and open space system using traditional financing methods in light of the needs projected.

An area-wide financing approach needs to be developed by La Conner, Skagit County, and the La Conner School District. The approach must use a combination of shared user fees, excise taxes, joint grant applications, impact fees, and voter approved general obligation bonds if levels-of-service are to be maintained and improved upon in the face of continued Town population increases.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

- (1) Conner Waterfront Park development plan.
 - (a) Task(s): Develop waterfront pavilion (completed), restrooms, and boating as an addition to Pioneer Park.
 - (b) Funding: Local contributions (Rotary and others) and RCO grants.
- (2) Pioneer Park
 - (a) Task:
 - i) Continue maintaining trails and explore the possibility of lighting in the park.
 - ii) Develop and redevelop camping facilities in the north park area.
 - iii) Maintain and continue to improve picnic shelter and amphitheater.
 - iv) Children play area and facilities.
 - (b) Funding: Local contributions and RCO grants.
- (3) Bike trail along Maple Avenue
 - (a) Task: Construct a bicycle and pedestrian path along Maple Ave to connect to Pioneer Park Way and Bridge.

(b) Funding: Local contributions and WDOT Safe Route to Schools Grant funding.

(4) Connector Trail

(a) Task: Install a bicycle/pedestrian trail along the eastern boundary of the town beginning at Morris Street, extending north connecting to North Third Street.

(b) Funding: Local contributions and RCO grant.

(5) Jordan Street Park

(a) Task: Extend waterfront views; add picnic tables and barbecues.

(b) Funding: Possible collaboration between Town and Port.

(6) Maple Street Park

(a) Add picnic tables, barbecues, and other public facilities.

(b) Unknown at this time.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

OVERVIEW

Following is a brief outline of the strategy that can best satisfy La Conner's park, recreation, and open space needs.

STRATEGY

La Conner could perform a strategic role providing park, recreation, and open space facilities and programs that no other agency can, or is willing to provide. The Town could act as a coordinator of local interests where facilities are provided by many other agencies. In that capacity, the Town can identify unique acquisition or development opportunities that could be implemented or operated by other agencies. In the current economy, pursuing public/private partnerships could achieve the best balance of community benefit and minimum financial load on local citizens.

A strategic approach to services will require the following:

Involvement - La Conner must coordinate planning and development efforts with the public and other agencies such as the La Conner School District, Port of Skagit County, state, federal, and other public and private agencies to be aware of and have impact on these and other agency local programs and efforts.

Planning - La Conner must continually analyze long range needs and conditions for residents within town limits and the urban growth area in order to recognize and be prepared to act on opportunities.

Priorities - La Conner must decide policies and outline actions to be undertaken should opportunities allow strategic developments.

Commitment - La Conner must provide appropriate staff expertise and budgets with which to implement strategic planning programs and projects when no other agency can or is able within a strategic time schedule.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT STRATEGY

Current Practice

Members of the public will have an opportunity to participate in the development of parks and recreation policies and programs at a number of levels. The Park Commission consists of one member of the Town Council and five members of the general public. In 2019, the Parks Commission commissioned a Visioning Survey to identify citizen's needs and priorities related to parks and recreation. Town residents were surveyed as were local business owners and residents surrounding the Town. Park Commission members have used the survey as a source of general guidelines in developing policy and programs.

Individuals and groups also present ideas for parks and recreation to the Park Commission, the Planning Commission, or the Town Council. Presentations may be informal or formal in nature. Some supporters of a specific proposal expend a great deal of effort to develop, for example, meeting with other groups and individuals and identifying possible funding sources. Others leave those tasks to the elected or appointed representatives. Once a proposal is in hand, the Park Commission, Planning Commission, and Town Council members meet with individuals or groups who favor or oppose the plan. While some of these meetings may be informal, notices about proposed plans are published in the town paper and open public meetings are held before the project can proceed.

Anticipated Changes

- The Parks and Recreation Commission will continue to create surveys to determine public priorities, as they have recently initiated with relation to the future of the Maple Street Park.
- The Park Commission will review proposals for compatibility with the Parks and Recreation Plan.
- When a proposal is deemed compatible, the Commission will help the supporter to establish a Citizen's Advisory Group. If the proposal generates a strong, active advisory group, the Commission will take that as an indication that the proposal deserves further consideration and support.
- Advisory groups will also specify funding sources for the proposal over and above what the Town can provide.

To assist in the proposal development process, a member of the Park Commission will serve as a member of each Advisory Group.

ROLE RECOMMENDATIONS BY FUNCTION

This plan recommends La Conner pursue a modified strategic approach to services where La Conner assumes responsibility for those functions no other agency or organization can provide, and helps coordinate or support those functions and activities that have other viable sponsors. La Conner would be the coordinator or planner of first resort, and the provider of last resort. For example:

Coordinating activities

La Conner should provide central information and coordination services for park, recreation, and open space activities within La Conner, since La Conner alone has the local authority and resources to operate as a central facilitator. This role should include tracking future population growth estimates, inventories of existing and proposed facility developments, the identification of probable local facility and program needs, and proposals of area wide facility and program solutions. The selection and siting of public art shall be the responsibility of the La Conner Arts Commission.

Planning and development assistance

La Conner should provide more detailed planning and development assistance when:

- There are no other designated agencies or organization who can;
- The activity involves siting controversies or environmental consequences that may not otherwise be equitably resolved within La Conner; or
- A proposed development will be within La Conner.

Development, operation and maintenance

La Conner should not develop, operate or maintain park or recreation facilities and activities unless:

- The facility will serve the diverse needs of the user population and will be financed using Council approved methods, or
- Facility development and operating costs will be recaptured from direct charges of the populations who use the facility, or
- Facility development and operating costs will be compensated in some manner through local agreements with the using agency, area or benefiting user group, particularly where the demands will originate from a regional service requirement, or
- The site or facility has intrinsic value apart from traditional operation and maintenance needs, such as a passive natural area, waterfront access, or wetland preservation.

ROLE RESPONSIBILITY BY ACTIVITY

By activity, this plan recommends La Conner assume the following responsibilities:

Environmental Conservation

La Conner should assume a major responsibility for the planning, coordination, and preservation of unique wildlife habitat, ecological, wetland, and open space areas.

La Conner should work with all other public and private agencies, particularly Washington State Departments of Fish & Wildlife, Natural Resources, and Transportation to create an effective approach to these local conservation issues and proposals.

Outdoor Facilities

La Conner should assume a major responsibility for the planning, development, and operation of a variety of outdoor facilities. These facilities include playgrounds, tennis courts, picnicking areas, campgrounds, skate park, public fishing, waterfront parks, or park and bicycle trails that are directly related to site opportunities within the town and are of most interest to local residents. La Conner should also actively be involved with the development of facilities for those resident populations that may be underserved by the current level-of-service.

La Conner should help coordinate and assist other public and private agencies, such as the La Conner School District, to develop major competitive outdoor athletic facilities.

Special Facilities

La Conner may assume some responsibility, including enterprise operations and/or joint efforts where appropriate, for the development and operation of facilities that have special or unique interests, impacts or relevance to residents of La Conner that may not be provided by another public or private agency.

Indoor Facilities

La Conner should help coordinate and assist other public and private agencies, such as the La Conner School District to plan, develop, and operate specialized indoor facilities. Since these facilities directly serve the local area and are of major interest to Town residents of all ages, their use and future role for community recreational needs should concur with community-wide needs.

Recreation programs

The Town of La Conner does not have sufficient staff or budget to assist with and actively coordinate the operation of programs for athletic leagues and sports, teen and senior age groups, and special populations. The Town must rely on Skagit County and the La Conner School district for operation of such programs since these facilities directly serve the local area and are of major interest to city residents of all ages. However, the Town has begun to provide funding for Braves Club after school recreational programs.

ADOPTION PROCESS

OVERVIEW

This Park Plan meets the requirements of the Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) and the Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA). The Plan has been adopted as an amendment to the La Conner Comprehensive Plan following guidelines within the IAC publication *“Framing a Community Future”* as well as GMA requirements adopted under LCMC 15.125.090 and 15.125.100.

Following is an overview of the process for amending the Plan.

- The Park Commission and Planning Commission hold regular meetings which are open to the public to discuss and work on the draft plan. The Commissions develop the initial draft plan, and provide opportunities for public input.
- The Parks Commission, Planning Commission, and Planning Department finalize details of the updated plan.
- The Planning Department publishes a SEPA DNS for public and agency comment.
- The draft plan is submitted to the State’s Department of Commerce for their required 60-day review period.
- The Parks plan is forwarded to the La Conner Town Council for review and a public hearing.
- The Town Council and Planning Department consider comments and possible amendments to the proposed plan.
- The Town Council adopts the plan, and docket it for inclusion on the town’s Comprehensive Plan.

Appendix 11A





