

# Meeting Summary

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS  
FEBRUARY AND MARCH 2019

## Meeting Purpose

Engage individuals or small groups with specific interests in the parks, recreation and natural areas system in Renton to discuss their perspective on changes in the community, how people engage with the system and how to improve parks, recreation and natural areas.

An agenda with open-ended questions (attached) was used to prompt the discussions, which varied greatly depending on the stakeholder's connection to the topic. These individual perspectives help the planning team identify issues that can be explored in the plan update process. This summary records and carries forward the main ideas from each conversation.

## Initial Themes

The stakeholder interviews are part of several layers of input opportunities informing the update of this plan. As the process continues, the project team will consider all these efforts together in a growing and evolving understanding of community input. While these conversations were unique by design, some interesting points from across these interviews include:

- Connect physical places and park users to the area's past, community culture and art;
- Create a parks, recreation and natural areas system that works for everyone;
- Explore additional partnerships in programming or events, recognizing this would require some additional coordination;
- Make parks more dog owner-friendly by modifying rules or features to support bringing dogs along;
- Recognize the unique role that Renton's parks play in providing water access;
- Design and use parks for community events, place making and as gathering spaces; and
- There is community interest in exploring the intersection of parks and food, including food trucks and food insecurity.

**Participant: Rocale Timmons,**  
**Perspective: Seco Development**  
**Interview: February 26, 2019**  
**Conducted by: Lauren Schmitt (MIG)**

- Would like to see more incorporation of the arts and involvement of the Arts Commission, which has gained footing over the last few years.
- The park system needs to evolve to better meet needs today and tomorrow. This includes wayfinding and placemaking.
- Maintaining roots is important. Some stories that could be told within the park system include coal mining, Boeing and healthcare.
- Would like to see more food trucks/food events at parks.
- Interest in using public R.O.W. more creatively to expand parks and recreation opportunities.
- Untapped potential to partner with local corporations, who see Renton as their hometown and feel social responsibility toward the city.
- Likely potential in expanding public/private partnerships for parks. Tools such as intensifying zoning in exchange for improvements or requiring trail easements have potential.
- Southport will have 7000-9000 people at build out with Class A tech space, structured parking and other features.

**Participant: Millie Phung**  
**Perspective: Renton Housing Authority**  
**Interview: February 26, 2019**  
**Conducted by: Lauren Schmitt (MIG)**

- Housing employees visit parks, play, and meet friends and family. They also attend city events.
- The Highlands Sunset Neighborhood Park is across from the Housing office and is well-used. It has changed the character of the neighborhood, with more eyes and more lighting.
- People love the river.
- Housing also created a volleyball team and play at Riverview. They hold staff meetings at park shelters to get people outside.
- Majority of Housing residents are seniors (approximately 300 seniors) who are in independent living and there is not much turnover.
  - They go to City events.
  - They mostly spend time indoors.
  - They bring their dogs when they go places.

- Some use the Senior Center.
- The Housing Authority contracts with a shuttle service that allows seniors without cars to get places, including to parks.
- Posters/printed materials seems to work well with their senior population.
- Most senior properties have garden space/plots.
- Programs that seniors mention as being needed: ESL, computer training, lunch/food programs, bingo, cooking classes.
- Housing has 8 properties with families. These tenants typically have children and don't interact much with the Housing Authority staff. They are located near the neighborhood center and use it.
- In Housing Authority properties, languages other than English are common. For many of the seniors, English is their second or third language. Top languages in Housing Authority properties: Russian, Chinese (Cantonese), Somali, Vietnamese. Though there are a lot of Spanish speakers in Renton, there are not as many in Housing Authority properties. They work with Neighborhood House.
- Regarding changes in Renton, the Sunset Area is transforming. People are buying up substandard properties and renting them out as is. From observing the number of cars, it appears that multiple families are living in single units or homes. This means the density of park users is probably higher in the Sunset Area than the zoning might indicate. There are code compliance issues with the landlords. The Healthy Housing Initiative is helping address code compliance. Section 8 inspections also help.
- Housing loves to work with the City, because their residents love to go to events and activities. They can help get word out to residents about City efforts or programs and may be able to help with posters.
- Regarding desired changes in the park system:
  - Make Coulon dog-friendly by allowing dogs at off-peak times/seasons, especially near the trail;
  - More barbecues and reservable shelters throughout the system;
  - More picnic tables and seating throughout the system;
  - Regular activation and placemaking, including scheduled food trucks; and
  - Safety improvements on the Cedar River Trail, including the library underpass.

**Participant: James Alberson**

**Perspective: Renton Chamber of Commerce Board Chair and Local Business Owner**

**Interview: February 27, 2019**

**Conducted by: Lauren Schmitt (MIG)**

- Lake access, Liberty Park and River Days are highlights.
- Farmers Market and events downtown such as the car show are great for downtown and businesses.



- The Chamber has been successful at incubating events, and this may be an area of collaboration in the future too.
- Interest at the Chamber in bringing in new businesses and developers who are open to new ideas and interested in investing/improving properties.
- Dogs (especially at Coulon Park) and food trucks are topics that come up lately.

**Participants: Victoria García Tamayo; Kim J. Wicklund**

**Perspective: Community Health, Kaiser Permanente, Washington**

**Interview: February 28, 2019**

**Conducted by: Ryan Mottau (MIG)**

- Kaiser looks at community health efforts at both a regional (Washington) and a local scale.
- Currently working on a Community Health Needs Assessment that has some overlap with the City’s parks and recreation efforts. Three elements of this assessment:
  - Thriving schools: supporting K-12 education;
  - Safety net: including clinics, basic needs and food insecurity; and
  - Thriving people and places: is the community surrounding our facilities and programs healthy?
- Thriving people and places area is expanding and under-development now.
  - Working from an “Anchor Institution” framework to benefit the local economy.
  - Addressing the connection that economic opportunity has to health outcomes.
- Thriving schools includes several areas that are important to parks and recreation:
  - Opening play areas and joint use of schools and parks;
  - Promoting mental health; and
  - Healthy eating and active living.
- Kaiser marketing is also present in the community.
  - Sponsoring events, including farmer’s markets.
- There are many connections to be made to parks, trails, natural areas, recreation programming.
  - Programming is a difficult one to support.
  - Kaiser is not an effective programming provider.
  - Could be a co-developer of a curriculum for programming the City or others could provide.
- Other resources:
  - Human resources can help advertise community input activities (send the project website link).
  - Chief Financial Officer is a Renton resident.
  - Kaiser Research Institute can help answer questions about existing research that supports efforts.

- Center for Community Health Evaluation has developed a logic model to guide investment in community health initiatives.

**Participants: Karen Walter**

**Perspective: Muckleshoot Tribe, Fisheries Biologist**

**Interview: March 29, 2019**

**Conducted by: Ryan Mottau (MIG)**

- Entire city of Renton is within the usual and customary lands and fisheries of the Muckleshoot people.
- Treaty rights of the Muckleshoot People predate the City of Renton and the State of Washington.
- Currently the Cedar River is not actively fished by the Tribe to protect the fish populations.
  - If that were to change, the main tribal concern would be access.
  - May also require explanation of the native rights to other community members.
- Lake Washington is important to fish and to tribal fishing.
- Sampling juvenile salmon at Coulon Park and the south end of Lake Washington has helped establish the importance of the natural shore line.
- Resident orca populations rely on chinook salmon as a food source.
- Salmon recovery has been extremely difficult; water is:
  - Too hot,
  - Too little, and
  - Polluted.
- While more wholistic thinking and action is happening, connectivity between improvements is a challenge.
- Trail protection and maintenance on the bank of the Cedar River is not fish-friendly.
- Encourage early coordination with the Tribe as projects move forward from this plan.
- The Tribe is looking to build formal agreements to document decisions and partnerships, relying less on personal relationships.
- Opportunities for this plan to advance understanding and express intent:
  - Include text in the context of this plan that recognizes the native people who have (and still do) live in and use the area.
  - Express intent to work together on common interests.
- Additional perspectives that could contribute to the plan:
  - Cultural resources group is interested in restoring gathering areas and native vegetation;
  - Muckleshoot people who live in Renton; and
  - A revived canoe family.