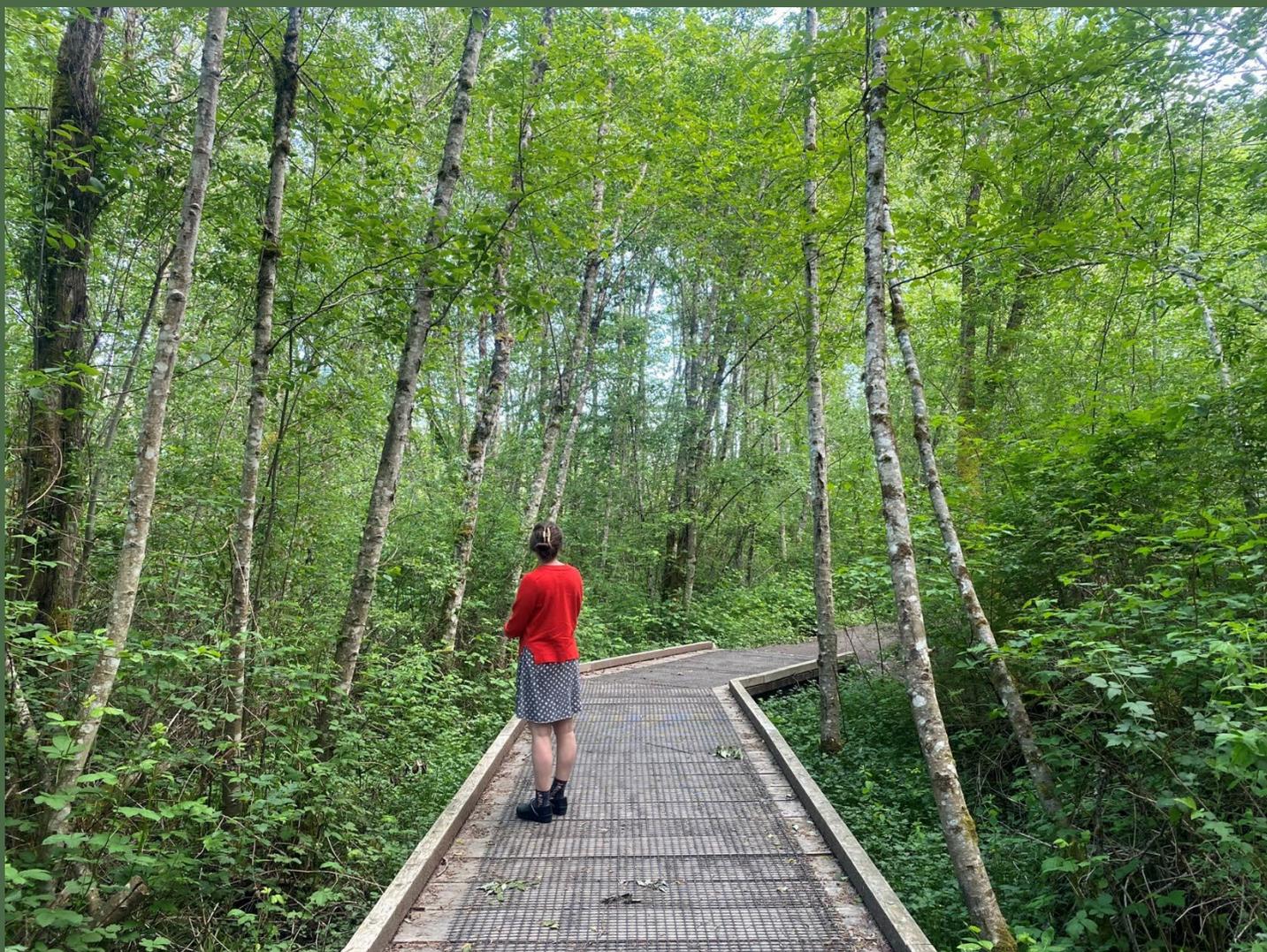


Comprehensive Plan Update Preliminary Draft



Bainbridge Island Metropolitan Park & Recreation District

Draft November 2025

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INTRODUCTION

This document outlines key findings and decision points for the Comprehensive Plan Update. The Bainbridge Island Metropolitan Park & Recreation District ("BI Parks" or the "Park District") has been undergoing the update process per the Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) requirement to update plans every 6 years to maintain grant funding eligibility. This update process is an opportunity to connect with the public, check in about priorities, and set a vision for the system of parks, trails, and indoor facilities on the island.

This is a chance to provide feedback on the work done so far and offer guidance on direction setting. Most notably:

- What are the top priorities for system improvements in the coming 6-10 years?
- How should BI Parks pursue the funding necessary to maintain existing assets and make future improvements.

This document is organized into 3 sections:

WHAT WE HAVE:

What currently exists within the park, trail, and recreation system on Bainbridge Island? What is owned and managed by BI Parks, and what is offered by partner organizations? What types of facilities do residents have access to?

WHAT WE HEARD:

What public engagement efforts have been conducted as part of this effort? What have we heard from the community?

WHAT WE NEED:

How do we interpret public feedback into a Level of Service assessment? How do we evaluate the Quantity, Quality, and Access of parks, trails, and indoor facilities on Bainbridge Island?



WHAT WE HAVE

PARKLAND & FACILITIES ON BAINBRIDGE ISLAND

Bainbridge Island residents enjoy access to a variety of parks, trails, and recreation facilities owned and managed by the Park District as well as other providers. These spaces act as venues for exercise, play, gathering, and exploring the natural and historic wonders of the island. By assessing how much park land there is, how it is being used, what kind of facilities are available, and how these assets are distributed throughout the island, we can get a establish a baseline from which to determine how to system should grow, shrink, or stay the same in the future.

This section provides an inventory or physical park assets as well as recreational programming.

Park Land:

For this plan, we use the term **Park Land** to describe lands that are open to the public and used for recreation and/or cultural activities. In this plan we focus on park lands owned by BIMPRD, the City of Bainbridge Island, the Bainbridge Island Land Trust, or the Bainbridge Island School District.

Park Lands tend to be outdoor spaces but may contain buildings with community, internal operations, or utility uses.

Facilities:

For this plan, we use the term **Facilities** to talk about the structures and assets within a park that facilitate their use for exercise, play, gathering, and learning. This includes indoor facilities used for recreation and community gathering, sports fields and courts, trails, playgrounds, and much more.



PARK LAND USE CATEGORIES

This plan uses 5 main categories to talk about how Park Land on Bainbridge Island is used.

NATURAL AREAS

Natural Area acreage is minimally developed, contains a high density of tree canopy, and/or are largely unpaved. These areas often contain trails to facilitate experiences in nature, and may have other facilities and amenities such as interpretive signage, benches, and parking lots. These Park Lands may provide access to historic sites and breathtaking views, or be

RECREATIONAL SHORELINE

Recreational Shoreline is land along the shore that is primarily used for water, beach, and/or tideland access. These park lands may facilities such as kayak launch, dock, or other structures that facilitate water recreation.

DEVELOPED PARK LAND

This is Park Land acreage that is developed for recreational and/or cultural use. This includes sports courts and fields, playgrounds, lawns, planted areas, paved paths, and many more facilities and amenities that we associate with a classic park.

INDOOR FACILITIES

Indoor facilities provide recreation, culture, and community spaces within buildings.

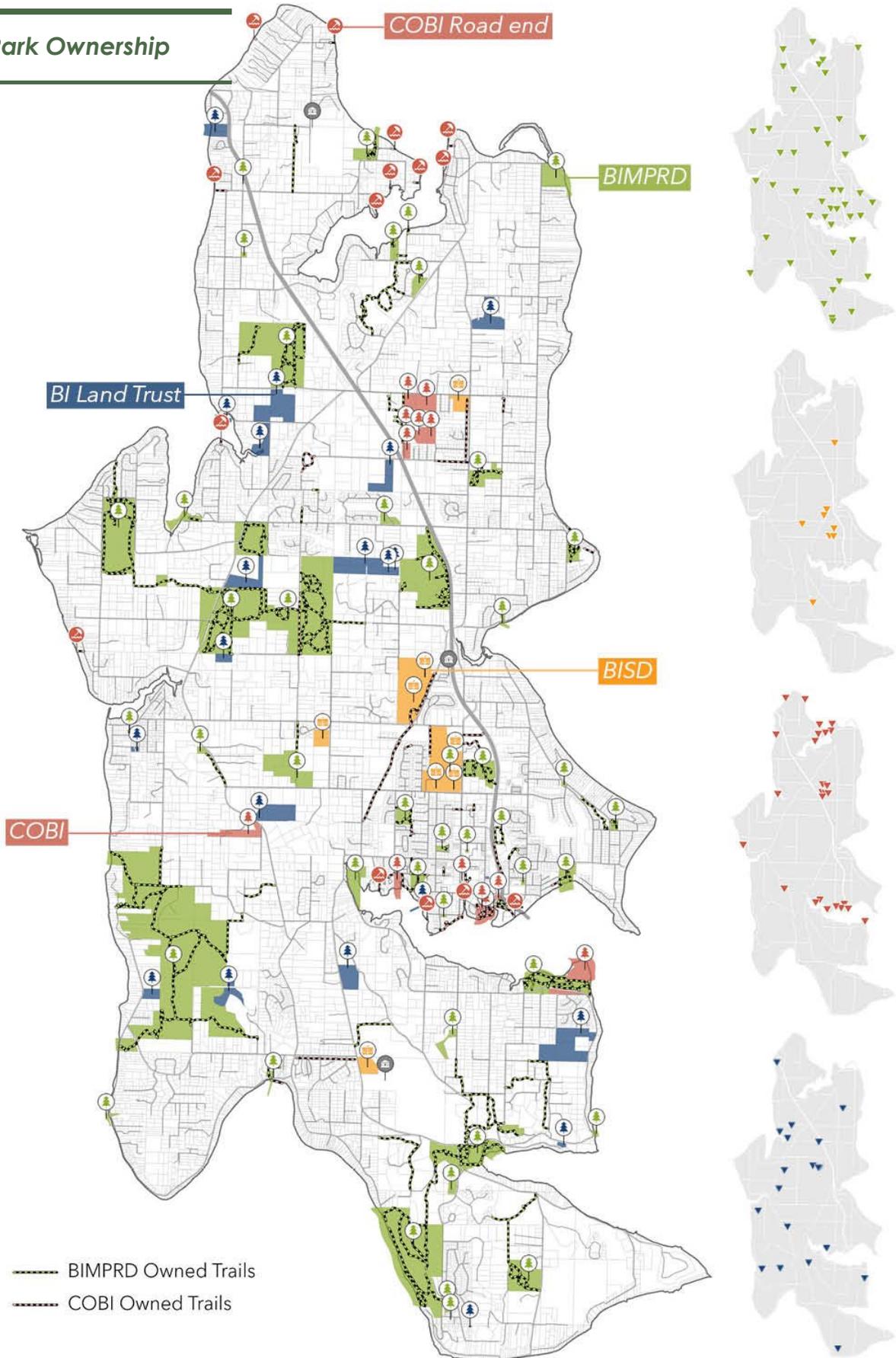
TRAILS

Recreational Trails are paved or soft-surface trails within or outside of park lands that are designed to facilitate exercise, exploration, and experiences in nature.

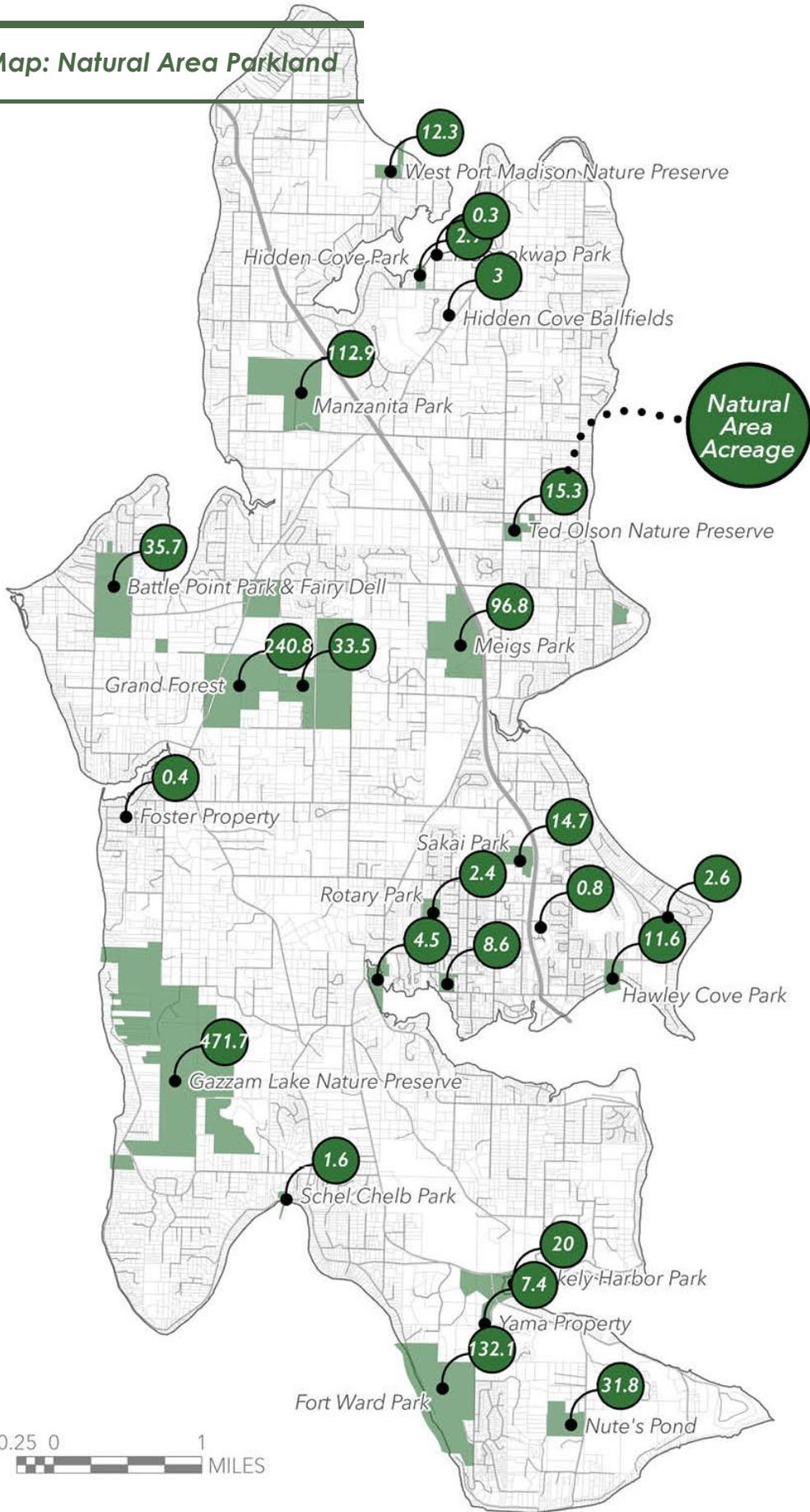
Table: Park Land Use and Ownership

Owner	Natural Areas	Recreational Shoreline	Developed Park Land	Indoor Facilities	Trails
BI Parks	1562 acres	76 acres	129 acres	49,400 ft ²	42 miles
COBI	144 acres	22 acres	5 acres	.5 ft ²	###
BISD	104 acres	0	104 acres	2 ft ²	0
BILT	535 acres	0	0	0	0
Total	2009 acres	98 acres	239 acres	49,404 ft²	42 miles

Map: Park Ownership

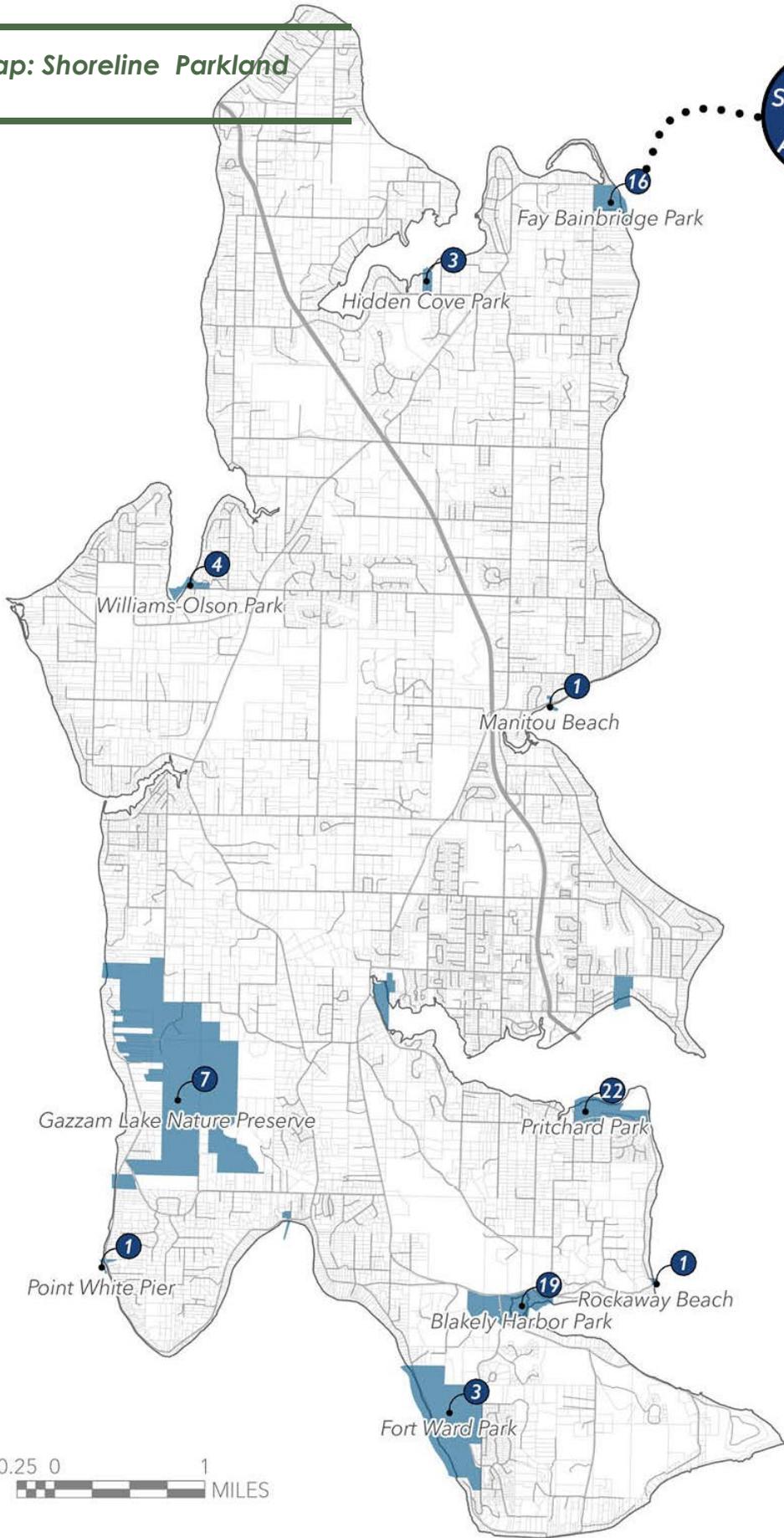


Map: Natural Area Parkland

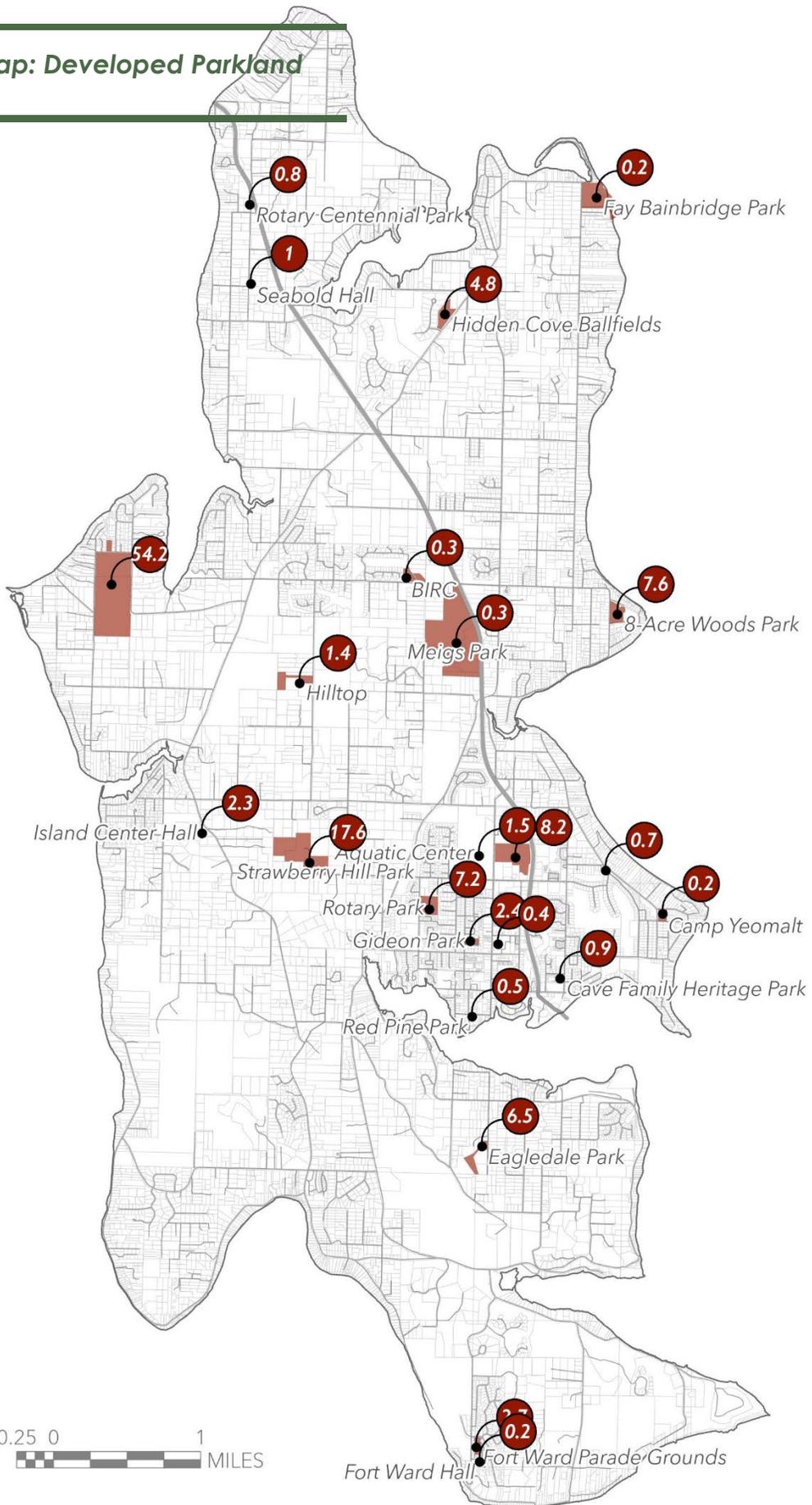


Map: Shoreline Parkland

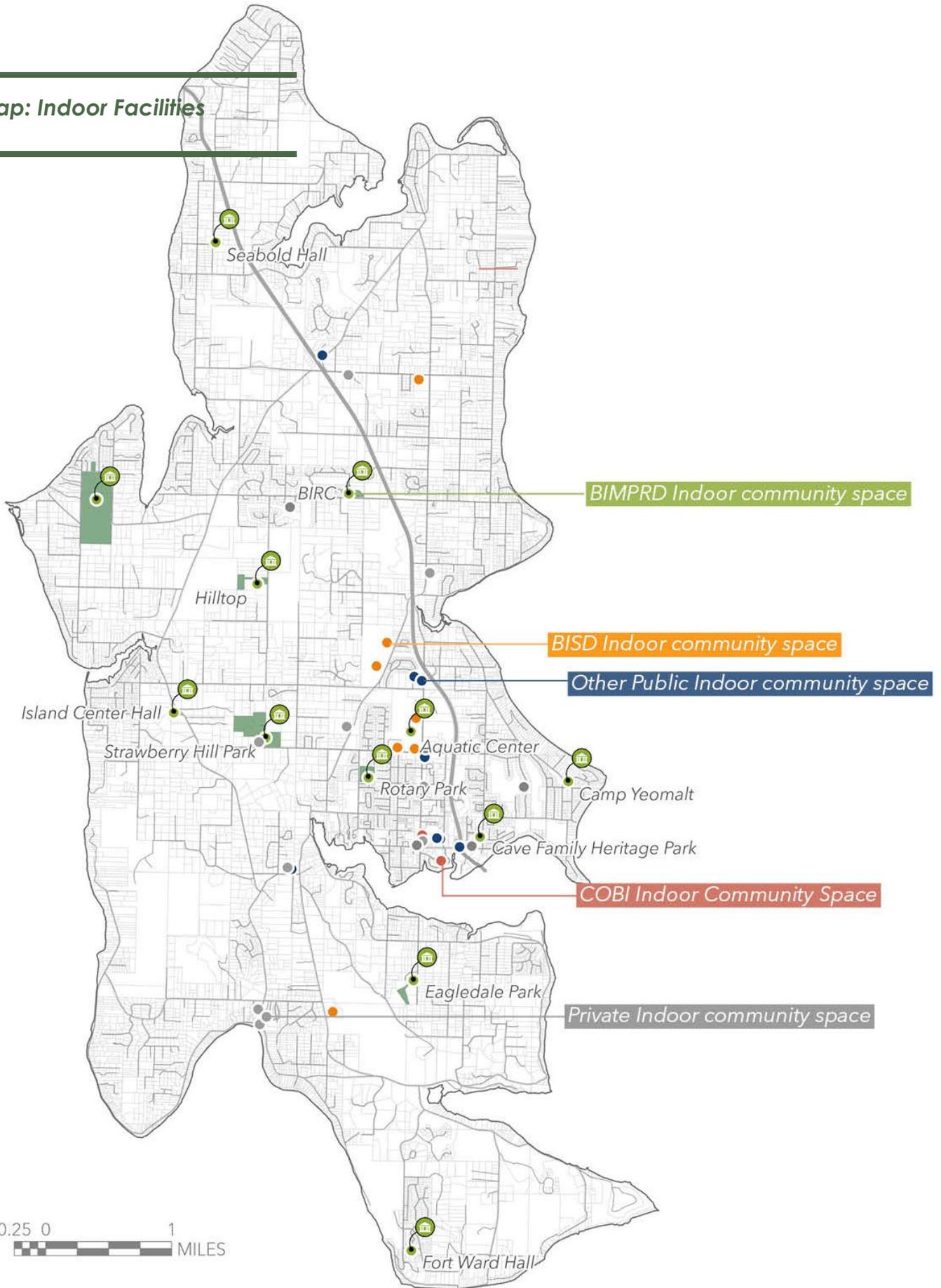
Shoreline Park Acreage



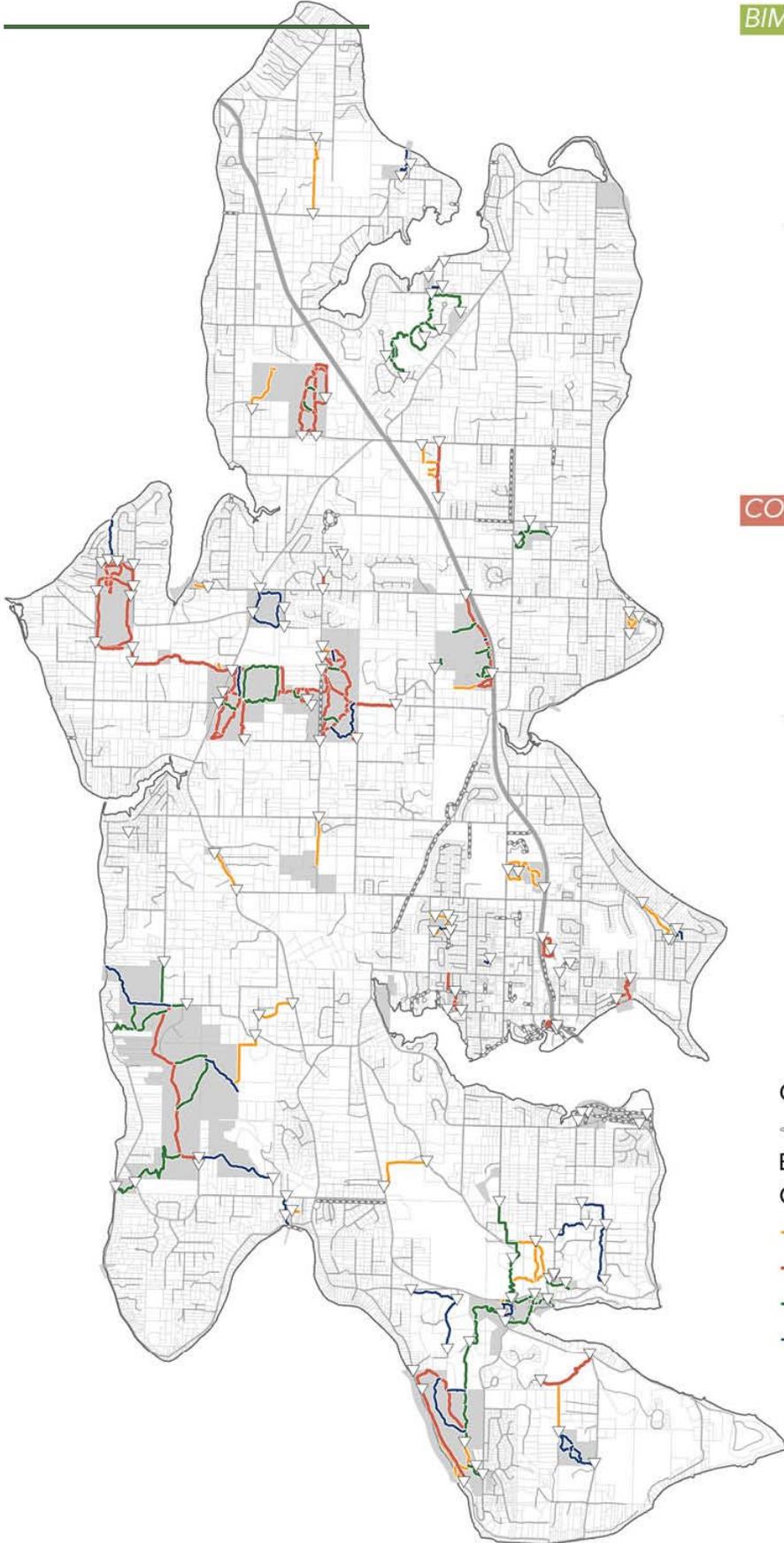
Map: Developed Parkland



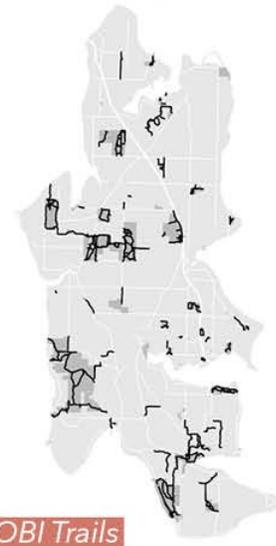
Map: Indoor Facilities



Map: Recreational Trails



BIMPRD Trails



COBI Trails



- COBI Owned Trails
- COBI Owned Trails
- BIMPRD Owned Trails
- Class
- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3



RECREATION PROGRAM AREAS

The Park District offers a myriad of unique recreational programs, from mermaid-themed swim lessons to glass fusing and sewing circles; from Snowshoeing trips to tai chi and cheer tumbling. These programs offer ways for the community to get together, learn, exercise, and be creative, utilizing the many indoor and outdoor facilities on the island and beyond.

The data in this section comes from 2023-2024. In 2024, the District offered over 2000 classes, camps, camps, meetups, and expeditions. The main types of programs are outlined below:

ADAPTIVE & SPECIALIZED RECREATION:

While all programs are open to participants with disabilities, adaptive programming is tailored to providing low-sensory environments and providing enjoyable adaptive and specialized activities. In 2024, the number of Adaptive programs increased by 42%, from 102 to 145 programs.

There are adaptive programs available for participants of all ages. Programs include:

- Swim lessons
- Pottery
- Fitness
- Skill building
- Educational and community programs.

In 2024, the District offered over 2000 classes, camps, camps, meetups, and expeditions.

AQUATICS

Aquatic programs take place at the Bainbridge Island Aquatic Center and the Bainbridge Island Recreation Center, and include the learn to swim program, recreational swimming, and water safety courses. From 2023 to 2024, Aquatics programming increased by 17%, for a total of 976 aquatics programs in 2024.

ART & ENRICHMENT:

Residents and visitors can play games, learn new skills, and spend time being creative the diverse Art & Enrichment program options, including:

- Crafts
- Drawing
- Painting
- Writing
- Pottery
- Glass staining
- Language
- Music
- STEM
- Canine classes
- After-school programs.

CAMPS:

Throughout the summer and non-school periods, the Recreation Department offers activities for youth during such as cooking, sewing, soccer, basketball, gymnastics, sailing, paddling, mountain biking, climbing, and imagination camps. These camps take place throughout the island, from the Bainbridge Island Recreation Center to Camp Yeomalt, Fort Ward Park, and Gazzam Lake Nature Preserve.

OUTDOORS:

People of all ages can enjoy the outdoors through activities such as hiking, mountain biking, kayaking, sailing, snowshoeing, fly fishing, climbing, nature and environmental education. In 2024, the Park District offered 290 classes, rides, paddles, and other adventures, increasing 54% from the year before.

Table: # of Programs 2023 & 2024

Recreation Program Area	2023	2024
Adaptive	102	145
Aquatics	832	976
Art & Enrichment	1228	902
Camps	672	676
Outdoors	188	290
Sports & Fitness	1918	1826

SPORTS & FITNESS:

In 2024, the Recreation Department offered 1826 Sports & Fitness programed, including activities such as walking and running, strength and physical conditioning, gymnastics, tennis, pickleball, softball, basketball, soccer, volleyball, sports league play, open gym, yoga and Tai Chi.

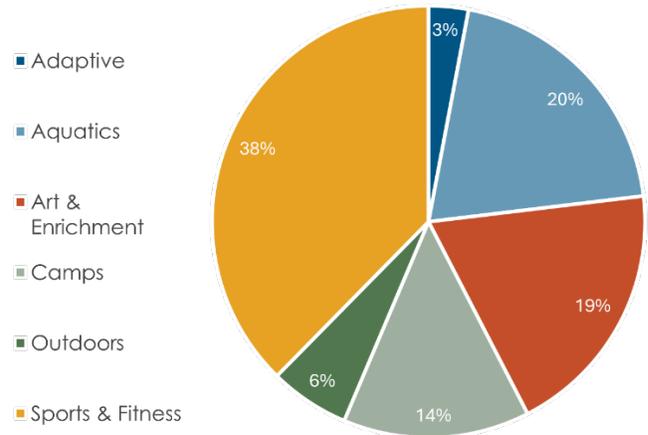


Figure 1: Program Areas

RECREATION AGE GROUPS



People of all ages can learn, exercise, and meet people by attending one of the many programs offered throughout the year. While some programs are open to both adults and children, many are tailored to varying age groups. The age brackets served by recreation programs are outlined below:

- Early Childhood, ages 0-5 years
- Youth, ages 6-12 years
- Teens, ages 13-18 years
- Adults, ages 18+
- Older adults, ages 50+

The pie chart below shows the breakdown of recreation programming by age group, with programs for youth representing 47% of offerings. Very few programs are offered

specifically for Seniors, rounding down to 0%.

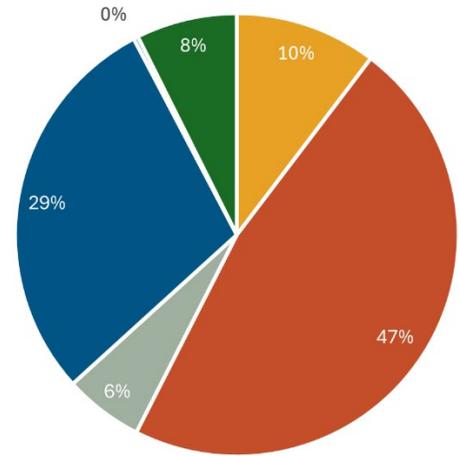


Figure 2: Program offerings by Age Group

- Early Childhood
- Youth
- Teen
- Adult
- Senior
- All Ages

SPECIAL EVENTS

A wide variety of small and large Park District special events take place annually for the Bainbridge community including volunteer appreciation events, trail and facility grand openings, tournaments, holiday celebrations, and entertainment. The four primary **large special events** all take place at Battle Point Park. An overview of these events is below:

The Park District hosts 4 large special events annually, totaling 43.5 hours of free, public programming.

HAUNTED HAYRIDE

3-day Halloween Event

- **When:** Tues-Thurs in October prior to Halloween
- **Average Attendance:** 2000
- **Event hours:** 13.5 hours total

EARTH EXPO

Spring Environmental Awareness Event

- **When:** Saturday in early May
- **Average Attendance:** 200-300
- **Event hours:** 4 hours

TERRY'S SOUNDS OF SUMMER

Annual Concert Series

- **When:** Wednesdays in July & August (8 concerts)
- **Average Attendance:** 2000-2500
- **Event hours:** 16 hours total

MOVIES IN THE PARK

Outdoor Movie Series

- **When:** Fridays in August (4-5 movies)
- **Average Attendance:** 150-200
- **Event hours:** 10 hours total



WHAT WE HEARD

ASKING THE ISLAND: HOW SHOULD THIS SYSTEM EVOLVE?

This plan document attempts to answer the question: what do Bainbridge Island residents want from their park, trails, and recreation programs, and what will it take to get there?

That means that a crucial part of this process was asking residents to weigh in on what matters most to them: how are parks, trails, and recreation enriching peoples' lives? Where are there need for maintenance or facility improvements? And which priorities are worth seeking additional funding mechanisms to achieve?

This public engagement process aimed at answering the above questions, as well as deepening relationships with the community and providing education on the roles of the Park District and its partners. The engagement methods and results are summarized on the following pages.



PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

BAINBRIDGE ISLAND METRO PARK AND RECREATION DISTRICT PARK COMPREHENSIVE PLAN SURVEY

The Bainbridge Island Metro Park & Recreation District (BIMPRD) is dedicated to fostering a healthy community through the effective and sustainable management of parks, open spaces, and the provision of diverse recreational and cultural programs for individuals of all ages. Your feedback will help guide investment in facilities, programs, and services.

1. How long have you lived in Bainbridge Island? Please enter number: years OR 3 Mark the box if less than a year

2. In which area of the island do you reside?

North Bainbridge South Bainbridge Other _____

Central Bainbridge WhiskeyCove/Deerholme Don't know

SATISFACTION WITH PARKS, FACILITIES, AND PROGRAMS

3. Overall, how satisfied are you with the quality of parks, facilities, and programs provided by BIMPRD?

	NOT AT ALL SATISFIED					VERY SATISFIED
	1	2	3	4	5	
Events, facilities, and programs that create opportunities to connect with the community. Fostering a sense of community culture by (BIA's)	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Access to open space, natural areas, and recreation	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Opportunities for recreation and exercise	<input type="checkbox"/>					

CURRENT USE

4. How often do you or members of your household visit BIMPRD parks or facilities?

	At least once a week	A few times a month	A few times a year	Rarely or never
Natural areas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Recreational facilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Recreational trails	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Playgrounds	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Athletic facilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Statistically-Valid Survey

A survey was mailed to 5000 households in May 2025. Once a statistically-valid sample had been achieved, an open link survey was made available to allow all residents to provide feedback.



Stakeholder Meetings

Two stakeholder meetings in May gave people the chance to learn about the plan, weigh in on challenges and opportunities, and play a budgeting game.



Open House

At Open House we relayed back what we heard at Stakeholder Meetings, continued to build our map of challenges and opportunities, and talked to folks about what's most important to them about parks.



Events

Throughout the summer, we attended events and let people know that they could provide survey feedback.

MAPPING ASSETS & OPPORTUNITIES

At both Stakeholder Meetings and at the Open House, we invited attendees to identify challenges and opportunities on a map of the island. They pointed out assets to maintain, opportunities for improvements, and overall spoke to where the park system is and is not meeting their needs.



The composite map on the following page summarizes these responses. Some trends include:



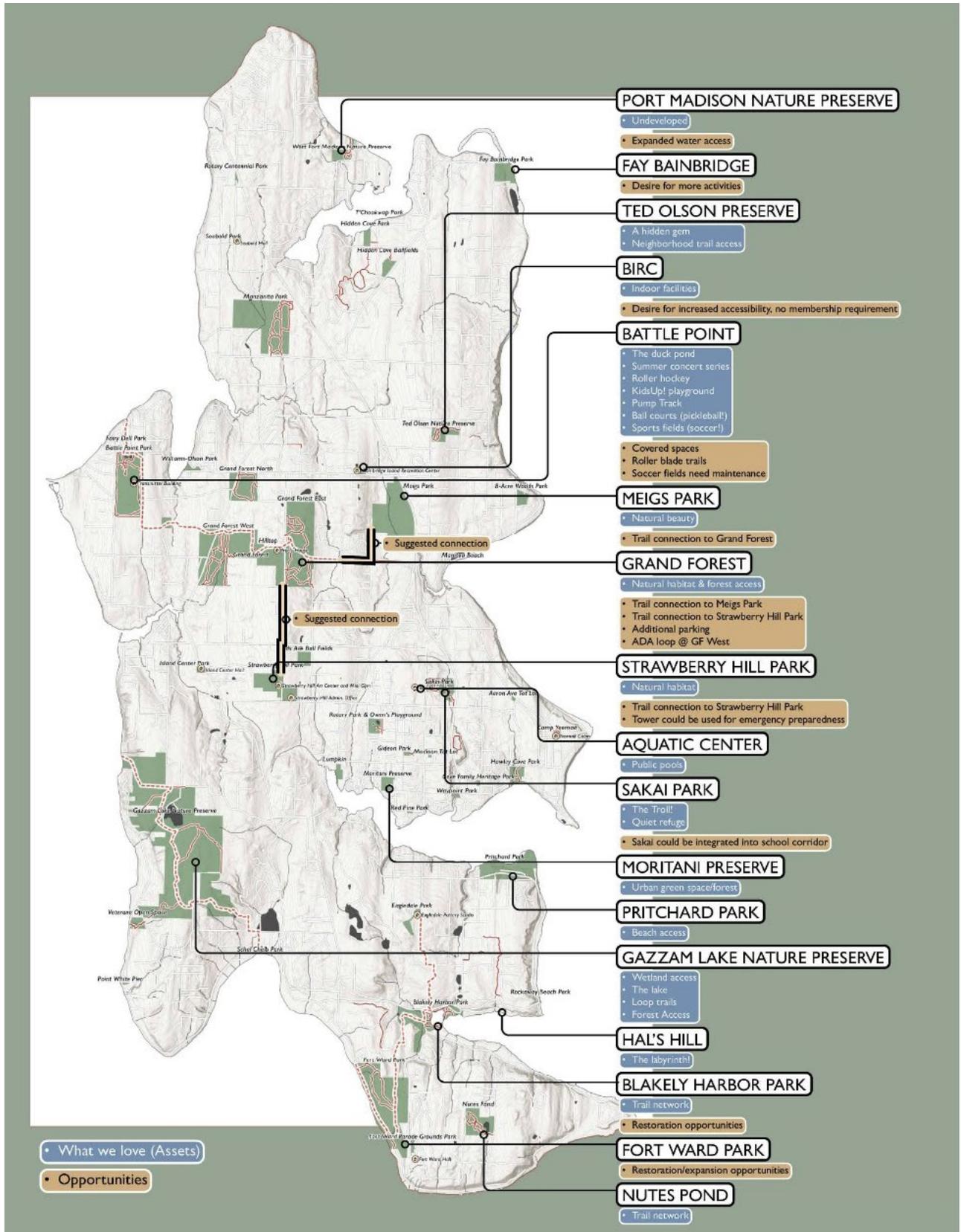
ASSETS:

- Wetland access at Gazzam Lake Nature Preserve
- Public Pools
- Roller hockey, KidsUp! Playground, and the pump track at Battle Point Park.
- Ted Olson preserve (a hidden gem!)

OPPORTUNITIES:

- More trail connections and formalized access into neighborhoods
- Additional access to docks and boat launches for fishing and swimming.
- Acquisition of shoreline land and use of undevelopable land as pocket parks

Assets & Opportunities Summary Map



UNDERSTANDING THE BUDGET

AT THE MAY STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS...

We played a game based on the Park District budget. In the game, participants tried to maintain operations and current levels of maintenance using the limited money they were given. To get more money for Capital Projects, players rolled a dice to try for funding from levies and grants, emulating the reality that for the Park District to complete additional projects, it must secure additional funding.

WHAT WE LEARNED:

- The Park District budget of around \$14 million goes mostly to maintaining the many parks, facilities and programs that Bainbridge Island residents enjoy.
- Fees for recreation programs and use of indoor facilities help offset the cost of running them, but don't quite cover the costs.
- Much of the Capital Projects budget is slated to go towards renovating existing facilities to keep them in good shape for continued use.
- In order to build new facilities or acquire new land, the District will need additional funds. These funds could come from bond initiatives, additional property taxes, grants, or fundraising by partner organizations.



WHERE DOES THE PARK DISTRICT BUDGET GO?

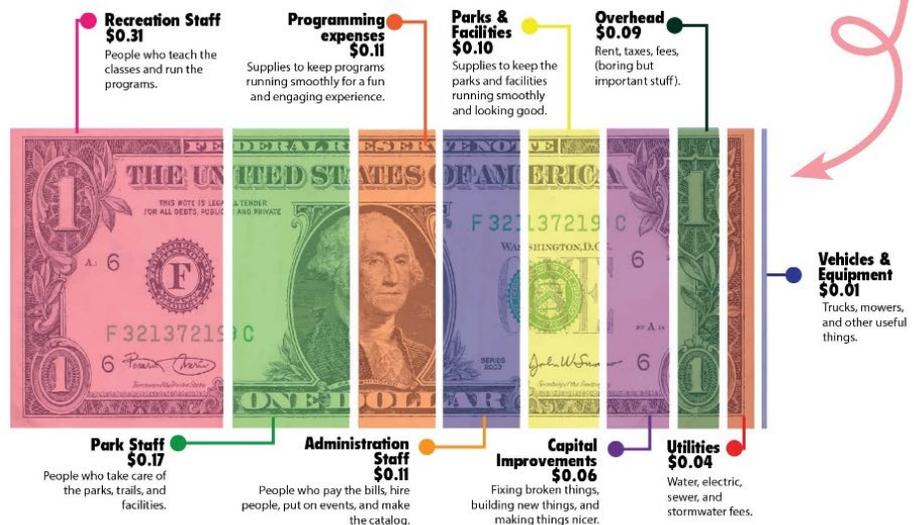
The graphic below shows the breakdown of how the Park District spends its budget, represented as a proportion of \$1.

PARK BUDGET 101

Capital Projects are capital-intensive initiatives aimed at purchasing, constructing, expanding, or improving assets like trails, buildings, ballfields, playgrounds etc. Capital projects differ from maintenance or operating projects due to their scale, cost, complexity, and longevity.

Bond initiative: Citizens vote to temporarily raise property taxes to fund a specific public project.

Property Tax Levy: Annual taxes levied on all property on BI based on the property value.



PARKS, TRAILS & RECREATION SURVEY

Part of this engagement effort entailed a survey to ask residents about their experiences, hopes, and priorities for parks, trails, and recreation.

STATISTICALLY-VALID SURVEY

To encourage responses from a representative sample of the island, a statistically-valid survey was sent to 5000 households. These households, chosen at random, were invited to use the QR code on their postcard to access a password-protected survey.

OPEN LINK SURVEY

To give all residents a chance to provide their feedback in the survey, an open survey was made available. Using that link, anyone could access and fill out the survey. These open link results were kept separate to preserve the results of the statistically-valid survey. Comparing differing results from these two survey pools also provides insight into user demographics and needs.

ANALYSIS

Survey results were analyzed and summarized by consultant RRC Associates using the following process:

- The demographic profile of the invite sample is compared to known statistics of Bainbridge Island residents using 2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates provided by the US Census Department.
- Underlying data from the invitation survey is weighted by the age, gender, housing tenure (own/rent), and household makeup (presence of children).

The weighting process changes the results only slightly but ultimately makes the results more accurate and representative of the population

Table: Survey responses

	<i>Statistically-Valid</i>	<i>Open Link</i>	Total
Surveys Completed	389	878	1,267

KEY FINDINGS

Two samples were collected in the survey effort—the statistically valid Invite sample and the Open link sample—both of which had strong response rates. The Invite is representative of the whole population of Bainbridge Island, including parks and recreation users and non-users; therefore, the Invite sample is considered more reliable. Respondents from the Open link survey are more represented by families and frequent users. Together, both samples provide an excellent source of input on topics addressed throughout the survey.

Satisfaction with services, facilities, and natural areas is consistently high.

Satisfaction is strong across all categories, with Invite respondents generally rating higher. “Opportunities for recreation and exercise” and “accessible natural areas and shoreline” top the list, while “resources for community needs and programming” ranks lowest, especially in the Open link sample.

Natural areas, trails, and shoreline access are the community’s highest priorities. These amenities are rated as the most important, with most needs being met. Shoreline access, however, rated higher in importance than meeting the needs of the community, indicating some room for improvement.

Nature-based and fitness activities are the most common uses of parks. Access to natural areas and personal fitness are the top reasons for visiting parks. Other common activities include dog walking, walking/running, and shoreline access—highlighting the importance of nature preservation and active recreation.



Expanding trails and improving amenities are the top ways to encourage park use. More trail miles and improved trail amenities are the top ways to encourage park use, followed by shade, restrooms, and maintenance.

There is strong engagement in Park District programs. Participation rates are notably higher in the Open link sample (67%) compared to the Invite sample (43%). Respondents most frequently cited cost, program convenience, and the quality of instructors as key factors influencing their decision to participate.

The community’s goals center on health, environmental stewardship, and equity. Both samples share the same top goals: active lifestyles, environmental protection, affordability, sustainability, and accessibility.



Residents show strong support for sustainability and environmental stewardship efforts. Across both samples, there is clear prioritization of sustainability initiatives, with proactive forest management and wildfire mitigation ranking as the highest environmental priorities. Other widely supported actions include waste reduction, resource conservation, and shoreline protection— demonstrating the community's commitment to long-term ecological health.

Trails are the top funding priority for residents. Both samples direct the most hypothetical funding to trails, followed

by parkland acquisition and shoreline access. Open link respondents allocate more to sports courts, splash pads, gym space, and athletic fields. Bond referendums are the most supported funding method.

Email is the preferred method for District communication. Most respondents rate Park District communication positively. The recreation guide is the most used source, but email/newsletters are the most preferred, showing strong alignment with current outreach methods.

Top Priorities:

- Maintain existing land, facilities, and programs
- Increase trail connections
- Steward existing natural areas
- Improve access to recreational shoreline

WHAT WE NEED

MEASURING WHAT PARK LAND, TRAILS, AND FACILITIES PROVIDE

A Level of Service (LOS) describes the “minimum capacity of public facilities or services that must be provided per unit of demand” (WAC 365-196-210(21)). A transportation LOS, for example, describes the capacity of a given roadway to carry a number of vehicles. School systems may have a Level of Service described as number of students per classroom. When demand increases, for example when a population grows, facilities or services must also increase in order to maintain the same level of service.

There are many ways of measuring the level of service provided by a park and recreation system, and some methods date back to over a century ago. A brief history:

- **1914:** Landscape architect Charles Downing Lay recommends 15 acres of park land per 1000 residents. Using this system, a jurisdiction would need to add park land to maintain the LOS as their population grew.
- **1983:** NRPA publishes their own set of standards and guidelines, maintaining the same framework but recommending 6.25 to 10.5 acres of park land per 1,000 residents.
- **2019:** NRPA revokes their standard, citing the need for individualized metrics that take into consideration local demographics and resources.

In summary: there is no standard method for measuring parks LOS. Many jurisdictions continue to use “acres per 1000 residents,” a simple calculation that encourages jurisdictions to set aside public land as their populations grow. Eventually, however, options for new acquisition will be scarce, and it will no longer be possible to maintain the established LOS.



Other per capita measurements can indicate how facilities are spread across a population. For example, the BI Parks 2020 Comp Plan (2020 Comp Plan) indicates that there were 11 playgrounds for a ratio of .43 playgrounds per 1000 people. This can help to indicate when new facilities may be needed to accommodate growing populations, but does not indicate their quality or how well they can be accessed by the community.

Now, park planners utilize a myriad of approaches to describe future park and recreation demands. Some approaches involve creating scoring matrices that indicate how well individual parks are performing. Others use capital spending to track park investments year by year and per capita. The right approach depends on the specific needs and goals of the community.

RECREATION AND CONSERVATION OFFICE (RCO) GUIDELINES

The RCO's Manual 2: Planning Guidelines states: "RCO recommends, but does not require, determination of a level of service for park and recreation planning, including trails." For jurisdictions that choose to adopt a LOS standard, RCO recommends that it uses indicators in the following three categories (each with measurable elements):

- **Quantity Criteria:** *i.e., number of facilities*
- **Quality Criteria:** *i.e., public satisfaction and facility function.*
- **Distribution and Access Criteria:** *i.e., population served and accessibility*

MEASURING LOS ON BAINBRIDGE ISLAND

The following criteria guide the discussion of how best to measure parks and recreation LOS on Bainbridge Island.

REFLECT PUBLIC INPUT

The LOS metric should reflect what is most important to Bainbridge Island residents. Feedback collected through the parks survey, stakeholder meetings, and other events should directly inform how the LOS is measured and what standards are adopted.

CREATE A REALISTIC METRIC FOR MEASURING ONGOING LOS

BI Parks has spent the past 20 years acquiring land, developing parks and trails, and adding recreation programs that provide enrichment for Bainbridge Island residents and visitors. The majority of the available budget now goes to maintaining these assets and running these programs. With a limited budget, it is important that the LOS does not outline a need for growth that BI Parks and its partners will be unable to afford. Instead, this LOS should be achievable and reflect what is truly needed.

CREATE A TOOL THAT IS EASY TO UNDERSTAND AND UPDATE FOR FUTURE PLANNING CYCLES

There is a balance to strike between using a fine grain tool that most accurately reflects community needs and using a tool that can be easily updated and understood. The goal is that BI Parks staff can update the LOS during future planning cycles without the assistance of a consultant.

CREATE A METRIC THAT REFLECTS THE ASSETS OF BI PARKS AND PARTNERS

BI Parks is the primary provider of parks and recreation on Bainbridge Island, but City-owned parks, school facilities, and land preserved by the Bainbridge Island Land Trust are also part of the system. By incorporating these lands and facilities into the LOS, the metric will better reflect what Bainbridge Island residents have access to.

This plan uses a three-pronged approach to measure Level of Service. Focusing on the RCO's guidance as well as the criteria outlined above, we have designed a tool that quantifies the services provided by Bainbridge Island parks, trails, and facilities using a 5-point scale. Below, we outline our methods for measuring park Quantity, Quality, and Access.

Q U A N T I T Y

Typical metrics of acres of park land per 1000 residents measure quantity. It tells us how much of a city's land is allocated to parks and open space, and how that relates to the number of people living there. As a population grows, the park land per capita decreases, guiding a city towards acquiring new land to maintain an adopted per capita standard. Because cities have a finite amount of land, an adopted acres/1000 LOS standard eventually becomes infeasible to maintain if a population continues to grow.

Rather than omitting a quantity metric from an assessment of BI Parks, this plan uses a peer cities comparison to frame our understanding of park, trail, and facilities on Bainbridge Island. Rather than choosing a number of park land acres that should be maintained for every 1000 residents, we look at cities with similar demographics to Bainbridge Island to assess how our system compares. By choosing four peer cities, we can yield 1-5 scores based on how Bainbridge Island compares across **Natural Areas**, **Developed Parks**, **Indoor Facilities**, and **Trails**. Because **Recreational Shoreline** is a unique aspect of our island condition, this is omitted from our peer city comparison.

B A I N B R I D G E I S L A N D ' S P E E R C I T I E S

In many respects, Bainbridge Island is both geographically and demographically unique. Choosing the right peers to benchmark parks and recreation offerings is thus challenging. However, finding peers that have similar revenue generating potential, age distribution, and ability to access amenities beyond their borders is helpful in assessing the performance of the Parks District. Informed by our review of peer cities, the parks district has several key challenges and strengths:

Age distribution: the Island has two large age cohorts, those over 50 and those under 18 (the former is significantly larger). These two groups have substantially different recreation preferences and needs.

Geographic isolation: unlike communities clustered around Seattle and Bellevue, island communities must be more recreationally self-sufficient. This is particularly challenging for large-scale facilities designed to serve a regional audience – for example, Olympic-sized pools or indoor tracks. An Eastside community for instance, might provide one regional facility and rely on its neighbors to fill other specialized facility gaps.

Relatively low land value: compared to its peers near Seattle, Bainbridge Island has relatively low land value on a per acre basis. Normalizing land value by area helps us to see beyond the high cost of individual properties, to look at the revenue generating potential of different municipalities, as well as the expense of acquiring large tracts of land. For communities like Mercer Island that have more than four times the population density of Bainbridge Island, a million-dollar home sits on a much smaller parcel. This would tend to push a community like Mercer towards active recreation facilities that maximize a small amount of space rather than investing in sprawling natural areas. Bainbridge Island has a unique combination of lower land values and a relatively affluent community, which has helped the District to hit far above its weight both in terms of active recreation facilities and open space acquisition.

Lower Density: Compared to peers close to Seattle, Island residents are significantly more spread out. If your municipality's area is a square quarter mile and you only have one park, every resident is within walking distance of that park. In Bainbridge's case, providing walkable park access to all residents is more challenging, particularly given the limitations of the island's road network.

Peer selection: No community is demographically and geographically identical to Bainbridge Island. Peers were selected based on a combination of factors. Median household income and total population provided the initial pool of comparators. Population density, parks and recreation administrative body, community age distribution, and geographic isolation influenced final selection. Median household income and total population were prioritized because they strongly influence type, quality, and quantity of parks and facilities.

Below is the initial list of peer cities. From this list, we selected **Mercer Island, Issaquah, Kenmore, and PenMet** (The metropolitan parks district for Gig Harbor and its neighbors).

Table: Peer City Analysis

City	Population	Median Income	Population Density*	Median Age
Bainbridge Island	24,254	159,882	904	51.6
Mercer Island	24,742	202,359	4,024.70	45.3
PenMet	51,426	\$145,437	1,093.90	47.4
Kenmore	23,391	137,926	3,956.00	40.1
Issaquah	38,977	153,786	3,429.00	38.9
High Bridge	3,147	160,938	459.6	45.6
Newcastle	12,761	162,646	3,082.90	39.5
Lake Forest Park	13,006	158,868	3,854.20	44.2
Woodinville	13,450	158,723	2,498.80	39.7
Eastmont	23,486	139,346	4,784.80	39.3
North Lynnwood	23,653	102,888	7,762.10	35.6
Mill Creek East	25,461	183,466	5,739.10	36.4
Oak Harbor	24,016	43,982	2,616.90	33.1
Frederickson	24,219	53,413	2,338.30	34.3
Moses Lake	26,299	71,115	1,495.80	34.5
Tumwater	27,239	93,635	1,588.00	39.1
Camas	27,254	140,053	2,130.50	34.5
Redmond	80,280	162,099	4,935.30	35.3
Bellevue	151,574	161,300	4,676.80	38.4

ISSAQUAH

Population**

41,592↑

24,963

Median Household Income**

\$170,507↑

\$163,959

Population Density

Residents/square mile

3,429↑

904

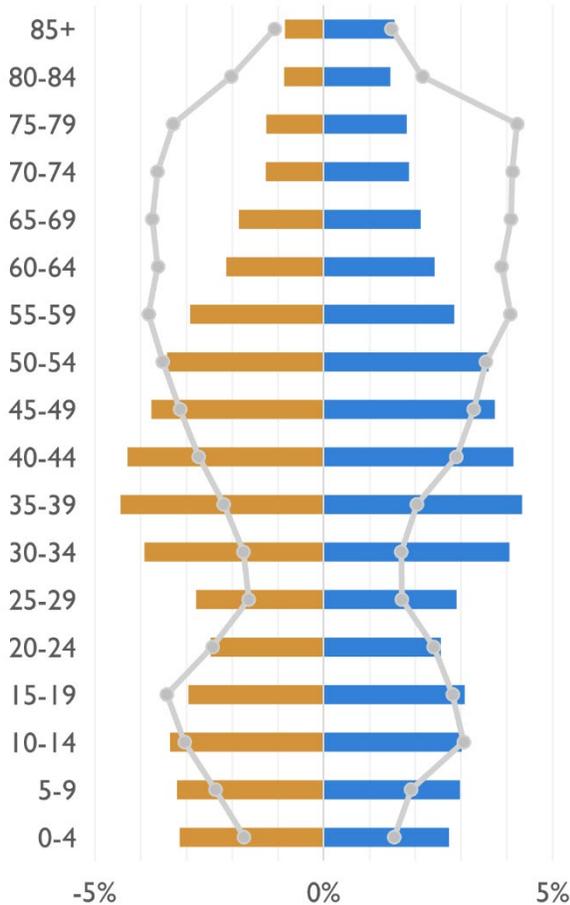
Median home value**

\$1,249,407↑

\$1,125,533

5-year Age cohorts**

MALE | FEMALE | BI



Child Dependency Ratio*

35.5↑

33.7



Senior Dependency Ratio*

23.6↓

56.7



Similar to Bainbridge Island, Issaquah sits on the urban fringe. However, I-90 runs through the community, making the city a regional hub. Issaquah's impressive trail and open space system, which includes several regional hikes, serves a high-volume of users.

Issaquah's population is significantly younger than Bainbridge Islands', however, nature-oriented recreation opportunities are also at the heart of the city's recreational offerings. The City does have several large facilities, including a public pool, community center with gymnasium, and Central Park hosts an impressive sports field facility with six full-sized fields.

Unlike Bainbridge, Issaquah's parks and recreation department is housed within the city's government. Consequently, the comparison of active recreation facilities found at the end of this section reflects all City-owned offerings.

**2025 population estimates (Esri)

Median Age**

38.9↓

51.6

*Age Dependency Ratio (ADR) is a measure of the nonworking-age population relative to the population of working age that serves as a useful indicator of an area's age structure. This measure is used to express the relationship between three age groups in a population: under 18, 18 to 64, and 65 and older. Dependent populations are defined as children under 18 years of age and seniors aged 65 and older. For this measure, the population aged 18 to 64 is considered the working-age population.

MERCER ISLAND

Population

25,688 ↑

24,963

Median Household Income

\$228,003 ↑

\$163,959

Population Density *Residents/square mile*

3,429 ↑

904

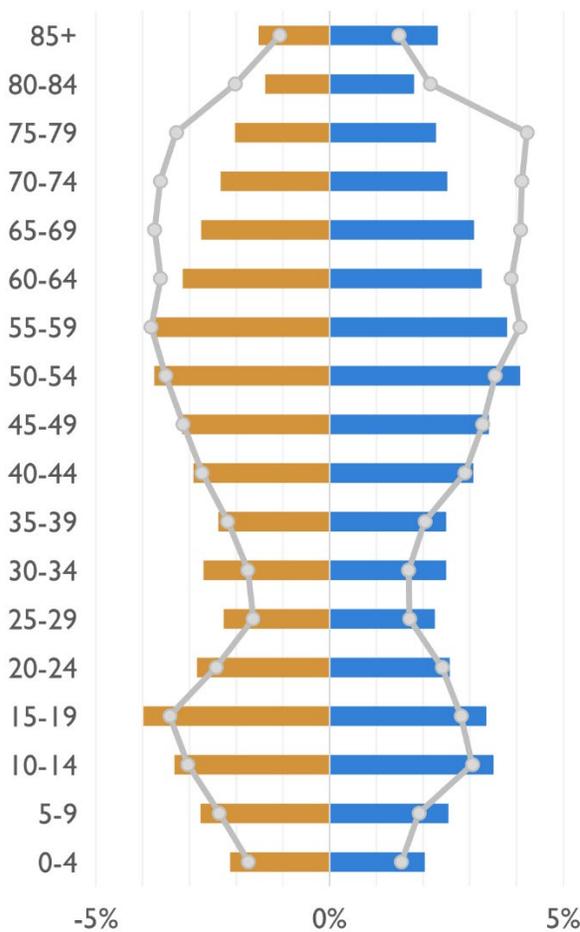
Median home value

\$1,249,407 ↑

\$1,125,533

5-year Age cohorts

MALE | FEMALE | BI



Child Dependency Ratio*

37.0 ↑

33.7



Senior Dependency Ratio*

38.7 ↓

56.7



In terms of total population and home value, Mercer Island is Bainbridge's closest island peer. However, with I-90 running through the community, Mercer does not require the same level of self-sufficiency as Bainbridge Island.

The Mercer Island Parks Department relies heavily on its local school district to provide active recreation facilities, including the Island's only public pool – a 6 lane, 25-meter pool similar in age and size to the District's Ray Williamson Pool.

The City's multi-use community center includes around 12,000 SF of active recreation space including gymnasium and fitness room. BIRC by comparison, 58,000 SF.

Median Age

45.3 ↓

51.6

2025 population estimates (Esri)

KENMORE

Population

24,346 ↓
24,963

Median Household Income

\$163,185 ↓
\$163,959

Population Density
Residents/square mile

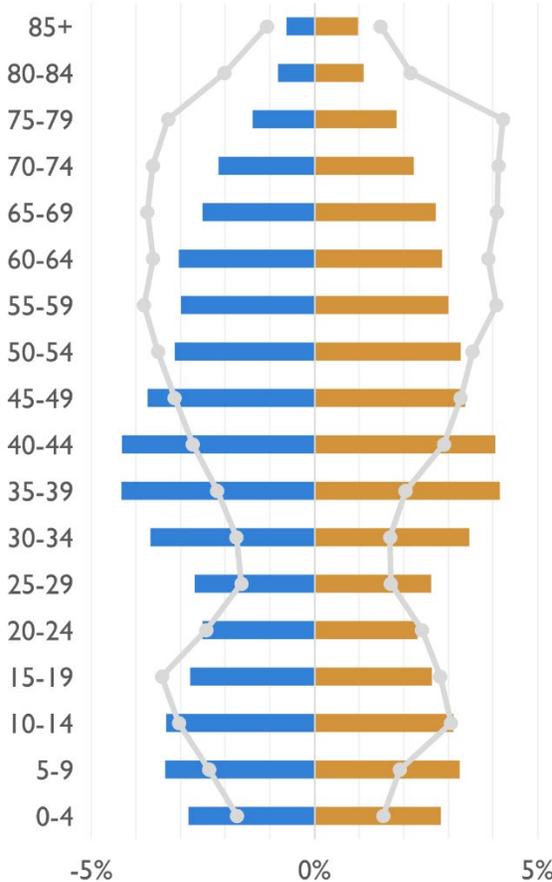
3,956 ↑
904

Median home value

\$944,841 ↓
\$1,125,533

5-year Age cohorts

MALE | FEMALE | BI



Child Dependency Ratio*

35.9 ↑
33.7



Senior Dependency Ratio*

26.6 ↓
56.7



Kenmore is the most similar to Bainbridge Island in terms of median household income and population, however the City has significantly fewer recreation facilities and parks.

The City has capitalized on its Lake Washington location with lake-front and Burke Gilman multi-use path-served Log Boom Park.

Kenmore residents can commute to neighboring cities to access larger scale recreation facilities.

Median Age

40.1 ↓
51.6

2025 population estimates (Esri)

PENMET

Population

52,154 ↑

24,963

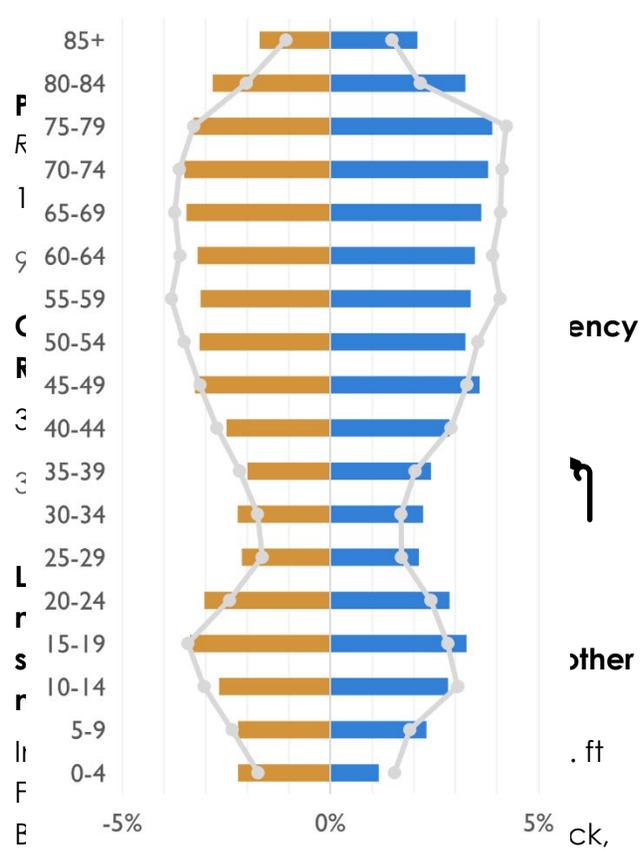
Median Household Income

\$145,437 ↓

\$163,959

5-year Age cohorts

MALE | FEMALE | BI



isolated from
increasing p

Median Age
17.1
51.8

Penmet serves around twice as many residents as Bainbridge Park's District, but is demographically similar, and is similarly

2025 population estimates (Esri)

LOS: QUANTITY

To determine quantities of natural areas, developed park land, indoor facilities, and trails, we referenced the most recent PROS Plan document for each peer jurisdiction. From these documents, we extrapolated numbers for:

- Acres of natural areas/open space
- Acres of developed park land
- Square feet of indoor recreation/community facilities
- Miles of recreational trails

In order to normalize data across jurisdictions as much as possible, we count only properties and facilities within the park department system. This means exclude state parks, private recreation facilities, and conservation easements held by partner organizations. Below, per capita measurements are listed for each jurisdiction.

Table: Peer City Benchmarking

Jurisdiction	Natural Areas <i>(acres/1000)</i>	Developed Park Land <i>(acres/1000)</i>	Indoor Facilities <i>(ff²/1000)</i>	Trails <i>(miles/1000)</i>
BI Parks	53.1	16.2	1940	1.65
Kenmore¹	5.13	1.11	0	0.16
Mercer Island²	11.6	7.88	469	1.13
Issaquah³	38.8	6.58	807	1.08
PenMet	4.55	9.66	1430	0.50

1. Kenmore 2020 PROS plan, page 25 states: "Of the 146 total acres of city-owned park land, 120 acres are natural area." This report thus calculates 26 acres of developed park land.

2. Mercer Island 2022 PROS Plan, page 32 states that "Mercer Island provides 481 acres of parkland...Open space totals just under 286 acres," for a deduced total of 195 developed acres.

3. Issaquah 2024 PROS Plan, page 24 lists 261 acres of Park and 1537 acres of Open Space.

4. PenMet PROS 2023 Plan, page 37 lists park types and acres. There are 391 acres of Regional Park, Neighborhood Park, Special Use Park, and Trail Corridor, and 96.05 acres of Undeveloped Sites, Water Access, and Open Space.

Table: LOS Quantity Scores

Natural Areas (acres/1000)	Developed Park Land (acres/1000)	Indoor Facilities (ft ² /1000)	Trails (miles/1000)
5	5	5	5

Comparing the figures from the Peer City Benchmarking table, we awarded a 1-5 score based on ranking, with 5 being the highest ranking and 1 being the lowest ranking. As the table above shows, Bainbridge Island ranks the highest in all categories. This shows that compared to its peers, Bainbridge Island residents have more acres of Natural Areas, Developed Park Land, Indoor Facilities, and Trails per capita.

WHAT DOES THIS TELL US?

The way other cities invest in their parks, preserve open space, or build trails does not dictate what Bainbridge Island residents desire and are willing to invest in. And while peer cities were chosen based on comparable population sizes and median incomes, the context of each city is unique. Benchmarking is thus not a standalone tool for guiding decision making, but a point of reference that tells a story about what the Bainbridge Island park system provides.

Consider Natural Areas: currently BI Parks owns and manages 53.1 acres of land for every 1000 residents. Lowest on the list, Kenmore and PenMet both provide around 5 acres per 1000 residents. The next highest peer city is Issaquah, providing 38.8. (It's worth noting here that Issaquah residents have access to many acres of State Park land that are not reflected in this figure, and that the BI Parks figure omits the 535 acres owned by the Bainbridge Island Trust.) The wealth of Natural Areas acreage on Bainbridge Island aligns with the survey feedback: Natural Areas are very important to residents, and they are largely satisfied with current facilities.

Mercer Island is the next highest peer when it comes to trails, providing 1.08 compared to Bainbridge Island's 1.65. Something to consider is how the difference in size (at 27 square miles, Bainbridge is nearly twice the size of Mercer) impacts how much of each city the trail systems provide access to. Survey feedback shows that trails are very important to Bainbridge Island residents, and that while 85% report that trail meet their needs, 60% report that additional trail miles or amenities would increase their park usage.

As populations in peer cities change and new facilities are developed, the way Bainbridge Island compares to its peer cities may change, and these numbers can be updated as new documents are adopted. For this point-in-time assessment, we deduce that park, trail, and indoor facility quantity on Bainbridge Island is excellent.

LOS: QUALITY

When people are asked what they want from their park system, their answer is often that they want more sports fields, upgraded playgrounds, more maintenance, or amenities like public art or signage. These aspects of quality are not reflected in the quantity scores, which focus on the volume of land and assets. Evaluating the quality of the park system is thus an important piece of the Level of Service puzzle, and one that tells us more about how people are able to use parks and facilities, and what condition they are in.

There are many ways to evaluate quality, from calculating per capita figures for key facilities such as tennis courts and playgrounds, using survey responses to establish public satisfaction, or evaluating park maintenance levels. For this assessment, we are using a staff assessment of how well parks, trails, and indoor facilities are meeting their intent based on the number and condition of their facilities and amenities.

QUALITY ASSESSMENT

This assessment aims to provide an understanding of park performance through the eyes of those who best understand their intents and functions. It is similar to the GRASP® assessment, a proprietary tool that uses a 1-3 score of park land, facilities, and amenities. In this system, BI Parks staff provide a 1-5 rating for the natural areas, recreational shoreline, developed park acres, indoor facilities, and trails within the BI Park system. The following rubric guides the assessment of these areas:

Not in Use 1	These are park lands that lack the facilities needed in order for them to serve their intended uses. This could be land slated for Neighborhood Park development that is currently inaccessible, or land meant as Natural Area that requires significant remediation.
Underperforming 2	These are parks that lack some needed facilities or amenities, or whose facilities or amenities are in need of repairs or maintenance. For Natural Areas, this could pertain to parks that have a high need for habitat restoration, or those that lack the trails needed to provide adequate access. For a Neighborhood Park, this could mean one whose playground is in need of replacement.
Meeting Expectations 3	These are parks that have the facilities and amenities to serve their intended use, and these facilities and amenities are in working order.
Exceeding Expectations 4	These are parks that have new, ample, bespoke, or otherwise exceptional facilities in working order.
Above & Beyond 5	These parks are resident and visitor favorites because they have outstanding facilities, ample amenities, well-maintained trails, art or historic elements, and/or provide access to local natural wonders

Using the above rubric, BI Park staff evaluated existing facilities, providing scores for the 5 Park Land Use Categories. Averages for each Park Land Use Category provide the quality scores below.

Table: LOS Quality Scores

Natural Areas	Recreational Shoreline	Developed Park Land	Indoor Facilities	Trails
2.47	2.84	3.07	2.92	2.77

WHAT DOES THIS TELL US?

All Park Land Use Categories hover above or below 3, showing that overall, parks, trails, and facilities are serving their intended function. In the RCO Manual, 80% of facilities meeting their intended function is an A grade. In our interpretation, this shows that while park lands are more or less meeting their intended function, there is room to improve.

Natural Areas show the lowest score of 2.47, which reflects needs for invasive plant removal, reduction of fire risk, and overall improvement of forest health. Other improvements could include the addition of wayfinding or interpretive signage, benches, or overlooks.

For Trails, increasing the score from 2.77 could entail additional trail maintenance, ensuring that all trails are functioning appropriately based on their classification. The addition of trail connections would also raise the score, creating options for longer continuous hikes, and more opportunities to connect to other parks, trails, and neighborhoods using recreational trails. Accessibility improvements were also considering in this assessment, as we the presence of amenities such as benches and wayfinding signage.

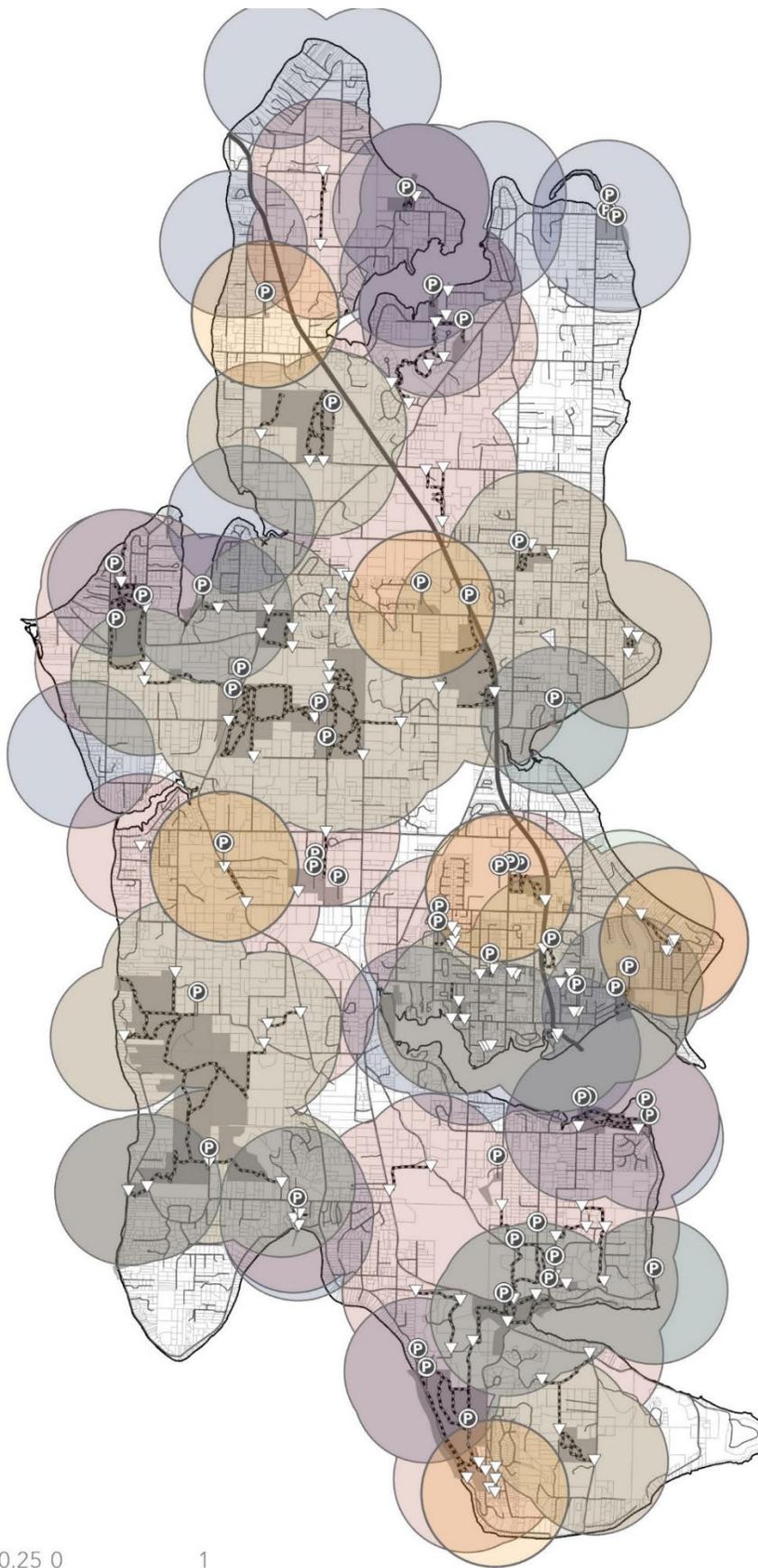
For Recreational Shoreline, improving the score could mean adding kayak launches, docks, or other structures that facilitate the use of the water. It could also mean adding parking lots, bathrooms, or campsites.

Overall, parks, trails, and facilities are meeting their intended function. We recommend setting a LOS standard of 3 for each Park Land Use, while striving to increase scores through habitat restoration, upgrades to existing facilities, and the addition of new facilities and amenities when possible.

LOS : ACCESS

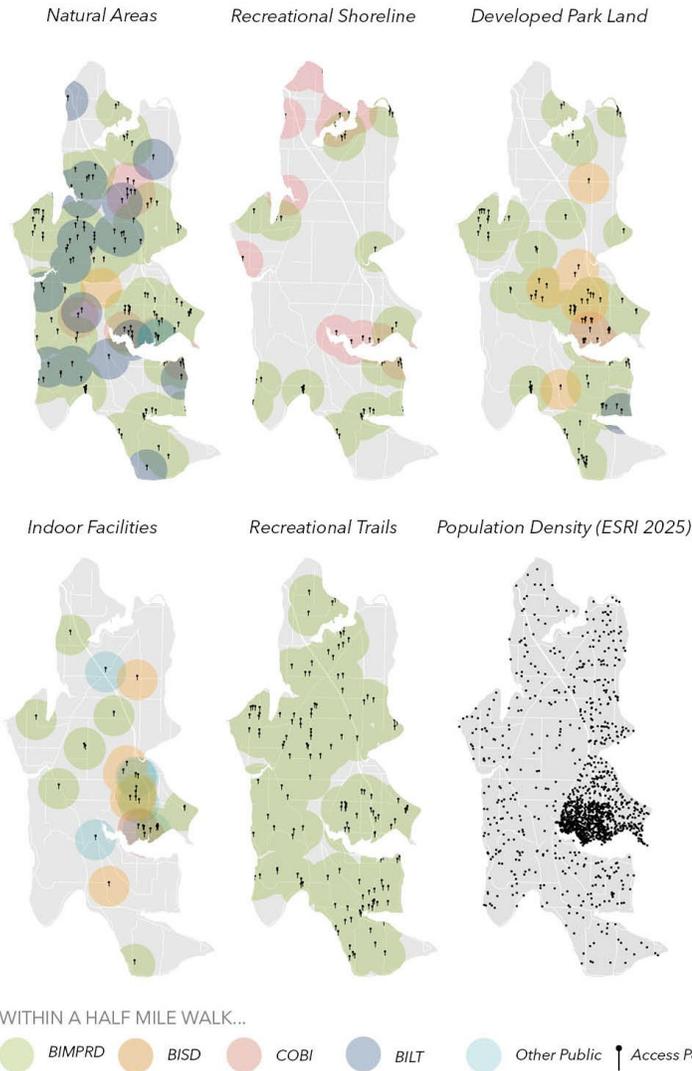
Being able to get to a park or trail is an important factor in determining how often you'll use it, especially for young families, elderly folks, and other people for whom mobility is a challenge. The more parks are distributed throughout the city, the more people who might be within walking distance of their nearest park. The RCO recommends measuring the percentage of a population that is within ½ mile of a neighborhood park, with larger buffers for larger park types. For this assessment, we focus on the five Park Land Use Types to understand how they are distributed throughout the island and where there are gaps. Notably, we include assets owned by other jurisdictions in this assessment to reflect the different recreation options residents have access to.

This assessment uses ArcGIS Pro to translate the inventory of parks, trails, and facilities on Bainbridge Island into maps, which provide a visual of asset distribution throughout the island as well as data on the percentage of residents that fall within these ½ mile buffers. For each park, trail, and indoor facility owned by BI Parks, COBI, BISD, or BILT, the access points are given a buffer of ½ mile.



0.25 0 1
MILES

Table: % of Population Within 1/2 Mile



Natural Area Parkland

86%

Recreational Shoreline

48%

Developed Parkland

74%

Indoor Facilities

53%

Trails

87%

To translate the above percentages into scores of 1-5, we use the RCO Manual, which assigns grades of A through F based on percentage of the population that's within a mile range of assets based on their intended audience (neighborhood, community, or regional).

Table: LOS Access Scores

Natural Areas	Recreational Shoreline	Developed Park Land	Indoor Facilities	Trails
5	4	5	4	5

WHAT DOES THIS TELL US?

This assessment uses a ½ mile buffer, which is meant to represent a distance that someone could feasibly walk to their neighborhood park. We are applying this system to things like indoor facilities and recreational shoreline, which are community assets and thus may more reasonably be expected to be within 5 miles based on RCO Manual guidelines for Community Parks. We are using ½ buffer system for all Park Land Use types, but rate them on different scales based on the populations they were meant to serve (i.e. neighborhood, community, or region).

Another consideration is how people are getting to the parks, and what barriers may make even a ½ mile journey difficult. Missing bike lanes, incomplete sidewalks, large road crossings, or lack of parking could all hinder people from accessing their parks using their preferred method of transportation. While improvements to transportation facilities are not within the purview of the Park District, understanding these barriers can enrich our understanding of what the access buffers mean.

Recreational Shoreline produces the lowest percentage of residents within ½ mile, including City of Bainbridge Island's Shore Ends. At 48%, this is nearly half of the island that is within walking distance of public water access. We draw the following conclusions:

- **A 5-mile buffer**, in line with RCO's recommendation for community assets, **covers most of the island**, which shows that current coverage meets RCO standards, but does not provide helpful information as to where the Park District might consider new shoreline land acquisitions should they become available.
- **Given the shape of the island, 100% coverage at the ½ mile scale is not possible**, but that buffer map reveals more useful information.
- While current coverage rates as an "A" in RCO's manual based on 5-mile coverage, we assign a "B" or a "4" to reflect that shoreline access is a high priority and there are opportunities to provide more access points. This could be via recreational shoreline acquired and managed by BI Parks, or through the addition of Road Ends by the City.

The other Park Land Use not rated a 5 is Indoor Facilities. With 53% coverage at the ½ mile scale, this far exceeds what is expected of these assets, which could be considered community or regional assets (for example, people travel from neighboring cities to visit the aquatic center because of the unique facilities it offers). We are rating it a 4 based on opportunities to expand partnerships with groups that could provide additional indoor recreation throughout the island.

Overall, every Bainbridge resident is within a ½ mile of a park, trail, or indoor facility. Natural Areas and Trails have exceptional coverage, and there are opportunities to provide better access to Recreational Shoreline through strategic acquisition of land or the development of more Shore End beaches by the City.

LOS: QUANTITY, QUALITY, ACCESS

	<i>Natural Areas</i>	<i>Recreational Shoreline</i>	<i>Developed Park Land</i>	<i>Indoor Facilities</i>	<i>Trails</i>
Quantity	5	5	5	5	5
Quality	2.5	2.8	3.1	2.9	2.8
Access	5	4	5	4	5
Average	4.2	3.9	4.4	4.0	4.3

CONCLUSION

Bainbridge Island residents have access to a wealth of park land, trails, and indoor facilities. Compared to peer cities, there is an abundance of land devoted to recreational uses. These different Park Land Uses are distributed throughout the city, offering opportunities for respite in nature, trail walks, indoor and outdoor recreation.

The greatest area for improvement is in Quality. While most park lands are meeting their intended uses, additional maintenance, upgrades or additional facilities will improve the way residents and visitors can use and enjoy them.

Maintaining the above service levels will require investments into continued maintenance of the parks, trails, and indoor facilities on the island. The Parks Board, residents, and BI Park staff must determine whether there are priority areas where additional service levels are desired, then determine how these improvements will be funded. If no action is taken to secure funding for the necessary maintenance, renovations, and restoration of existing facilities, service levels will decrease.