



The City of Medford is the major provider of park and recreation services in the City and within the region. This profile includes a description of the planning area, natural features, climate and vegetation, and demographics.

LOCATION & PLANNING AREA

Medford is located in southern Oregon in the heart of the Rogue River Valley and is the county seat for Jackson County. Located along Interstate 5 and just 27 miles north of the California border, Medford is the regional industrial, medical and service center of southern Oregon and northern California with an estimated market area of 400,000 to 450,000 people. The City lies approximately 25 miles southeast of Grants Pass, 12 miles northwest of Ashland, 76 miles west of Klamath Falls, and 118 miles east of the Pacific Ocean. Medford is about midway between Portland and San Francisco.

Bear Creek, one of the Rogue River's primary tributaries, flows through the City of Medford, and the 20-mile multi-use Bear Creek Greenway connects Medford to Central Point, Phoenix, Talent and Ashland.

The planning area for this Plan includes land within Medford city limits, plus the unincorporated land within the City's urban growth boundary (UGB).

NATURAL FEATURES

Medford's terrain is defined by its location in a river valley surrounded by mountains. The Rogue River runs approximately three miles north of the City, at its closest point. Medford is surrounded by rugged mountains that range from 3,000 to 8,000 feet in elevation, which include the Umpqua Divide to the north, the Cascades to the east, the Coast Range to the west, and the Siskiyou to the south. Visually, the snow-capped volcanic peak of Mount McLoughlin dominates the skyline east of Medford. Just north of the City, there are two flat-topped volcanic buttes, the Upper and Lower Table Rocks, which rise nearly 800 feet above the valley floor.

The City is divided into two distinct areas based on topography: the valley and the hillsides. The valley floor extends from the western edge of the planning area to Foothill Road. The terrain is generally level and consists of gentle to moderate slopes. East of Foothill Road, the terrain changes to moderate and steep hillsides that rise to the east. These hillsides, particularly in southeast Medford, have experienced significant new development in recent years.

Medford has several natural features that provide unique recreational opportunities. Bear Creek and Roxy Ann Butte are two of the City's most notable features. Bear Creek flows through the City and is bordered by steep banks and riparian vegetation. The City, Jackson County Parks and the Bear Creek Greenway Foundation have acquired portions of this corridor in an effort to create a continuous greenway from Central Point to Ashland. On the eastern edge of Medford, Roxy Ann Butte offers excellent views of the valley and the surrounding area. The City owns the 1,740-acre Prescott Park, which encompasses a majority of Roxy Ann Butte.

Other notable features in the area include Larson Creek, Lazy Creek, Crooked Creek and Griffin Creek. Each of these creeks is a tributary of the Bear Creek drainage corridor. The City has developed some trails along these corridors that could eventually provide connections to the Bear Creek Greenway. Some canals, such as Hopkins Canal, Phoenix Canal and Main Canal, also may provide possible corridors for future trails.

CLIMATE & VEGETATION

Protected by the surrounding mountains, Medford has a relatively mild climate and four distinct seasons, providing diverse opportunities for year-round recreation. In general, the climate is wet and cool in the winter and hot and dry in the summer. The average winter temperature is 36 degrees. Summers average 94 degrees and typically have 15 days over 100 degrees, but humidity is low. Medford averages 20.6 inches of precipitation per year, of which 3-8 inches is snowfall in the valley.

The native vegetation around Medford is a mix of three plant communities:

- Oak savannah: Once covered with native bunch grasses, this grassland is now dominated

by non-native grasses, colorful wildflowers, white oak and some ponderosa pine.

- Rogue Valley chaparral: Plants found in chaparral must be able to live in hot, dry conditions in shallow soils. Shrubs, such as the buckbrush and white-leaf manzanita, are common.
- Oak-pine woodland: This type of mixed woodland is a zone where oak savanna and chaparral communities merge with a sparse mix of madrone, black oak, Douglas fir and Ponderosa pine.

This natural vegetation affects the development of parks by introducing a variety of opportunities and challenges. For example, native and non-native grasses may affect the quality and maintenance of athletic fields, and lush green lawns require significant irrigation during the growing season. To provide more shade than that provided by the sparse local trees, additional trees may need to be planted and irrigated in City parks. Also, poison oak is a concern in places such as Prescott Park.

In addition to native plant communities, Medford is well-known for the pear orchards once prominent around the city. These orchards have influenced the character and economy of the City, as well as inspired several special events, such as the springtime Pear Blossom Parade and Festival. This citywide, five-day festival includes a parade, a golf tournament, a 5-K run, biking event, an arts and crafts fair, artisan food and beverages, and other recreational activities.

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

Demographic characteristics are important to note, since they influence recreational interests and participation. As population growth creates new demand for park and recreation services, factors such as age, employment, income and ethnicity play a role in determining recreational interests. These factors may affect an individual's level of participation, as well as his or her ability and desire for active recreation.

The City of Medford is a growing city and the largest in southern Oregon - home to many families with children, as well as older adults. Medford is slightly younger than the rest of Jackson County. Residents have slightly lower incomes than the County average, and one in five families lives in poverty. Residents are generally active and as a result levels of obesity and overweight are low compared to the rest of the country.

Population

Medford has experienced significant growth in the past 40 years, with a 159% increase in population from 1970 to 2010 (see Figure 1). Much of this increase occurred between 1990 and 2000, when the city grew by over 16,000 people, an annual rate of approximately 3.5%. However, the rate of population growth has slowed since - to approximately 1.5% annually over the past 15 years.

According to the 2010 Census, Medford grew by 19% between 2000 and 2010 to a

population of 74,907. Over this same time period, Medford grew faster than Jackson County as a whole, where the population increased by 12%. By 2015, the population of Medford had increased further to 77,655, according to Portland State University Population Research Center estimates.

The City of Medford’s Comprehensive Plan, adopted in 2007, projects further population growth over the next 25 years. It estimates the City’s population will grow to 111,025 people by 2026 and 133,397 by 2040, based on 2005 Portland State University Population Research Center forecasts. This growth would represent a 78% increase in total population between 2010 and 2040.

Figure I. Population Change – 1970 – 2040

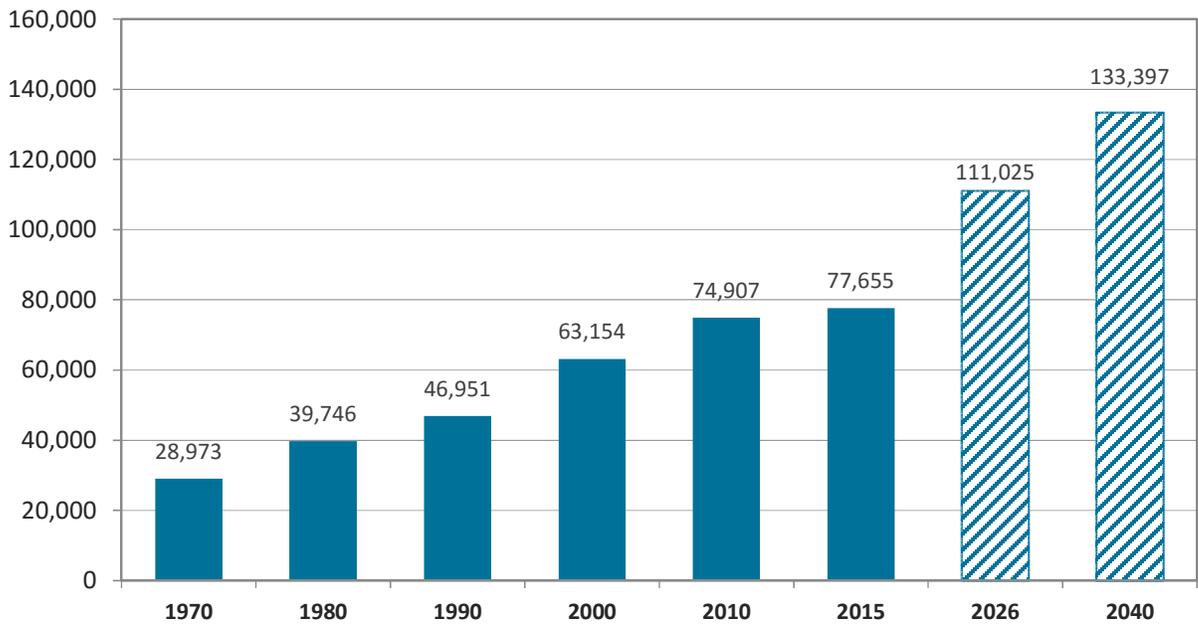


Figure 2. Population Characteristics: Medford, Jackson County, Oregon

| Demographics | Medford | Jackson County | Oregon |
|--|-----------------|----------------|-----------|
| Population Characteristics | | | |
| Population (2015) | 77,655 | 210,975 | 4,013,845 |
| Population (2010) | 74,907 | 203,206 | 3,831,074 |
| Population (2000) | 63,154 | 181,269 | 3,421,399 |
| Percent Change (2000-15) | 23% | 16% | 17% |
| Persons w/ Disabilities (%) | 16.4% | 16.9% | 14.2% |
| Household Characteristics (2010-14) | | | |
| Households | 29,695 | 82,977 | 1,522,988 |
| Percent with children | 26.9% | 24.6% | 28.3% |
| Median HH Income | \$42,366 | \$44,086 | \$50,521 |
| Average Household Size | 2.53 | 2.44 | 2.5 |
| Average Family Size | 3.06 | 2.96 | 3.05 |
| Owner Occupancy Rate | 51.2% | 62.4% | 61.5% |
| Age Groups | | | |
| Median Age | 37.9 | 42.1 | 38.4 |
| Population < 5 years of age | 7.2% | 5.9% | 6.2% |
| Population < 18 years of age | 24.1% | 21.8% | 22.6% |
| Population 18 - 64 years of age | 52.5% | 54.7% | 57.3% |
| Population > 65 years of age | 16.2% | 17.6% | 13.9% |

Age Groups

Medford has a younger overall population (median age 37.9) compared to Jackson County (42.1) and Oregon (38.4). The City has a higher percentage of youth under 18 than Jackson County (24% compared to 22%), but lower percentages of people age 18 to 64 (52.5% compared to 54.7%) and adults over 65 (16.2% compared to 17.6%). Medford’s population has aged slightly since 2000, when the median age was 37.

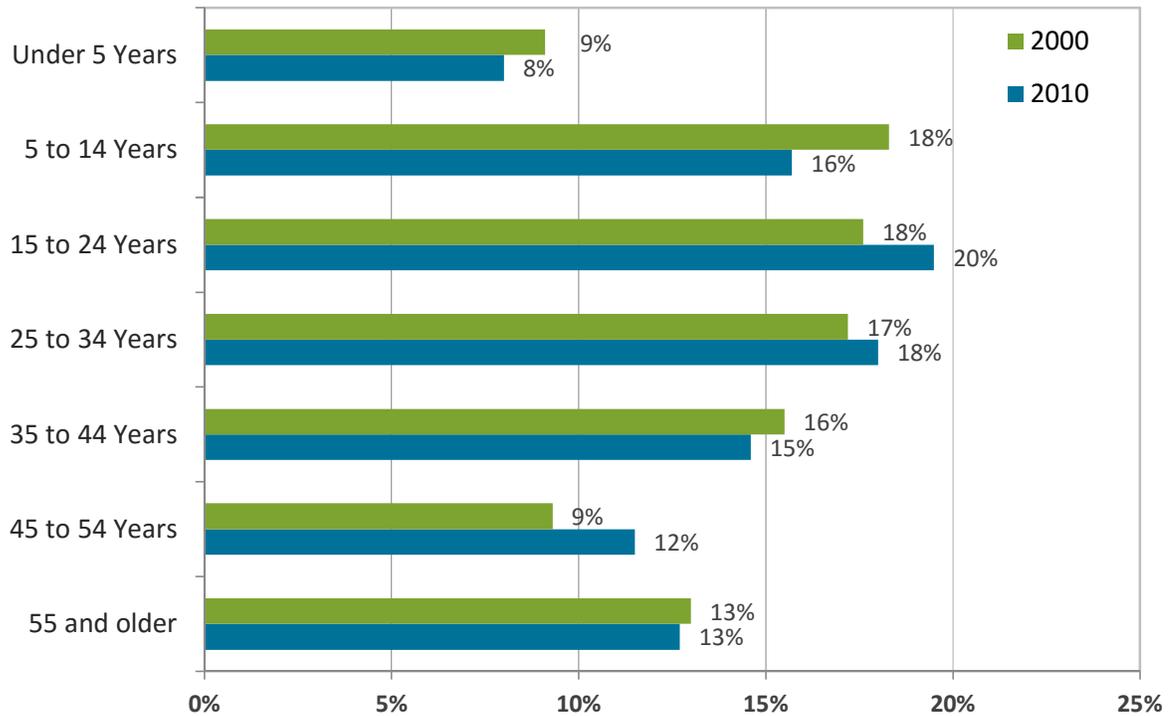
Medford’s population is relatively evenly distributed by age. The City’s largest “20-year” population group is comprised of 0 to 19 year-olds, representing 26.5% of the population in 2010. This differs from Jackson County, where the largest group is 45 to 64 year olds (29%). The following breakdown is used to separate the population into age-sensitive user groups.

- Under 5 years: This group represents users of preschool and tot programs and facilities, and as trails and open space users are often in strollers. These individuals are the future participants in youth activities.
- 5 to 14 years: This group represents current youth program participants.
- 15 to 24 years: This group represents teen/young adult program participants moving out of the youth programs and into adult programs. Members of this age group are often seasonal employment seekers.
- 25 to 34 years: This group represents involvement in adult programs with characteristics of beginning long-term relationships and establishing families.

- 35 to 54 years: This group represents users of a wide range of adult programs and park facilities. Their characteristics extend from having children using preschool and youth programs to becoming empty nesters.
- 55 years plus: This group represents users of older adult programs exhibiting the characteristics of approaching retirement or already retired and typically enjoying grandchildren. This group generally also ranges from very healthy, active seniors to more physically inactive seniors.

Figure 3 illustrates the age distribution characteristics of these cohorts and provides a comparison between 2000 and 2010 Census data.

Figure 3. Age Group Distributions: 2000 & 2010



Race & Ethnicity

In 2010, nearly 86% of Medford residents identified as White alone. In the same year, the City was 1.5% Asian, 0.9% African American, 1.2% American Indian or Alaskan Native, 0.5% Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, 6% some other race, and 3.9% from two or more races. Approximately 13.8% of residents identified as Hispanic or Latino. There has been an increase of 4% in the population of communities of color since 2000.

According to the 2014 American Community Survey, approximately 12% of Medford’s population speaks a language other than English at home, compared to 15% across Oregon. Approximately 54% of this group also speaks English very well.

Household Characteristics

The 2010 average household size in Medford was 2.53 people, slightly higher than the state (2.5) and national (2.51) averages. Average household size has increased since 2000, when it was 2.47 people. The average family size in Medford is larger (3.06 people). Of the 26,695 households in the City, 27% have children under 18, 45% were married couples living together, 18% had a single head of household, and 37% were non-families.

Income & Poverty

According to the 2014 American Community Survey, the median household income in Medford was \$42,366. This figure is about \$1,720 (-4%) lower than the median household income for Jackson County residents and \$8,155 (-19%) lower than Oregon households. The median household income in Medford has declined slightly (\$379) since 2010.

At the lower end of the household income scale, 28% of Medford households earn less than \$25,000 annually, which is slightly higher than households in Jackson County (27%), Oregon (24%) and the nation (23%). Approximately 13.6% of City households have household incomes over \$100,000, fewer than the county (14.4%) and state (19.5%).

According to the 2014 American Community Survey, 22% of Medford's residents and 17% of families are living below the poverty level. The poverty threshold was an income of \$23,850 for a family of four. Poverty affects 31% of children under 18 and 9% of those 65 and older, also higher than county and statewide levels.

Employment & Education

In 2014, Medford had a work force population (16 years and over) of 60,656 (77%). Of this population, approximately sixty percent (61.8%) is in the labor force, 7.6% is unemployed, and 38% is not in the labor force. The primary occupation of the working population is management, professional, and science occupations at 29.3%, while sales, office, and service occupations combined comprise an additional 52.3% of the workforce.

According to the 2014 American Community Survey, approximately 16% of Medford residents 25 years and older have a Bachelor's degree, and another 8% have completed a graduate degree or higher. This level of education attainment is on par with residents of Jackson County (15.4% and 9.5%, respectively) but lower than the average for residents across Oregon (19% and 11%, respectively). Additionally, 87.5% of City residents have a high school degree or higher, 2% lower than the statewide average.

Persons with Disabilities

The 2014 American Community Survey reported 16.4% (12,456 persons) of Medford's population as having a disability that interferes with life activities. This is on par with levels in Jackson County (16.9%) but higher than state averages (14.2%). Of Medford youth 5 to 17 with a disability (7.6%), the majority has cognitive difficulties (5.7%). Among residents 65 and older, the percentage rises to 41%, or 4,937 persons, which is on par with percentages found in the general senior population of Oregon.

Health Status

Information on the health of Medford residents is not readily available. However, approximately 25% of Jackson County residents are overweight or obese, a rate that exceeds national health targets but is low compared to counties nationwide. Approximately 17% of Jackson County adults age 20 and older report getting no leisure-time physical activity, compared to 16% across Oregon. This rate is better than even the highest performing counties nationwide, which average 20%. This may be due, in part, to a relatively wealth of places to participate in physical activity, including parks and public or private community centers, gyms or other recreational facilities. In Jackson County, 85% of residents have access to adequate physical activity opportunities, which is slightly lower than the average (89%) for all Oregon residents.

According to the County Health Rankings, Jackson County ranks in the bottom half of Oregon counties (22 out of the 34) for health outcomes (including length and quality of life) and health factors (such as health behaviors, clinical care, social and economic factors, and the physical environment).