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## Executive Summary



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the fall of 2008, the City of Grants Pass began updating its Comprehensive Park & Recreation Master Plan to identify opportunities to enhance the City's park and recreation system. The Parks Comprehensive Plan creates a new 20-year vision for parks, open space,



trails, recreational amenities and urban forestry. It identifies the types of park and recreation opportunities the community desires, guides location decisions and provides the necessary mechanisms to implement recommended projects.

The Parks Comprehensive Plan is an update of the 1984 plan, which was intended to guide City park and recreation services through the year 2000. A new plan is needed to reflect today's priorities for the park system and changes in the community over the last 25 years. The updated Parks Comprehensive Plan will provide new goals, policies and strategies for maintaining and developing quality parks, facilities, trails and green space in a sustainable way. This Plan will provide a roadmap for park and recreation services through the year 2029.

### A. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The planning process included extensive public outreach to identify community preferences for the park system. More than 1,400 people participated in the planning process. According to feedback, residents love and use their park system. Their top recreation activities include walking, exercising, bicycling, dog walking, swimming, playing soccer and watching wildlife. Participation in trail-related activities is strong. Residents frequently use their local neighborhood parks, but their greatest need is for larger, community and regional parks that provide more recreation opportunities. Facilities such as trails, playgrounds, soccer fields, water play areas and dog parks are desired. The community's top priority is the maintenance and caretaking of existing parks. However, residents clearly want to see and support the development of park reserves.

### B. EXISTING RESOURCES

The Grants Pass park and recreation system has grown with the community in the last 25 years. The City Parks and Recreation Division

now manages 507 park acres at 32 sites. Of these, 24 sites support playgrounds, sports courts, picnic shelters, trails and a variety of other recreation amenities and facilities. The remaining eight sites are well-placed undeveloped park reserves that represent future recreation opportunities for the growing community.

The majority of the City's developed park acreage is located at two sites: Reinhart Volunteer Park and Riverside Park. These two signature attractions support a variety of community events and recreation activities. These include the popular Walk on the Rogue, Art Along the Rogue, Back to the 50's, and the Boatnik Festival, which draw thousands of visitors to these parks each year. Most undeveloped acreage is provided at one site: the River Road Reserve. By itself, this site provides more park acreage (248 acres) than the entire developed park system (194 acres).

The City's 194 acres of developed park land supports a basic level of service for residents, providing **less than 5 acres** of park land per 1,000 residents. Comparable cities in Oregon provide, on average, **over 16 park acres** per 1,000 residents. However, if the City's park reserves were developed, the City of Grants Pass would provide approximately 13 acres of park land per 1,000 residents.



In addition to City resources, Josephine County, the Bureau of Land Management, Grants Pass School District 7, Rogue Community College and several other agencies provide park and recreation opportunities. While their facilities help serve the community, their recreation opportunities are not always accessible or located where they are most needed. Maintenance, availability, access and location are all variables that impact the desirability and usability of these resources.

## C. PARK AND RECREATION NEEDS

This Plan identifies park and facility needs, based on the community's vision for the park system. The most significant park needs include:

- **Neighborhood Parks:** Neighborhood parks are needed in seven unserved areas in Grants Pass:
  - South Grants Pass in the Allenwood area (around an existing park reserve);

- Southeast Grants Pass in the Overland area (around an existing park reserve);
- Southeast Grants Pass in the Harbeck/Grandview area;
- South-central Grants Pass in the Nebraska area;
- Northeast Grants Pass;
- Northwest Grants Pass; and
- West Grants Pass.
- **Community Park:** A community park is needed in Grants Pass to help address a high demand for facilities such as soccer fields, water play areas, tennis courts, and trails. The Allen Creek Reserve, in conjunction with Garrison Fields, can provide a combination of active and passive recreation opportunities, connected to other parks and key destinations via the Allen Creek Trail.



- **Regional Park:** A regional park is needed to address community and regional demands for environmental preservation, outdoor education and recreation. A regional park at the River Road Reserve or another comparable property would help preserve a unique natural and cultural landscape while meeting pressing recreation needs. Residents would like to see a regional park with a mix of natural areas, plus active and passive facilities such as open play fields, a destination play area, water play area, community garden, Food Bank working farm, orchard, nature center, interpretive area, nature and recreation trails, boat launch, picnic shelter and other facilities that support the community's vision for parks and recreation.
- **Trail Corridors:** Trail-related activities are by far the most popular types of recreation activities in Grants Pass. Community-supported trail corridors are needed to improve park access, link existing trails, connect to the proposed regional trail system, and provide opportunities for recreation, exercise and non-motorized transportation.
- **Green Space:** More green space is needed throughout the City to protect the City's tree canopy, preserve the beauty of Grants Pass, protect natural resources and provide opportunities to enjoy the outdoors. Additional green space can be provided in trail corridors, a regional park and other park types.

## D. MAINTENACE PLAN

Along with new parks and facilities, residents want the City to take care of its existing parks, providing clean, safe, and inviting opportunities for

outdoor recreation. Existing City parks currently are well-maintained, and residents appreciate this level of care. Nevertheless, the adopted FY 2010 budget reduced funding and staffing for park maintenance due to national and local economic conditions. This reduction occurs even though new facilities have been added to Redwood Park and Reinhart Volunteer Park. To manage the park system more efficiently and assist with resource allocation, the Parks Comprehensive Plan includes recommendations to implement a tiered maintenance service plan. This tiered system will be used to update the City's maintenance management practices, including performance standards, frequency goals and time requirements.

The City currently needs approximately \$1.4 million annually to maintain the existing park system. Based on tiered costs to maintain parks, the City of Grants Pass should continue to maintain community parks, regional parks and special use areas at a high level. However, mini parks, neighborhood parks and green space will only receive more basic care. Undeveloped park reserves should be maintained at a lower level still, although the City may need to increase spending at park reserves to maintain site safety.



## E. VISION AND GOALS

Community values, priorities and preferences were used to define a vision and goals for Grants Pass parks and recreation. Through the public involvement process, the following vision emerged:

*We envision a safe, interconnected, and sustainable system of vibrant parks, thriving green spaces, and quality recreation opportunities that enhance our community and its economic vitality.*

To achieve this vision, the strategies and policies section of the Parks Comprehensive Plan notes specific projects that will help sustain the park system for future generations. These include recommendations in the following categories:

- **Parks and Green Space** describes actions that are needed to provide a balanced and equitable park system, which may incorporate partner sites.
- **Recreation Facilities** notes options for facility development that will enhance recreation opportunities in the future.

- **Environmental Policies** includes guidelines to promote sustainability, protect urban trees, wetlands, and other natural resources, and enhance park resources for future generations.
- **Maintenance** presents steps to ensure sufficient funding and maintenance resources are available to take care of existing parks and new parks when developed.
- **Funding Strategies** provides strategies to get the most from limited City resources, including raising rental and programming fees to reflect the true cost of facility use, enhancing partnerships, identifying new sources of capital and operations funding, and continuing to involve volunteers to support the park system.

## F. PARK COSTS AND PRIORITIES

Community involvement throughout the planning process helped create a comprehensive vision for the City's future park system. The scope of this vision is considerably larger than anything the City can achieve in the next 20 years. In fact, the anticipated costs associated with this vision exceed \$90.6 million. If the City implemented every project desired by residents, it also would need another \$3.7 million annually for parks maintenance and upkeep. Clearly, this is more than the City can afford.

For this reason, residents were asked to help identify the City's top priorities for park and recreation facilities. City leaders, staff, and community members spent several months reviewing recommendations to determine which projects were most important to them. Their feedback was used to create a short list of priority projects that *may be achievable* in the next 20 years. This will help the City make decisions about which projects should move forward first *when funding is available*.

The table on the next page notes these priority projects. Priority projects include expanding trails in community-supported areas, developing community and regional park facilities, and completing projects that were previously started in existing parks. Projects with strong partner support and outside funding, such as a proposed Food Bank farm, are supported as well. The total cost for priority projects is approximately \$21 million. However, volunteers, sponsorships, partnerships, donations and grants will decrease the amount that City will spend on park and facility development.

**Priority Projects and Costs (2009 Dollars)**

	PROJECT	ESTIMATED COSTS
<b>EXISTING PARKS</b>		
Fruitdale Park	Complete Phase II improvements.	\$788,000
Gilbert Creek Park	Add playground cover, off-leash dog area, and trail improvements.	\$150,000
Redwood Park	Complete Phase II improvements.	\$226,000 <sup>1</sup>
Riverside Park	Add sport court. Develop pedestrian/bicycle entry at 6 <sup>th</sup> Street. Move disc golf. Improve restrooms.	\$333,000
Reinhart Volunteer Park	Finish River Vista and associated improvements.	Completed
Tussing Park	Complete Phase II improvements.	Budgeted <sup>1</sup>
<b>Subtotal</b>		<b>\$1,497,000</b>
<b>PROPOSED PARKS AND TRAILS</b>		
NE Neighborhood Park	Investigate options to develop a new 5-acre neighborhood park in NE Grants Pass. Consider the Hillcrest Reserve, potential partnerships at school sites, or other appropriate sites. Create a site master plan and develop the site according to design and development guidelines.	\$1,250,000 <sup>2</sup>
Community Park	Investigate options to develop Allen Creek Reserve as a community park. Acquire additional acreage, create a site master plan, improve Garrison Fields, and initiate Phase I development.	\$8,767,000
Regional Park	Investigate options to develop the River Road Reserve or a comparable site as a regional park. Create a site master plan and pursue a partnership with the Food Bank to develop a working farm. Provide infrastructure and initiate Phase 1 development for facilities to be identified in the site master plan. These may include open playfields, a destination playground and sprayground.	\$6,502,000
Tom Pearce Trailhead	Investigate options to acquire 5 acres and develop a trailhead to improve access to Tom Pearce Park.	\$1,250,000
River City Trail	Create trail master plan to identify appropriate trail routes. Acquire corridors and extend current trails as proposed.	\$1,710,000
<b>Subtotal</b>		<b>\$19,479,000</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$ 20,976,000</b>

<sup>1</sup>Partial funds for Redwood Park and full funds for Tussing Park are included in the FY2009-2010 Adopted Budget.

<sup>2</sup>These funds are for park development only. No acquisition costs are noted.

Available funding and partner assistance will help determine if these projects can be implemented, including the order and timing in which priority projects will be pursued. Projects may be re-prioritized if substantial volunteer contributions or unanticipated funding becomes available, even for projects not noted on the short list. The City should take advantage of all available resources to implement projects in this Plan and achieve the community's vision for the future.

## G. IMPLEMENTATION

The short project list noted above presents community priorities for park and facility development *if and when funding becomes available*. These projects are not tied to a specific funding strategy, and the City is not under any obligation to fund and develop these projects. Nor are City residents under any obligation to pay for these improvements. However, the Parks Comprehensive Plan provides the policies, strategies, and guidance necessary to decide where to look for funding, how to obtain it, and where to spend it once the City has it. These efforts will involve future strategic funding decisions.

## H. STRATEGIC FUNDING DECISIONS

The Parks Comprehensive Plan advises proceeding in a conservative and systematic way to support parks and recreation in the future. This strategy involves maintaining existing parks first, and then investing in new parks and facilities when funds are available. If funding can be obtained, the Plan recommends proceeding with projects that increase



the recreation capacity of existing parks and/or provide the highest return on the City's investment. These include low-cost, high-impact projects, such as trail development, to get large numbers of residents out walking, biking and playing.

To implement this vision, both short-term and long-term funding strategies are needed. In the short-term, grants and volunteer-supported projects will continue to drive new park and recreation development. This means that community groups who are willing to fund and develop park facilities can move forward with projects that support the vision of this Plan. Also in the short term, the City should increase its cost recovery rates to decrease its reliance on the General Fund. Short-term revenues may include grants, facility use fees, recreation charges,

sponsorships, and other options to support maintenance and minor site enhancement.

In the long term, the City should consider more aggressive strategies to meet recreation needs in underserved areas. When the economy rebounds, the City should review its SDC methodology and consider adjusting rates to be comparable to other jurisdictions. The City may also consider broadening the Transient Room Tax to pass on development costs to out-of-town visitors who take advantage of City recreation opportunities. As conditions improve in the long term, the City may want to consider other funding mechanisms, such as a levy or General Obligation Bond, to fund priority projects. However, those options will require public approval, and community support will depend on future economic conditions.

Despite current challenges, the City of Grants Pass is well-poised to meet community recreation needs. It has a variety of well-maintained parks and facilities that support many different recreation opportunities. It owns a wealth of park properties, acquired through wise investments in strategic locations. It has strong leadership, an excellent maintenance team and a top-notch Parks Board who recruits volunteers and solicits donations to improve City parks. It has many park and recreation providers who are willing to work together to enhance the park system. In addition, Grants Pass has a great park constituency who recognize that parks and recreation are integral to a livable community. With all of these positive forces working for the common good, the City of Grants Pass should be able to achieve their future parks and recreation vision.



## I. MOVING FORWARD

The Comprehensive Park & Recreation Master Plan is a roadmap to the future. It provides directions for achieving a sustainable park system, where cost-effective stewardship of City assets is the key to park management. The Plan includes recommendations based on the community's vision for the park system. Vibrant parks, well-maintained facilities, peaceful green spaces and interconnected trails will link the community together to strengthen the fabric of the City. The Parks Comprehensive Plan captures this vision and conveys it to the community, so that citizens, City leaders and staff together feel

empowered to make strategic decisions to improve their community through people, parks and programs. As this Plan is implemented, City leaders and residents can determine how much they can invest to sustain the park system and create the quality of life they desire.

