



Community engagement and input played an important role in establishing a clear planning framework that reflects current community priorities. Most residents care deeply about the future of Medford’s parks and recreation system and appreciated the opportunity to offer feedback in the development of this Plan. Public outreach provided a baseline of demand and need, and outreach methods were varied and extensive, including:

- A mail- and online-based community survey
- Five stakeholder discussions
- Four community meetings
- mySidewalk online engagement
- Social media content & email blasts
- Parks & Recreation Commission meetings

Throughout this process, the public provided information and expressed opinions about their needs and priorities for parks, trails and recreation facilities and programs in Medford. This feedback played a crucial role in updating policy statements and prioritizing the capital facilities project list contained within this Plan.

COMMUNITY SURVEY

The Medford Parks and Recreation Department created and administered a community survey between April and June of 2015 as a component of this Plan. The purpose of the survey was to gather input to help determine park, path, open space and recreation priorities of the community. City staff designed a 29-question survey to assess residents' recreational needs, preferences and priorities. It was developed using examples from Bend, Eugene, Portland, North Clackamas Parks & Recreation District and Oregon City, as well as the survey that was conducted in 2004 as part of the input gathered for the creation of the current Leisure Services Plan. The survey was reviewed and approved by the Parks and Recreation Commission and City Council.

The survey was administered as a mail and online survey. In all, 600 printed surveys with return envelopes were mailed, plus an additional 1,000 post cards were mailed that provided information on how to access the online survey that was hosted on SurveyMonkey. Also, a link to the survey was sent to the over 3,000 email addresses that the Department had on file for Medford residents.

Additionally, staff and Parks & Recreation Commission members attended a number of community events, such as Rec-Fest and Art-in-Bloom, in an effort to gain completed surveys or to provide information via the post card for interested citizens to access the online survey. The survey also was available at the Santo Community Center for participants in events and meetings.

In total, 685 surveys were completed – representing a total of 1,854 Medford residents. A detailed discussion of community survey results appear in the needs assessment chapters of this Plan (starting on page 61). A summary of the response data from survey is provided in Appendix A.

Major Findings

Medford residents generally are satisfied with parks, trails and recreation opportunities in the City, but many indicated an interest in additional or expanded services and facilities.

- Majority of survey respondents (77%) are satisfied with the physical condition of Medford's neighborhood parks. However, improvements or maintenance needs may exist at Jackson School Park, Cedar Links Park (*currently undeveloped*), Union Park (*recently refurbished*) – all of which had low levels of satisfaction in the community survey.
- Permanent or upgraded restrooms ranked as the most frequently (62%) cited park improvement.
- Considering the interest in gathering spaces, the combination of picnic tables and benches with picnic shelters ranked as the most important improvement – 46% of survey respondents selected either picnic shelters or picnic tables/benches as a desired park improvement.
- Roughly 9 in 10 people (90.2%) surveyed said they visited a City park or recreation facility at least once a month over the last year – and 5 in 10 households (49.6%) visited

a park or recreation facility at least once a week.

- A large majority (83%) of respondents support the construction of a new aquatic facility.
- Approximately 50% of the households surveyed stated that they participate in recreation programs offered by the City, and approximately 64% of those who participate have enrolled in more than one program over the past 12 months.
- Medford Parks and Recreation, public and private schools and private health and fitness clubs ranked as the top three providers of recreational programs.
- The top three actions ranked as “very supportive” by respondents were to rehabilitate older parks (70.1%), develop a new indoor recreation center/pool (59.6%), and expand programming for youth under 18 (54.6%).

STAKEHOLDER DISCUSSIONS

Interviews with external stakeholders were conducted to more broadly assess the opportunities for program enhancements, partnerships and coordination. Stakeholders were identified by City staff based on their past coordination with the City and/or their involvement or interest in the future of Medford’s park, recreation or trail offerings. The stakeholder meetings were held between October 2015 and February 2016, and the following local organizations provided insight to the Plan:

- Medford School District
- Rogue Valley YMCA
- S.O. Ultimate Players
- M.A. Little League
- Rogue Valley Timbers
- Economic Development groups, including Travel Medford, Chamber of Commerce, SOREDI, among others
- Medford Parks & Recreation Foundation
- Parks & Recreation Commission

Stakeholder comments were often specific to the particular perspective or interest of the stakeholder group. Overall, comments were generally favorable in regard to existing City facilities and the potential for future improvements within Medford. Stakeholders recognized the limited financial capacity of the City and were often quick to offer suggestions for potential partnerships or other means to accomplish specific projects. Suggested projects ranged from developing parking, access and trails at Prescott Park, exploring the potential for a new aquatics facility and recreation center, installing athletic field lighting, and improving existing parklands. Specific recommendations are incorporated in the Needs Assessment chapters.

Additionally, an internal discussion with Department staff occurred early in the development of the Plan. Staff provided their feedback and comments on existing challenges and issues, as well as ideas for future opportunities, system improvements and partnerships. Summary notes from all of the stakeholder discussions are provided in Appendix B.

COMMUNITY OPEN HOUSE MEETINGS

Community members were invited to a series of open house meetings in April 2016 to review and comment upon proposed projects, priorities and draft recommendations for the parks and recreation system. Four meetings were held – one in each City Council ward. For each public meeting, the project team prepared informational displays covering major themes for parks and recreation. These display stations included Recreation Programs and Facilities, Paths and Greenways, Parks and Outdoor Recreation. The displays also highlighted the existing parkland inventory and associated park walksheds areas, existing and proposed trail corridors, recreation program priorities and other park and trail system enhancements. Attendees were encouraged to talk with staff, record their comments and complete a written comment card. City staff and project team staff engaged with participants to explore current issues, needs and interests related to park, trail and recreation opportunities and needs. Summary notes from the four public open house meetings appear in Appendix C.

OTHER ENGAGEMENT PLATFORMS

In addition to the direct outreach opportunities noted above, the Medford community was informed about the planning process through a variety of media platforms. The following venues were used to inform residents about the project and about opportunities to participate and offer comments.

- City website
- Parks & Recreation Department Facebook page
- mySidewalk (Medford.mysidewalk.com)
- Medford Mail Tribune

In addition to the City's own social media feeds (Facebook), the project team utilized the mySidewalk platform (mysidewalk.com) as an integrated, on-going online community discussion. The tool allowed for integration with the traditional public meetings, and it enabled residents to submit ideas, offer feedback and answer questions about key issues and topics. The mySidewalk site was also linked to the City's social media accounts. Public feedback collected from the mySidewalk site appear in Appendix D.