

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Bainbridge Island is a unique community both geographically and demographically. Situated a ferry ride from the Seattle metropolis, it offers an abundance of park, recreation, and open space resources that exceed those of peer communities, despite its less urban property tax base. The Island's median age of 50.7 also distinguishes it from other Washington communities, with the 65+ population expected to continue growing - a trend of note for long-range community planning.

Parks, recreation, and open space are key to Bainbridge Island's quality of life. Park lands provide public access to the Puget Sound shoreline, forested areas, and athletic facilities. The recreational trail network links residents and visitors to recreation facilities, historic sites, public art, and scenic viewpoints. Together, the larger system provides the community with opportunities to gather, exercise, learn, enjoy special places and events, and conserve nature.

Since 1965, the Bainbridge Island Park District – voted on in 2004 to become a metropolitan park district - has served its mission to steward park lands and services dedicated to recreation, culture, and access to nature. The Bainbridge Island Park & Recreation District has the same boundaries as the City of Bainbridge Island, but is an independent jurisdiction, funded by a dedicated portion of local tax property taxes.

Over the years, the Park District has partnered with community organizations to acquire land, develop parks, and manage facilities, extending offerings, beyond the limits of public financing. These efforts have created a diverse range of assets and programming, from playgrounds and aquatic facilities to art classes and outdoor excursions.

Throughout this update of the Bainbridge Island Parks, Recreation, and Open Space (PROS) Plan - also known as the Park District's 2026 Comprehensive Plan - the community provided essential direction for the PROS system. We asked how parks, trails, open space, and recreation services add to people's lives and can serve them better. We looked at maps to identify favorite places and experiences, along with areas needing improvement. We also discussed fiscal realities, scale of operations, and maintenance needs - acknowledging evolving strategies to achieve community goals and desired service levels.

This plan is a summary of that effort. It presents a snapshot of publicly accessible park, recreation, and open space assets. Then it conveys the community input gathered through a statistically valid survey and public participation. Finally, it outlines strategies to focus future efforts on community goals, providing an updated Level of Service (LOS) and a list of actions to guide the Park District in delivering this plan.



SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS SINCE THE 2020 PLAN:

- **2020:** Expanded Youth Sailing Recreation program and access to Recreational Shoreline Facilities — including a restroom, connection to 2-mile trail network, and a 220-foot-long dock that was paid for with community donations and state grant funding.
- **2021:** Completion of the KidsUp! Playground, a one-of-a-kind, inclusive playground at Battle Point Park, with a community fundraising through the Bainbridge Island Parks & Trails Foundation.
- **2022:** Recreation participation at the Park District more than doubled, despite COVID-19 pandemic, largely due to the opening of the Bainbridge Island Recreation Center (BIRC), with over 50,000 Indoor Facility square feet for recreation and community programming.
- **2023:** Formation of the Natural Resources department, encompassing trail maintenance and development, community stewardship programs, and the management of the Natural Areas, including conservation areas with the Bainbridge Island Land Trust.
- **2024:** Opening of new synthetic turf field at Woodward Middle School, with field lighting, completed by the School District with donations from user groups.
- **2025:** Completion of the Island's first dedicated bike facility, Strawberry Hill Bike Park, in partnership with the Bainbridge Island Parks & Trails Foundation.

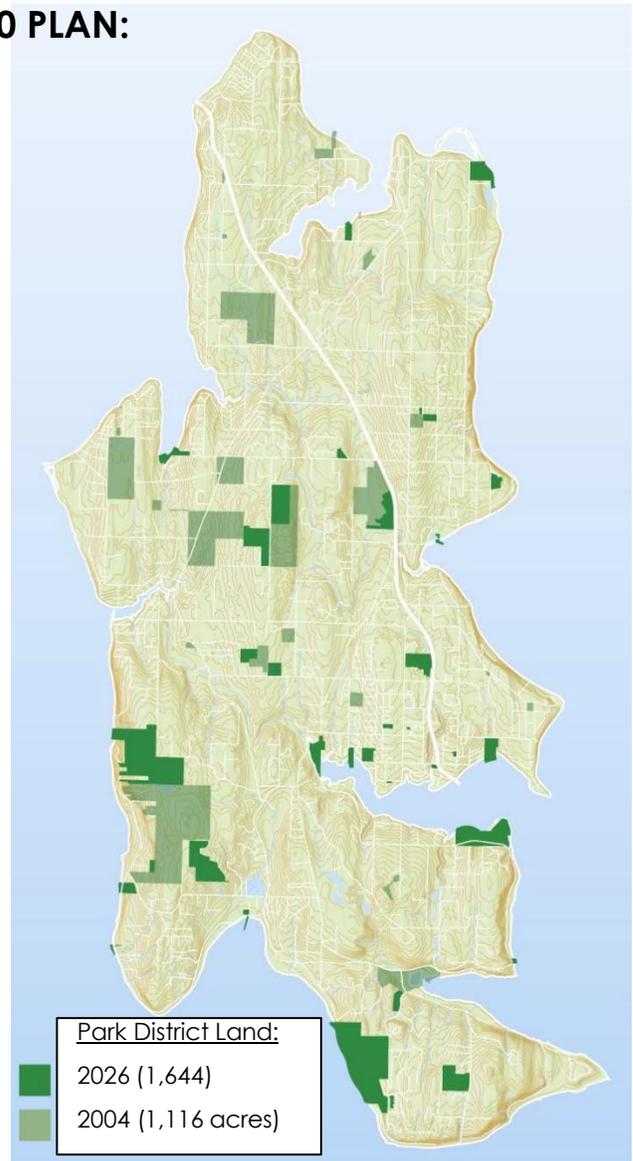


Figure 2: Park system growth since 2004 inventory

Noteworthy park system expansions:

In 2001, Island residents approved an \$8 million open space bond authorizing the City of Bainbridge Island to collect tax funds to purchase open space, forested areas, wildlife habitat, and properties for trails and passive parks. The City transferred numerous properties purchased with these funds to the Park District, as noted in Park Exhibits, Appendix E.

In 2011, Fay Bainbridge and Fort Ward parks were transferred from the State of Washington to the Park District.

SYSTEM AREAS & LEVEL OF SERVICE (LOS)

A key task of this planning effort was to create a structure for the community to evaluate and guide its parks, recreation, and open space system. A structural approach is needed to understand purpose, functions, and relationships of a complex system with a vast array of public and private assets. This resulted in the five system areas introduced in this plan: **Active Use Park Land**, **Natural Areas**, **Recreational Shoreline**, **Recreational Trails**, and **Recreation** (often housed within **Indoor Facilities**). [See pages 23-24 for more detail.]

These categorize the system in a comprehensive manner that offers pragmatic approaches to understanding, developing, utilizing, and maintaining park lands, facilities, and recreational services.

Another initiative of this update to the plan was to translate community feedback into measurements that reflect community values and interests. [See page 69, regarding LOS.] For example, the previous plan accounted for 59.23 acres of park land per 1,000 residents as the metric to maintain amidst population growth. This method focuses only on the quantity of park lands, and it did not account for the quality or distribution of system-wide assets across the Island.

Quantity, Quality, and Distribution

[See Figure 3]

Following guidance from the Washington State Conservation and Recreation Office (RCO), this plan now outlines a LOS metric that measures the quantity, quality, and distribution of park land and facilities that serve the community.

Quantity: This plan uses a peer comparison to evaluate the quantity of park land and facilities provided on the Island. Four peer jurisdictions were selected based on population size, median income, and other factors. Compared to these jurisdictions, Bainbridge Island has significantly more park land, trail miles, and indoor facilities, earning it a score of 5 out of 5 for each System Area.

Quality: The Park District evaluated how each of its own assets meet their purpose and function within System Areas. On a 1-to-5 rubric, a score of 3 indicates that an asset or System Area is meeting its intent. The average score of 2.82 indicates that there is room for improvement here through the addition of facilities, maintenance and renovation, environmental stewardship, or other initiatives aimed at improving the condition of park lands and services.

Distribution: Distribution was evaluated by calculating the percentage of the population within certain distances from recreation access points. Scores were assigned based on RCO guidelines for service ranges, with an overall score of 4.6. There are access deficiencies to address but this indicates that the majority of Bainbridge Island residents are within the service ranges of park lands and facilities.

Bainbridge Island PROS System Level of Service Scores

	Quantity	Quality	Distribution
<i>Average Scores</i>	5	2.82	4.6

Figure 3: Overall LOS Scores (on a scale of 1 of 5)

LEVEL OF SERVICE: TAKEAWAYS

The LOS calculation shows that there is no shortage of park land and facilities, and that these assets are well distributed throughout the Island. Park quality is the area with opportunity for improvement, indicating the need to upgrade existing assets and maintenance levels.

Improving park land quality does not exclusively entail large capital funding projects. Quality can improve strategically by re-investing in existing assets, extending the application of limited funding. The Natural Areas average score of 2.5, for example, indicates a need for long-term land management strategies.

As the Park District updates capital projects and long-range initiatives, the LOS metrics help steer towards community goals and the desired impactful outcomes. An evaluation process is delineated in "Sticking the Landing," which then outlines implementation measures reflective of system needs and objectives.

ROLES, GOALS, & OBJECTIVES

The roles, goals, and objectives of the plan translate what we heard during public engagement around core community values. For each system area, this plan outlines long-range Community Goals that pertain to the entire PROS system, as well as Implementation Objectives to be carried out by the Park District in the next six years.

The list below outlines the overarching Community Goals by System Area:

Active Use Park Land:

Meet the needs of daily recreation for people of all ages and abilities

Natural Areas:

Conserve and manage the community's natural resources by varied efforts to:

- Increase access to nature where planned,
- Conserve ecosystems of high ecological value such as streams, wetlands, and salt marshes for the benefit of local flora and fauna,
- Pursue climate resilience and the mitigation of environmental impacts

Recreational Shoreline Areas:

Enhance safety and public access along the shorelines of Bainbridge Island,

Preserve and enhance opportunities for shoreline access and protection,

Expand water recreation within recreational shoreline areas

Recreational Trails:

Increase connectivity of the community's trail network, expanding the access and useability of recreational trails

Recreation:

Provide opportunities for exercise, socializing, learning, and celebration through classes, events, performances, and other recreational activities

KEY VALUES GUIDE IMPLEMENTATION

The ability of the Park District to facilitate Island-wide service levels – both maintenance and improvements – depends on the availability of funding and the capacity of partner organizations. New investments must be carefully vetted to ensure that resources are allocated in a way that best address community values. A key addition to this plan is the establishment of key value considerations to guide Park District decisions.

Implementation: Key Values

The following values guide implementation initiatives:

Safety: Properly maintaining facilities is crucial for safe usership. The management of park lands to reduce the risk of wildfire on the Island exemplifies this priority value.

Access: This term and value encompass many meanings: accessibility, affordability, distribution, and proximity being a few. Valuing access means striving to ensure that people of all ages, abilities, backgrounds, and income levels can enjoy park and recreation assets.

Experience: Valuing experience means providing comfort, offering amenities, creating opportunities for community building, and fostering pride for the Island's history, culture, and assets.

Ecological Stewardship: When making decisions, leaders should also consider ecological aspects such as habitat contiguity and aquifer recharge.

KEY CHALLENGES AHEAD

This plan comes at a time when the Park District is determining how to move forward amidst budget limitations. The immense system of park land, facilities, and programs utilizes 94% of the current budget, leaving a small amount for capital improvements, requiring savings for necessary renovations and major repairs. To add new park land or facilities to the system means not only drawing from a relatively small capital improvement budget, but to committing to the additional associated operation cost to maintain the park system.

The collection of property taxes, the Park District's primary source of revenue, is controlled by state law and has not kept up with inflation costs. To ensure that the Park District can maintain what it currently owns and manages, this plan recommends a levy lid lift to secure necessary funding. This voter-approved measure will need to be considered during each six-year planning cycle of the PROS plan.

In the next six years and beyond, the Park District will continue to work with its partners to serve the community. It is through these partnerships that the Island's PROS system has grown to what it is today, a comprehensive system that critically contributes to the quality of life for residents and visitors of all ages.

PLAN ORGANIZATION

The Bainbridge Island Metropolitan Park & Recreation District (BIMPRD or the Park District) has been undergoing the process of updating its Comprehensive Plan, also known as the “Bainbridge Island PROS Plan” in line with the Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) expectation to do every six years. This not only allows the Park District to maintain eligibility for grant funding, it is also an opportunity to connect with the public, check in about experiences, and set a vision for the system of park lands, trails, and indoor facilities on the Island.

This document outlines key findings and decision points related to growing and maintaining the assets that allow Bainbridge Island residents to recreate, experience nature, and enjoy public gatherings. These include assets owned and operated by the Park District, as well as those provided by partner organizations. While the plan focuses on priorities for the coming 6–10 years, the missions and plans already established among partners serve as the foundation of on-going efforts.

This plan is meant to be both a resource for residents to understand the assets they have access to, and the guide towards implementing the shared vision of a shared system into the future. This document is organized into six sections:

Who we are:

What are the demographics of Bainbridge Island residents? How are they likely to change over the planning horizon?

What We Have:

What currently exists within the park, trail, and recreation system on Bainbridge Island? What is owned and managed by the Park District, and what is offered by partner organizations?

What We Heard:

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

What We Need:

How do we evaluate the Quantity, Quality, and Distribution of parks, trails, and indoor facilities?

How We Get There:

What should the Park District prioritize, and how will that be funded?

Sticking the Landing *:

Implementation items to direct future decision-making.

How We Pay for It:

Funding Strategies and the approved Capital Improvement Plan

** Title Inspired by gymnastic youth whom attended Stakeholder Meetings to advocate for new equipment and an updated venue beyond the school gym. In the budgeting game, they invested nearly all capital funds available over the next 6 years (6 cents on the each dollar collected) into a new gymnastics facility.*

PLANNING CONTEXT

The Park District Comprehensive Plan evaluates how the parks, recreation, and open space system (PROS) is serving the public. Each planning effort includes a focused public engagement process resulting in an updated vision for how the system should evolve to meet the needs of a changing and growing population. The table below outlines Bainbridge Island's past and projected population growth, to be consistent and concurrent with the City's Comprehensive Plan.

	2020	2025	2044
Population	24,825	25,530	29,349

Figure 4: Bainbridge Island Population Growth

The graphic below shows the lifecycle of this PROS Plan; adopting the plan is just one small part of the Plan's full lifecycle which includes implementation, monitoring, and periodic refinement.

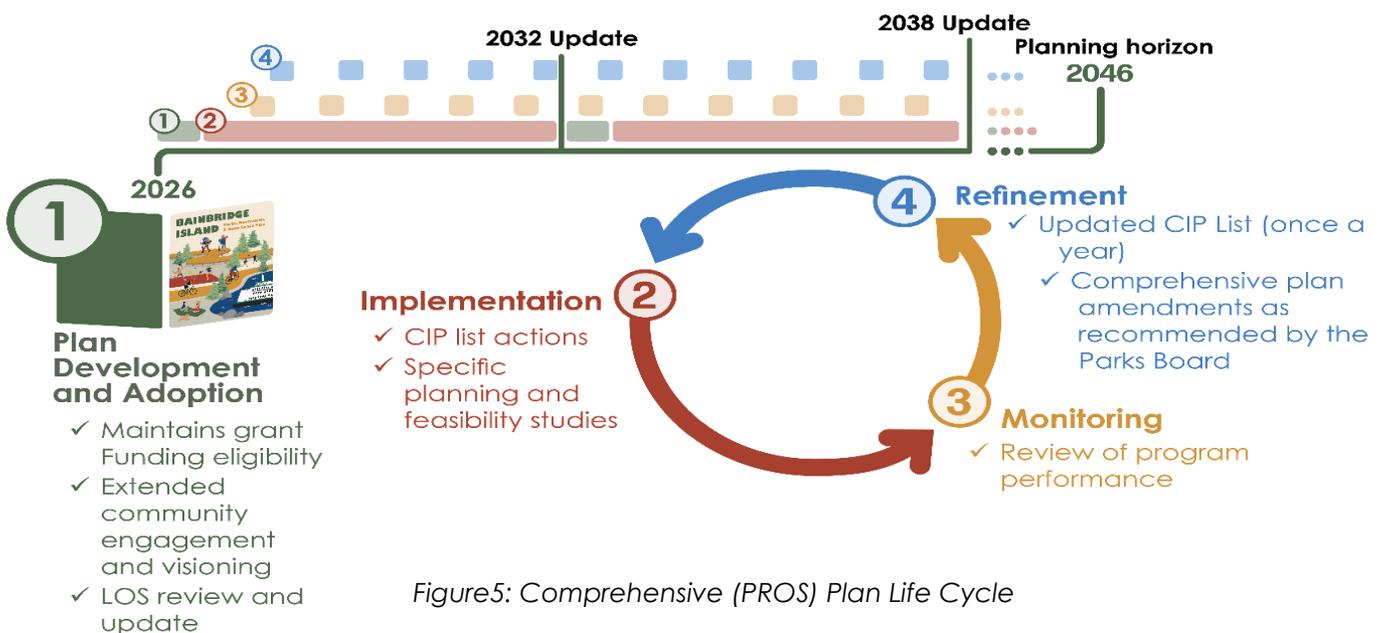


Figure 5: Comprehensive (PROS) Plan Life Cycle

PROS Plan documents must be updated every six years for communities to be eligible for grant funding from the Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO). Under the RCO's Planning Manual #2, a PROS Plan must contain the following:

- Goals and Objectives
- Inventory
- Public Involvement
- Demand and Need Analysis
- Capital Improvement Program
- Notice of Adoption

Our District

On September 14th, 2004, Bainbridge Island residents voted that the local Park District become a metropolitan park district. Per State code, metropolitan park districts are distinct from municipal jurisdictions in which they operate, with an independent property tax structure and elected body.

Park Board

The Park Board, comprised of 5 elected commissioners, for 6-year terms, is the Park District's decision-making elected body.

Who Provides Park Lands, Trails, & Facilities on Bainbridge Island?

The following diagram shows the partner organizations involved in providing and caring for Bainbridge Island's many park lands, open spaces, trails, and recreational facilities. These partnerships work towards supporting the community and maintaining accessible green spaces for residents and visitors alike.



Figure 6: System providers and their principal roles

Map: Park, Recreation, and Open Space System Ownership

Properties that contribute either park land, park facilities, and/or natural areas to form Bainbridge Island's Park, Recreation and Open Space (PRO) System

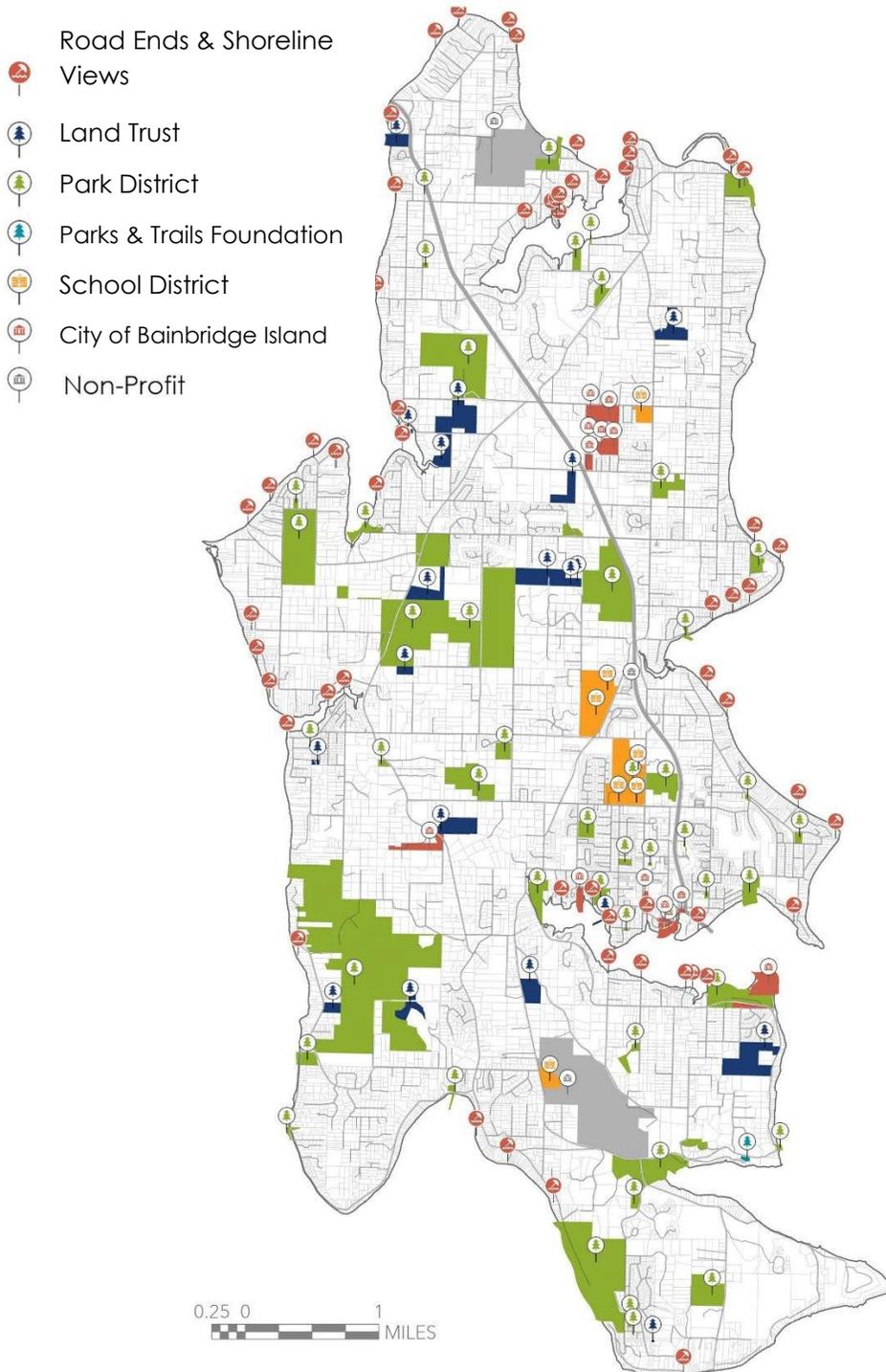


Figure 7: Park lands map by ownership