

PURPOSE OF A PROGRAM PLAN

SETTING THE FUTURE DIRECTION AND DESIGN PRINCIPLES FOR THE PARK



GUIDING PRINCIPLES

This document is designed to help protect the Park integrity and character, while setting the stage and direction for any renovation or future capital enhancements within Point Defiance Park by following these principles:

- Balance environmental concerns and outdoor recreational opportunities within this regional park. Provide recreational and educational development that fosters appropriate use of the Park while preserving its remoteness and intrinsic value.
- Increase year-round quality programs for Tacoma citizens that recognize the cultural diversity represented in the region so the Park can continue to serve as a tourist destination for Pierce County.
- Provide a diversified opportunity of trails and related services that will offer outstanding opportunities for creative use of outdoor time.
- Manage and maintain the Park so that it retains its important scenic, natural and cultural values.
- Preserve significant biologic, geologic, scenic and historic resources within the Park.
- Interpret the Park by focusing educational programs on the visitor's relationship to nature and humanities, natural processes, ecology, the value of natural conditions and the history of the Park.
- Improve access to and use of the Park by members of groups that are underrepresented, such as persons with disabilities, the economically disadvantaged and elderly park visitors.
- Participate in partnerships with other public agencies, nonprofit organizations, volunteers and the private sector to achieve mutual goals.
- Pursue all appropriate revenue generating activities within the Park to ensure the fiscal health of the District.

As a community leader in conservation, Metro Parks Tacoma should consider making Point Defiance Park a model and strive for sustainable development.

BALANCED APPROACH

Understanding the Park's Land Allocation

As a public agency dedicated to transparency in its operation, the Park District offers this document to help Tacoma residents understand the goals and strategies of the agency and how to make their interests known. The document highlights opportunities the public had to participate in the planning, development, operation, interpretation and stewardship of this document. Metro Parks Tacoma preserves a rich heritage of natural and cultural resources for Tacoma citizens and the District wishes to showcase the jewel of the park system, Point Defiance Park. The program plan should enhance the customer experience and promote open space, trails, safe and healthful recreation and environmental education.

As stated in Executive Director Wilson's opening letter, the goal is to maintain a careful balance between the commitment to protect and conserve resources, while providing important opportunities for recreational and educational use of the Park, both now and in the future.

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PARK AND PROGRAMS SERVE AS AN ECONOMIC CATALYST FOR TACOMA

A recent study shows over 3 million people visit Point Defiance annually. While unique places like the Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium and Fort Nisqually have a 75% non-resident visitor rate, Point Defiance Park itself and Ruston Way attract 40% of their guests on a regular basis from outside the City limits. This waterfront and park experience is a destination. According to the study, 98% of the visitors drive to Point Defiance and 90% drive to Ruston Way. However, the new connection between the two experiences encourages more non-motorized modes of transportation such as bicycling and walking.

An Economic Study commissioned by Metro Parks Tacoma (MPT) revealed that overall spending generated by Ruston Way and Point Defiance is estimated to be \$2.7M by residents and \$12.5M by non-resident visitors. This spending is above and beyond any admissions and MPT sales. It is what users spend in or on their way to experience these public treasures. Together, Ruston Way and Point Defiance form a destination which generates \$15M in direct economic benefit annually.

Metro Parks Tacoma employs nearly 100 career employees to manage Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium, Boathouse Marina, Fort Nisqually Living History Museum and their associated grounds. An additional 175-200 summer seasonal and part-time employees find entry level work through the District at Point Defiance Park. In short, the application of tax funds to a destination such as Point Defiance creates jobs and stimulates our local economy.

Additionally, Point Defiance Park drives tourism to our community. Tourism is enhanced by the ferry terminal, the Tacoma Yacht Club and Anthony's Restaurant. While providing enjoyment to visitors, these locations also return revenues that help to offset the cost of managing the Park. Leases on site generate nearly a half million dollars each year to support this popular shoreline destination.

Point Defiance is also home to many events which draw visitors from across the Puget Sound. Taste of Tacoma is the largest, drawing over 220,000 visitors. There are also organized runs that take advantage of the Park landscape and road system such as the Sound to Narrows Run. In addition, Metro Parks Tacoma and other organizations host races that fill the streets of Point Defiance from September to May resulting in approximately 10,000 more runners.

Having programs that drive additional revenue help to relieve tax support and general fund subsidy and are a major driving principle for this plan and future park development.

