

## COMMUNITY PROFILE

The City of Medford is a major provider of park and recreation services in the city and in the region. This chapter provides a profile of Medford characteristics in the planning context of parks, recreation facilities, and programs. This profile includes a description of the region, planning area, natural features, climate and vegetation, and population characteristics.

### 2.1 REGIONAL CONTEXT

Medford is located in southern Oregon in the heart of the Rogue River Valley. Located off Interstate 5, just 27 miles north of the California border, Medford is the industrial, medical, and service center of southern Oregon and northern California. 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, 273 miles to the north, and San Francisco, 373 miles to the south.

Medford borders the City of Central Point on the northwest and is conveniently connected to Phoenix, Talent, and Ashland to the southeast by I-5 and the Bear Creek Greenway Trail. Figure 2.1 illustrates the regional context of Medford.

#### Key Elements of the Community Profile:

1. *Regional Context*
2. *Planning Area*
3. *Natural Features*
4. *Climate and Vegetation*
5. *Demographics*



Figure 2.1: Regional Context

## 2.2 PLANNING AREA

The planning area for this study includes land within the City limits of Medford plus the unincorporated land within the City's urban growth boundary (UGB). The specific boundaries are a point north of East Vilas Road on the north, Oregon Hills/Roxy Ann Butte on the east, Stage Road on the south, and the Central Point City limits and a point west of Ross Lane/Thomas Lane on the west. Figure 2.2 illustrates the planning area.

## 2.3 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. At 1,382 feet above sea level, Medford is surrounded by rugged mountains that range from 3,000 to more than 8,000 feet in elevation. These 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.

Physical features have divided the City into two distinct areas based on topography: the valley floor and the hillsides. The valley floor extends from the western edge of the planning area to Foothill Road, which runs near the eastern edge of town. The terrain is generally level and consists of gentle to moderate slopes. East of Foothill Road, the terrain changes to moderate to steep hillsides that slope toward Bear Creek. These hillsides, particularly in southeast Medford, have experienced increasing development in the last few 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, which flows through the City, is bordered by steep banks and riparian vegetation. The City 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 Prescott Park, which encompasses a majority of Roxy Ann Butte.

Insert Medford Planning Area map (Figure 2.2)

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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 pathways and 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. Medford's varying terrain and natural resources provide many opportunities for recreation.

## 2.4 CLIMATE AND 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 winters and hot and dry in the summers. Medford averages 20.6 inches of precipitation per year, of which 3-8 inches is snowfall on the valley floor. Yearly snowfall is more common and heavy in the surrounding mountains than in the valley, where any accumulation typically melts within a few hours. The average winter temperature is 36 degrees. Summers average 94 degrees and typically have 15 days over 100 degrees. Humidity is low, and the average growing season is 170 days.



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. Poison oak is common here.

This natural vegetation affects the development of parks and facilities by introducing a variety of opportunities and challenges. For example, native and non-native grasses and broadleaves affect the quality and maintenance of athletic fields, and lush green lawns will require significant irrigation.

Additional trees may be desired in City parks to provide more shade than provided by the sparse trees that grow there naturally. Also, poison oak is a concern in places such as Prescott Park.

In addition to native plant communities, Medford is well known for pear orchards that once covered the valley and the gently sloping foothills 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 Festival. This Citywide, five-day festival includes a parade, a golf tournament, a 5-K run, an arts and crafts fair, and other recreational opportunities.

### 2.5 DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

Demographic characteristics and trends are important to note because they influence recreational interests and participation. Just as population growth creates new demand for park and recreation services, factors such as age, employment, income, and ethnicity also 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 to pursue active recreation.



#### Population

With an estimated 2003 population of 68,080, the City of Medford is the largest city in Jackson County and the seventh largest city in Oregon. According to the U.S. Census, the City's 2000 population was 63,154 persons. The population base creates a sizable demand for parks and recreation opportunities.

Since Medford is the service center for southern Oregon, the City's facilities draw people from throughout the County. In 2003, Jackson County's population was estimated at 189,100 persons. The U.S. Census recorded 181,269 people in Jackson County in 2000. Of this, 111,905 (61.7%) were from the Medford Census County Division (CCD). This statistical county subdivision includes Central Point, Jacksonville, Phoenix, Medford, and the Medford vicinity.

#### Population Growth

The City of Medford has grown continuously since its incorporation in 1885, with the exception of a period from 1910-1920. Table 2.1 illustrates population growth for the City of Medford and Jackson County since 1900. Although the growth rate has fluctuated over the last century, Medford has seen a steady increase in population throughout the last 60 years.

**Table 2.1**  
**Historical Population Growth 1910-2000**  
 City of Medford and Jackson County

Year	City of Medford	Percent Increase	Jackson County	Percent Increase
1900	1,791	---	NA	
1910	8,840	<b>+393.5%</b>	NA	
1920	5,756	-34.9%	NA	
1930	11,007	<b>+90.2%</b>	NA	
1940	11,281	+2.5%	36,213	---
1950	17,305	<b>+53.4%</b>	58,510	<b>+61.6%</b>
1960	24,425	<b>+41.1%</b>	73,962	+26.4%
1970	28,454	+16.5%	94,533	+27.8%
1980	39,746	<b>+39.7%</b>	132,456	<b>+40.1%</b>
1990	46,951	+18.1%	146,389	+10.6%
2000	63,154	<b>+34.5%</b>	181,269	+23.8%

Sources: Portland State Population Research Center, U.S. Census Bureau  
 Bold numbers represent periods of significant population growth

As the table above shows, Medford's population grew from 46,951 to 63,151 persons between the years 1990 and 2000. This 34.5 percent increase is even greater than Jackson County's overall rate of growth (23.8%).

Table 2.2 illustrates the population growth in the City of Medford on an annual basis starting in 1985. Medford's population has steadily increased since then, averaging about 3.3% growth annually during that period. Even in the last 10 years, Medford has reported an average annual increase of 2.97%. This rate of growth will be significant in predicting the community's need for recreation resources in the future.

**Table 2.2**  
**Population Growth 1985-2003**  
 City of Medford

Year	Population	% Change
1985	41,975	-----
1986	42,460	1.2%
1987	43,875	3.3%
1988	45,000	2.6%
1989	45,290	0.6%
1990	46,951	3.7%
1991	49,050	4.5%
1992	49,900	1.7%
1993	51,215	2.6%
1994	52,504	2.5%
1995	55,090	4.9%
1996	57,155	3.7%
1997	57,610	0.8%
1998	58,895	2.2%
1999	No data	-----
2000	63,720	-----
2001	64,730	1.6%
2002	66,090	2.1%
2003	68,080	3.0%

Note: Data for the years 2001-2003 are estimates.  
 Sources: Portland State Population Research Center,  
 City of Medford Planning Department

### Age

Age is a significant factor in determining recreational interests. In general, the older the population, the less they participate in active or competitive recreation activities. Youths tend to participate in recreation activities more frequently than any other age group and favor activities that are more active and competitive in nature. These activities have historically included basketball, baseball, soccer, swimming, and bicycling. However, an emerging trend has been towards extreme, non-competitive sports, such as skateboarding, in-line skating, and mountain biking. Young adults (ages 18-35) are also active and form the core of adult competitive sports. Older adults (ages 35-65) typically have less time to devote to recreational activities and tend to be more concerned about maintaining a home and a job. Recreational time is at a premium and often limited to weekends and occasional evenings. However, some of these adults may participate in parent/child programs.

Jackson County has a slightly different population profile than the rest of the State of Oregon. In general, the county population is slightly older than the state population overall (Table 2.3). The median age in Jackson County is 39.2, whereas the median age for the State is 36.3. In the City of Medford, an analysis of age distribution indicates a higher percentage of people over the age of 65 than in the rest of the state. Approximately, 16.5% of the City's population is age 65 and over, in comparison to 12.8% in Oregon overall. Medford is characterized by an above average number of senior citizens and retirees. The City's adult population tends to be smaller than in both Jackson County and the State. However, over a quarter of Medford's population is youth ages 18 and under. This profile may suggest the City should pay special attention to the needs of youth and seniors before other age groups.

**Table 2.3**  
**Age Distributions 2000**  
Selected Geographic Areas

Selected Geographical Area	Ages 18 and Under	Ages 18 to 64	Age 65 and Over	Median Age
State of Oregon	24.7%	62.4%	12.8%	36.3
Jackson County	24.4%	59.6%	16.0%	39.2
<b>City of Medford</b>	<b>25.8%</b>	<b>57.7%</b>	<b>16.5%</b>	<b>37.0</b>
City of Ashland	18.8%	66.3%	14.8%	37.9
City of Grants Pass	26.0%	54.5%	19.4%	37.9
City of Klamath Falls	25.5%	61.8%	12.8%	33.4
City of Roseburg	23.2%	57.8%	18.9%	39.2

Sources: Portland State Population Research Center, U.S. Census Bureau

Table 2.4 lists the specific age breakdowns for the City of Medford, along with their percentage of the total population.

**Table 2.4**  
**Age by Category 2000**  
City of Medford

Category	Population	Percentage
0-4	4,398	7.0%
5-9	4,652	7.4%
10-14	4,553	7.2%
15-19	4,193	6.6%
20-24	3,956	6.3%
25-34	8,064	12.8%
35-44	9,150	14.5%
45-54	8,521	13.5%
55-59	3,018	4.8%
60-64	2,214	3.5%
65-74	4,529	7.2%
75-84	4,230	6.7%
85+	1,676	2.7%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>63,154</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Sources: Portland State Population Research Center,  
U.S. Census Bureau

### **Income and Employment**

Income levels are also important clues in recreation planning. In general, the higher income groups tend to be more active and participate in more expensive types of activities. Although income levels within the City of Medford are lower than the State of Oregon as a whole, they are slightly higher than the rest of Jackson County and higher than similar cities in neighboring counties. Table 2.5 shows a comparison of the median household and per capita incomes from Medford and selected areas.

**Table 2.5**  
**Income Levels 2000**  
 Selected Areas

Selected Geographical Area	Median Household Income	Per Capita Income
State of Oregon	\$40,916	\$20,940
Jackson County	\$36,461	\$19,498
<b>City of Medford</b>	<b>\$36,481</b>	<b>\$20,170</b>
City of Ashland	\$32,670	\$21,292
City of Grants Pass	\$29,197	\$16,234
City of Klamath Falls	\$28,498	\$16,710
City of Roseburg	\$31,250	\$17,082

Sources: Portland State Population Research Center, U.S. Census Bureau

Table 2.6 includes an occupational analysis of the labor force in Medford and other cities in Southern Oregon. Data shows that the greatest percentage of people in Medford work in sales, management, or other professional or office positions. This has changed since 1990, when the largest number of residents were employed in service occupations, followed by manufacturing. This shift parallels an upward shift in household income since 1990 for many households in the City.

Not everyone in Medford is making more money, as the average numbers would indicate. A large percentage of families in southern Oregon fall below poverty level (Table 2.7). Medford’s poverty rate is higher than in Jackson County and the State of Oregon overall. In general, impoverished families may rely on the use of City-provided facilities, such as playgrounds, for recreation. They also create a demand for inexpensive leisure services and the possibility for scholarship opportunities.

Although homelessness is difficult to gauge using census data, Medford’s large number of families below poverty level may correspond to a high incidence of homelessness in the area. Transient populations may use park facilities, such as restrooms and picnic shelters, in a way that limits use by other groups. They may also create a perceived need for increased security in parks.



**Table 2.6**  
**Employment Classification 2000**  
 Selected Areas

Selected Geographical Area	Management, Professional and Related Occupations	Service Occupations	Sales and Office Occupations	Farming, Fishing and Forestry Occupations	Construction, and Extraction, and Maintenance Occupations	Production, Transportation, and Material Moving Occupations
State of Oregon	33.1%	15.3%	26.1%	1.7%	9.1%	14.7%
Jackson County	30.6%	17.4%	26.6%	1.5%	9.5%	14.4%
<b>City of Medford</b>	<b>29.2%</b>	<b>17.5%</b>	<b>29.3%</b>	<b>1.4%</b>	<b>8.9%</b>	<b>13.8%</b>
City of Ashland	49.8%	19.8%	21.0%	0.3%	3.4%	5.8%
City of Grants Pass	28.7%	20.4%	26.8%	1.2%	10.7%	12.4%
City of Klamath Falls	31.1%	18.6%	23.4%	1.7%	9.6%	15.7%
City of Roseburg	30.8%	19.7%	23.8%	1.1%	8.0%	16.6%

Sources: Portland State Population Research Center, U.S. Census Bureau

**Table 2.7**  
**Poverty Status 1999**  
 Selected Areas

Area	Percent Below Poverty Level
State of Oregon	7.9%
Jackson County	8.9%
<b>City of Medford</b>	<b>10.3%</b>
City of Ashland	12.5%
City of Grants Pass	12.2%
City of Klamath Falls	16.2%
City of Roseburg	11.0%

Source: Portland State Population Research Center

**Ethnicity**

Ethnicity is a significant factor in determining recreation interests and participation levels. Some ethnic groups have a higher level of participation in specific types of recreational activities, which would increase the demand for certain types of facilities. Population classifications based on race are listed in Table 2.8.



An analysis of race and ethnic background in Medford reveals that a majority of City residents (90.0%) are white. However, a significant percentage of Medford’s population (9.2%) is also Hispanic or Latino. Table 2.9 shows a comparison of the total population of Hispanic or Latino descent in Medford and selected areas. Medford has a higher percentage of residents of Hispanic/Latino descent than in Jackson County and the State of Oregon overall.

**Table 2.8**  
**Race Classification 1990**  
 City of Medford

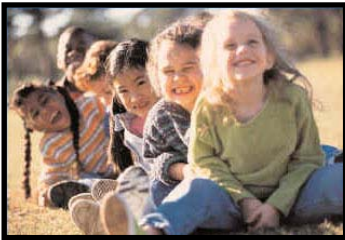
Type	Percentage
White	90.0%
Other	3.9%
American Indian and Alaskan Native	1.1%
Asian	1.1%
Black or African American	0.5%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0.3%
Two or more races	3.2%

Sources: Portland State Population Research Center, U.S. Census Bureau

**Table 2.9**  
**Percent Hispanic/Latino by Area 2000**  
 Selected Areas

Selected Geographical Areas	Percent Hispanic or Latino
State of Oregon	8.0%
Jackson County	6.7%
<b>City of Medford</b>	<b>9.2%</b>
City of Ashland	3.6%
City of Grants Pass	5.4%
City of Klamath Falls	9.3%
City of Roseburg	3.7%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau



**Population Projections**

New population growth is a basic reason for increased demand for park and recreation services. As reported in the 2004 State of the City address, “Southern Oregon, with Medford as its economic driver, is predicted to be the fastest growing region in the state for the 2002-2012 timeframe, growing at a rate of 15.6% during those years.” This growth will place pressure on Medford’s existing recreational resources and create a demand for new facilities, programs, and services.

Table 2.10 shows a 50-year population forecast for the City of Medford. According to the projected data, Medford will have a population of 74,164 in 2010. If Medford continues to grow at its current rate (approximately 3% annually), the City could expect in the year 2010 to have a population of 82,100.

According to the Planning Department, long-term population forecasts for the region anticipate population growth at a slightly decreasing rate in the next 50 years. The City will surpass 100,000 people by the end of decade 2030, and there will be over 111,000 people living in Medford by the year 2050. The City will need to be able to expand park land, recreation facilities, and programs to meet the needs of this sizable population base.

**Table 2.10**  
**Population Projections**  
City of Medford

Year	Medford Population
2000	63,154
2003	68,080
2005	69,222
2010	74,164
2020	84,471
2030	93,770
2040	102,054
2050	111,068

Source: Medford Planning Department