

CHAPTER 12

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

Recommendations for park sites, recreational open space, trails, and other facilities are discussed in the preceding chapter. Resources to develop these improvements are identified in this section and will come from many sources. Some of these funding sources are new to the County, whereas others have been used in the past. The intent of this chapter is to identify a six year strategy for funding park and recreation improvements. Whereas many counties have established County funds for acquisition and capital projects, Skagit County has no dedicated source. Because of this, Skagit County Parks and Recreation is required to find creative means of finding monies to fund projects. Funding can come from grants and non-profit organizations. SCPR is constantly looking for ways to fund acquisition and development projects. Some of those potential sources are listed in this chapter.

GUIDING PRINCIPALS

The following themes will guide the implementation of the Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Plan:

Parks Will:

- Focus on the maintenance and upgrade of existing parkland for regional and community use.
- Pursue opportunities for expanded use of existing developed and undeveloped parks.
- Pursue land-banking as a way to preserve threatened parkland and critical area.
- Develop and maintain partnerships to improve the delivery of regional and community parks.
- Explore innovations in planning, development, and ongoing stewardship/management of parks and recreation.
- Solicit community input and support through programming and public involvement.

Acquisition Priorities:

- Acquisitions which expand and improve existing parks.
- Acquisition of critical habitat and natural area.
- Acquire property and/or facilities that fill priority needs of Skagit County residents.

CAPITAL FACILITY PLANNING

Major Park capital improvement projects funded by Skagit County are through an established planning tool known as the Capital Facilities Plan (CFP). It identifies, prioritizes and determines capital needs for the County. The CFP is the major fund source for park related facilities including parkland acquisition, development, redevelopment and renovation. The CFP is a 6-year financing plan, evaluated and updated every year by the Skagit County Board of Commissioners.

GROWTH MANAGEMENT AND CAPITAL FACILITY PLANNING

In 1989 the Growth Management Act fundamentally changed the way in which public infrastructure was provided. Essentially, the GMA required jurisdictions to identify necessary infrastructure needs, and develop clear funding plans to meet those needs. This narrowed the list of projects on many jurisdictions' capital improvement programs; only those projects with a reasonable chance of funding were to be included. By creating finite plans which are tied to the available financial resources, the GMA essentially mandated that governments "live within their means."

POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES

1.) **Washington Wildlife and Recreation Coalition Fund:**

A special fund created by a coalition of recreation and wildlife groups with the intent of preserving wildlife habitats and open space and developing recreation areas. For the 2003-2005 Biennium, the legislative appropriation is \$45 million.

2.) **Property Transfer Excise Tax (Real Estate Excise Tax - REET):**

A tax assessed on the sale of property and administered by local counties and cities. Revenue can only be used to finance capital facilities specified in the local government's Capital Facilities Plan.

3.) **County General Fund:**

This category includes general funds allocated to the Skagit County Department of Parks and Recreation for annual expenditures and capital development.

4.) **Park Impact Fees:**

Development fees imposed by a county or city for park land acquisitions and development. Fees charged to developers are typically based upon a set amount per

residential unit. This amount is calculated to represent the development's share of public improvements necessitated by growth.

Credits can be given to developers that contribute land, improvements or other assets. Funds must be used for capital facilities required by growth, and not for current deficiencies in levels of service. Fee revenues cannot be used for operations.

5.) Short Term Special Levy:

A property tax for construction and/or operation levied for a set number of years (typically 1-3 years). A special levy requires a 60% voter approval.

6.) General Obligation Bond:

A property tax for the sale of construction bonds. The tax assessment can be levied up to 30 years. Passage requires a 60% majority approval of 40% of the voters who voted at the last election. This approach is usually used for major projects.

7.) Revenue Bonds:

Revenue from the operation of the facility pays for the capital cost and debt service. This does not require a vote of the people.

8.) LWCF:

These are grants distributed from the Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund. Grants pay matching funds of the cost of acquisition and development. At one time, this was a major funding program for recreation programs. The program is administered locally by the Washington State Interagency Committee (IAC) on Outdoor Recreation.

9.) Department of Ecology:

Grant monies are available from the Coastal Zone Management account and pay up to 50% of the project cost. They are primarily used for shoreline acquisition and public access.

10.) HUD Grants:

Grant monies are available from the Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development for a wide variety of projects. Most are distributed in the lower income areas of the community. Grants can be up to 100% of project cost. Funds may not be used for maintenance or operation of existing facilities.

11.) Aquatic Land Enhancement Fund:

This program, funded by the State Department of Natural Resources, will fund for acquisition and development of waterfront parks, public access and environmental protection. A new program has been added to the Aquatic Land Enhancement Fund called "Wetland Stewardship Grant Program." This program will fund for the acquisition of locally significant wetlands.

12.) Initiative 213 Boating Funds:

Funds received from boating gas taxes are allocated to marine-related projects. A 50% match is required.

13.) Certificates of Participation:

A lease purchase approach in which a City or County sells Certificates of Participation (COP's) to a lending institution. The City or County pays off the loan from revenue produced by the facility or from its own general operating budget. The lending institution holds title to the property until the COP's are repaid. This procedure does not require a vote of the public.

14.) Volunteer Efforts:

Volunteers can be quite effective in terms of contributing cash, materials, or labor.

15.) Transfer of Development Rights:

This is a process wherein the development rights of a specific parcel of desired open space land is transferred to a second parcel of land more suitable for development. The second parcel is then permitted a higher level of development. If the two parcels are owned by two different land owners, the increased value of the second parcel is given to the owner of the first parcel.

16.) Work Release Program:

An alternative to jail time is for offenders to provide community services such as working on a park maintenance crew or providing other recreation services.

17.) Conservation Futures Levy:

Counties can levy up to \$0.065 per \$1,000 assessed valuation for the acquisition of shoreline and open space areas. The money cannot be used for development see maintenance. In Skagit County, these funds have been levied with an emphasis being placed on the preservation of farmland.

18.) Centennial Clean Water Program:

This is a state program administered by the Department of Ecology and financed by a tax on cigarettes. The program is designed to provide grants and loans on projects that will enhance water quality. Typical projects related to parks and open space could include lake maturation, storm water retention, wetland enhancement and other water quality mitigation measures. Grants are available for planning, design and construction up to 70% of the total project cost.

19.) Utility Tax:

Cities or counties can charge a tax on the gross receipts of electric, gas, garbage, telephone, cable TV, water/sewer, and stormwater service providers. Revenue can be used for capital facilities acquisition, construction and maintenance.

20.) Urban Forestry Grants:

The Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) administers two funding grant programs in the art of urban forestry. The first is funded by the US Small Business Administration and provides grants to purchase and plant trees. Urban street tree planting programs are sometimes funded by this method. A 25% match is required. The second program is for educational and technical assistance and is funded by the US Forest Service. A local match is also required for this program.

21.) ISTEA:

The "Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991" provides funding for bicycle transportation facilities, including new or improved lanes or paths, traffic control devices, shelters and parking facilities.

22.) Donations/Foundations:

Private donations and foundations are also possible sources of assets and funding.

23.) Councilmatic Bonds:

Bonds issued by a City or County. Does not require a vote of the people but must be paid out of the annual operating budget.

24.) User Fees:

Cities, counties, and special purpose districts can charge fees for use of facilities or participating in programs. They are often entrance fees or registration fees.

25.) Transportation Improvement Account:

Cities, urban counties, and transportation benefit districts can apply for these funds through the State Transportation Improvement Board. Funding is provided annually for projects to alleviate and prevent traffic congestion caused by economic development or growth. The proposal should be multi-agency, multi-modal, congestion related, related to growth, and have a 20% local match.

26.) Local Option Vehicle License Fee:

Counties can charge up to \$15 per vehicle registered in the county, with proceeds to be used for "general transportation purposes". Revenues are distributed back to the county and its cities on a weighted per capita basis-- unincorporated areas receive a larger share, per capita, than do cities.

27.) Life Estate:

This is the donation of a property to a public agency with the provision that the donor may live on the site as long as desired.

28.) Resource Management:

The County could acquire and dedicate the revenues of specified properties to certain programs or departments. For instance, revenues from timber sales, grazing leases, concessions, etc. could be allocated to recreation programs or used to acquire and develop park properties.

29.) Washington Community Economic Revitalization Team (WA-CERT)

The Washington Community Economic Revitalization Team was created as pan of the Economic Adjustment Initiative (EAI) that begun in 1993. This program provides technical assistance and financing support aimed at encouraging economic diversification in timber dependent communities.

30.) The Seattle Mariners Grant

The Seattle Mariners sponsors a grant each year to a Washington city for the development of a youth baseball field. Award is based on community need.

31.) Hydroelectric Relicensing Opportunities

Projects that generate hydroelectric power fall under the regulations of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. Any new hydroelectric project, or one requiring relicensing, must submit a new license application. Part of the application process includes a plan for mitigating open space and recreation opportunities lost as a result of the project.

Local regulatory authority over hydropower development falls under the jurisdiction of the Shoreline Management Act (RCW 90.58). The Skagit County Department of Planning and Community Development and the State Department of Ecology have entered into a Coastal Zone Management Grant Agreement addressing amendments to the Skagit County Shoreline Management Master Program relating to the site and development of hydropower generation facilities.

At issue here is the fact that corporations intend to use Skagit County's resources to generate a service for residents who live outside the County. As a result, these corporations should pay for the right to use the County's resources.

Both the US Forest Service and National Park Service have been very active in requiring recreation mitigation and enhancement projects during the hydroelectric licensing and relicensing processes. This has included a \$9 million environmental education center at Diablo Lake. Skagit County also has been somewhat successful in obtaining some commitments for recreation improvements on their own sites.