

Parks, Recreation & Open Space

Introduction

This chapter summarizes the City's Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan (PROS). The goals and policies regarding parks is found in Chapter 2 of this plan and the PROS plan. They are included in both places to meet grant eligibility requirements.

Developing a comprehensive plan necessarily involves asking residents about vision and values, and as the process to update Monroe's plan progressed, participants repeatedly noted the City's parks. Residents were especially interested in preserving open-spaces that link Monroe to its natural setting.

The City updated its PROS plan as part of this comprehensive plan update. That plan is included as Appendix F of this document, and includes additional data and analysis of parks conditions.

The following pages contain an overview of Monroe's existing parks and recreation conditions and needs; adopted levels of service (LOS); and priorities relevant to parks, recreation and open space. Because parks and open-space systems are often closely related to factors including land use, transportation and basic infrastructure, the full goal, policy and actions framework, presented in Chapter 2, should be considered this plan's most complete expression of PROS-related policy.



Figure 7.01 - Parks, open space and recreational assets are so key to life in Monroe that residents wished to include broad-ranging goals and policies in this plan. (Image source: Studio Cascade, Inc.)

Purpose & Relationship to the Growth Management Act (GMA)

Washington State's Growth Management Act (GMA) requires cities to consider as part of the development of their comprehensive plan the goal to:

"Retain open space, enhance recreation opportunities, conserve fish and wildlife habitat, increase access to natural resource lands and water, and develop parks and recreation facilities."

The GMA also requires a Parks and Recreation element be included in comprehensive plans. Specifically, the GMA requires the element to include:



Figure 7.02 - Parks add considerably to the quality of life and value of nearby neighborhoods. Here, a critical link from Lewis Street Park into Al Borlin Park. (Image source: Studio Cascade, Inc.)

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

This element adopts by reference the Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan and provides a larger policy basis for that plan.

Conditions Overview

The City of Monroe owns approximately 288 acres of park land at 17 sites, as well as more than 14 miles of trails. Fifteen of these parks (282 acres) are developed, providing places to play, gather, and experience nature. Two sites (six acres) and undeveloped, holding acreage in reserve for future park development (not including the Cadman site, a planned park, and not currently owned by the City).

The parks are of various sizes, states of improvement and are owned, administered and maintained by the City of Monroe. Additionally, the Department is responsible for the maintenance of the streetscapes along Main Street, Lewis Street, Frylands Boulevard, N. Kelsey, Hillcrest and three roundabouts, while these areas do not function as parkland, they are a part of the park land inventory that is maintained by the City.

The City-operated parks have facilities which provide a range of recreation activities, including softball, soccer, basketball, lacrosse, skate boarding, tennis, children's and preschool play equipment, picnic shelters, water sports, open play areas, trails, pathways, restrooms and other passive recreational opportunities.

Additionally, Monroe is situated next to the Skykomish River, a popular recreation resource. Snohomish County also owns and operates three parks within the general vicinity of the City of Monroe.

Several trails and street-side pathways in Monroe contribute to the community's recreational activities, and Snohomish County has an extensive, accessible trails system that extends to King County and connects to Washington State trails. While at present none of Snohomish County trails connect to Monroe, plans exist to create these connections.

Table 7.01 identifies existing properties classified as parks which are owned and operated by the City of Monroe. The map (Figure 7.03) shows Monroe's existing park and trail system.

In addition to its park and trail system, the Monroe School District owns and operates 13 sites in the City of Monroe and the Monroe School District Area. District-owned sites which may be available for recreation use by the general public, as administered by the City of Monroe Parks & Recreation Department, are estimated to be 81.5 acres. Actual use and the assigned acreage value of School District properties and facilities is dependent on the establishment of specific interlocal agreements and the terms and operating conditions of such agreements. As of early 2015, interlocal agreements exist for shared space at Lake Tye and one was developed for joint use, synthetic fields at the High School. School lands are not considered a part of the Monroe parkland inventory nor do

Table 7.01 - Monroe's existing parks inventory

Classification	# of Sites	Total Acreage	Examples
Community Parks	2	114.3	Lake Tye Park and Skykomish River Park
Neighborhood Parks	9	15.0	Currie View Park, Rainier Park, Wales Street Park
Special Use Sites	1	0.6	Travelers Park
Nature Preserves	1	46.7	Foothills Wetland Preserve
River Greenbelts	2	105.1	Al Borlin Park, Lewis Street Park
Undeveloped Park Sites	3	6.0	North Hill Site, North Kelsey Site
Total	17	287.7	

Note: The complete park and facility inventory is located in Appendix A of the Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan

they contribute to an adopted recreation level of service, but they are available to some degree for local recreational use.

Needs Assessment

The Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan and Comprehensive Plan update employed extensive public engagement, establishing Monroe's park and recreation needs based on the findings of a community survey, discussions with stakeholders and results of public outreach. The key findings of the City's park and recreation needs are:

- **Trails and Paths.** *There is an overall desire for more trails and paths for walking and biking, with 51% of respondents saying that building more trails and paths should be the top funding priority*

- **Key Connections.** *Respondents thought a connection to the Centennial Trail (69%) was the most important connection for the City to develop, with a "Riverwalk" trail (50%) and extension of the Snoqualmie Valley Trail (46%) as other top choices.*
- **System Satisfaction.** *Overall respondents are highly satisfied with general park maintenance and generally satisfied with the variety of park opportunities. However, respondents are less satisfied with the current access to the Skykomish River. On average respondents were satisfied with the mix/availability of special events and recreation programming, but there is a desire for more special events and activities that would bring people downtown.*

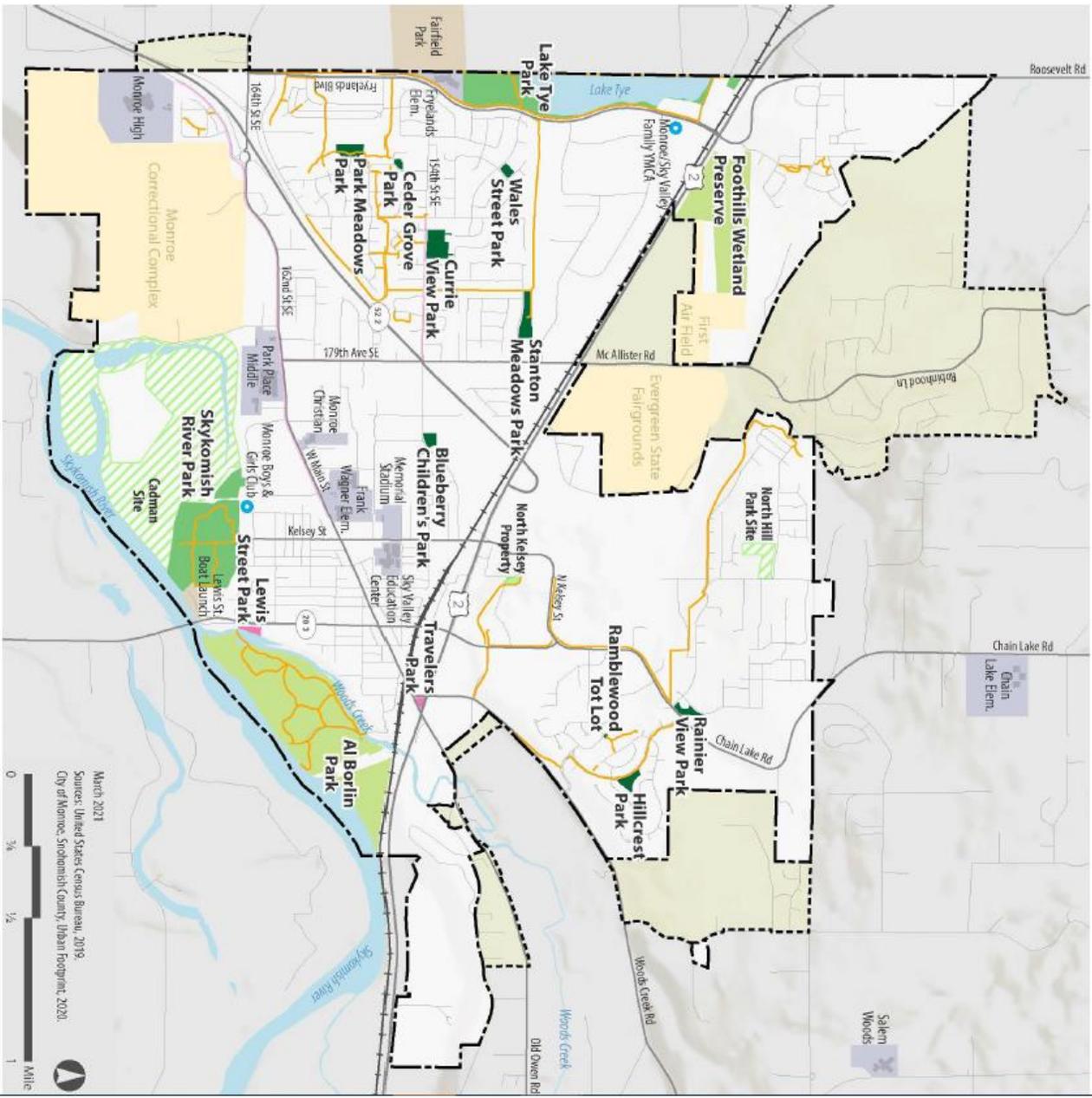


Figure 7.03 - Monroe's proximity to the Skykomish River presents significant opportunities to take advantage of scenic vistas and open space.

- **Play.** Respondents would like to see unique play features and challenge elements in more parks. Swimming and water play was an activity that respondents would like to see expanded.
- **Specific Site Improvements.** Most respondents answered that they were very excited for Lake Tye and Cadman Site improvements as well as the idea of a linked riverfront. At a new park in the North Hill area, respondents thought the most important features to include were restrooms, a playground, nature play elements, a viewpoint, picnic area, and open turf area for play.
- **Funding Mechanisms.** A little over half of respondents (52%) indicated that they would support a bond measure, and three quarters believe that parks funding should increase. Based on a home with a \$500,000 value, approximately 80% of respondents indicated that they would

support or strongly support a bond measure that increases property taxes between \$50 to \$75.

A complete discussion of the public process, workshop results, and community survey can be found in the Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan (Appendix F).

Levels of Service

The Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) recommends, but does not require, a determination of a level of service for parks and recreation planning, including trails. The Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan adopts a park LOS because using a LOS tool can indicate strengths and weaknesses of the park, recreation, and trail system and further suggest where additional resources or improvements are needed.

The following Table 7.02 identifies the Park LOS Standards and needs

Table 7.02 Park LOS Standards and Needs

PARK TYPE	Existing Acreage	Existing LOS (acres per 1,000)	Proposed LOS Guideline (acres per 1,000)	Current Need (in acres) 2020	Net Future Need (in acres) 2035	New Park Needs (Sites and Acres)
Community Parks	114.3	6.6	5.15	(24.8)	2.4	2.6 acres adjacent to Lake Tye Park
Neighborhood Parks	15.0	0.9	1.38	9.0	16.3	North Hill development (5 ac); North Hill Expansion acquisition and development (3.3 ac); UGA Site A (4 ac) and Site B (4 ac) acquisition and development
Special Use Parks	0.6	0.0	0.11	1.3	1.9	North Kelsey development (1 ac); Downtown gathering space (1 ac)
Nature Preserves	46.7	2.7	2.06	(10.9)	0.0	None (0 ac)
River Greenbelt	105.1	6.0	11.95	102.5	165.5	Cadman acquisition and development (165.5)
Undeveloped Parks	6.0	0.3	-	(6.0)	(6.0)	Existing undeveloped sites (North Hill and North Kelsey) are moved to other park classes
Total	287.7	16.6	20.7	71.1	180.1	

Notes: LOS refers to park Level of Service, noted in terms of acres per 1,000 residents. Existing LOS is based on a 2020 population of 17,373 residents, which excludes the population of the Monroe Correctional Center (MCC). Proposed guidelines are based on a 2035 UGA population of 22,652 residents, which excludes the MCC population. Net future need for parks subtracts existing park acreage to identify the acreage deficiency. Existing undeveloped parks will be developed in a different classification, accounting for the variations in acreage needs. Higher density residential areas will require more park land to address the needs of nearby residents



Figure 7.04 - Special-purpose fields like the “Miracle League” Field and all-weather surface fields enjoy strong support among residents. (Image source: Studio Cascade, Inc.)

In addition to potential acquisition, to meet additional parkland requirements over time, Monroe should focus on design and development of the lands it presently owns. There should be improvements made in response to specific needs that will enhance facilities, use and service capacity of existing parks.

The specific recommendations for improvements to existing parks and the development of new parks are described in Chapters 3 and 5 of the Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan.

Recommended 20-Year Enhancements

Over the next 20 years, the City of Monroe will enhance the existing park system by acquiring new park sites and trail corridors, developing site master plans, building new parks, adding specific amenities and facilities, renovating existing facilities, replacing facilities at the end of their lifecycles, and enhancing and expanding existing facilities. In addition, the City will maintain all developed assets and natural resources in its parks. These recommendations will enhance the quality of parks and increase recreation opportunities for all.

Appendix F details site recommendations for every existing and proposed park site in the system. As per City planning protocols, it does not include recommendations for specific trail corridors, since trail alignments are planned and funding with Transportation projects.

Recommended park projects are categorized to make it easier to identify the types of funding that may be needed:

- **Build/Add:** *Acquiring and developing a new park/facility or adding facilities to an existing site are considered capacity enhancement capital projects that may be eligible to be funded through mitigation fees. These project increase and diversify the recreation opportunities in Monroe.*
- **Replace or Enhance:** *These larger replacement projects or improvements to existing amenities and facilities requires capital funding. An example of this type of project might be a roof replacement, which typically goes beyond routine maintenance*
- **Repair and Maintain:** *These projects address the smaller-scale routine repairs and ongoing site maintenance that are addressed through operations funding.*

Policy Overview

The administration, governance, and empowerment of Monroe’s parks and recreation department are based on a set of policies that serves the public’s interest and promotes and protects public parks, trails, recreation and functional open space assets.

This plan asserts that land used for recreational purposes has a positive influence on the local economy and quality of life. Parks and recreation assets are of public interest and deliver proven benefits in terms of social, economic, and environmental qualities.

The parks, recreational, and open space policies contained in Chapter 2 help extend and coordinate these topics among a wide range of other, often complementary, planning topics, such as land-use, transportation, economic development and environmental considerations.

Map 5-1: Site Recommendations

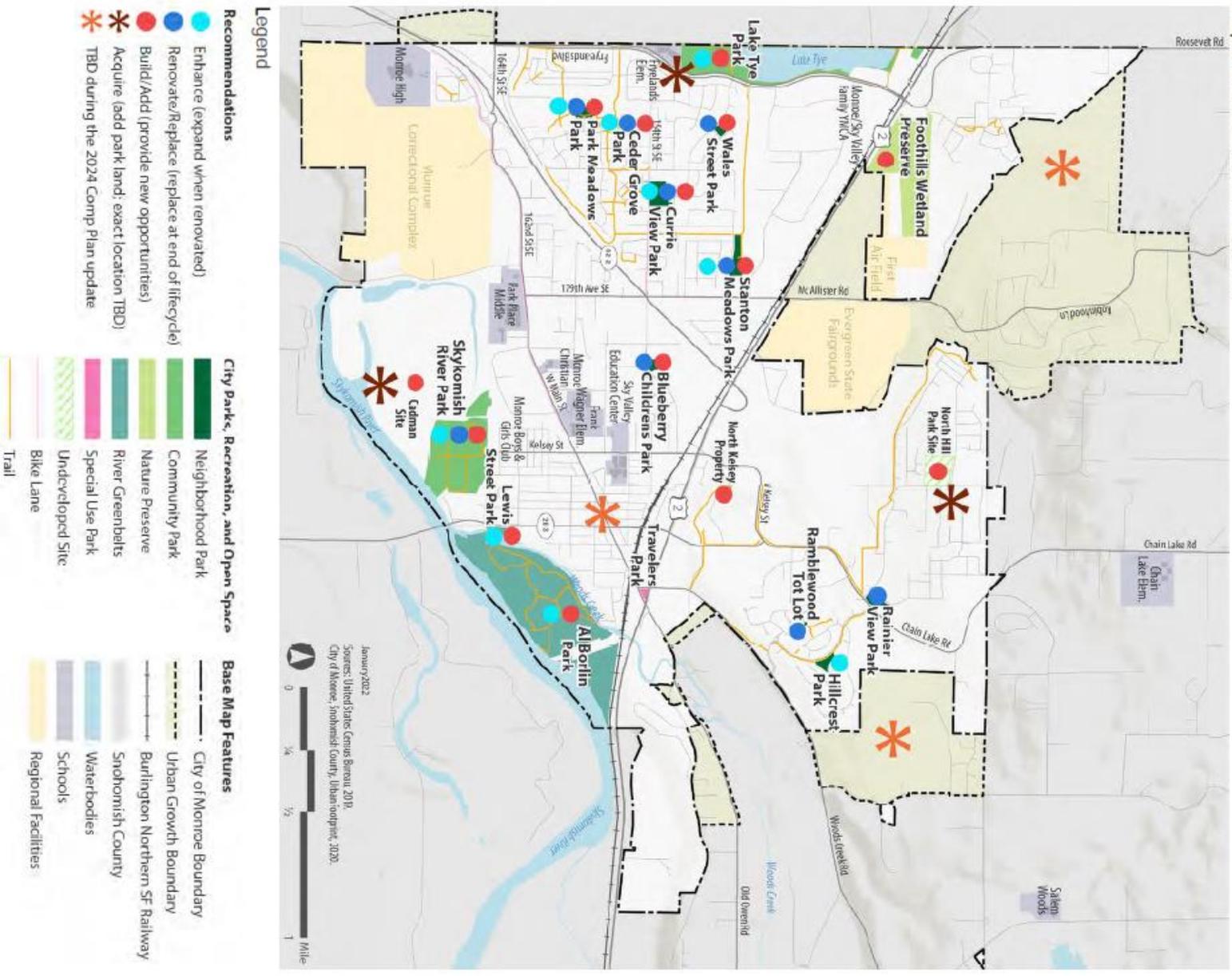


Figure 7.05 - Monroe's park and trail layout plan represents the proposed improvements. (Image source:)



Figure 7.06 - Dog parks like “Wiggly Field” are likely to remain popular, as homes with smaller yards become more common across Monroe. (Image source: City of Monroe)

The parks, recreation, and open space policies and actions cover familiar and critical themes including:

- *Coordinating transportation and trail network plans to promote alternative modes and routes of travel*
- *Using parks and open space resources as an economic development tool*
- *Prioritizing the preservation and maintenance of existing facilities over the construction of new ones*
- *Coordinating with the school district to take advantage mutually beneficial recreation opportunities.*

The policies contained in Chapter 2 have been organized to follow the goal or goals they most

closely relate to. Similarly, each policy includes column indicators that show which plan element or elements it supports, helping the reader gain a topical understanding of the policy set.

