

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

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A number of strategies exist to improve park and recreation service delivery for the Medford Parks and Recreation Department; however, clear decisions must be made in an environment of competing interests and limited resources. A strong community will be necessary to bring many of the projects listed in this Plan to life, and the Medford City Council has demonstrated over the last decade its willingness to support parks and recreation, park maintenance and a high quality of life.

The recommendations for park and recreation services noted in this Plan will trigger the need for funding beyond current allocations and for additional staffing, operations and maintenance responsibilities. Additional resources will be needed to leverage, supplement and support the implementation of proposed policies, programs and projects. The following implementation strategies are presented to offer near-term direction to realize these projects and as a means to continue dialogue between the City, its residents and its partners.

Given that the operating and capital budgets for the Department are limited, the implementation measures identified below look primarily to non-General Fund options. Additionally, a review of potential implementation tools is attached as Appendix H and includes local financing, federal and state grant and conservation programs, acquisition methods and others.

Partner Coordination & Collaboration

Specific projects and goals identified in this Plan demand a high degree of coordination and collaboration with other City departments and outside agencies.

Internal coordination with the Public Works and Planning departments can increase the potential of discrete actions toward the implementation of the proposed trail and path network, which relies heavily on street right-of-way enhancements, and in the review of development applications with consideration toward potential parkland acquisition areas, planned path corridors and the need for easement or set-aside requests. However, to more fully expand the extent of the park system and recreation programs, additional partnerships and collaborations should be sought.

Continued coordination with local school districts and private schools will advance a number of projects in which resources can be leveraged to the benefit of the community. The City should explore options with the Medford School District for joint financing and shared use of a new multi-use recreation and aquatic center that can serve the needs of both organizations.

As an active lifestyles community, Medford should explore partnership opportunities with regional health care providers and services, such as Asante, Providence and the Jackson County Health & Human Services Department, to promote wellness activities, healthy living and communications about the benefits of parks and recreation. For example, this group could more directly cross-market services and help expand communications about local wellness options, and they could sponsor a series of organized trail walks throughout Medford as a means to expand public awareness of local trail opportunities and encourage residents to stay fit. For example, other communities in the Pacific Northwest have been successful with funding requests to regional hospitals for the development and printing of community walking guides that highlight the health benefits of walking and include trail system maps and descriptions.

Volunteer & Community-based Action

Volunteers and community groups already contribute to the improvement of park and recreation services in Medford. Volunteer projects include wildlife habitat enhancement, invasive plant removal and tree planting, among others. Medford should maintain and update a revolving list of potential small works or volunteer-appropriate projects for the website, while also reaching out to the high schools to encourage student projects. While supporting organized groups and community-minded individuals continues to add value to the Medford parks and recreation system, volunteer coordination requires a substantial amount of staff time, and additional resources are necessary to enable a volunteer coordinator position to more fully take advantage of the community's willingness to support park and recreation efforts.

Local Funding

According to the City budget, Medford maintains reserve debt capacity for councilmanic bonds and voter approved debt. Although past attempts failed to secure voter approval for a new aquatic facility, the City should continue to examine options for a new multi-use recreation and aquatic center. Based on the community feedback conducted as part of this Plan in support of a new facility, the development of a new recreation center warrants a review of financing alternative and debt implications for such a large capital project, along with polling of voter support for such a project. Additionally, the Department should seek to re-use existing bond repayment funds for a reallocation toward increased staff support or as leveraged resources toward a large capital project such as a new recreation and aquatic center. Also, the continued collection of the Parks Utility Fee, Transient Lodging Tax and Car Rental Tax are critical to the Department's continued successful operations of its programs and facilities.

System Development Charges

Park System Development Charges (SDCs) are imposed on new development to meet the increased demand for parks resulting from the new growth. SDCs can only be used for parkland acquisition, planning and/or development. They cannot be used for operations and maintenance of parks and facilities. The City of Medford currently assesses Parks SDCs, but the City should periodically update the methodology and rate structure, as appropriate, to be best positioned to obtain future acquisition and development financing from residential development. The City should prioritize the usage of Parks SDCs to secure new park properties and finance park or path/trail development consistent with the priorities within this Plan.

Grants & Appropriations

Several state and federal grant programs are available on a competitive basis, including Oregon State Parks, LWCF and MAP-21. Pursuing grants is not a panacea for park system funding, since grants are both competitive and often require a significant percentage of local funds to match the request to the granting agency, which depending on the grant program can be as much as 50% of the total project budget. Medford should continue to leverage its local resources to the greatest extent by pursuing grants independently and in cooperation with other local partners.

Appropriations from state or federal sources, though rare, can supplement projects with partial funding. State and federal funding allocations are particularly relevant on regional transportation projects, and the likelihood for appropriations could be increased if multiple partners are collaborating on projects.

Parkland Donations & Dedications

Parkland donations from private individuals or conservation organizations could occur to complement the acquisition of park and open space lands across the City and UGB. Gift deeds or bequests from philanthropic-minded landowners could allow for lands to come into City ownership upon the death of the owner or as a tax-deductible charitable donation. Parkland dedication by a developer could occur in exchange for Park SDCs or as part of a planned development where public open space is a key design for the layout and marketing of a new residential project. Any potential dedication must be vetted by the Department to ensure that such land is located in an area of need or can expand an existing City property and can be developed with site amenities listed in the Department's *Guidelines for Site Selection and Development*.

Public-Private Partnerships

Public-private partnerships are increasingly necessary for local agencies to leverage their limited resources in providing park and recreation services to the community. Corporate sponsorships, health organization grants, conservation stewardship programs and non-profit organizations are just a few examples of partnerships where collaboration provides value to both partners. The City has existing partners and should continue to explore additional and expanded partnerships to help implement these Plan recommendations.

Park & Recreation District

Another approach to financing park, recreation and path/trail needs is through the formation of a special district. Municipalities across Oregon have favored the creation of Park and Recreation Districts (PRD) to meet the recreational needs of residents, while also being sensitive to the set of demands placed on general purpose property tax funds. Bend and Willamalane are two examples of successful PRDs in Oregon.

The Oregon Revised Statutes (Chapter 266) detail the formation and operation of such a district. Upon formation, the district would be managed by an elected board and have the authority to levy taxes, incur debt and issue revenue or general obligation bonds.

In particular, a PRD may be a viable option to help finance the construction and operation of a new multi-use recreation and aquatic center. As a regional facility, the PRD boundary could be enlarged to encompass nearby cities to help spread costs. A feasibility study should be conducted to explore the potential, financial viability and voter support for a PRD.

Other Implementation Tools

Appendix H identifies other implementation tools, such as grants and acquisition tactics, that the City could utilize to further the implementation of the projects noted in the CFP.