



LEISURE SERVICES PLAN UPDATE

Executive Summary

INTRODUCTION

Medford is the largest city in Southern Oregon and a regional provider of park and recreation services. Rapid population growth has increased the demand for parks, recreation facilities, and programs community wide, and the City has developed a new plan to address meeting existing financial challenges while expanding recreation opportunities and maintaining existing resources.

In the past, the City has shown great vision in acquiring and developing park and recreation facilities to meet community needs. Facilities such as numerous sports fields, the Bear Creek Greenway and Bear Creek Park have become great community assets, attracting residents from all parts of Jackson County. In addition, through a cooperative effort with the Medford School District, the City has developed one of the best neighborhood school/park systems in the Northwest. However, a funding deficit has created problems in maintaining many park sites, and some parks are underdeveloped. Moreover, the City continues to utilize outdated facilities, such as Hawthorne and Jackson pools, which accrue huge operations costs that are not offset due to lower than typical fees. Past levels of recreation programming and community participation in City programs were lower than comparable communities; particularly for youth, teens, and seniors, driving a recent priority to increase recreation programs and services.

As Medford continues to grow and the City looks to the future, this plan will address community needs and provide new direction for the development of parks and leisure services for the next twenty-five years. The City has an excellent foundation for a thriving park system and the potential to provide comprehensive recreation programming for the entire community. However, to provide a higher level of service to residents, this plan supports both improvements to the existing system and early acquisition of new park land while the opportunity exists to do so.

EXISTING RESOURCES

The Medford park system consists of both active and passive recreational areas, including a variety of park types, pathways, and facilities. The City of Medford manages approximately 2501 acres of park land, including nearly 75 acres leased from the Medford and Phoenix/Talent School Districts. The park land inventory includes over 454 acres of active parks, 14 acres of linear parks, nearly 1,923 acres of natural areas and greenways, and more than 124 acres of undeveloped sites. In addition, the City maintains nearly 15 acres of beautification areas, including greens, roadway strips and islands, and landscaped areas around buildings.

The City of Medford is a significant provider of recreation and sport facilities. Additional facilities are provided by other entities as well, such as school districts and private providers. When all resources are counted, the total inventory for all recreation facilities in Medford is relatively high. However, some fields suffice as practice fields only, because they are inadequate for games. Other facilities have scheduling restrictions. The City provides many sports fields, but it depends on school facilities for use of gymnasiums and adult baseball fields. The City has two outdoor pools, but the community relies on private providers to meet indoor swimming needs.

The following facilities in Medford are counted as part of Medford's unrestricted inventory, meaning they are considered adequate for games/practice:

- 1 adult baseball fields
- 6 adult softball fields
- 6 youth softball/baseball fields
- 12 soccer fields
- 1 football field
- 2 gymnasiums
- 0 square feet of pool space

Additional inventory exists in a restricted capacity which is not considered readily available or adequate for games/practice.

COMMUNITY INPUT

This Leisure Services Plan Update incorporates community input in several ways, including a community workshop, a sports group questionnaire, and a city-wide recreation survey.

The community workshop was held on September 14, 2004, in the Santo Community Center. Key findings are summarized below:

- Participants identified the following as the top facilities for priority development:
 - Sports field complex
 - Indoor recreation center
 - City-wide trail system
- Preservation of Prescott Park as a natural area was emphasized. Greater notoriety, easier access, additional parking and a trail-head are desired, along with improved trail systems for pedestrians, bicycles, and horses.
- Participants indicated that they support the expansion of recreational programming.
- The top three issues identified for Medford parks and recreation were:
 - Funding
 - Park and facility maintenance
 - Upgrades to existing parks

In Fall 2004, organized sports providers in Medford were asked to fill out a questionnaire regarding the number of teams and players in the league, season of play, field requirements, etc. This survey of sports group obtained information regarding 27 different programs for adults and youth provided by both the City and private providers in Medford. The data was used to determine sports field and facility needs.

A city-wide survey of public attitudes, recreation interests, and recreation participation was conducted in Fall 2004. Completed questionnaires were obtained from 438 randomly selected households, representing four City quadrants and diverse opinions. Key findings included:

- Neighborhood parks are the most frequently visited type of park or facility.
- Of all park and recreation services, residents want most:
 - Upgrades to existing parks
 - Sports field development
 - More trails and pathways

- Respondents clearly prefer an indoor pool aquatic center to meet future needs.
- The survey supports increased programming for seniors, one of the fastest growing segments of the City of Medford population.
- The survey supports increases to youth and teen programming. A growing national trend and awareness associating relatively minor teen programming costs with exponentially greater reduced law enforcement costs point to a substantial City cost benefit.
- Respondents want more off-street, paved multi-purpose trails throughout Medford.

PARK LAND AND FACILITY NEEDS

Ten additional neighborhood parks and four community parks sites have been identified to meet Medford's service area criteria for parks. However, the 25-year reduced project list adopted 1/19/2006 eliminated a number of the proposed sites. As these are typical facilities for a city the size of Medford, additional creative funding sources will be pursued for these facilities.

As opportunities to develop greenways and linear parks along creeks, canals, utility corridors, and roadways arise, the City will seek to develop a trail system that will interconnect parks, schools, and recreation facilities. The City will also seek opportunities to add linear park and open space/greenways to include trails and pathways.

The current deficiency in sports facilities is:

- 5 adult hardball fields
- 7 adult softball fields
- 12 youth softball/baseball fields
- 10 soccer fields

There is a current need for one additional indoor pool. Two additional pools will be needed to meet future swimming needs.

FACILITIES PLAN

The Leisure Services Plan includes a facilities plan for existing parks, proposed new parks, and new facilities. Key points of the facility plan are summarized below:

- Improvements are proposed to most of the City's parks. Improvements include replacement or repair of aging facilities, changes to facilities to reduce maintenance costs, repair to vandalism, and the addition of new facilities to reflect the changing needs of

a maturing park system. These projects are not growth related SDC eligible projects.

- Significant upgrades are proposed for the outdoor pools at Hawthorne and Jackson parks. Maintenance costs of these two pools (which have aged beyond a pool's typical life cycle) have become extreme. It is recommended that the City evaluate the feasibility of replacing Hawthorne pool with a water-park.
- The Plan also recommends that the City develop an indoor recreation center/aquatic facility in the long term to meet swimming and gymnasium needs.
- One new gymnasium is funded in the '05 – '07 biennium at the existing Santo Community Center. Two gymnasium courts are included in the 25-year plan, and may be integrated with the proposed community centers.
- Four new community park sites have been identified to meet future service area needs as well as community needs for sports facilities. In places where large parcels are not available or where land costs are prohibitive, sites outside the UGB will be utilized.
- A Community Park will be developed on a small portion of Prescott Park, providing improved access, additional parking, trail-heads, the development of an overlook and viewpoint, pedestrian and bike trails, added signage, and a caretaker's residence.
- The plan identifies several parks such as the Sports Park and Chrissy Park as mixed uses.
- The acquisition and development of several small greenway connectors is planned to support the intra-community trail system and to increase park connectivity.
- A joint plan for developing Alba Park and the Carnegie Building is contemplated.
- The plan supports Medford Urban Renewal's efforts for funding and implementing the Bear Creek Master plan and completing trail linkages along Bear Creek.
- Existing City park land will be utilized for new parks whenever park service area requirements can be met.

TRAILS PLAN

A trails plan identifies potential routes for recreational trails, pathways, and bikeways to provide a safe trail network that links

neighborhoods, parks, schools, recreation sites, and other community attractions. The trails plan includes:

- Pedestrian/bike routes as well as an equestrian trail from the Southeast Plan Area, through Chrissy Park, and into Prescott Park.
- Off-street paved, multi-purpose trails for walking and recreational biking.
- A geographic distribution of trails balanced throughout the City. Acquisition of additional routes for future trails and pathways can be extremely challenging and/or expensive, especially in West Medford where infill is extensive.
- Creation of a trail system will require inter-departmental cooperation for successful development of off street paths during the construction of new roads and the development of trails on land out of the UGB with Jackson County zoning.

OTHER CONCLUSIONS

- Working with partner agencies to help meet the demand for indoor and outdoor sports facilities will be of a high priority.
- The City will seek to acquire park land in advance of need to reduce land acquisition costs.
- Opportunities for program marketing and public information will continually be sought out.
- An increase in the following recreation programs and services is anticipated: aquatics, instructional classes, special interest programs, outdoor programs, special events, and senior programs.
- The Plan anticipates increasing recreation programs fees in alignment with fees charged by other providers community wide, while implementing scholarship programs and discounted services for residents in need.
- Improved maintenance management through cost tracking to improve maintenance levels of service at parks and recreation facilities is identified as a priority.
- The City will consider all sources of funding, including bonds, levies, grants, donations, and sponsorships, to address existing financial challenges.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The following 25-Year Capital plan was adopted 1/19/2006, funded by a 3-step SDC fee increasing over three years. An SDC fee for single family residences of \$2,544 starts at 80% of this amount in '06, moves to 90% in '07, and 100% in '08.

25-Year Capital Plan	
Item	Cost
2007 - 2012 Budget	
Neighborhood Park	\$1,860,000
Community/Urban Park	\$2,718,765
Recreation Facilities	\$444,300
Sub-total:	\$5,023,065
2012 - 2017 Budget	
Neighborhood Parks	\$1,200,000
Community/Urban Parks	\$3,000,000
Recreation Facilities	\$549,000
Sub-total:	\$4,749,000
2017 - 2022 Budget	
Neighborhood Parks	\$1,860,000
Community/Urban Parks	\$2,589,300
Recreation Facilities	\$596,700
Sub-total:	\$5,046,000
2022 - 2027 Budget	
Neighborhood Parks	\$1,207,500
Community/Urban Parks	\$2,589,300
Recreation Facilities	\$889,000
Sub-total:	\$4,685,800
2027 - 2032 Budget	
Neighborhood Parks	\$2,835,000
Community/Urban Parks	\$0
Recreation Facilities	\$1,916,420
Sub-total:	\$4,751,420
25-year Compliance Costs	\$1,575,000
TOTAL	\$27,822,500

The total cost for the 25-year Parks Master Plan was initially estimated to be \$118,951,250, requiring an SDC fee for single family residence of \$5,900. This is far more than the City will or can finance through SDC fees. The City adopted a reduced project list totaling \$27,822,500 by eliminating a standard for Special Use Areas and linear parks; eliminating 5 Neighborhood and 2 Community Parks; eliminating 5 Adult Baseball/softball fields, 2 Football fields, 9 Soccer Fields, and 1 Gymnasium; and by not including Community Centers, an Aquatic Center, and many proposed trails. These eliminated facilities may be developed using alternative funding sources or developed with an increase to current SDC rates.

The 25-year plan funds five new Neighborhood Parks, three utilizing existing park land. It also funds the completion of three existing and

unfinished Neighborhood Parks. One additional new Neighborhood Park, Summerfield Park, is funded in the current budget, and should be constructed in the spring of 2006.

The plan also completes one existing Community Park, funds the development of one Community Park on existing park land, and funds the acquisition and development of two new Community Parks.

The following recreational facilities are funded by the 25-year plan:

- (18) Youth Baseball/Softball Fields (\$628,200)
- (8) Adult Softball Fields (\$1,006,200)
- (10) Soccer Fields (\$1,941,800)
- (2) Gymnasium Basketball Courts (\$1,500,000)
- 245 miles of trails (\$1,126,000)

Summary of Costs for SDC Eligible Growth Required & Deficiency Projects

Item	Cost
1) SDC Eligible Growth Cost	\$23,940,720
2) Park SDC Deficiency	\$3,881,780
TOTAL	\$27,822,500

As the City's population increases, new facilities must be built to maintain the City's current level of park, recreation and leisure services. Growth required facilities that were not built in the past become deficiency projects which can no longer be funded through park SDC funds. The 25-year cost of deficiency projects totals \$3,881,780, which, when spread out over a 25-year period, will require \$155,271 per year to complete. This is considered achievable anticipating grants, donations through the Parks and Recreation Foundation, volunteer efforts, as well as non-SDC funding sources both existing and proposed such as the Car Rental Tax, the Park Utility Fee, and a \$10,000,000 bond which is assumed in the park SDC methodology.

This Leisure Service plan contemplates all future park funding needs, both required and hoped for. It includes current maintenance and deferred maintenance from past funding shortfalls; replacement of aging facilities; upgrades needed to reduce maintenance costs; and new facilities expected of a vital and contemporary park system. The Parks and Recreation Department proposes a number of innovative funding strategies for the creation and maintenance of a park system the citizens of Medford have envisioned and need for their health and welfare.