



Part 4—Administration

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



Inventory

The Administration section of the plan documents the current recreation administration for the City of Washington and the Borough of East Washington. It includes an analysis of the effectiveness and capacity of the municipalities, the ability to involve the public with long-range planning efforts, the ability to work cooperatively with other planning agencies, community groups, and businesses, and the effectiveness of existing procedures and policies.

Legal Structure

The City of Washington is a Third Class City and is run by a strong mayor-council form of government. The council consists of the mayor and four members elected by residents. The City consists of the following departments: Shade Tree Commission, Police Department, Fire Department, Street Department, Washington Park, Parking Authority, Garage/Electrical, and Accounts and Finance. In addition, the City appoints residents to serve on a number of boards and commissions including Planning Commission, Economic Development Council, Zoning Hearing Board, Appeals Board, Civil Service Board, and Business District Authority and Board.

East Washington Borough is governed under the Municipal Borough Code. Under this code, the Borough is governed by a weak mayor-council form of government. Council is comprised of seven elected officials and a mayor, who does not have voting power (unless there is a tie). Board and Commissions of the Borough include: Planning Commission, Park and Shade Tree Commission, Civil Service Commission, Zoning Hearing Board, Board of Code Enforcement Appeals and Council Vacancy Board.

Personnel

The City does not have a parks and recreation director or a board. Rather, a council member serves as the director, providing guidance for the park staff. The City has two full time parks and recreation staff—a park foreman and a laborer—and between one and six part time park maintenance personnel during the summers. In addition, the City employs a full time park secretary. The City's swimming pool is overseen by a pool manager, an assistant manager, and between 10 and 12 lifeguards.

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There is a job description for the foreman, the full time park laborer, and the park secretary. The summer park laborers do not have job descriptions, but they do have certain roles and responsibilities. The pool manager has a contractual agreement with the City. The City of Washington has an organizational flow chart under which its employees operate (see Appendix D-1: Washington Park Employee Flowchart). The City of Washington has a complete personnel policy manual, but they do not have an appraisal system. Employees are provided opportunities to attend educational sessions.

The Borough of East Washington does not have any personnel that are specifically designated for parks and recreation. Similar to the City, the Borough does not have a director or board, but rather a council member oversees parks and recreation. Park maintenance work is normally completed by the Borough's public works department, which consists of one full time employee and one part time employee. There is a job description for the full time employee, which includes responsibilities in the Borough's park. The Borough also has a personnel policy manual, but no appraisal system. They are willing to send staff to educational sessions.

Staffing is a problem faced by almost every parks and recreation department. There is never enough staff to accomplish everything that needs to be completed; therefore, it is imperative to establish a sound group of volunteers to assist with programming and other aspects of parks and recreation. The City utilizes students from Washington & Jefferson College do various projects in their parks, such as, painting and landscaping. The City uses a work release program, which provides volunteer help for cutting wood, clean up and painting. The City also has used Eagle Scouts to assist with various park projects, such as picnic tables and benches.

The Borough has also utilized students from Washington & Jefferson College with projects and the Borough's Park and Shade Tree Commission helps with various tasks.

Policies and Procedures

Pavilion Rentals

The City of Washington requires rental agreements for use of any of the pavilions. Incorporated into the agreement are rules and policies that address park hours, prohibited conduct, reservation for specific uses, fees, and violations and penalties (see Appendix D-2: Picnic Rules and Regulations and Picnic Reservation Policy). The City has a separate policy for alcohol use in the park (see Appendix D-3: Alcohol Policy).

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The Borough of East Washington requires a rental agreement for use of their pavilion. The agreement includes rules and policies and requires a damage deposit. The use of the pavilion is free to residents; non-residents must pay a fee (see Appendix D-4: Pavilion Policy).

Field & Court Agreements

The City of Washington maintains several agreements with various organizations regarding the use of their facilities at Washington Park. A copy of each agreement can be found in Appendix D-5.

- ⚠ Washington School District has priority use of the Washington Park tennis courts, Colt Field and TWIST Field #1. They also have use of the park trail for cross country. The school district pays the City a flat fee of \$11,000 each year for use of these facilities.
- ⚠ Chartiers-Houston School District, located north of Washington, has an agreement with the City for the use of the tennis courts located in Washington Park. The school district uses the courts for both the boys and girls tennis teams and pays the city a fee of \$2,250 for use of the courts for four months. Negotiations for a new agreement are done on or before December 31 of each year for the upcoming season.
- ⚠ Washington Youth Baseball (WYB) has an agreement with the City for the use of the baseball fields. WYB leases the eight ball fields in Washington Park at a rate of \$1,500 per field, for a total of \$12,000 annually. The agreement stipulates that Washington High School uses Colt Field and has priority for use.
- ⚠ Trinity-Washington Interarea Softball Teams (TWIST) has an agreement with the City for the use of the softball fields. TWIST leases the six ball fields in Washington Park at a rate of \$1,500 per field, for a total of \$9,000 annually. The agreement stipulates that Washington High School uses Field #1 and has priority for use.
- ⚠ TWIST Softball Association has an agreement with the City that provides TWIST with the use of six fields in Washington Park at a lease rate of \$1,500 per field or \$9,000.
- ⚠ The City also has a cooperative agreement with the Peters Township Swim Club permitting the swim club to teach competitive swimming in a team environment at Washington Pool. Per the agreement, the Club pays \$600 to have priority use of the swimming pool Monday through Friday from 8:00am to 10:00am between June and August. The Club provides its own lifeguards.

East Washington Borough does not have any cooperative agreements in place.

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Record Keeping

Accurate record keeping is vital to the success of any recreation effort. It ensures effectiveness and efficiency and will eliminate the possibility of forgetting important information that can be used in the future to advance and/or protect the municipality in many areas. Maintaining good records are also useful when writing grants, preparing budgets, submitting for awards, and in the case of liability issues.

The secretary at Washington Community Park maintains the following records at the park office:

- ☒ Picnic reservations – payments and refunds
- ☒ Payment of fees for the swimming pool and junior tennis clinics
- ☒ Bank deposit slips and reports
- ☒ Monthly deposit reports
- ☒ Purchases made by park employees via purchase orders
- ☒ Monthly budget information
- ☒ Park development fund deposit records
- ☒ Sales of pool passes and pool party rentals

East Washington Borough does not have any established record keeping procedures for their park.

Public Relations and Marketing

Public relations and proper marketing is the key to successfully providing vibrant parks and recreation. Current methods used by the City to publicize their parks and recreation initiatives include the City website (www.washingtonpa.us); the electronic billboard (near I-70); the City Hall Bulletin Board; and a seasonal activities flyer.

Current methods used by the Borough to publicize their parks and recreation initiatives include the Borough website (www.eastwash.com); the local newspaper; an annual newsletter; and the Borough Building Bulletin Board.

Analysis & Recommendations

Two of the project goals are related to administration—building capacity and improving marketing.

Goal #3: Build capacity to improve the administration of parks and recreation.

As is often the case, the biggest obstacle to enhancing the parks, recreation facilities, and programs for the City and Borough is capacity. While the City does have paid recreation staff, they are mainly for maintenance. Neither the City nor the Borough has the capacity to adequately provide recreation in terms of facility management or to offer programs. There is no recreation department, director, or a parks and recreation board or similar organization to oversee the parks and thereby, they are limited in their ability to expand recreation.

Strategy 3.1: Maintain open lines of communication between municipal officials and the public in regards to recreation needs.

The planning process for the Parks and Recreation Plan allowed for residents to provide their input as to what the recreational needs are for the City and Borough as well as identify the priorities. At the public open houses, many residents expressed their appreciation for being asked to contribute their thoughts and opinions regarding recreation. The City and the Borough should explore methods to maintain this communication to ensure that the types of recreation they are providing (i.e. parks, facilities, programs) are meeting the needs of the residents. Therefore, the following is recommended:

1. Educate the general public about the many values derived from providing quality recreation programs and facilities.
2. Conduct annual surveys for park users to determine needs regarding existing facilities, proposed new facilities, and programs.
3. Develop a regional parks and recreation advisory board.
 - a. Appoint interested individuals who represent all areas of the community. A minimum of five to a maximum of nine can be appointed in each community.

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- b. Develop a set of bylaws, an organizational chart, and a code of ethics under which the Board will function.

Educating residents about the benefits of recreation will go a long way in establishing support for new recreation initiatives. Recreation has been shown to strengthen community image; reduce crime and improve safety and security; support economic development; and promote health and wellness, among other benefits.

It is also recommended that the City and Borough conduct annual surveys of their residents to determine first, if the current parks, facilities, and programs are meeting their needs and second, what improvements they would like to see. With limited resources, it is imperative that the City and Borough know whether or not their project is supported. This information can be used as constructive criticism for future improvements; reference material when applying for grants or awards; determine whether to retain or eliminate the facility/program; and determine a better time or location for the facility/program.

Finally, establishing a parks and recreation board would allow volunteers to become part of the City and Borough's parks and recreation administration. A parks and recreation board is comprised of residents appointed by their respective councils to serve in an advisory role. A board provides invaluable volunteer service; develops a vision for the parks and programs; assists in planning and supervising programs, special events and park projects; helps seek donations and sponsorships; and assists recreation and park staff in many other ways. Establishing a regional parks and recreation board would allow the City and Borough to formally plan for parks and recreation at the regional level.

Strategy 3.2: Develop a solid volunteer base to assist with parks and recreation.

The current public works staff in the Borough of East Washington has been able to properly maintain their park in a relatively good condition. If the Borough doesn't develop any additional park land, current staffing will be able to continue to maintain the park property and facilities.

The City of Washington park employees, along with assistance from Washington Youth Baseball and TWIST Softball, do their best to maintain the parks. With the recent hiring of a new knowledgeable park foreman, the overall park maintenance should improve. However, as additional recreation facilities and areas are developed, maintenance must be considered and dedicated staff hired to properly maintain the parks and facilities.

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Staffing is a problem faced by almost every parks and recreation department. With paid staff already stretched to capacity, volunteers will be an integral part of providing adequate staff for any future parks and recreation efforts in the City and Borough. Even though volunteers are generally not paid for their services, there is an extensive amount of time and effort involved in locating these individuals and providing the proper guidance, training and direction to maintain quality in the parks and programs they are associated with. Often it is difficult to retain them as a continued volunteer resource. The following is recommended in terms of utilizing volunteers as staff:

1. Utilize volunteers from local recreation organizations for park development, maintenance, and potential programming.
2. Maintain records of their work and hours to use for in-kind services to match grants.

Following is a list of potential volunteer resources that the City and Borough could utilize:

Boy Scouts, Girls Scouts & similar organizations – The opportunity to work with these groups is very rewarding for both the organization and the community. They are generally required to do community service and/or projects to earn merit badges or advance to higher levels in the organization. Utilizing them to help with programs can provide much needed assistance in running games and other activities. A Boy Scout, working on his Eagle Scout project, may provide a park with a new facility or other feature that may not otherwise be constructed. This provides them the opportunity to use their leadership skills and learn at the same time.

Community service organizations – These organizations can come in many forms such as: church groups, student groups, women’s organizations, or service organizations such as: the Elks, Moose, Lions, Rotary, etc. All of these organizations will often offer their services and/or financial support to help the community provide a higher quality of life for the residents.

High School/College Students – Students will look for opportunities to do volunteer service so they can include the information on their applications for scholarships or on resumes. This is an excellent resource for obtaining volunteers for programs or small projects.

Corporate volunteers – Many businesses now require their employees to contribute volunteer time in various capacities. Connecting with these companies and establishing viable volunteer opportunities that are interesting and rewarding for their employees can develop a long lasting source of volunteers.

Required community service individuals – These are generally individuals that have been in trouble with the authorities for some minor violation of the law. The courts normally require

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them to do a certain number of hours of community service in lieu of fines and/or jail time. These individuals are usually given minor maintenance tasks to complete or they may help with special events. The number of hours they are required to work generally is not long enough to depend on them for any major projects. The individual/parent or legal guardian should be required to sign a waiver indicating that they are not covered under workmen's compensation and the final number of hours they complete.

Adopt-A-Park – This is a group that will adopt a specific park as their project and help with maintenance and various projects in that park.

Renewal Incorporated – This organization provides prisoners the opportunity to go out and work in communities as volunteers assisting with various projects.

Senior Community Service Employment Program – This service provides older adults the opportunity to work at no cost to the municipality. www.experienceworks.org

Student Conservation Association – Provides students of all ages volunteer opportunities, including summer programs and internships serving and protecting national parks, forests and urban green spaces. www.theSCA.org

AmeriCorps – This is a national service program that allows people of all ages and backgrounds to earn money which helps pay for education in exchange for a year of service. Some funds may be required to pay these individuals. www.americorps.org

Other potential staffing opportunities that would require some municipal funds include the following:

Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance—PHEAA offers a work study program for students in the field of parks and recreation, as well as other fields. Local government agencies can apply to receive a list of students in the area who are eligible for this program. PHEAA will pay 40% of the student's wages while working under the work study program. Work-Study program students not only earn money to contribute to their educational costs, but also enhance their classroom learning with valuable work experience while assisting the municipality by providing community service. This is an excellent opportunity to help a student get experience while keeping the wage costs down for the recreation and park program. If interested in participating in the PHEAA Work-Study program, an application should be submitted by December for the upcoming summer program. www.pheaa.org

Local Government Academy —LGA sponsors a Municipal Intern Program where both graduate and undergraduate students from all area colleges and universities are invited to attend a

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Municipal Intern Fair. A certain number of paid internships are available each year. The program provides a service to various communities by placing students in municipalities to complete their summer internship programs. The students work full time for a twelve week period during the summer focused on a particular project. A student working through this program could help in a number of project areas. www.localgovernmentacademy.org

The Pennsylvania Conservation Corps—PCC can provide two valuable benefits to a community. First both men and women between the ages of 18 and 25 can join the corps for a one year term of service which can be extended. Preference is given to the economically disadvantaged. They are paid for their service as a corps member and gain valuable work experience through the completion of substantial and needed projects. They receive on the job training in a variety of trades depending on the project they are working on. Depending on the individual, they may be offered adult literacy tutoring, life skills training, vocational education, college courses, job-search workshops and the chance to earn an equivalent high school education. This program offers interested individuals an opportunity to make a major difference in their life. The second benefit is to the community. A municipality can submit an application to have the PCC come into the community to work on a project. Municipalities that are awarded a PCC project receive the services of a crew for one year; most also receive funds to cover the cost of materials for the project and contracted services. www.pcc.org

Intern & Practicum Students—There are a number of colleges and universities that offer course curriculums in the area of parks and recreation. The students studying in the various fields offered within the parks and recreation departments are required to do practicums and internships before earning their degrees. These students are an excellent source of help for municipal recreation programming. A practicum student usually has to work 120 hours to complete their requirements, while an intern student has to do anywhere from 400 to 600 hours of work to complete their internship. These students like to find positions where they are paid, but it isn't a requirement that they are compensated. Since these students are in the field of parks and recreation, they usually have a genuine interest in what they are doing, knowing that they will be graded on their efforts and that there are potential jobs opportunities that can come from this work. As part of their work they are normally assigned a project to complete that will benefit the community. Penn State University, Slippery Rock University, California University, Butler County Community College, Lock Haven University, York College, East Stroudsburg, Temple, as well as a few other schools in Pennsylvania, can be contacted to locate students that are potentially available for doing a practicum or internship. If interested in providing an opportunity for these students and obtaining this type of staffing for the community, these institutions should be contacted the fall before they will be needed for the position.

Program Instructors—Most program instructors want to be paid for their services. However, you can find individuals who are more interested in improving the quality of life in the community

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through recreational programs. These instructors are usually residents of the community that have special talents that they are willing to share with others by providing classes or programs for interested individuals. This provides an excellent opportunity to get residents involved in helping to improve the community at a nominal fee. It does take some time and effort to locate these people and to convince them that they have something to offer to the community.

Strategy 3.3: Maintain written records for all parks and recreation matters (facilities and programs).

As the recreation and park efforts grow, records and various forms of information will have to be recorded, filed and maintained to meet the growing needs of the communities, assist in budget preparation, and protect the municipality. In particular, the development of an administrative manual would allow the City and Borough to maintain all of their established policies and procedures in one location. The administrative manual could be broken down into several different manuals including: a general operation manual, a park operation manual, a program operation manual, and a facility rental manual. Developing this type of document would afford the City and Borough, Councils, staff, and volunteers, the ability to work together as a team, each knowing their respective roles and responsibilities. It would allow the staff to function in an organized and effective manner in all areas of administering recreation and park demands. It will, also, provide a quick reference for many documents needed on a daily basis. To help the City and Borough institute better record-keeping procedures, the following is recommended:

1. Keep everything, especially program information, well organized, documented to the smallest detail, evaluated and fully recorded.
2. Develop a field use policy and establish a fee schedule for use of the public fields. These fees will help with improvements and maintenance costs of the facilities.
3. Ensure that agreements with associations that provide port-a-johns and other facilities located near their fields meet all ADA requirements.
4. Establish and update policy manuals to meet the needs of the parks as they further develop.
5. Develop an administrative manual that contains all strategic information pertaining to operations, personnel, park facilities, and programs.
6. Establish safety policies and a risk management program.
7. As things change concerning the City park personnel, make any necessary changes to the organizational chart to keep it up to date.
8. The Borough should develop an overall organizational chart for the Borough's staff as it relates to parks and recreation.

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Strategy 3.4: Ensure that parks and recreation personnel are adequately prepared, trained, and maintain clearances.

Continued training and education is very important in keeping employees and volunteers up to date on changing trends and issues in their respective areas. The community should be aware of upcoming conferences, workshops and seminars that may benefit the employees and volunteers serving the community. There are numerous opportunities for personnel to attend educational programs throughout the year, such as: the playground maintenance workshop, trail maintenance workshops, and turf and infield maintenance workshops. The Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) and the Pennsylvania Recreation and Park Society (PRPS) offer many learning opportunities throughout the year for maintenance employees and administrative employees. It is recommended to provide employees and volunteers continued opportunities to attend available workshops, seminars and conferences.

Having detailed job descriptions already in place allows both the City and the Borough to provide both new and current employees details as to what their job entails. These descriptions should be reviewed regularly and discussed with current employees. As circumstances change within the parks, items may need to be added or deleted to the job descriptions to keep them up to date. All employees should have a copy of the current job description. It is imperative for summer personnel to have an understanding of the position they hold as well. Therefore, a job description should be written that describes the duties and responsibilities of their position and the skills required for the position. This should be given to the summer employees before they start.

Recreation and maintenance staff, including public works personnel working in the parks should be provided the opportunity to attend proper training. Appropriate training and education is provided by various organizations such as the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) and the Pennsylvania Recreation and Park Society (PRPS). At least one member of the staff should receive their Playground Safety Inspection Certification or at least attend the playground maintenance seminars offered by PRPS. A staff member that maintains the park grounds should have their Pesticide Certification in Category 23 along with any other appropriate categories. Every person working in the park should be required to have their Act 33 & 34 clearances and other background checks as deemed necessary.

Continual education opportunities should be provided for the entire staff and volunteers regarding the safety standards published by the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) and other such organizations. Each staff member and volunteer should be familiar with contact procedures concerning legal requirements and inspections for conformance to sanitary regulations, criteria

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for licensing, fire laws, building and zoning codes, pesticide applications, and safety procedures. As stated above, first aid supplies and safety equipment should be readily accessible and regular training of staff regarding the use of First Aid, and CPR/AED is essential. The municipalities should ensure that the "Right to Know" information and other information as required by law are posted in an easily accessible and highly visible location. Fire extinguishers should also be in an easily accessible and highly visible location in park/road department vehicles and on other equipment.

To assist the City and Borough in ensuring that their recreation personnel is adequate, the following is recommended:

1. All park staff should attend training seminars to keep up to date on safety issues and maintenance procedures.
2. All park staff should be certified in CPR/AED and attend update training every two years.
3. Consider providing first aid training and certification to park staff.
4. As needed, hire dedicated personnel to properly maintain recreation and park areas and facilities.
5. Conduct annual performance evaluations.
6. Conduct proper background checks and obtain clearances for park employees, instructors and volunteers.
7. Encourage parks and recreation staff to attend educational sessions (such as the PRPS Annual Conference).
8. The "Right to Know" information should be readily accessible to the employees.
9. Ensure that at least one park maintenance staff has the Category 23 pesticide license and the license number is properly displayed on a park vehicle.

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Goal #4: Develop a coordinated marketing plan for recreation.

It is important for the residents of the Washington area to be aware of the facilities and any future programs that are offered. Therefore, spending resources on public relations and marketing is money well spent. Public relations, marketing, customer service and community relations are four complementary functions that have the same goal: making the recreation and park services more successful. In order for any marketing strategy to be successful, it is imperative to know the needs of the community and offer programs and facilities that will meet those needs.

Strategy 4.1: Enhance the City and Borough's online presence to promote parks and recreation.

As recreational activities increase and new technology becomes available, the City and Borough will need to expand their marketing efforts. In order to guide the municipalities in the area of public relations and marketing, policies should be established to ensure conformity and to avoid potential pitfalls. Several methods to increase the City and Borough's online web presence are recommended:

1. Keep websites up to date with parks and recreation information (facilities available, rental costs, programs, events, etc.).
2. Offer online registration for programs.
3. Offer online rentals for pavilions and a "real time" guide to pavilion availability.
4. Develop an "at a glance" section on the website featuring the park facilities and programs.
5. Provide information regarding the City playgrounds.
6. Consider establishing a Facebook account that publicizes upcoming programs and events.
7. Provide links to area recreation providers, such as the Brownson House, sports organizations, etc.

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Strategy 4.2: Continue to explore additional methods to publicize parks and recreation.

As the communities improve and expand their facilities and if additional programming begins, it is important to remember that one of the most effective methods for promoting the facilities and programs is through positive word of mouth from satisfied participation in past events. This is true in almost any area where quality programs and events are offered. Keeping records of park users and event and program participants will allow the City and Borough to develop and maintain a database of email addresses. A distribution list could then be created to send out monthly e-newsletters or e-blasts to alert them to any new programs or events.

There are a variety of other methods that the City and Borough can explore in the future as they increase their recreation initiative. Signs are a very effective way for providing information about upcoming programs. The use of street signs, if permitted, using digital display signs when available, and using banners, kiosks, bulletin boards, store windows, etc. provide viable opportunities for marketing. Other visible methods are through information on municipal maps or even placemats in restaurants. Flyers could also be distributed to local businesses and through community/church bulletins. The following is recommended to better publicize the City and Borough's parks and recreation initiatives:

1. Maintain a database of program participants and send out monthly e-newsletters/e-blasts.
2. Develop a semi-annual City/Borough newsletter that promotes the area parks and recreation programs.