

CITY OF RENTON



Recreation Plan

The recreation program offered to the public by the Recreation Division makes every effort to be balanced, customer-driven, and conceptually sound. To the outside observer, it may look like just an assortment of fun activities and random events that are haphazardly put together to fill a month's calendar. However, in reality, the programs offered represent many months of planning, community research, outreach to targeted groups, and customer feedback. A deeper look will reveal that the quality recreation programs provided by the Recreation Division can and do help to develop the social, physical, mental, and spiritual well-being of individuals, families, neighborhoods, groups, and communities. Examples of these efforts are listed below:

Conceptual Foundations of Play, Recreation and Leisure

Recreational experiences are more than just a fun way to spend a few minutes or hours. A quality recreational experience will also provide opportunities for the participant to express their creativity, develop their sense of self worth, and make choices that will enhance their over-all sense of well being and quality of life. Programs do not, in themselves, create a recreation experience. Instead, they provide opportunities for the participant to interact with the social, physical, and natural environments; thus allowing the participant to shape the recreation experience based on their own expectation, needs, and interests.

Recreation Division staff understand that quality recreation programs should be designed to promote a degree of freedom, choice, or voluntary engagement. They should have a stated purpose or objective, be wholesome, and encourage creative, spontaneous self-expression. Participants should not only feel a sense of delight while actively participating in the program, but should carry that sense of well being with them into the future. It should give them a chance for self-discovery and to develop individual skills such as leadership, the ability to share, and to be able to get along well with others. In other words, a quality recreation program will provide opportunities for the pursuit of joy and pleasure, excitement, challenge, and individual expression. Each recreation program planned by the Recreation Division has a stated, written goal that addresses these fundamental concepts.

Most quality recreation programs have a secondary purpose, which is the building of family, community, or special interest groups. Everyone recognizes the recreational value of a child playing soccer on a youth team, but many overlook the value of the interactions that are happening simultaneously among the parents in the bleachers or the younger siblings in the adjacent playground. Bringing people together to share an enjoyable experience (who would have otherwise not had any opportunity or reason to interact) is one of the best ways to break down barriers, develop new friendships, and create a sense of community. Similarly, helping participants connect with other people who share their interests can be the catalyst to developing life-long friendships. By providing opportunities for these interactions to occur, the Recreation Division is directly contributing to the development of strong families, neighborhoods, special interest groups, and ultimately the entire community.

Programming That Meets Constituent Needs

Renton is a city with rapidly changing demographics. Recent school district information revealed that children in the Renton School District's "English as a Second Language" program speak forty-seven different languages. Diverse ethnic groups such as Ukrainians, Sikhs, and Vietnamese comprise large segments of some neighborhoods. The City's work force is diversifying from one dominated by blue collar industries like Boeing and Paccar to retail and white collar businesses like Wizards of the Coast, Ikea, and dot-com companies. Single-family residences are being replaced with multi-family housing. All of these trends have a significant impact on the recreational needs and desires of the community. The Recreation Division staff strive to keep abreast of these changes by attending diversity training, meeting with neighborhood and community groups, and reviewing demographic reports as they are released. Formal and informal customer feedback is solicited in a variety of ways to ensure that programs are customer-driven and meeting the needs of as many people as possible. These include surveys, advisory groups, meeting with neighborhood groups, attending school open houses, and feedback through the City's web site, to name a few. In an effort to start crossing the language barrier, informational flyers about the Senior Activity Center programs were translated into Spanish and distributed to a local church that held Spanish language services. Spanish was chosen as the first language for this program, because it is the language of the largest ethnic group in the city. Other groups will be targeted in the future, as these are on-going efforts that will be continued indefinitely as our community continues to change.

Community Opportunities

The Recreation and Parks Divisions take full advantage of the abundant natural resources available within the City. The Senior Activity Center, Renton Community Center, Carco Theatre, Liberty Park, Maplewood Golf Course, Ron Regis Park, Riverview Park, and a lovely 4.5 mile walking/biking trail are all situated on the banks of the Cedar River. The boathouse is located on Lake Washington at the mouth of the Cedar River, offering the perfect location for both river and lake boating experiences. Numerous smaller parks, trails, open space preserves, and the Black River Riparian Forrest are situated along

smaller creeks and wetlands. The department's crown jewel is Gene Coulon Memorial Beach Park, which features 55 beautifully landscaped acres along the south banks of Lake Washington, with a breath-taking view of the snow-capped Olympic Mountains and Seattle skyline in the distance. The park contains picnic shelters, playground equipment, sand-lot volleyball, a swimming beach, nature trail, boat launch, water walk, fishing pier, canoe launch, tennis courts, public art, boat moorage, a lovely water-front picnic gallery, and two restaurants. It is generally acknowledged as the premier park facility on the entire lake. These beautiful park settings afford the Recreation Division the opportunity to provide programs like music in the park, City-wide special events such as "Clam Lights," camps, and sporting competitions in a serene and beautiful setting that enhances the esthetics of the event. Both City and non-city residents flock to these facilities to exercise, enjoy the cultural arts, or just take in the beauty of the area.

Other recreational resources available in Renton include indoor swimming pools that are operated by King County Parks, the school district and Renton Technical College. The YMCA does not have a facility in Renton, but they provide before and after school programming at many of the City's elementary schools. Several commercial gyms, an ice-skating rink, and several bowling alleys are available as well. A complete listing of community recreational resources is provided in the Recreation Plan manual and the Parks, Recreation and Open Space Comprehensive Plan. It is also important to note that Renton is surrounded on all sides by other municipalities that also provide recreation programming. In many cases, these programs are closer to Renton residents' homes than Renton's programs or facilities. For this reason, the Renton recreation staff regularly coordinate with their counterparts from King County, Kent, Tukwila, Bellevue, Newcastle, and Seattle Parks and Recreation Departments.

Recreation's Role in the City's Philosophy and Goal

The Recreation Division uses the recreational concepts listed above to help fulfill the organizational goals and objectives adopted by both the City Council and the Community Services Department.

City's Vision: *Renton – A world-class city where people choose to live, work, and play.* Providing quality parks and recreation programs is a vital part of making this vision a reality. To this end, the City leaders have committed significant funds over the years to provide their citizens with parks and recreation facilities that are designed, maintained, and staffed to a much higher standard than surrounding communities. The City's citizens repeatedly cite the parks and the recreation programs as one of the things that they are the most proud of in their city.

City's Mission Statement: *The City of Renton, in partnership with residents and business is dedicated to providing a healthy atmosphere to live and raise families.* Major factors in providing a healthy place to live and raise families include low crime rates; safe, well maintained parks and facilities where children can play; and the availability of recreational programs and activities that meet the needs and desires of the community. Renton's parks and recreational programs are planned to address these needs by

providing positive youth and teen programs, maintaining parks and facilities to the highest possible standards, and using many forms of customer feedback to ensure that programs are designed to meet the unique cultural, ethnic, age, and interest mix of the community.

Community Services Department Mission Statement: *The City of Renton Community Services Department promotes and supports a more livable community for Renton residents and businesses by providing relevant and innovative programs, modern parks and facilities, and undisturbed natural areas that meet the needs of a diverse population.* This mission statement ties the programs provided by the Recreation Division directly to the livability of the City. The Recreation staff make a concerted effort to be knowledgeable of the changing demographics of the community, so that their programs are relevant and enjoyable.

Recreation Division's Mission Statement: *The Renton Recreation Division will promote and support a more livable community by providing opportunities for the public to participate in diverse recreational, cultural, athletic, and aquatic programs and activities.*

Experience Desirable for Clientele

In addition to planning programs for the general public, the Recreation Division also targets programming to the needs and interests of specific groups. A good example is the very large and loyal special population group that actively participates in the City's "Special Pops" program. Between fifty and one hundred participants from Renton and the surrounding cities attend the social programs that are held each Thursday evening. In addition, the group enjoys monthly trips to restaurants, cruises, and points of interest throughout the area. They are also actively involved in a variety of sports—track and field, bowling, golf, softball, basketball, soccer, and many more. They have earned the reputation as "The team to beat" at the local and state Special Olympics competitions, and many times bring home team and individual medals in each and every category. These programs provide the participants opportunities to socialize, enhance self-esteem, learn new skills, and develop a sense of community. The programs also provide support and respite for their families, as well as a chance for them to share in the fun.

Other targeted programs offered by the Recreation Division include teen programming, Senior Activity Center programs, preschool activities, and summer camp programs held on-site at the local housing authority. Each program has a stated and written objective that explains what benefits the participant can expect to receive from taking part in the activity.