



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Leisure Services Plan is a ten-year guide and strategic plan for managing and enhancing park and recreation services in Medford. It establishes a path forward for providing high-quality, community-driven parks, trails, greenways and recreational opportunities. The Plan reinforces the City's vision for its park and recreation system, proposes updates to service standards for parks and trails, and addresses departmental goals, objectives and other management considerations toward the continuation of high-quality recreation opportunities to benefit the residents of Medford.

This Plan was developed with the input and direction of Medford residents. The Plan inventories and evaluates existing park and recreation areas, assesses the needs for acquisition, site development and operations, and offers specific policies and recommendations to achieve the community's goals.

15,000: Number of people participating in special events and festivals in 2015

\$67 million: Economic impact of U.S. Cellular Community Park since 2008

300: Number of recreation program offerings provided by MPRD

2,501: Number of acres managed by MPRD for parks, greenways and natural open space

\$8 million: Overall appraised value of Medford's park and street tree urban forest (inflation-adjusted from 2008)

MEDFORD'S RECREATION SYSTEM

The City of Medford Parks and Recreation Department (MPRD) is Southern Oregon's largest provider of recreation services and is a nationally accredited agency through the National Recreation and Parks Association. The City currently provides over 2,500 acres of public parkland and recreation facilities distributed among 36 park sites and numerous open space parcels. This system of parks supports a range of active and passive recreation experiences. The Department is responsible for the maintenance and programming of the U.S. Cellular Community Park and the Santo Community Center, and its staff coordinate over 300 programs, services and events each year.

Medford's shining star is the U.S. Cellular Community Park. This sport field complex is the largest synthetic turf sports park in the United States. Since its opening in 2008, the U.S. Cellular Community Park has generated over \$67 million in economic benefit for the Medford community. MPRD is well known locally and regionally for coordination of youth and adult sports leagues and tournaments. Medford also boasts the largest adult softball program in Oregon.

Medford is preparing for continued growth tied to the planned expansion of the urban growth boundary. As the City grows, new investments in parks and recreation will be necessary to meet the needs of the community, support youth development, provide options for residents to lead healthy, active lives and foster greater social and community connections.

GOALS & POLICIES

This Plan includes a series of goals intended to guide City decision-making to ensure the parks and recreation system meets the needs of the Medford community for years to come. These goals and policies were based on community input and technical analysis. They include:

- **System Growth & Stewardship:** Provide for a full range of recreational activities and opportunities to meet the needs of all residents of Medford.
- **Natural Areas Management:** Preserve natural resources in the Medford Urban Growth Boundary that provide open space or have unique recreational potential, encouraging development with parks and recreation facilities if appropriate.
- **Connectivity:** Provide an interconnected park and recreation system that is well integrated with the community.
- **Management & Maintenance:** Coordinate park and recreation planning, acquisition, maintenance, and development in the City of Medford to serve a broad spectrum of citizen and institutional interests.
- **Partnerships:** Enhance and support partnerships that leverage Medford's human, social and physical capital to improve recreation opportunities for residents.

- **Aesthetics:** Maintain and enhance community livability in Medford by promoting the aesthetic quality of the urban environment.
- **Engagement & Communications:** Encourage and support active and on-going participation by diverse community members in the planning and decision-making for parks and recreation.

SERVICE STANDARDS REVISIONS

This Plan re-evaluated the current service standards for parks, greenways and trails and proposes adjustments to the City’s standards to achieve community goals within projected resources. These standards include the following.

- **Community Parks:** This Plan maintains the acreage standard for community parks of 2.75 acres per 1,000 people to continue to emphasize the relative importance of active parks within the park system. The City currently is meeting this standard, and it will need to acquire an additional 57 acres of parkland to meet the needs of future residents.
- **Neighborhood Parks:** This Plan maintains the acreage standard for neighborhood parks of 1.56 acres per 1,000 people, and the existing City-owned parks meet that standard. However, significant gaps exist in access to neighborhood parks, and the City will need to acquire an additional 45 acres of neighborhood parkland to meet the projected, future population.
- **Natural Areas & Greenways:** The City has been a strong leader in the protection of sensitive lands and creek corridors through its land use regulations. The existing service standard for open space relies on a numeric acres per capita metric, and this Plan recommends adjusting the approach to this standard. Open space conservation focuses on the need to protect areas of special and/or sensitive habitat, and greenway planning focuses on the connectivity of open spaces to create large, linked corridors. An acreage measurement places an arbitrary quantitative target on the demand for open space conservation. This Plan recommends the elimination of an acreage standard for greenways and open space lands and recommends the development of a specific conservation and greenways plan to assess and identify key targets for future land conservation and corridor linkages.
- **Trails & Paths:** The existing service standard for paths and trails is a mileage per capita metric of 0.46 miles per 1,000 population. Using this standard, the current level of service indicates a current deficiency of over 4 miles of paved paths and 10 miles of unpaved park trails, which will increase with the population without further improvements. However, the standard does not adequately address the distribution and connectivity of the trail system. This Plan recommends the elimination of the recreational trail mileage standard in favor of a connectivity goal that re-states and reinforces the desire to improve overall connections across the City and enhance off-street linkages between parks and major destinations, as feasible.
- **Specialized Recreation Facilities:** The previous Leisure Services Plan did not include a numeric standard for special use facilities, and this Plan maintains that approach. Special use recreation facilities are, by their nature, unique and do not translate well to a population based numeric standard.

FUTURE IMPROVEMENTS

The City of Medford is anticipated to grow to approximately 111,000 residents by 2026 based on a 2005 Portland State University Population Research Center forecast. Serving existing and future residents will require improvements to existing parks, expansion of the park system, expansion of the path and trail network and development of recreation facilities. The 10-year Capital Facilities Plan proposes approximately \$44 million of investment in acquisition, development and renovation of the parks system over the next ten years and identifies additional investment priorities for the future.

To ensure existing parks provide desired recreational amenities and offer safe and accessible opportunities to play and gather, the Plan includes investments in the development and improvement of neighborhood and community parks. For example, the development of Prescott Park and other existing neighborhood park sites will provide enjoyment for decades to come. The Plan also proposes smaller improvements throughout the park system to enhance ADA accessibility, safety and usability of park amenities.

The Plan includes a focused land acquisition program to ensure sufficient land for outdoor recreation as City population grows. It identifies target acquisition areas to secure community parkland and fill gaps in neighborhood park access. To connect Medford's residents to destinations throughout the city and provide healthy and safe options for walking and bicycling, the Plan proposes development of ten miles of paths and trails, and many of these connections will help fill existing gaps in the path and trail network to make a more connected and comprehensive system.

Interest and participation in the City's recreation programs have been increasing annually. However, the number and types of activities the City can offer in its facilities are limited by a lack of facility capacity and staffing. To meet the strong demand for aquatics and indoor recreation programming, this Plan recommends the construction of and staffing for a new, multi-use aquatic and recreation center. Such a facility would allow the City to control programming, scheduling and fees to more effectively meet community needs. The facility should include gymnasiums, classrooms and multifunctional rooms, fitness rooms, and a lap swimming and leisure aquatics facility. A close look at financing alternatives and partnership opportunities will be necessary to offset development and operational costs.