2013
Parks Plan

Town of La Conner

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PARKS COMMISSION

The Comprehensive Parks Plan recognizes and ensures that the natural human need for open spaces and places for outdoor activities be considered equally with the economy, housing and other services that the Town provides.

-La Conner Parks Commission 2013

The La Conner Parks Commission was founded in 1915 and is responsible to "act as an advisory board for the Mayor, Town Administrator, and Town Council regarding the operation, policies, procedures, and improvements to the Town's parks, play fields, street ends, and open space". (*See Ord. 188 § 1, 1915*).

Members of the 2013 Parks Commission:

Brian Scheuch, Chair, Resident

Tom Winn, Resident

Linda Seales, Resident

Bo Miller, Resident

Richard Wisniewski, Resident

Dan O'Donnell, Town Council Representative

Staff:

John Doyle, Town Administrator and Planning Director

Brian Lease, Public Works Director

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW

"The Town of La Conner is committed to enhancing our community's quality of life by providing well planned and managed leisure and recreational opportunities for the residents and guests of La Conner."

-La Conner Parks Commission 2013

Community History and Profile

La Conner is a historic rural town settled in the 1860's that has preserved much of its small town character. It is located between the Swinomish Channel, Sullivan Slough, and Skagit Bay in the agriculturally rich Skagit Valley of Washington State.

The arrival of Indian groups in the Pacific Northwest cannot be dated with great precision. However, archaeological investigations at the Manis mastodon site near Sequim on the Olympic Peninsula indicate man was in the area as early as 12,000 years ago.

Swinomish, Samish, Sauk-Suiattle, and Upper Skagit Indians lived in the Skagit River valley in significant numbers as late as 1913.

Today, the Swinomish Tribal Community has a reservation across the Swinomish Channel from La Conner. Members of the Tribal Community attend schools (approximately 30% of the enrollment) in La Conner and participate in various recreational opportunities within Town. The Town and the Tribal Community began a tradition of annually celebrating Native American Day to promote goodwill between the communities. In that vein, the Town and the Swinomish Tribal Community look for opportunities to share in the development of recreational facilities.

La Conner is located on the Swinomish Channel approximately 12 miles southwest of the City of Mount Vernon, Washington. Most of the community is at or near sea level. The topography of the Town area is characterized by a basaltic hill with flat agricultural lands to the east and the Swinomish Channel to the west.

Although the Town currently has 891 people (2010 census), its infrastructure serves residents outside the Town limits from Pleasant Ridge to Kiket Island (approximately 5,000 people within 30 square miles). The Town has a projected growth of 950 people by 2025[1]. In addition, La Conner is a popular tourist destination with an average daily visitation of 1,400 people (500,000 annually). La Conner Town limits covers 255 acres, of which 51 acres is within a National Historic Preservation District. The La Conner Comprehensive Plan provides for increased population densities by encouraging in-fill, and no expansion of the Town limits is planned.

Climate and Geography

Washington State's climate is strongly influenced by moisture-laden air masses created in the Pacific Ocean. The airflow from the Pacific Ocean is interrupted first by the Olympic Mountains and then significantly by the Cascade Mountains. As a result of the mountain ranges, the west or windward sides of the Cascades receive moderate to heavy precipitation. Due to its unique location in the "rain shadow" of the Olympic Mountains, La Conner receives less precipitation than areas outside the “rain shadow”, an average of only 30" of rain a year. This location and mild marine temperatures help make La Conner a popular recreation area, and a pleasant tourist destination.

[1] Population & Employment, Forecasting & Allocation 2025 - Berryman & Henigar, Inc. in association with Michael J. McCormick, December, 2003

Mean temperatures vary from a high of 60 degrees in July to a low of 40 degrees Fahrenheit in January with extreme variations recorded at -3 to a high of 102 degrees Fahrenheit. The average annual growing season is about 170-190 days. Approximately 80 percent of the precipitation occurs from October through March.

La Conner is composed of flatlands or valley created by the Skagit River interspersed with hills of basaltic origin. Topography ranges from 0 to about 100 feet above Puget Sound on the hills. The main residential hill facing the Downtown district drops off abruptly in places with slopes ranging from 40 to 100 percent.

Increased population density and tourist activity will place greater demands upon existing parks, open spaces and public spaces. Additional land for recreational use may be desired but not available or affordable in the future. The La Conner Parks Plan provides guidance for future management and parkland acquisition in the community.

CHAPTER 2

PARKS PLAN GOALS

This plan analyzes supply, demand, and need for park and recreation property and facilities within the La Conner service area. The inventory includes a comprehensive assessment of all public and private facilities and services within the Town's boundaries.

Development strategies presented in the Plan are the result of an analysis of need and opportunity. The proposed strategies recommend the Town focus resources where park, recreation, and open space needs are most critical and effective. The Plan provides representations of many of the Plan-recommended actions.

The Plan complies with the Town's Comprehensive Plan's[2] vision to:

- "Encourage changes that promote livability, pedestrian orientation and high quality design"
- "Enhance opportunities for recreation and cultural activities for all ages by encouraging diversity in available choices"
- "Open space and public access to the waterfront is a priority"

The following Goals and Policies are intended as a management and council decision-making tool to help provide consistency and priority to park and recreation development and funding.

Goal 1. Designate, retain, maintain, and enhance publicly owned and leased lands and facilities for the purpose of parks and recreation for Town residents, service area residents (school district) and visitors to Town.

Policies

1A. Identify and create appropriate park, recreation, and open space facilities in the La Conner service area that preserve and enhance climatic, natural, wildlife, historic, cultural, and current developmental conditions.

[2] See Appendix I for Comprehensive Plan Goals and Policies.

1B. Use creative economic methods for retaining public properties such as leasing and requiring open space incentives for new development.

1C. Develop public properties through private/public partnerships and grants.

1D. Encourage coordination and cooperation between the Town and other entities such as private enterprise, the County, State and Tribal agencies in exploring opportunities to share the development of park and recreational resources and facilities.

1E. Determine the costs involved in maintaining and/or improving park, recreation, and open space levels-of-service (LOS).

Goal 2. Provide, maintain, and enhance public access both physically and visually to publicly owned or leased lands and facilities.

Policies

2A. Define an implementation program by outlining the actions necessary to realize the park, recreation, and open space plan's development.

2B. Acquire public spaces whenever appropriate and possible.

2C. Develop and implement a forest "Best Management Practices" maintenance program to enhance the Pioneer Park facilities.

2D. Enforce development standards in the Shoreline Master Program to require public access to shorelines.

2E. Work to coordinate efforts with the private sector to increase and build access.

2F. Provide quality waterfront docks, floats, and boat launches for diverse public boating uses.

2G. Increase pedestrian and recreational trail opportunities on public right-of-ways and Town owned properties.

2H. Develop signage, maps and brochures to identify parks and other public spaces.

Goal 3. Protect and develop view corridors to waterways, farmlands and scenery of the community as public land locations permit.

Policies

3A. Connect waterfront access points with one another where feasible through the development and implementation of a plan to provide a waterfront "boardwalk" from North First Street to Pioneer Park.

3B. Have viewing areas that display the essential features of La Conner and the surrounding communities.

3C. Develop existing waterfront open space for people to enjoy the waterfront as pedestrians.

3D. Provide lease incentives for leaseholders to develop and open the waterfront properties to the public.

3E. Coordinate with Skagit County and private property owners to develop a waterfront trail along the west side of Sullivan Slough.

3F. Enhance usage of trails, utilize gravel or walkways in areas where necessary, as in low spots that collect water.

Goal 4. Provide recreational opportunities to areas and groups that are underserved

Policies

4A. Identify appropriate roles and responsibilities that should be undertaken by La Conner to meet critical recreational facility and programming needs.

4B. Survey public opinion bi-annually to determine which issues are most important to La Conner residents, and the public desire for improved recreational opportunities.

4C. Coordinate planning efforts with the La Conner Chamber of Commerce, Arts Commission, Swinomish Tribal Community, area service clubs, and the Parks and Recreation Departments of Skagit County, Mount Vernon, and Anacortes.

Goal 5. Assure safe usage of publicly owned or leased lands and facilities

Policies

5A. Support and maintain park and recreational properties for their optimum use.

5B. Ensure American Disabilities Act compliance with access and usability.

5C. Ensure proper maintenance with secure funding sources.

5D. Provide and maintain safety equipment and ladders from water on Town floats along the channel.

Goal 6. Provide diversity in parks and recreation for both active and passive opportunities for a wide range of users

Policies

6A. Identify and provide recreational opportunities to all ages.

6B. Tourism should be considered together with the needs of the community when planning for recreational facilities in the community.

6C. Coordinate planning efforts with the La Conner Chamber of Commerce, Arts Commission, Swinomish Tribal Community, area service clubs, Parks and Recreation Departments of Skagit County, Mount Vernon, and Anacortes.

6D. Develop Conner Way waterfront area with camping, picnic and kayak launching facilities.

Goal 7. Integrate wildlife habitat and conservation elements in the parks planning

Policies

7A. Develop the elements of a comprehensive plan for creating and/or refurbishing park, recreation, and open space facilities including wildlife habitat and conservation areas, open spaces and natural resource areas, trails, athletic fields and facilities, and other recreational facilities.

7B. Forecast demand for future park, recreation, and open space facilities and services that may be provided by the Town, County, school district, or other agencies for wildlife habitat conservation.

7C. Encourage coordination and cooperation between the Town and other entities such as private enterprise, the County, State and Tribal agencies in exploring opportunities to share the development of park and recreational resources and facilities.

7D. Encourage and develop habitat improvement program (i.e. ivy out).

Goal 8. Preserve the historical heritage of La Conner and the surrounding area

Policies

8A. Identify, maintain and enhance historic landmark structures and sites.

8B. Grant applications should emphasize the regional, state and national significance of many of La Conner's recreational lands and facilities to fund improvements to those properties.

8C. Clearly identify the historical significance of properties and their role in the history of the area.

8D. Enhance and review development standards to increase open space.

Goal 9. Beautify the Town

Policies

9A. Have a park system that displays the natural and historic beauty of La Conner.

9B. Coordinate planning efforts with the La Conner Chamber of Commerce, Arts Commission, area service clubs, Parks and Recreation Departments of Skagit County, Mount Vernon, and Anacortes.

9C. The La Conner Arts Commission shall have the authority to fulfill the Town Council mandate for public art inclusion in the Parks Plan in cooperation with the Park Commission.

9D. Survey public opinion to determine which issues are most important to La Conner residents, and the public desire for improved recreational opportunities.

9E. Seek opportunities to include artwork in public spaces.

9F. Incorporate design elements that unify efforts to enhance parks and public spaces through creative signage, brickwork and the use of colors.

Goal 10. Promote healthy life styles through recreational opportunities in La Conner Parks

Policies

10A. Have a park system that provides a diverse level of physical activity.

10B. Develop park spaces with amenities for physical activities.

10C. Develop a La Conner cell phone app (QR technology) that will enable hearing brief descriptions of key public spaces, parks and points of historical interest.

10D. Promote the image of La Conner as a destination point for walking, cycling and enjoying other outdoor activities.

CHAPTER 3

TOWN PARK AND RECREATION INVENTORY

OVERVIEW

The Town of La Conner, La Conner School District, Skagit County, and other public and private agencies have assembled land devoted exclusively to park, recreation and open space uses within or adjacent to La Conner.

These lands provide a variety of park, recreation and open space activities including picnic facilities, athletic fields and playgrounds, community centers, and related park supporting administrative and maintenance facilities.

Approximately 24 acres (Pioneer Park and waterfront sites) or 60% of the total park, recreation and open space inventory are regionally significant sites. Town and County residents, regardless of where they reside within La Conner or the surrounding region, use these sites. Out-of-area visitors and tourists also use a significant portion of these regional sites and facilities.

The remaining 16 acres, or 40% of the total park, recreation and open space inventory, are locally significant sites and properties used by residents who reside within the immediate area.

TOWN OF LA CONNER

La Conner owns and has easement use of 29 properties with 40 acres of land for possible public park, recreation and open space use.

Park	Features
South Pioneer Park	Large parcel of property with a picnic shelter, amphitheater and walking trails.
North Pioneer Park	Undeveloped parkland with rough campsites and walking trail.
Sherman Street End	Public Boat Launch. Very steep slope improved in 2009. Trailer Parking.
Maple Avenue Ball Fields	These play fields offer dual purpose for baseball and soccer. The space offers two fields for each sport in opposite season rotations. These ball fields are leased from the Hedlin Family.
Caledonia Street End	Undeveloped street end with accompanying DNR waterfront lease.

Park	**Features**
Commercial Street End	Undeveloped street end adjacent to channel. Excellent Rainbow Bridge view.
John Hammer Park	Small neighborhood toddler park with play equipment.
Magnus Anderson Cabin and Totem Pole	Historic Site located just below Town Hall.
Old Fire Hall Park	Located across from Catholic Church. Grass and trees.
Butterfly Garden	Adjacent to Civic Garden Club. Excellent views of the channel, bridge and downtown.
Calhoun Street End	Public Moorage.
Civic Garden Club	Older historic structure utilized for town meetings and other civic events.
Maple Center/Hall Plaza	Community facility for theater, conferences, other social events. Includes a barbeque and courtyard.

Park	Features
Dirty Biter Waterfront Park (Calhoun Street end)	Semi-developed street end on waterfront side of first street. Features benches, picnic tables and public moorage.
First Street Restroom/Old Log	Restroom provided for tourism use. Old growth cross-section log in need of restoration.
Swinomish Park (Benton Street End)	Public Moorage and waterfront viewing. Dock owned by Town. Information kiosk and sculpture.
Benton Street Stairs	Nice rock stairs with excellent view of Downtown. Connect downtown with hilltop.
Old Library Courtyard	Public picnic seating. Divided by brick wall.
Washington Street	Planted area on south side of Washington Street between 2nd and 1st Streets
Washington Street and 3rd Street Corner Triangle	Bench and planted area donated to the Town by the property developer.
Washington Street End	Public Moorage, information kiosk and views of the Channel, salmon sculptures and ramp.
Gilkey Square (Morris Street End)	Excellent channel views and focal point from Morris street as visitors enter town. Planning is underway for a major renovation.
Morris Street Restrooms	Small restroom on Morris street at bottom of 3rd Street stairs.
3rd Street Stairs	Stairway connects Morris street with hilltop.

Park	Features
Kirsch Building Site	Waterfront view. Plan for future use to be determined.
Jordan Street	Undeveloped waterfront lot.
Pioneer Monument	Not in Town limits, maintained in cooperation with the Pioneer Association.
Maple Avenue Triangle	Triangular piece of property, mostly grass.
High Street End	Excellent views from undeveloped right-of-way.
Garden Street End	Undeveloped right-of-way in south residential area. Possible "pea-patch" garden and neighborhood park.
Orchard Street Right-of Way	Undeveloped street between Park Street and Maple Avenue
4th Street Right-of-Way, South Hill and North Hill	Green Space
1st Street Right of Way between Commercial and Caledonia	Current half of the property is being used for public parking and the majority of this street portion is undeveloped.
Sherman Avenue boat launch	Small boat recreational boat launch.
Conner Way Waterfront Park	Dramatic open space waterfront beneath the Rainbow Bridge. Small float and kayak launch.

LA CONNER SCHOOL DISTRICT

The La Conner School District owns a large amount of property dedicated to recreational facilities.

La Conner – Swinomish Skatepark

Site	Features
Tennis Courts	Two courts resurfaced with lights for evening play.
Playgrounds	Elementary school playground contains swing sets, sand area, climbing structures, tetherball and blacktop for ball games.
Basketball (outdoor)	• Behind the Elementary School is a covered outdoor basketball court with several hoops. • Adjacent to the Boys and Girls Club is an outdoor court (2 hoops).
Baseball Fields	• One permanent softball field behind the Elementary School playground with dugouts and a bleacher on one baseline. • One regulation baseball field behind the Middle School with dugouts and bleachers on both baselines, and a field house.
Soccer Fields	• One soccer area adjacent to the softball field. • Two soccer fields adjacent to the baseball field.
Track	One ¼ mile track with high jump and pole vault areas.

Park	Features
Football Field	One football field in the center of the track with covered bleachers on one side.
Skateboard Park	Opened in 2011.
YMCA Day Care Facility	A modular building with a toddler play area behind the Administration Building.
Boys and Girls Club	A recently renovated cement block field house behind the Administration Building and adjacent to Best Place.
Gymnasiums	Three gyms. One each at the Elementary, Middle and High Schools. The Middle School gym also serves as a multi-purpose room.

STATE OF WASHINGTON AND THE PORT OF SKAGIT COUNTY

These two entities have holdings that impact the Town of La Conner.

The Port of Skagit County maintains a large marina that is filled primarily with recreational boats. The Port also leases land to a resort development that, in turn, operates a private pool. The pool was once open to the public and is now closed to all but private memberships. The Port also has property adjacent to the Town that will be used as a dual use area. The primary use will be as a constructed wetland to process the storm water from the Town. This area will also function as an interpretive nature walk to demonstrate the importance of wetlands to our ecology and an innovative approach to storm water management.

The State of Washington does not own any recreational facilities in or near the Town, however, the Department of Natural Resources leases shoreline properties to the Town and to private entities that provide recreational opportunities. In addition, the State has provided the Town with funding for several public recreation projects in the past.

PRIVATE FACILITIES FOR PUBLIC USE BY MEMBERSHIP OR FEE

Other nonprofit and private agencies own properties with land and buildings of possible use for recreational facilities for a membership or a fee within or adjacent to the Town of La Conner.

Park	Features
Potlatch Resort	RV Park, Swimming Pool, spa, group dining area, Exercise facility.
Thousand Trails	Camping, boat launch, cabins, recreation center, RV Park, waterfront beach, hiking, and picnicking. The Thousand Trails facility is located 3 miles west of La Conner.

INVENTORY IMPLICATIONS

- The Town of La Conner, La Conner School District, Skagit County and other public and private agencies have significant amounts of acreage, including park, recreation, and open space land and recreational facilities in the La Conner area.
- A significant portion of the inventory are regional facilities that are used by populations who reside outside of the La Conner service area boundaries, even though the maintenance and operation of these sites has been financed by the city and school district.
- The La Conner School District has developed a significant percentage of the inventory of park and recreational related facilities, including outdoor playgrounds and athletic fields, indoor arts and crafts, meeting rooms, and gymnasiums. School facilities are competitive, higher quality, capacity sites.
- Private resort facilities provide significant recreation opportunities for members and limited access for La Conner residents and school children.

CHAPTER 4
DEMAND AND NEEDS ANALYSIS

OVERVIEW

The following proposals concerning elements of the park, recreation, and open space plan are based on the results of field analysis, inventories, demand analysis, and planning sessions.

Site descriptions are organized by the major type of land or activity to be provided. A particular park may include one or all of the following features.

The descriptions provided in this section describe the improvements that will be accomplished under each major type of plan element - see each element for a composite description for any particular site. Also see the chapters on existing land and facilities or opportunities for a description of each site's current conditions, ownership and other particulars.

CONSERVANCIES – HISTORICAL

Resource properties that retain and preserve significant historical and cultural sites and facilities throughout La Conner should be protected. Generally, historical conservancy properties may be acquired that conserve and provide interpretive access to significant sites. These include original homesteads or prominent building sites, commercial or public buildings with unique architectural characteristics, locations of important industrial or resource oriented activities, and other culturally important areas. Lands may also be acquired that conserve significant man-made constructions on the land including bridges, dikes, dams, and other features.

To the extent possible and practical, historical sites and buildings will be linked with other parklands to create activity centers or facilities that reflect the original cultural use. In some instances, the buildings or sites may be adapted to provide supporting services such as trailheads, parking lots, restrooms, and utilities.

Whenever possible, historical buildings and structures will be preserved on their original sites. In some instances, however, the buildings or other

improvements may be relocated to other public properties in order to better conserve, display, or provide interpretive access.

To protect archaeological significance, historical or archaeological sites may be marked or use signage as part of the conservancy park element. Interpretive signs may be located off-site or in areas that do not risk exposure or possible vandalism of underlying archaeological resources or properties (including private lands).

Vision

As described herein, historical conservancies may be realized through:

- Acquisition of title and/or development rights of properties that would otherwise be destroyed or developed for other land uses;

- Provision for public access and interpretive use which would not be possible if the properties remained in private ownership; and

- Provisions for signing and interpretation subject to appropriate security measures and underlying property owner agreements.

EXISTING HISTORICAL/CULTURAL SITES[3]

The following sites have been acquired and may be improved to provide historical or cultural exhibits and activities as part of surrounding park features.

Civic Garden Club	Formerly the Territorial Courthouse prior to statehood and has served as the county seat, school, Grange hall and general public meeting place.
Gaches Mansion	The home of one of the early Town pioneer families that is now a private quilt museum.
Town Hall	The original bank for the Town which is now being used as the administration building and sheriff's office.
Canoe Shed	Authentic Native American Cedar Canoe housed under a

[3] Site includes portions providing historical resource value. Site may also include characteristics that may be listed under other plan element proposals.

	cedar shed structure. Located on the North side of Moore Street below Town Hall.
Pioneer Homestead	Original homestead relocated to the corner of Moore and Commercial below Town Hall. Surrounded by civic gardens.
Louisa A. Conner Monument	Monument to the founders of La Conner located in Pioneer Park.
Log Cross Section	Log cross-section located on the south side of the First Street public restrooms.
Pioneer Memorial	Located at East entrance to town and in memorial to Pioneer Heritage.

Proposed Improvement to Historic/Cultural Sites

Log Cross-Section	Log section needs maintenance and preservation work.
Town Hall	Rehabilitate and preserve period architecture and character.

Proposed Historical/Cultural Sites

The following sites may be provided conservancy protection through easements, land use agreements, or acquisitions.

Heritage Trees	Several trees in the community have reached maturity and are spectacular examples of their species. The Town should inventory, determine the health of, and provide special designation for such trees. A corresponding map could be placed in a heritage tree park in the old library courtyard.
Heritage Park	Reconfigure the plaza space at the entrance to Maple Center to highlight the Town's heritage and founding families.

Resource and Activity Parks

Resource lands may be preserved in La Conner that provides public access to significant environmental features. Generally, resource lands may provide access to the Swinomish Channel, woodlands (Pioneer Park), agricultural open space, and scenic areas.

To the extent practical, resource lands may also be traversed and linked by all types of pedestrian corridors, increasing access to significant and visually interesting features.

Resource and activity oriented facilities may be developed that provide public use and enjoyment of environmental resource sites throughout La Conner. Water-oriented resource activities may provide fishing piers, docks, and boat launches.

Where appropriate, resource-oriented and outdoor activity sites may also be improved with a variety of outdoor facilities including group and individual campsites, picnic facilities, playgrounds, and open grassy playfields. Supporting services may also be developed including parking lots, restrooms, and utilities.

Resource activities may be located on independent properties or include portions of other sites provided for resource conservancies, trail corridors or other public facilities. Resource activities may also be developed on other publicly owned lands subject to public use agreements or easements; or on lands acquired for other public purposes including stormwater management detention and retention ponds, and wastewater treatment sites.

Vision

As described herein, the resource activities vision will be realized through:

- Acquisition of resource lands - that would otherwise be developed for other land uses;
- Provision of public access - and use of natural features which would not be possible if the lands remained in private ownership; and
- Conservation for public access - and use of unique and available natural features that visually define and separate developed areas and neighborhoods.

BOAT LAUNCH POINTS

Sherman Avenue	Power and hand-carry boat launch ramp located on Sherman Avenue street end. Needs improvement to lessen conflicts between kayaks and power/sailboats.
Port of Skagit County	Boat launch/lift facility. Equipped to handle large vessel launching.

PICNIC FACILITIES

Existing

Old Town Hall site	Picnic table located adjacent to the bluff near the Catholic Church. Corner of 4th and Douglas.
Dirty Biter park	Picnic tables located on Calhoun street end. Waterfront picnic area.
Pioneer Park	Picnic tables throughout Pioneer Park.
Benton Street end	Waterfront picnic area.
Morris Street restroom	Morris Street commercial area.
Little Park (North Pioneer)	Potential for much improvement.
Library courtyard	Downtown commercial area.
Below Town Hall	Close to historic canoe and children's play area.
Gilkey Square	Waterfront picnic area.

Proposed

Pioneer Park	▪ Implement a forest Best Management Program to enhance and maintain the Parks tree and plant health. ▪ Develop trail system in the north section and connect to south section under Pioneer Parkway. ▪ Develop overnight camping and small RV facilities in the north section. ▪ Improve water access camp areas for kayaks for inclusion as a Watertrails Park.
Little Park (North Pioneer)	Additional picnic tables and camping sites to be located in redeveloped park area.
Calhoun Street End – Whatcom	Develop as a picnic rest area and link for walking tour of the Town.
Jordan Street end	Picnic area and mini-park to be developed at the Jordan Street end site.
Morris Street End - (Gilkey Square)	Picnic area to be developed on the site adjacent to the Swinomish Channel. Enhance park and landscape features for pedestrian access and special events.

Picnic facilities – shelters/cook facilities

Existing

Pioneer Park	Large group facility
Maple Hall	Covered outdoor cooking facility

WATER TRAILS

A water access system may be developed for dory, canoes, kayaks, and other hand-carry or car-top boating activities. The water trails may provide access to salt and freshwater bodies that are not readily accessible or suitable for powerboats or other larger watercraft.

Where possible, water trailheads should be located adjacent to other trail corridors, resource conservancies, and other park and recreational facility services including parking lots, restrooms, and utilities. When provided on separate sites, water trailheads may be improved with launch ramps or landings, picnic tables, parking lots, restrooms, and other services.

Vision

As described, the water trail vision may:

- Increase and promote public access to the area's significant salt water resources - particularly for car-top boating enthusiasts.
- Provide access to scenic natural areas and features of interest that can not be accessed from other trail systems.
- Provide for boating enthusiasts of all skill levels.
- Provide for extended boating duration including overnight trips.

WATER TRAIL ACCESS SITES

Existing Launch Sites

The most popular spot for hand carry boat launches is from the Sherman Avenue float. This often results in conflicts with trailered boat users, as the hand held boats require dockside time to prepare for use. Trailered boat users also create wakes that can be hazardous to the hand carry boaters. Kayak clubs, both private and commercial, routinely launch from the Sherman Avenue site.

Letters and conversations with kayak user groups indicate a strong preference for having a dedicated water trail head south of the Sherman Avenue boat launch, in the northern portion of Tract 23. The DNR lease for Tract 23 is held by the Town of La Conner. The Town will redevelop the portion of the northern end of Tract 23 for a waterfront park.

Sherman Avenue End	Power and hand-carry trailer boat launch ramp located on the east bank of the Swinomish Channel.

Proposed launch sites

The following project will be considered for development and funding under a future RCO grant.

Jordan Street End	Renovate building pier for kayak and small boat launch and landing area.
Sullivan Slough Wetland	The storm water treatment project may provide an opportunity for a kayak launch site in the future.
Conner Way Park	Extend finger dock south from existing float.

WALKING AND HIKING TRAILS

Walking and hiking trails may be developed to link major environmental assets, park and recreational facilities, community centers, and historical features throughout La Conner. Generally, walking and hiking trails may be developed as dirt or bark surfaced routes on interior alignments through environmental features. Portions of the system within the more densely developed areas, however, may be developed as sidewalks or boardwalks with urban streetscape furnishings and amenities.

Wherever possible, walking and hiking trails may be developed in alignments separate from vehicular or other motorized forms of transportation. For example, walking and hiking trails may be located within natural drainage corridors, wooded ravines, utility easements, and undeveloped alleyways/right of ways. In some instances, and for short

duration, walking and hiking trail systems may be developed as improvements within the right-of-way of established vehicular or other transportation corridors.

Generally, walking and hiking trails may be developed to class 2-5 walking trail standards providing 2-way travel on a crushed rock, bark or compacted dirt base varying between 2 and 5 feet in width. The trails may be of a slope not more than 1:12 unless stairs or other erosion controls are provided. Class 2-3 trail segments may be handicap accessible and usable by all age and skill groups.

Within the most urban alignments, walking and hiking trails may be developed to class 1 walking trail standards providing 2-way travel on an asphalt or concrete surface between 4 and 6 feet in width. Such sidewalk or boardwalk trails may be of a slope not more than 1:50. Class 1 trail segments may be handicap accessible and usable by all age and skill groups.

Walking and hiking trail corridors may be located to coincide with other park and recreational improvements or public facilities to access rest stops, parking lots, restrooms, and other services.

Walking and hiking trail corridors may be independent properties or include portions of other sites provided for resource activities, athletic facilities, and other park and recreational or public facility properties.

Vision

As described, the walking and hiking trails vision may be realized by providing recreational trail opportunities in La Conner that:

- Access natural features that may not be available otherwise,
- Link park spaces and other areas into a greenway system,
- Serve persons with varied physical abilities and skills,
- Establish high visibility and volume pedestrian routes through the most developed urban areas, and
- Expand the park system to connect with public properties.

Wherever possible the Town should attempt to connect pedestrian corridors. Examples include establishing a walking waterfront connection between Pioneer Park and downtown, or a connection between the La Conner School grounds and the Marina along the drainage system. A pedestrian connection should be established between the top of the hill and Whatcom Street. An additional trail may be constructed through the constructed and natural wetlands associated with Sullivan Slough.

PARK WALKING TRAILS

Existing trails

The following sites have been identified as formal and informal trails:

La Conner waterfront between Channel Lodge and Morris Street	A class 1 waterfront trail providing excellent water views.
Benton Street Stairs	A significant pedestrian corridor linking downtown with the residential area on the hill.
3rd Street Stairs	A significant pedestrian corridor linking the Morris Street commercial area with the residential district on the hill.
Port Walk	A popular walk for exercise along Pearle Jensen Way.
Pioneer Park/Rainbow Bridge	A significant number of pedestrians travel through Pioneer Park and over the Rainbow Bridge.

Proposed trails and improvements to trails

Downtown Waterfront Boardwalk	Continue to follow the goals and design ideas within the Harbor Area Plan by improving the waterfront with connected boardwalks.
La Conner School to Port connection	Connect the Port property with the north end of Third Street by providing a walking path along the drainage system.
East Hill Connector	Develop a pedestrian path linking the hill to Whatcom Street. Investigate developing stairs such as those located at Benton and 3rd Street.
Sullivan Slough and Eastern Dike Trail	Work with the County and establish walking and hiking paths connecting to the County's Open Space Plan.

TRAILHEADS

Proposed

Parking, restroom, signage, and other biking services may be provided at the following sites.

North Port Area	Designate parking and restrooms, and install signage indicating beachfront walk north of the Port area.

ON-ROAD BICYCLE TOURING ROUTES, IN-LINE SKATING, AND BIKING

Cross-county bicycle touring, commuter routes, bike and skate paths may be developed to access major environmental assets, park and recreational facilities, historical features, scenic corridors and vistas, and other features of interest to experienced bicycle touring, skating and skateboard enthusiasts throughout La Conner.

Where appropriate, and to the extent practical and safe, bicycle touring routes may be extended into Town to create an integrated on-road bicycling system. The local on-road bicycling system may provide access to local park and recreational facilities, schools and public facilities, community centers and business districts, places of employment, and transit transfer centers for adult and youth bike riders from local areas.

To the extent possible, bicycling touring routes may be developed to class 1-3 AASHTO (American Association of State Highway & Transportation Officials) standards with expanded, designated or marked road shoulders and lanes. In the less congested areas, bicycle touring routes may be simply designated for joint vehicular/bicycle use of a class 4 AASHTO standard.

Bicycling enthusiasts working in conjunction with public agencies and other private cycling interest groups could identify most of the bicycle touring routes to be designated.

Vision

As described, the bicycle touring route vision may:

- Increase on-road bicycle touring access for experienced riders to scenic areas and features,
- Increase bicycle trail access for local residents, including commuters, to community facilities, schools, employment, and transit transfer centers,
- Improve access to service for persons with varied physical abilities and skills, and
- Expand roadway corridors and park features to provide recreational and commuter uses.

ON-ROAD BICYCLE TOURING ROUTES, IN-LINE SKATING, AND BIKING

Proposed

No routes have been proposed as a part of this plan. Skagit County is working to develop an integrated bicycling plan for the entire county.

STREETSCAPES

Streetscape improvements, which are a more urban form of multipurpose trail, may be developed to link community facilities, public buildings, commercial business districts, and other major activity centers within the La Conner business district. Streetscapes may provide for one or more modes of recreational and commuter travel use including biking, and, where appropriate, may be linked with public transit and other vehicular conveyance systems.

To the extent possible, streetscape improvements may be developed within the right-of-way of established vehicular or other transportation corridors. Where appropriate or necessary, however, the right-of-way or the streetscape improvement may be aligned off the roadway to incorporate gateways, parks, storefront boardwalks or plazas, and other pedestrian spaces.

Typically, the bikeway portion of streetscape corridors may be developed to a class 1 walking trail and to class 1 AASHTO (American Association of State Highway & Transportation Officials) bicycle trail standards. The trails may provide 2-way travel on concrete, brick, paved or asphalt base between 8 and 12 feet in width. The trails may be of a slope not more than 1:50, handicap accessible and usable by all age and skill groups.

Streetscape corridors may be improved with trailhead services including rest stops, parking lots, and transit connections. Where the streetscape is located in association with another park and recreational improvement or public facility, the corridor may be improved with active picnic, playgrounds, and play areas, restrooms, water, and air utilities. Where the streetscape is incorporated into adjacent retail spaces or plazas, the corridor may be improved with artworks and sculptures, water fountains, outdoor dining areas, amphitheaters and performing areas, and other activities of interest.

Streetscape corridors may be contained within, or extensions of the public road right-of-way, or include portions of other public sites acquired to define gateways or other linear park definitions. Streetscape improvements may also be developed and maintained on privately owned lands subject to public use agreements or public access easements.

Vision

As described, the streetscape vision may be realized by providing recreational and commuter trail opportunities within the most urban developed areas that:

- Conserve natural features,
- Define gateway and urban identities,
- Link public facilities and commercial business centers,
- Serve persons with varied physical abilities and skills,
- Promote commuter and other more functional transportation methods, and
- Create pedestrian-friendly access zones and activity areas that support urban core areas.

Future Growth Implications

The Washington State Office of Financial Management (OFM) and the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) expect the population of La Conner to increase from 761 persons in 2000 to an estimated 925 to 1045 by the year 2015, an increase of 164 to 284 more persons.

The Town has an estimated visitor rate of over 1,300 per day. This places specific pressure on facilities such as park areas, walking areas, boating facilities, and museums.

These forecasted population increases would create requirements for all types of park, recreation, and open space lands and facilities, especially within the developed Town, which presently provides the park, recreation,

and open space facilities that service residents and user groups from the surrounding Skagit Valley.

Continuation of the Town's existing level-of-service (ELOS) could require a significant dollar amount simply to remain current with present standards not accounting for any maintenance, operation or repair costs.

The approximate cost of sustaining the Town's existing level-of-service (ELOS) standard will be calculated per new person added to the Town's population and/or for every new housing unit.

Under the composite agencies proposed level-of-service (PLOS), the Town will need some additional acres of land and facility units (square feet, courts, fields, etc.) by the year 2015, if these agencies are to supplement the existing inventory as described within this chapter.

The realization of the composite agencies proposed level-of-service (PLOS) for the Town could require a consistent annual dollar amount by the year 2015.

CHAPTER 5

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

These levels of facility investment cannot be financed with the resources available to La Conner, Skagit County, and the La Conner School District, if each jurisdiction pursues an independent delivery approach or uses traditional methods of funding. The Town will not be financially able to develop, manage, and maintain a comprehensive, independent park, recreation, and open space system using traditional financing methods in light of the needs projected.

An area-wide financing approach needs to be developed by La Conner, Skagit County, and the La Conner School District. The approach must use a combination of shared user fees, excise taxes, joint grant applications, impact fees, and voter approved general obligation bonds if levels-of-service are to be maintained and improved upon in the face of continued Town population increases.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

(1) Waterfront Boardwalk

(a) Task: Connect the street-end parks and Pioneer Park with a waterfront boardwalk (this was the #1 priority in a 2010 citizen survey).

(b) Funding: Local contributions, State PW Capital Facilities Grant and RCO grants.

(2) Conner Way waterfront park development plan

(a) Task(s): Develop waterfront picnic, restrooms, boating and camping area as an extension of Pioneer Park.

(b) Funding: Local contributions (i.e Rotary) and RCO grants

(3) Benton Street Stairs

(a) Task: Complete renovation of stairway to increase safety and improve aesthetic appeal. Stairway is used heavily by tourists and La Conner school teams.

(b) Funding: Form a working group with the Chamber of Commerce and school teams to establish fundraising goals and activities, and funding from the Streets Fund.

(4) Pioneer Park

(a) Task:

i) Continue maintaining trails and explore the possibility of lighting in the park.

ii) Develop and redevelop camping facilities in the north park area.

iii) Maintain and continue to improve picnic shelter and amphitheater.

iv) Children play area and facilities.

(b) Funding: Local contributions and RCO grants.

(5) Jordan Street End and Kirsch Property

(a) Tasks:

i) Develop a usage plan for building and site as a recreation facility and small boat access.

ii) Renovate building and site.

(b) Funding: Form a development group of vested interests (i.e. kayakers, bikers and boaters) to secure local match for RCO Boating Facilities Grant.

(6) Bike trail along Maple Avenue

(a) Task: Construct a bicycle and pedestrian path along Maple Ave to connect to Pioneer Park Way and Bridge.

(b) Funding: Local contributions and WDOT Safe Route to Schools Grant funding.

(7) Connector Trail

(a) Task: Install a bicycle/pedestrian trail along the eastern boundary of the town beginning at Morris Street, extending north connecting to North Third Street.

(b) Funding: Local contributions and RCO grant.

CHAPTER 6
IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

OVERVIEW

Following is a brief outline of the strategy that can best satisfy La Conner's park, recreation, and open space needs.

STRATEGY

La Conner could perform a strategic role providing park, recreation, and open space facilities and programs that no other agency can, or is willing to provide. The Town could act as a coordinator of local interests where facilities are provided by many other agencies. In that capacity, the Town can identify unique acquisition or development opportunities that could be implemented or operated by other agencies. In the current economy, pursuing public/private partnerships could achieve the best balance of community benefit and minimum financial load on local citizens.

A strategic approach to services will require the following:

Involvement - La Conner must coordinate planning and development efforts with the public and other agencies such as the La Conner School District, Port of Skagit County, state, federal, and other public and private agencies to be aware of and have impact on these and other agency local programs and efforts.

Planning - La Conner must continually analyze long range needs and conditions for residents within town limits and the urban growth area in order to recognize and be prepared to act on opportunities.

Priorities - La Conner must decide policies and outline actions to be undertaken should opportunities allow strategic developments.

Commitment - La Conner must provide appropriate staff expertise and budgets with which to implement strategic planning programs and projects when no other agency can or is able within a strategic time schedule.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT STRATEGY

Current Practice

Members of the public will have an opportunity to participate in the development of parks and recreation policies and programs at a number of levels. The Park Commission consists of one member of the Town Council, the Town Planner and five members of the general public. In 1999, the Town Council commissioned a Visioning Survey to identify policy and program directions for La Conner, including planning for Parks and Recreation. Town residents were surveyed as were local business owners and residents surrounding the Town. Park Commission members have used the Visioning Survey as a source of general guidelines in developing policy and programs. Individuals and groups also present ideas for parks and recreation to the Park Commission and Town Council. Presentations may be informal or formal in nature. Some supporters of a specific proposal expend a great deal of effort to develop, for example, meeting with other groups and individuals and identifying possible funding sources. Others leave those tasks to the Park Commission or Town Council. Once a proposal is in hand, the Park Commission and Town Council members meet with individuals or groups who favor or oppose the plan. While some of these meetings may be informal, notices about proposed plans are published in the town paper and open public meetings are held before the project can proceed.

Anticipated Changes

- Although the Visioning Survey provides general guidelines for the Parks and Recreation Commission, it is not useful for priority setting. A Parks and Recreation Priority Survey will be initiated next year. The Commission will use the results of the Survey to prioritize future projects.
- The Park Commission will review proposals for compatibility with the Parks and Recreation Plan.
- When a proposal is deemed compatible, the Commission will help the supporter to establish a Citizen's Advisory Group. If the proposal generates a strong, active advisory group, the Commission will take that as an indication that the proposal deserves further consideration and support.
- Advisory groups will also specify funding sources for the proposal over and above what the Town can provide.

To assist in the proposal development process, a member of the Park Commission will serve as a member of each Advisory Group.

Role Recommendations by Function

This plan recommends La Conner pursue a modified strategic approach to services where La Conner assumes responsibility for those functions no other agency or organization can provide, and helps coordinate or support those functions and activities that have other viable sponsors. La Conner would be the coordinator or planner of first resort, and the provider of last resort. For example:

Coordinating activities

La Conner should provide central information and coordination services for park, recreation, and open space activities within La Conner since La Conner alone has the local authority and resources to operate as a central facilitator. This role should include the maintenance and updating of future population growth estimates, inventories of existing and proposed facility developments, the identification of probable local facility and program needs, and proposals of area wide facility and program solutions. The selection and siting of public art shall be the responsibility of the La Conner Arts Commission.

Planning and development assistance

La Conner should provide more detailed planning and development assistance when:

- There are no other designated agencies or organization who can,
- The activity involves siting controversies or environmental consequences that may not otherwise be equitably resolved within La Conner, or
- A proposed development will be within La Conner.

Development, operation and maintenance

La Conner should not develop, operate or maintain park or recreation facilities and activities unless:

- The facility will serve the diverse needs of the user population and will be financed using Council approved methods, or
- Facility development and operating costs will be recaptured from direct charges of the populations who use the facility, or
- Facility development and operating costs will be compensated in some manner through local agreements with the using agency, area or benefiting user group, particularly where the demands will originate from a regional service requirement, or

- The site or facility has intrinsic value apart from traditional operation and maintenance needs, like a passive natural area, waterfront access, or wetland preservation.

Role Responsibility by Activity

By activity, this plan recommends La Conner assume the following responsibilities:

Environmental Conservation

La Conner should assume a major responsibility for the planning, coordination, and preservation of unique wildlife habitat, ecological, wetland, and open space areas.

La Conner should work with all other public and private agencies, particularly Washington State Departments of Fish & Wildlife, Natural Resources, and Transportation to create an effective approach to these local conservation issues and proposals.

Outdoor Facilities

La Conner should assume a major responsibility for the planning, development, and operation of a variety of outdoor facilities. These facilities include playgrounds, tennis courts, picnicking areas, skate park, public fishing, waterfront parks, park and bicycle trails that are directly related to site opportunities within the town and are of most interest to local residents. La Conner should also actively be involved with the development of facilities for those resident populations that may be underserved by the current level-of-service.

La Conner should help coordinate and assist other public and private agencies, such as the La Conner School District, to develop major competitive outdoor athletic facilities.

Special Facilities

La Conner may assume some responsibility, including enterprise operations and/or joint efforts where appropriate, for the development and operation of facilities that have special or unique interests, impacts or relevance to residents of La Conner that may not be provided by another public or private agency.

Indoor Facilities

La Conner should help coordinate and assist other public and private agencies, such as the La Conner School District to plan, develop, and operate specialized indoor facilities. Since these facilities directly serve the local area and are of major interest to Town residents of all ages, their use and future role for community recreational needs should concur with community-wide needs.

Recreation programs

The Town of La Conner does not have enough staff or budget to assist with and actively coordinate the operation of programs for athletic leagues and sports, teen and senior age groups, and special populations. The Town must rely on Skagit County and the La Conner School district for operation of such programs since these facilities directly serve the local area and are of major interest to city residents of all ages. However, the Town has begun to provide funding for Boys and Girls Club after school recreational programs.

CHAPTER 6
ADOPTION PROCESS

OVERVIEW

This Park Plan meets the requirements of the Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) and the Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA). The Plan has been adopted as an amendment to the La Conner Comprehensive Plan following guidelines within the IAC publication *"Framing a Community Future"* as well as GMA requirements adopted under LCMC 15.125.090 and 15.125.100.

Following is an overview of the process for amending the Plan.

- The Park Commission held monthly meetings which are open to the public to discuss and work on the draft plan. The Commission developed the general draft plan, and provided opportunities for public input.
- The Parks Commission finalized details of the updated plan.
- The Planning Department publishes a SEPA DNS for public and agency comment.
- The Parks plan is forwarded to the La Conner Town Council for review and a public hearing.
- The Town Council and Planning Department considers comments and possible amendments to the proposed plan.
- The Town Council adopts the plan.
- A copy of the adopted Parks Plan is sent to RCO.
- The Town Council forwards the plan to the Planning Commission for docketing for the next Comprehensive Plan or code amendment process that may be necessary.

Appendix I

La Conner Comprehensive Plan Goals and Policies Regarding Parks

Chapter 5 - Land Use Element

Open Space, Parks and Recreation

GOAL M

Encourage the retention of open space and development of recreational opportunities, conserve fish and wildlife habitat and increase public access to natural resource lands and the Swinomish Channel.

Policies

5M-1 Maintain and support existing and future recreational and cultural activities through the dedication of public properties to such uses.

5M-2 Maintain or set aside publicly owned land suitable for recreation purposes.

5M-3 Maintain or develop available street-ends and undeveloped right-of-ways to allow public access for viewing, recreation, greenways or added tree canopy.

5M-4 Develop a pedestrian corridor along the shoreline to connect activity centers, open spaces, and parks.

5M-5 Acquire, preserve and develop land and waterfront areas for public recreation based on area demand, public support, and use potential.

5M-6 Maintain public access to publicly owned property.

GOAL N

Encourage the acquisition and development of parks, open space, and recreation facilities, both active and passive that are attractive, safe, functional, and available to all segments of the community.

Policies

5N-1 Pedestrian access to public spaces, pathways and facilities located within the industrial zone shall be safely accommodated to the greatest extent possible. Special emphasis shall be placed on establishing pedestrian corridors and vibrant, amenity-rich pathways along the water's edge.

5N-2 Maintain and update the Parks and Recreation Plan.

5N-3 Develop additional cultural resources, programs and activities at Maple Hall and Maple Center.

5N-4 Distribute parks and/or open spaces throughout commercial, residential, and industrial zones in an attempt to more equitably serve the entire community.

5N-5 Use existing school district facilities or other public facilities to maximize recreational and cultural opportunities whenever possible.

5N-6 Identify and develop bicycle corridors on main streets where feasible.

GOAL O

Enhance the quality of life in the community by encouraging or providing recreation programs that are creative, productive, and responsive to the needs of the public.

Policies

5O-1 Encourage citizen participation in the design and development of public facilities and/or recreation areas.

5O-2 Encourage and promote cultural facilities and social services compatible with recreational use.

5O-3 Encourage opportunities for recreational and cultural activities for all ages.

5O-4 Maintain and support existing and future recreational and cultural activities through the dedication of properties for such uses.

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