



Part I – Introduction

City of Washington & the Borough of East Washington
Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Plan



PLAN PURPOSE

The purpose of the City of Washington and East Washington Borough Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Recreation Plan is to examine and analyze all components of parks, recreation, and open space within the City and Borough. In 2012, the City and Borough adopted a multi-municipal comprehensive land use plan that looked at recreation on a broad-scale. One of the high priority recommendations of the plan was for the City and Borough to continue their partnership and develop a multi-municipal comprehensive parks and recreation plan.

It is worth noting here that the term “recreation” is sometimes used rather broadly. For purposes of this Plan, a simple definition of recreation is the entire range of activities, relationships, interactions, and experiences planned for and carried out to meet the recreational needs of residents. This includes providing the spaces and places where recreation takes place. Community recreation and parks is anything and everything the community does to satisfy people’s interests.

The aim of community recreation and parks is to improve the quality of life for residents, giving them opportunities to enhance their physical, social, spiritual, cultural, and intellectual well-being. Through recreation programs, citizens improve their health and fitness, learn to compete and cooperate, enhance their creativity, build relationships, develop character, reduce stress, and become happier and more productive and involved in community life. In addition, a quality recreation and parks system attracts business relocation and expansion, and serves as a catalyst for tourism, bringing visitors and retirees to spend money and time in the community. It contributes to healthy and productive work forces, and enhances real estate values.

Recreation and parks also help to develop a bond among citizens that encourages preservation and conservation of the environment. They preserve plant and wildlife habitats; foster community pride in natural resources; provide accessible places to enjoy nature; protect natural resources and open space areas; help to control pollution; and they enhance air, water, and soil quality. Parks provide buffers between residential and industrial areas. Trail and greenway systems link parks, schools, and other community services together for safe biking and walking.

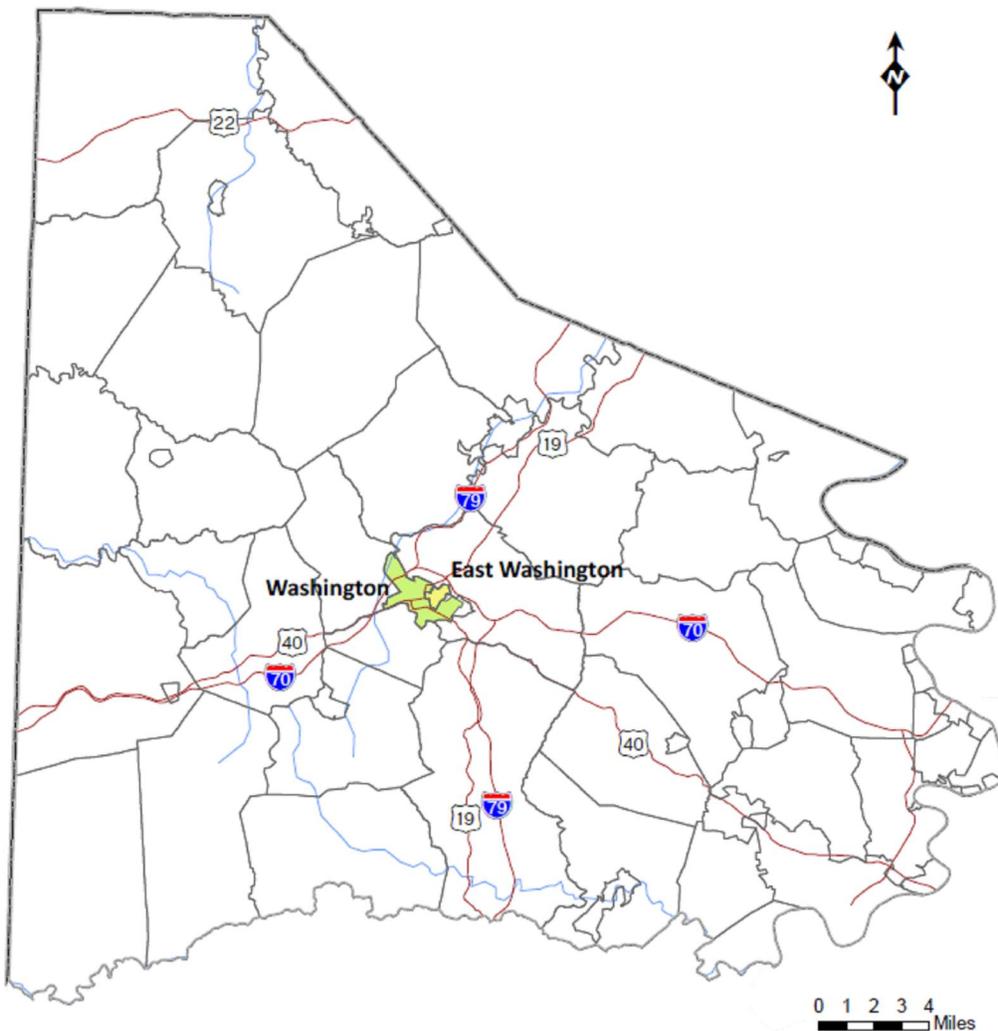
An important role for local government is to serve as the “central clearinghouse” for parks and recreation activities. This role can enhance communication among organizations and identify opportunities to work together and share resources. By coordinating all that is offered, local governments can improve services, give residents a clear understanding of all the opportunities available to them, and minimize duplication of services. The focus is on collectively strengthening the community’s recreation and parks system.

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PROJECT LOCATION

The City of Washington and East Washington Borough are located in Washington County in Southwestern Pennsylvania at the crossroads of Interstates 70 and 79 and Route 19, as shown on Figure 1-1 below. The City and Borough are surrounded by South Strabane Township to the north and east, Canton Township to the west, and North Franklin Township to the south. The City is the county seat and the project area is home to Washington and Jefferson College.

Figure 1-1: Project Area

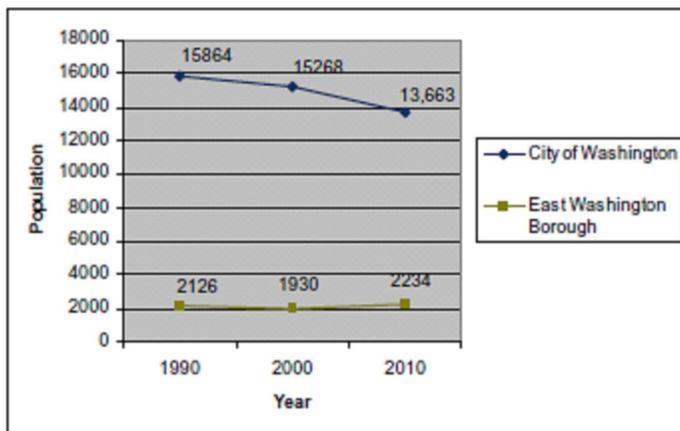


POPULATION TRENDS

The Washington and East Washington Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plan (2012) provided a detailed demographic overview. For purposes of this recreation plan, the following excerpts provide an overview of the population trends in the City and Borough.

Population within the City and Borough are similar to most communities within Southwestern Pennsylvania. Population has been on the decline since 1990 in the city of Washington, as shown on Chart 1-1. However, East Washington has experienced some growth between 2000 and 2010.

Chart 1-1: Population



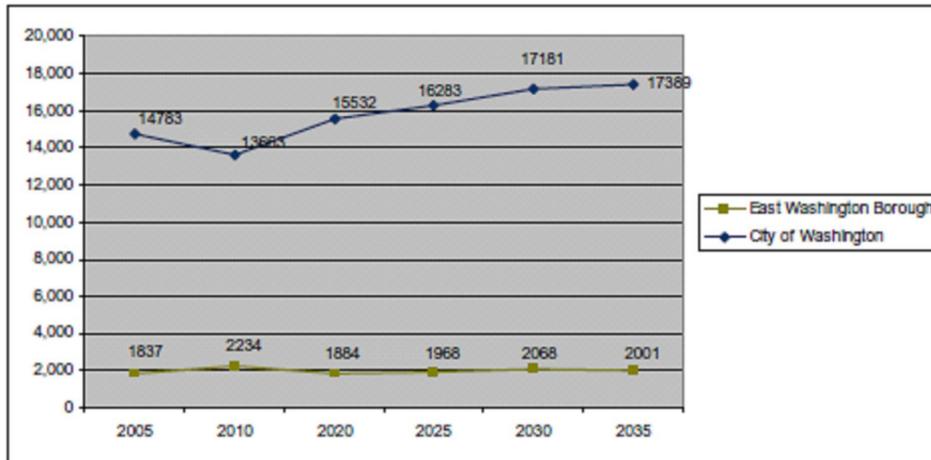
Source: US Census Bureau

The Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission (SPC), the metropolitan planning agency for a ten-county region in Southwestern Pennsylvania that includes Washington County, released population projections for 2010, 2020, 2025, 2030, and 2035. SPC used the 2005 population estimates as the base year and adopted the projections on June 28, 2007.

Chart 1-2 depicts a gradual increase in population for East Washington Borough and the City of Washington. Total population for the two municipalities is estimated to increase from 16,620 people to 19,390. However, it is important to note that population projections are just forecasts that can change due to many factors, such as economic growth, infrastructure projects, and so forth.

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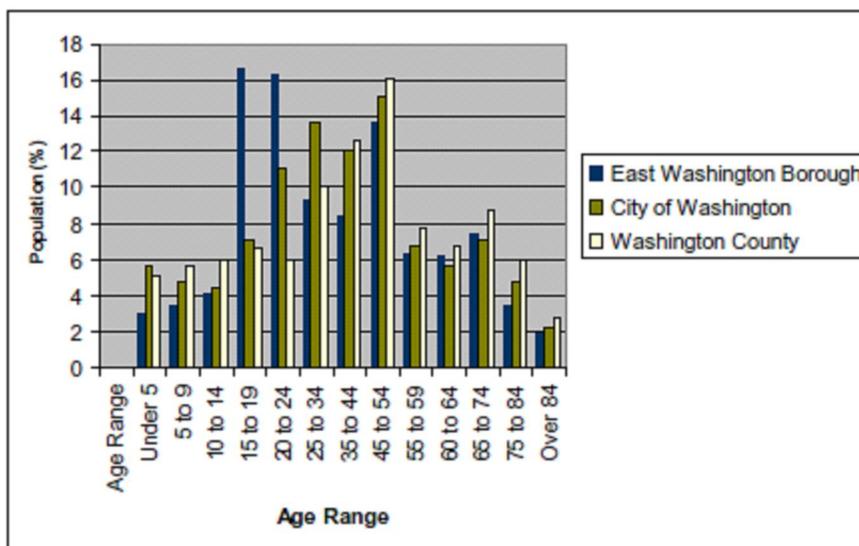
Chart 1-2: Population Projections



Source: SPC

Age is an important aspect to review as it can determine the level and types of services needed in a community. For instance, if a municipality has an aging population then services needed may include transportation geared for persons with limited mobility, a variety of housing options, and different types of recreation. When a municipality has a younger population with a great amount of school age children this can affect the school district, as well as a demand for more playgrounds and recreational programming. Both the City and the Borough have a higher percentage of young people than the County, although the high percentage of persons between 15-19 and 20-24 in the Borough is due to Washington and Jefferson College.

Chart 1-3: Age



Source: US Census Bureau

PLANNING PROCESS

The comprehensive planning process for the Washington/East Washington Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Plan included three phases:

Phase 1: Inventory & Analysis

Phase 1 included developing a community profile and analysis for demographics, parks and facilities, programs, and management and operations.

The community profile and demographic analysis were collected as part of the Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plan (2012) and utilized to supplement the Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Plan. The park and facility analysis, program analysis, and management and operations analysis were all completed by a Certified Parks and Recreation Professional (CPRP). These analyses were completed by conducting field views of parks and recreation sites as well as interviews with park staff, municipal officials, and other recreation providers. In addition to inventorying and analyzing public/municipal parks and recreation sites, the CPRP also conducted similar field views of quasi-public recreation facilities as well as private recreation facilities in the region.

Phase 2: Community Needs Assessment

Phase 2 included a Community Needs Assessment, which was completed to solicit feedback from residents regarding their needs and preferences for parks and recreation within Washington and East Washington. A variety of methods were used to ensure the participation of a cross-section of the region's population. In addition, the technical assessment of the region's parks and facilities, current programs, and finances and operations that was conducted as part of Phase 1 was utilized to identify existing deficiencies and assist with determining future needs.

Steering Committee Meetings

The City and Borough appointed representatives to serve on a Steering Committee for the Parks and Recreation Plan. The Committee met on a monthly basis throughout the project to provide direction and approval at key milestones. The meeting minutes are included in Appendix A-1.

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Stakeholder Interviews

All public providers of recreation, in addition to a number of quasi-public/nonprofit and private providers were interviewed to supplement the Inventory as well as the Community Needs Assessment. The Steering Committee also provided additional stakeholders who were interviewed due to specific interests that would be relevant to the components of the plan. Each of these individuals was interviewed and the information gathered was tabulated into the key person summary. A summary of the stakeholder interviews is included in Appendix A-2.

Public Meetings

Several public meetings were held throughout the planning process in order to gather public input and feedback. The meeting summaries are included in Appendix A-3.

Open House Public Meetings—October 2011

Public meetings were held on October 5 (5-7pm) and October 6 (5-8pm) as part of the Washington Park School Open Houses. A booth was set up in the gymnasium on both nights to gather public input on parks and recreation needs. The meeting included the following:

- ☒ Park Master Site Plans Display - Aerial mapping and photographs of the existing facilities available in Washington Park and 7th Ward Playground were on display and available for attendees to mark areas for improvement or new facilities. Staff members were on hand to discuss the master site plan process and record comments.
- ☒ Issues Identification Station— A map of the existing parks and recreation facilities in the City and Borough was on display. Staff members were on hand to discuss the parks and recreation plan and record comments regarding facilities, programming, maintenance, etc.
- ☒ Public Survey – The public survey was available to everyone to complete. Participants who completed a survey were entered into a drawing to win one of several prize baskets, containing items donated by the City of Washington (two family season passes to the pool), Washington & Jefferson College, Washington School District, and EG&G, Inc.

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Final Public Meeting—October 2012

A final public meeting was held on October 4, 2012 as part of the Washington Park School Open House. Similar to the meetings in 2011, a booth was set up in the gymnasium to present the draft plan and recommendations. Staff members were on hand to discuss the parks and recreation plan, record comments, and answer questions.



Public Survey

Community surveys were distributed at the onset of the project through several avenues. Surveys were mailed to all property owners within the City and Borough in July 2011 as part of the Washington School District's annual tax mailing. Approximately 4,000 surveys were mailed; 161 were returned. To supplement these results, the survey was made available to everyone in attendance at one of three Washington School District Open House Meetings and 189 surveys were received. In total, 350 surveys were received. The results can be found in Appendix A-4.

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Phase 3: Action Plan

The information gathered during the Washington/East Washington Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plan (2012) was coupled with data gathered through Phase 1 and 2 of the Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Plan and used to provide recommendations for enhancing existing recreational opportunities. The recommendations include specific actions that the municipalities should undertake to improve recreational services and programs to better meet the needs of residents. Recommendations were designed to promote better land use planning in the region with an understanding of municipal resources, both current and future. The Action Plan recommendations are broken down by short term (1-3 years), medium term (4-7 years) and long term (8 plus years), and identifies the responsible party and potential partners.

Master Site Plans

In addition to the Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Plan, master site plans were developed simultaneously. The master site plans were developed for the 7th Ward Playground and Washington Park. The same public input methods that were used to gather data for the Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Plan were also used to gather input for the master site plans. The master site plans can be found in Part 6 of this document.

Pool Feasibility Study

In addition to master site plans, a feasibility study was completed for Washington Park Pool as part of the overall comprehensive recreation plan. The pool study analyzed the current conditions of the pool facility; developed various concepts for improvements; documented management and operations of the facility; inventoried current programming and concessions; and analyzed the budget. The study provides the city with detailed recommendations as to how to improve management, increase revenue, decrease expenses, and improve customer satisfaction. The final study can be found in Appendix H.

Mission & Goals

Parks and recreation are an integral part of building a sense of community. Benefits provided by parks and recreation include:

- ☞ Strengthen Community Image and Sense of Place. Parks, recreation facilities, programs and community events are key factors in strengthening community image and creating a sense of place.
- ☞ Support Economic Development. Parks, recreation programs and facilities attract and retain businesses and residents, as well as attract tourists and increase property values. Parks and recreation provides jobs and generates income for the community and for local businesses.
- ☞ Strengthen Safety and Security. Park and recreation professionals provide safe environments for recreation and design facilities, programs and services specifically to reduce criminal activity.
- ☞ Promote Health and Wellness. Participation at parks and in recreation improves physical, psychological and emotional health.
- ☞ Foster Human Development. Parks and recreation services foster social, intellectual, learning, physical and emotional development.
- ☞ Increase Cultural Unity. Parks and recreation increases cultural unity through experiences that promote cultural understanding and celebrate diversity.
- ☞ Protect Natural and Cultural Resources. By acquiring, protecting and managing valuable resources as open space, such as rivers, streams, greenways, view sheds forests and other habitat areas, and culturally important assets, these resources are protected and habitat required for the survival of diverse species is preserved.
- ☞ Facilitate Community Problem solving. Park and recreation professionals have skills in facilitation and leadership that can be applied to resolve community problems and issues.
- ☞ Provide Recreational Experiences. Through programmed and self-facilitated recreation, a variety of benefits to individuals and society are achieved. Recreational experiences also are important as an end in themselves for personal enjoyment.

*The above information was taken from Barry Weiss's presentation on "Repositioning" Making Parks & Recreation Essential, which was modeled after the VIP Strategic Action Plan developed by the California Park & Recreation Society and the academic work of Distinguished Professor John L. Crompton of Texas A&M University.

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Mission Statement

A mission statement was developed as part of the planning process that should serve as a guide for both the City of Washington and East Washington Borough as they plan for parks and recreation over the next 10-20 years.

It is the mission of the City and Borough to provide high quality parks and recreation that are safe and accessible to all residents and which offer a variety of facilities, active and passive spaces, during all seasons.

Goals

To help guide the overall planning process, a series of goals were developed. These goals are designed to be broad-based, each aimed at addressing priority issues and concerns facing both the City and the Borough with regards to recreation.

1. Build capacity to adequately administer parks and recreation.
2. Develop a coordinated marketing plan for recreation.
3. Focus on maintaining current parks and existing facilities first.
4. Provide parks and recreation facilities and equipment that adequately meet local needs.
5. Build and maintain collaborative partnerships with area recreation providers and organizations.
6. Incorporate green design and conservation principles into parks and recreation.

Implementation

Once the recommendations were developed for the City and Borough, the project committee was tasked with ranking the projects. The ranking allows the City and Borough to know which projects they should be focusing on over the next ten years. High priority projects should be started within the next 1-3 years; medium priority projects over the next 4-7 years; and low priority projects over the next 8-10 years (or later). However, the City and Borough should keep in mind that as funding becomes available, lower priority projects may be implemented first.

In addition, an implementation matrix (see following pages) was developed that identifies each recommendation along with its priority ranking; responsible party (i.e. the organization that should lead implementation); potential partners; and an opinion of probable cost (where appropriate).