



# RECREATION PROGRAMMING

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The City of Medford currently has two indoor community facilities - the Santo Community Center and the Carnegie Building. These facilities provide meeting and multi-purpose rooms used for recreation, arts, educational and community programs and events. The Santo Community Center is heavily used for programs and community rentals and reaches capacity at peak times. Additionally, the City operates a 25-yard pool at Jackson Park, which is the only outdoor public pool in the greater Medford area. The Department partners with the Medford School District and local private schools for gymnasiums and building space to provide recreation options and programs to local residents.

## TRENDS IN RECREATION PROGRAMMING

The current national trend is toward a “one-stop” recreation facility to serve all ages. Large, multi-purpose regional centers help increase cost recovery, promote customer retention and encourage cross-use of the facility by other city departments and community groups. Amenities that are common in large multi-purpose regional centers (65,000 to 125,000+ sq. ft.) include:

- Gymnasium space

- Indoor walking tracks
- Lap, leisure and therapeutic pools
- Weight and cardiovascular equipment
- Outdoor recreation and education centers
- Interactive game rooms
- Playgrounds
- Community, event or party rooms

## The State of the Industry Report

Recreation Management magazine's 2015 *State of the Industry Report* listed the top 10 program options most commonly planned for addition over the next three years, along with the frequency (in parentheses) noted by survey participants:

- Mind body / balance programs (25.2%)
- Fitness programs (24.9%)
- Educational programs (24.3%)
- Day camps & summer camps (22.8%)
- Environmental education (21.5%)
- Teen programming (20.4%)
- Adult sports teams (19.4%)
- Active older adult programs (19.4%)
- Holidays & other special events (19.1%)
- Nutrition & diet counseling (17.4%)

For most programming types, community centers are the ones most likely to be planning to offer such programs. There are a few exceptions; parks are most likely to be planning to add environmental education, sports tournaments or races, individual sports activities and water sports.

The same report indicated park systems that are planning to add features to their facilities in the next three years list their top five planned amenities as:

- Playgrounds
- Park shelters, such as picnic areas and gazebos
- Park restroom structures
- Outdoor sports courts for basketball, tennis, pickleball, etc.
- Bike trails

## Sports Trends

The National Sporting Goods Association (NSGA) reported on participation levels in 47 sports indicating that 32 sports experienced growth during 2012. Highlights from the 2013 NSGA participation survey include:

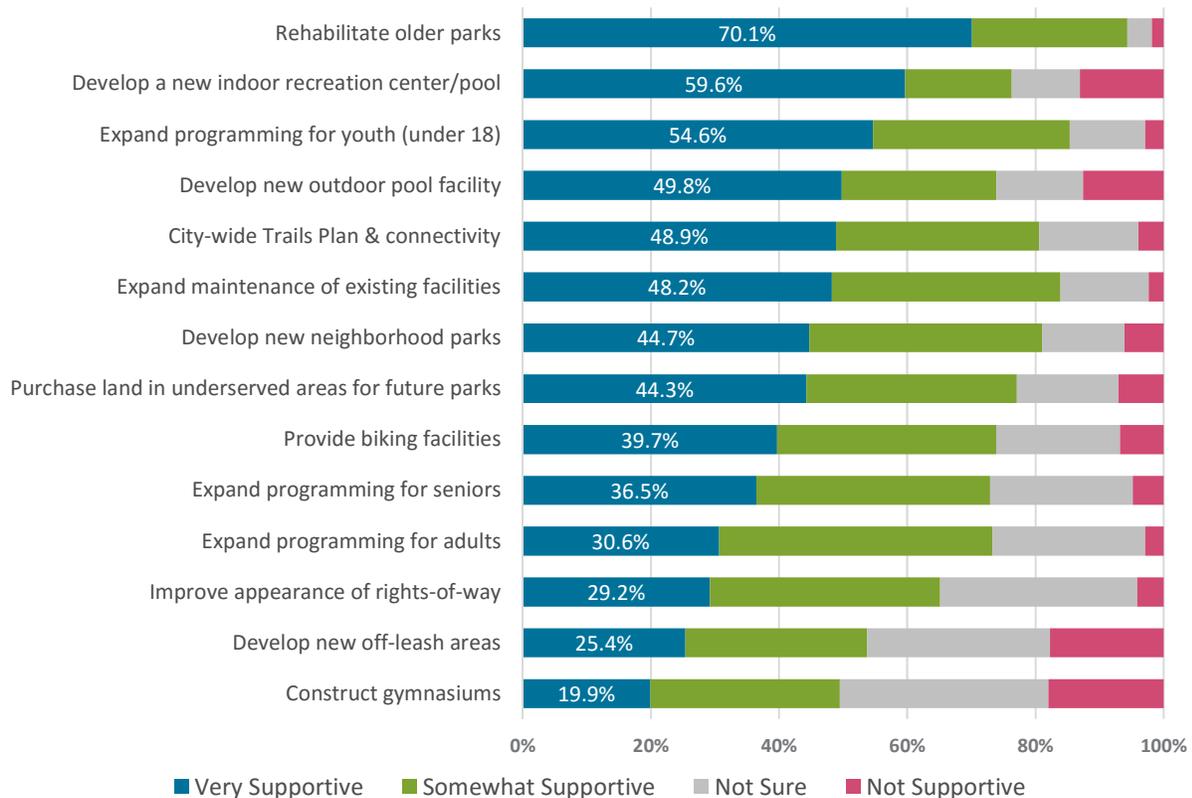
- Fitness sports each increased about 5%.
- Team sports showed mixed results with participation lagging in basketball, baseball, ice hockey and soccer and increases in lacrosse, softball and volleyball.
- Tackle football experienced the largest team sport drop of nearly 13% decline in participation. Over half the decline was in the 7-11 age group of those who might participate on an infrequent basis.
- Female participation in 40 of the 47 sports/activities has increased compared to only 11 sports showing increased male participation.
- Indoor gaming activities increased by an average of 11%.

Overall the trend shows that participation in many sports is rebounding with some sports continuing to struggle to attract new participation.

## LOCAL FEEDBACK

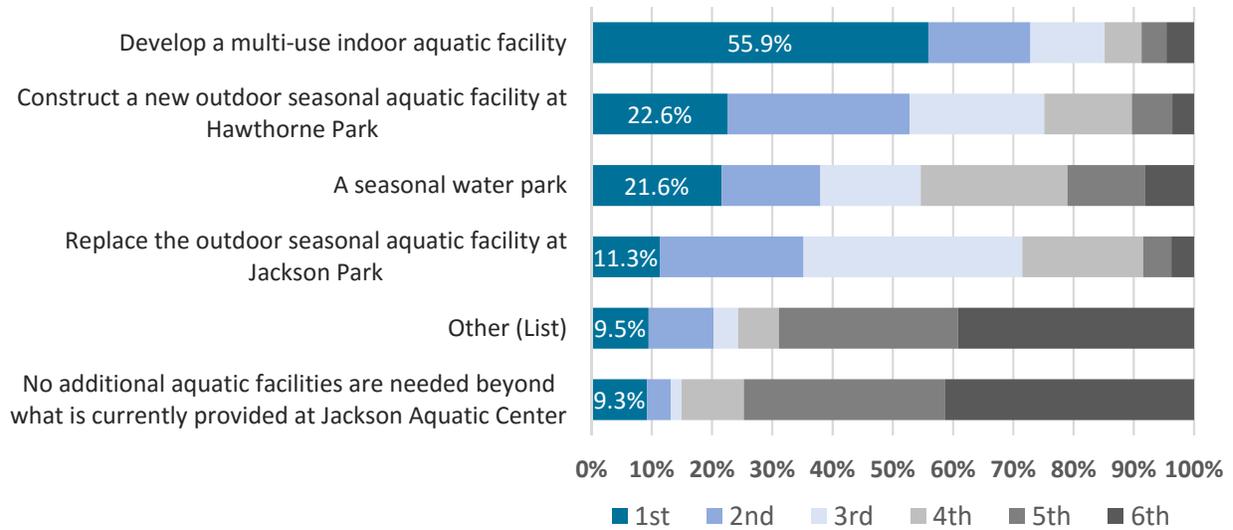
Community residents were vocal about their interest in expanded or additional indoor recreation and particularly aquatic facilities. During community open houses, many residents voiced interest in exploring options to build a multi-use recreation and aquatic center. From the community survey and when compared against a list of park and recreation amenities, 76% of respondents supported developing a new indoor recreation center and pool, and 74% were supportive of developing a new outdoor pool facility. The following chart illustrates the level of support for facilities and programs.

Figure 23. Survey Responses Regarding Relative Support for Facilities and Programs



Specific to aquatics, survey respondents were much more favorable to building a new, multi-use indoor aquatic facility than other options for aquatics, with 56% ranking it as their top choice and 85% ranking it as one of their top three choices. Although the survey was conducted prior to the recent renovation of Hawthorne Park that included the installation of a new spray park feature, 22% favored constructing a new outdoor, seasonal aquatic facility at Hawthorne Park. Regarding Jackson Aquatic Center, 72% ranked replacing the outdoor aquatic facility at Jackson Park as one of their top three choices.

Figure 24. Survey Responses Ranking the Need for Aquatic Facility Improvements



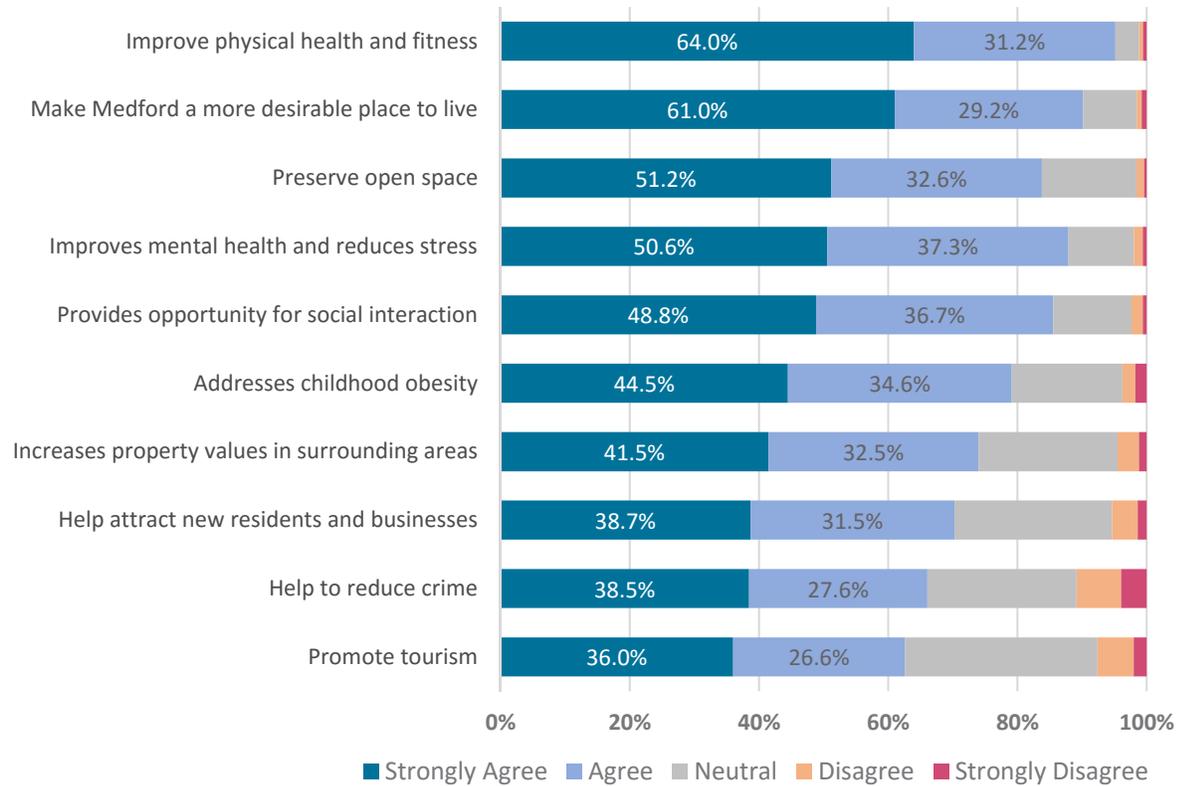
The majority of survey respondents rated the quality of programs as good or excellent, with the highest levels of satisfaction for athletics and special events. Approximately 88% felt that athletics were excellent or good, and athletics showed the highest ranking of overall quality. Higher numbers of residents rated the quality of aquatics programs as ‘fair’ or ‘poor’ than did other types of programs, which may be related to community dissatisfaction with existing aquatic facilities. Aquatics showed the greatest weakness in terms of quality, but while lower, it was still noted as excellent or good by 65% of respondents. Overall, 81% felt that all programs combined were either excellent or good.

Figure 25 Survey Responses Regarding the Quality of Programming



In general, residents acknowledged a number of benefits provided by parks and recreation. When asked to identify their level of agreement with a list of benefits, 95% noted agreement that parks and recreation improves physical health and fitness, and 90% noted agreement that these services make Medford a more desirable place to live.

Figure 26. Survey Responses of the Benefits of Parks and Recreation



Approximately 50% of Medford households have participated in a City recreation program in the last year according to the community survey. Of these households, 35% participated in one program, 46% participated in two or three different programs, and 18% participated in four or more different programs.

Other comments from the survey, stakeholder sessions and the community open houses included:

- Shortage of available gymnasium space - the school district gyms currently are extensively utilized by the District or other organizations
- Demand for more classroom space with appropriate flooring and amenities
- Interest to expand preschool programs
- Need for teen center/teen space
- Desire for additional programming, including farmer’s markets and additional movies in the park/concerts
- Desire for additional or more varied programs, including senior and teen programs, arts and crafts, outdoor adventure recreation/camps, walking/hiking programs

## FACILITIES

### Santo Community Center

The Santo Community Center houses the offices of the Medford Parks and Recreation Department and serves as a hub for many programs and activities, including scheduled use by other community organizations, such as Easter Seals and ACCESS Foodshare. The Santo Community Center is a high-demand facility heavily programmed for City recreation and events. However, the facility has limited capacity to meet existing community demand and has insufficient space for the type and number of programs and activities the City offers. The Center provides the only gymnasium under the Department's control and is heavily utilized. A variety of classroom spaces are used for recreation programs and also may be rented for private use.

### Carnegie Building

Dedicated in 1912 as a public library, the classic revival style Carnegie Building has been restored and renovated with amenities and an open floor plan to serve as a meeting hall and rental facility. The building is a significant historic resource within the Downtown Historic District and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The building also serves as the venue for a number of recreation classes and City commission meetings.

### Jackson Aquatic Center

Built in 1960, the Jackson Aquatic Center is an outdoor, 25-yard pool located in Jackson Park. The pool hosts open and lap swim, along with youth and adult swim lessons, lifeguard training and water aerobics. Also, the pool can be rented for private use and parties. This facility is at the end of its useful service life, and mechanical systems, decking and pool lining may fail due to the age and difficulty in obtaining replacement parts.

### Other Recreation Facilities

#### **Medford School District Facilities**

Medford School District facilities include gymnasiums, tennis courts, sport fields and track ovals. The District makes its facilities available to local organizations, groups or individuals only after the District's need for those facilities have been achieved. The District charges a facility rental fee and requires a security deposit. The District's gymnasiums, in particular, are heavily scheduled by local community or non-profit groups.

In 2010, the Medford Parks and Recreation Department eliminated its usage of

District gyms due to a past decision by the District to assess rental fees for non-school organizations. This created a severe restriction in the Department’s capacity to offer volleyball and basketball programming. However, in January 2016, as a result of a facility use agreement, the Department has access to two gyms at McLoughlin Middle School on Wednesday and Thursday evenings for adult volleyball use (year-round), in exchange for sport field time at U.S. Cellular Community Park, at no charge to either organization.

### **St Mary’s High School**

St. Mary’s High School has a 24-acre campus with an 8-lane all-weather track and five acres of athletics fields. The school’s Naumes Fine Arts & Athletic Center features two gymnasiums, fitness center, locker rooms, two art classrooms and two music classrooms. The City of Medford utilizes the school’s facilities for several recreation offerings, including men’s basketball, ballet, zumba and theater, among others.

### **Cascade Christian High School**

Cascade Christian High School is an independent, non-profit school with a 5-acre campus including a four-court gymnasium, weights facility and wrestling room. The City of Medford utilizes the school’s facilities for volleyball.

### **Rogue Valley Family Y**

The Rogue Valley Family Y is a membership-based recreation and health club that provides fitness and recreation amenities. The facility includes a 25-yard indoor pool, a climbing wall, racquetball court, a small gymnasium and several classrooms.

### **Medford Senior Center**

The Medford Senior Center is a private, non-profit organization serving seniors in the Rogue Valley. It is a membership organization although visitors are welcome. The Center offers hot lunches Monday through Friday to offer healthy meals and social interaction to members and visitors. A variety of activities and events are offered to encourage local seniors to stay active and be involved with others in a social setting.

### **Private Fitness**

Several private fitness clubs and centers operate in Medford, and these enterprises further highlight the latent demand for indoor recreation facilities and for recreation programming choices. These facilities vary in their offerings, providing workout, nutrition, education and professional coaching at market rates. Local, private fitness facilities include:

- Aspire Fitness Club
- Pride Personal Training
- Anytime Fitness
- Snap Fitness
- Superior Athletic Clubs
- Women’s Fitness Company
- International Fitness
- Avamere Health and Fitness Club
- Rogue Valley Swim & Tennis Club
- Southern Oregon Gymnastics Academy
- Rogue Valley Country Club

Since there are a number of private recreation, sports and fitness providers located in the Medford market, these entities should continue to be relied upon to provide more specialized activities that are not easy for the public sector to provide due to a lack of facilities or expertise.

## Future Needs

Interest and participation in the City's recreation programs are increasing annually. However, the number and types of activities the City can offer in its facilities are limited by a lack of facility capacity. Although school facilities provide additional activity space, these partnerships no longer meet the needs of Medford's residents. Additional recreation, fitness and community space is needed to promote wellness, active recreation and social engagement.

To meet this need, the City should pursue a multi-use indoor facility to enable comprehensive recreation programs for Medford residents. Such a facility would allow the City to control facility design, programming, scheduling and fees to more effectively meet community needs. Development of an indoor recreation facility requires extensive planning, including a feasibility analysis, appropriate site, and management and operation plans, as well as exploration of potential financial and programming partnerships. The facility should include gymnasiums, classrooms and multifunctional rooms, fitness rooms and a lap swimming and leisure aquatics facility. The facility may also include civic space (i.e., library, city service center/offices, etc.) or other leasable office space depending on the potential to secure funding partners with interest in co-locating at the facility.

Partnerships may be necessary to offset development and operational costs. Given that the region recently lost the pool at Southern Oregon University and strong demand remains, the Department should take the lead role in soliciting assistance from other agencies and organizations, as needed. Potential partners may include the Medford School District, Jackson County, nearby municipalities (e.g., Ashland, Shady Cover, Butte Falls, Grants Pass, White City), nearby school districts (Crater, Phoenix), Rogue Community College and Southern Oregon University.

It is recognized that funding will be a challenge and there is a real and significant need to balance what the community says it wants with what the community is willing to fund. Although several past City bond attempts for a pool failed, it was voted down by the same percentage as the sports park did during its first attempt at public financing. There is potential to pursue a combined bond between the City and the Medford School District, which would demonstrate the partnership potential and due diligence by both agencies to develop a facility that jointly meets needs for recreational program space. Also, if the school district were willing to co-sponsor a financing package, the Oregon Legislature recently approved legislation for bond funding of aquatic facilities that is a competitive grant program for school districts to access state funds. Additionally, the Parks and Recreation Department should seek private construction capital and seek the potential re-use of existing bond repayment funds to lessen the total funding request of voters.

## RECREATION PROGRAMS

Medford’s recreation services are a major civic asset that support the physical, mental, and social health of the community. Medford Parks and Recreation is and should remain the primary provider of recreational programs in the community. The City is the most popular provider when compared to public and private schools, private health and fitness clubs and other providers.

In 2015, the Department engaged the general public with over 140 unique recreation programs and services encompassing over 300 offerings. The City currently offers a variety of programming, including fitness, sports, swimming, outdoor recreation, day camps, cultural programs, creative movement and a variety of other programs and special events for all ages.

To continue to provide attractive, responsive and productive programs, the City should:

- Add staffing necessary to enhance the diversity of programs offered, focusing on programs that are in high demand or serve a broad range of users;
- Provide services that address the needs of diverse users, including at-risk communities and those with special needs/abilities;
- Improve the accessibility of programs by holding classes and activities at locations throughout the community and at affordable rates; and
- Monitor local and regional recreation trends to ensure community needs and interests are addressed by available programming.

Given limited availability of indoor recreation facilities in the city, the Department should explore unique and traditional methods, including mutually-beneficial partnerships, to obtain recreation venues that help connect residents with options to learn and recreate.

### Youth Programming

Youth programs provide opportunities for recreation, socialization, community involvement, leadership development and education for youth 18 years and younger. These programs include the Discovery Preschool, summer, winter and spring break day camps, sports, dance, art and enrichment programs. These program offerings are focused to meet the diverse needs of youth in the Medford community.

As shown in the community survey conducted as part of this Plan, the Medford community considers youth programs to be the highest priority for expansion of City park and recreation services. Nearly 86% of the survey respondents expressed an interest in expanding programs for youth under age 18, and this interest in youth-based programs was the highest rank of all recreation program types.

To address community needs and demand, the City should provide adequate resources to expand and diversify its popular youth programs to meet the growing need for engaging, affordable, safe options for children and teens. The City should continue to

work with the school district, community partners, recreation providers, and sports organizations to offer both drop-in and structured programs in sports; art, music and dance; and educational and environmental activities for youth. Other comments from the public regarding programming needs include the following:

- Desire for additional/more varied programs, including teen programs, arts & crafts, outdoor adventure recreation/camps, walking/hiking programs
- Additional summer day camp capacity
- More programs for young children (under 5), such as toddler/parent swim, tumble/gymnastics classes, dance, story times, t-ball, etc., which requires access to specialized facilities
- Lack of teen programming and activities, including recreational (non-competitive sports) and other non-sports activities (technology, STEM, challenge/adventure courses)

As with recreation programs in general, teen programs are especially limited by a lack of compelling recreation facilities, available program space and staffing. If this program area remains structured as a center-driven approach, the City will need to continue to explore opportunities for expanded indoor program space to accommodate teen program expansion. To complement existing City programs or those offered by other organizations, the City should consider expanding teen programming to include additional individual athletics, fitness, and alternative sports programs provided additional staff resources are available. In particular, skate, parkour, bouldering, and BMX or mountain biking classes may appeal to teens and take advantage of proposed alternative sports amenities.

Expanding beyond the Santo Community Center presents a different opportunity and challenge. With the community center's location on the far western edge of the city, areas east of I-5 are underserved. The City should explore the potential of off-site programming to these areas and potentially target afterschool or school break programming. Such an approach creates challenges regarding staffing and logistics, but it may also be an important way to reach out to and connect with the youth of these areas of the city who may not have access to the Santo Community Center or other indoor youth programs and venues.

## Adult Programming

Medford offers a variety of adult recreational programs, including sports, health and fitness, day trips and enrichment classes (e.g., writing, art, CPR, photography, technology). However, the Department can't meet programming demands requested by the public, and in addition to existing offerings, the public has voiced comments about the following:

- Volleyball and basketball could be bigger if additional facilities were available
- Many programs, especially sports, are sold out
- There is a need for more programming and activities for Seniors and older adults, such as gentle exercise, including senior fitness, walks, aquatics; listen-and-learn events; technology classes

- Provide more adult recreational sports, as well as fitness, wellness (yoga, pilates, cooking/nutrition)
- Provide more drop-in sports options for people to participate in, with a small fee for each time they wanted to play or participate
- Partner with existing associations, such as Latinos-NW Seasonal Workers, to ensure MPRD offers needed programming/activities for the local Latino community

In the future, Medford may wish to expand the quantity and breadth of adult programs offered via mutually-beneficial partnerships with other recreation providers. In particular, the City should consider additional and more varied health and fitness classes, individual, drop-in and team sports programs, classes in alternative sports, additional art and music classes; and educational programs, such as language, and personal and home improvement. Because recreational programming can be influenced by national and regional trends, staff must stay abreast of current trends and continue to evaluate program offerings.

## Aquatics Programming

Swim lessons, water fitness, recreation and leisure swimming, and health and safety programs make up the majority of aquatic programming. The Jackson Aquatic Center is very popular with residents and serves the wider Medford region. There has been continued growth in Aquatics programming and demand for swimming. The Department was on track to achieve 30,000 customers (open swim) at Jackson Aquatic Center in 2015 before the onset of poor air quality and intense fire season.

As noted in the Facilities discussion above, there is a severe shortage of available aquatic facilities in the city, and this will continue to create pressure on the aging, seasonal facility. Given this pool's popularity and seasonality, the Aquatics program needs to balance and find opportunities to accommodate varied user group needs (e.g., lap swimming, therapeutics, open swim, etc.).

With the development of a new multi-use recreation and aquatic center and increased staffing, the Aquatics program would be able to expand water safety education to the community through swim lessons and certifications. Also, the Department could play a larger and more focused role in aquatic safety and health classes. In addition to being able to offer additional swim lessons and open swim, the Department could be positioned to provide water safety, water rescue, CPR and First Aid training to other City departments, such as police or fire, and to outside agencies.

## Community & Special Events

The Parks & Recreation Department has a major focus on special events. The City coordinates and/or staffs 30 major special events and festivals throughout the year. These events are well attended, with over 15,000 people participating in 2015

(combined). Medford Parks & Recreation Department's special events and programs include:

- Daddy Daughter Dinner Dance
- Mother-Son Super Hero Dance
- Howl-O-Ween Party
- Breakfast With Santa
- Winter Lights Festival
- "Beat of the Rogue" Drum & Bugle Corps Concert
- Parks Uncorked (in support of Medford Parks and Recreation Foundation)
- Arbor Day
- Family Fun Nights (4)
- RecFest Summer Kickoff Event
- Summer Concert Series (8)
- Summer Movie Series (8)
- Lunch-time / evening Pear Blossom Park concert series

Community and special events should continue to be an area of emphasis. Special events draw communities together, attract visitors from outside the community and are popular with residents. However, due to resource requirements of coordinating special events, the overall growth in the number of events should be carefully managed. This will ensure the City can adequately invest in its overall recreational offerings and maintain high-quality special events. If the City decides to offer more events, it should obtain sponsorships to offset costs and develop a series of seasonal activities. Also, the City should identify and develop additional flat and open park locations that can accommodate community events and programming, similar to Twin Creeks Park in Central Point.

## Other Programming Areas

### Special Needs

The special needs community in Medford has access to a range of therapeutic recreation options, which include dance, aquatics and Saturday R&R. The Department partners with Easter Seals and supports Special Olympics' Polar Plunge fundraising event and sports tournament.

It is often difficult for recreation agencies to have significant special needs programs. As a result, recreation departments often offer these programs in partnership with local or regional jurisdictions and service agencies in order to provide high-quality, cost-effective programs. While the City's direct programming for the local special needs population is limited, the Department should strive to provide a robust number of programming, events and activities that are inclusive and accessible to all residents.

## Senior Programs

The Department currently provides programming specifically targeted toward adults over 50 and seniors, but the depth and breadth of programming for seniors may need to increase as the overall population ages, with a greater emphasis on the wide-ranging needs and expectations of the Baby Boomer generation. In particular, this generation has greater participation in active recreation opportunities than previous generations.

City partnerships with local senior oriented organizations could reduce the need for the City to be a primary, direct provider. The City should explore opportunities for mutually-beneficial partnerships with the Medford Senior Center, RVCOG Senior & Disability Services and community organizations, colleges, and city and county agencies to provide expanded senior programs, classes, activities and services.

Today's seniors are generally more active than previous generations and would benefit from a diverse array of recreational and educational programs that promote active, healthy lifestyles. The City will likely see a demand for programs offered in evenings and weekends, as community members maintain employment or volunteer activities later in life.

## Arts & Culture Programs

Park and recreation planning values the relationship to arts and culture, as they directly contribute to the quality of life, sense of place and ability of Medford to continue as a healthy and vibrant community.

The City's Arts Commission advises City Council and aims to support public art, programs, awareness and education to enable all of Medford's citizens to enjoy and appreciate the arts. The Arts Commission has many tasks. It manages the City art inventory of over 100 pieces of art; it works to improve city owned facilities with art ideas and concepts; and it administers portable art display programs.

The City should consider the development of a Cultural Arts Plan and consider public art as a component to enhanced place-making. Many successful cities have used public art to define public spaces, promote tourism and encourage civic pride and identity. The plan should advocate for lifelong learning in creativity and the arts that will enhance artists and arts opportunities and provide a connection for artistic development through partnerships and relationships with collaborative organizations. Cooperation by educational providers, libraries, businesses and organizations will be necessary to leverage programming, events, exhibits and facilities to expand cultural arts access for the mutual benefit to the community.

## PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT & ASSESSMENT

As a CAPRA-accredited agency, the Department has demonstrated its commitment to excellence and continuous improvement. The Department has strong record keeping regarding recreation programs and registration and attendance numbers, and it has a solid track record of collecting data from recreation program users and the general public to both evaluate existing offerings and explore the potential of new programs. Staff periodically review data from the following sources to determine community needs for programs and services:

- Historical registration trends/success of current programs and services
- Surveys and questionnaires
- Focus groups
- Oregon Resident Outdoor Recreation Demand Analysis (SCORP Region 5 Summary)
- Suggestions provided by current instructors and current employees
- Suggestions submitted by prospective instructors/employees

Staff should continue to evaluate and assess the City's program offerings and prioritize future programs based on a mix of criteria that include:

- Current or potential importance for community-wide or broad individual benefit,
- Community needs or deficiencies,
- Potential for increased participation, and
- Revenue potential.

Also, the City periodically updates its Recreation Program Plan and realign program offerings as necessary to meet the needs of the community and optimize facility usage. The Program Plan is currently updated annually, and it also could establish a 5-year program plan that identifies the priorities for program development, the responsible staff member and the required resources. Each program area would then develop their own 5-year plan with a specific and detailed implementation plan for each year.