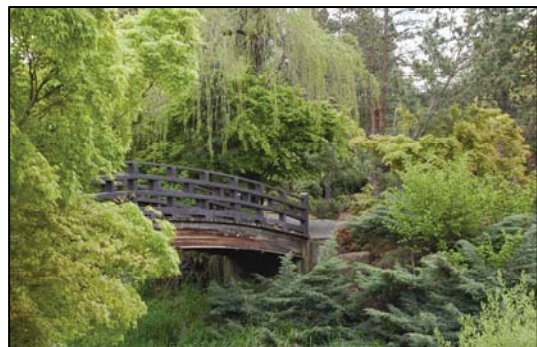


CHAPTER 3



COMMUNITY VISION AND PRIORITIES

A community's vision for parks and recreation as well as the type and amount of parks and recreation experiences they desire helps paint a picture of the future park system. The feedback obtained during the public involvement process helped refine the City's vision for parks and recreation and identify future community needs and priorities. This chapter provides an overview of the community's vision for the park and recreation system and their priorities for the future.

SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT



To create a plan that reflects the recreation preferences, needs, and values of Gresham residents, the planning process included multiple forums for community outreach. As noted in Chapter 1, nearly 1,800 Gresham residents participated in updating the City's Comprehensive Parks & Recreation, Trails and Natural Areas Plan. Representing a broad spectrum of ages, cultural groups, and special interests, community members completed surveys and questionnaires, participated in interviews, and provided feedback through focus groups and advisory committee meetings to indicate what types of parks and recreation facilities are needed in Gresham.

Overview

The public involvement process included a variety of activities to solicit feedback from community residents. These activities are described below. The parentheses indicate the numbers of Gresham residents who participated in each event.

- *Community Recreation Survey (429)*: The Community Survey was administered by mail in May and June 2007 to obtain information on current recreation participation, needs and priorities. Two thousand surveys were mailed to

random Gresham households. The survey included both adult and youth respondents.

- *Adult Questionnaire (494)*: Administered through the City's website and via print copies in Spring and Summer 2007, the Community Questionnaire was designed specifically for adults and collected information on parks and program usage, program and facility needs, priorities, and willingness to support City-supported programs and facilities.
- *Youth Questionnaire (252)*: A separate questionnaire, designed to address the needs and concerns of Gresham's youth, was also administered via the Internet and print copies in Spring and Summer 2007. The questionnaire included data on which parks and facilities Gresham's youth frequent, how they get there, how well the recreational needs of youth are being met, and what facilities and activities they would like to see made available.
- *Sports Groups Questionnaire (11)*: Representatives from eleven sports groups such as soccer and baseball provided data regarding their participation patterns and needs.
- *Community Open House (226)*: In Summer 2007, two open house events were held at Gresham's Farmer's Market. These events allowed many residents to identify park and facility priorities.
- *Key Stakeholders Interviews (23)*: Gresham community leaders and key stakeholders were interviewed about their perception of parks, recreation and open space issues, and challenges facing the city.
- *Focus Groups (30)*: Three focus groups were conducted in late May of 2007 with members of key stakeholder groups in Gresham: youth, seniors and Spanish-speakers.
- *Staff Interviews (8)*: Eight City staff and a member of the Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee were interviewed to provide insights into the issues and challenges facing the community and the Division.

- *Technical Advisory Committee (25)*: Twenty-five committee members met to discuss their vision for Gresham’s park system, its strengths and weaknesses, and priorities for improvement. Members consisted of City staff, other government agencies, and school district officials.
- *Community Advisory Committee (24)*: Twenty-four committee members discussed the strengths needs, priorities for improvement and vision for Gresham’s parks, recreation and natural areas. These included Neighborhood Association representatives, arts and culture, and sports groups
- *Park and Recreation Citizen Advisory Committee (7)*: Committee members discussed the strengths and weaknesses of Gresham’s park system, priorities for improvement and their vision for the future.
- *Community Presentations (287)*: Eleven community presentations were made to community groups to get their opinion on parks and recreation needs. About 287 residents attended the presentations. Presentations were given before service organizations, such as Lions and Kiwanis.

Summary of Key Findings

Key findings from each of the public involvement activities are presented in Appendix D. Highlights and common themes that crossed venues are summarized below.



- Overall, respondents are not satisfied with the City’s park and recreation system. Concerns over safety and security, maintenance, the condition of facilities, the level of park development, and the lack of programming were noted in most public involvement forums.
- Participants indicated that walking/biking trails, nature trails, and neighborhood parks are the three greatest needs in Gresham.
- The community’s top facility needs included a

skate park and off-leash dog area. An aquatic facility (indoor/outdoor) is also desired, as well as a multi-purpose recreation facility with indoor recreation opportunities (e.g., gymnasium, indoor track, exercise equipment, programming space).

- Respondents also noted a variety of programming areas where their recreation needs are not being met by the City or other providers. These include special events, adult programs, nature programs/environmental education, and indoor recreation opportunities, such as swimming, fitness, and running (on an indoor track).
- The most-supported park improvements include in ranked order developing trails/connecting existing trails, improving parks and natural areas, and improving park maintenance.
- The top two priorities for spending tax dollars include developing walking/biking trails and upgrading neighborhood parks.
- In all public involvement forums, respondents emphasized the need to develop previously acquired and undeveloped parks, and to improve and maintain the current park system before acquiring new park land. However, there was some support for preserving more natural areas. In addition, 100% of respondents at the Community Open House indicated that more parks are needed.
- Preserving natural areas and the environment, improving health and fitness, and providing opportunities to socialize were recognized as the top benefits provided by parks, recreation facilities, and trails.

VISION FOR A PREFERRED SYSTEM

Parks and recreation is an essential service that enhances the quality of life in the Gresham community by fostering personal health, strengthening community, preventing crime, protecting the environment, and contributing to a healthy economy. The City will provide an integrated, neighborhood-based parks and recreation system that:

- Provides *sufficient facilities and programs* to meet the needs of Gresham's growing population.
- Interconnects parks, open space, and trails to *maximize access to community destinations, parks and recreation facilities*.
- Ensures the *equitable distribution* of recreation resources throughout Gresham's neighborhoods.
- Provides *equal access* to diverse recreational opportunities for all residents, regardless of age, physical and mental ability, culture, and economic ability.
- Builds a *sense of community* through shared recreational experiences and volunteer involvement.
- Involves *residents as active participants and partners* in all aspects of parks and recreation.
- Builds and maintains *partnerships* to optimize funding and facility resources, and to improve recreational opportunities.
- Fosters *community stewardship* of our natural resources, through environmental education, outdoor experiences, and volunteer opportunities.
- Reduces auto-dependency and enhances recreational opportunities by providing a connected system of trails and bikeways.
- Provides for effective and economically *sound management of public resources*.
- *Protects the community's investment* by providing quality facility maintenance.
- Provides a *safe environment* in cooperation with community policing efforts and by increasing park activity through recreation programs.
- *Informs the community* about Gresham's parks and recreation opportunities and the benefits provided.

COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

The statements noted above are based on the vision set forth in the 1996 Plan. While these still apply, budget shortages have hampered the Division in implementing this park and recreation system. The vision for the park system has not changed significantly, but the focus of the Parks and Recreation Division has been refined.

Based on feedback obtained through the public involvement process, staff and residents are embracing projects that strengthen the community, accomplish city-wide goals, and provide strong environmental and social benefits. The desired park system is one that:

- Establishes and maintains parks, natural areas, recreational facilities for citizen use and enjoyment, helping to create *Oregon's most livable City*.
- Improves *community connectivity* through trail development.
- Provides *quality, enjoyable, and, most of all, safe play opportunities* for residents.
- Provides *nearby access to basic recreation amenities*, including playgrounds, picnic areas, and sport courts at neighborhood and community parks.
- *Develops parks more fully* to support a variety of recreational experiences, creating new opportunities for play, physical development and socialization.
- Acquires and develops additional park land in *underserved and economically disadvantaged areas* to provide a geographically and socially accessible and balanced park system.
- Provide more recreation programs and special events that *foster community gatherings and social interaction*, provide opportunities for life-long learning, promote personal health and community wellness, and enhance community livability.

- Provides *green places of renewal* that connect us to nature and wildlife.
- Provide inclusive, innovative, quality recreation services that *promote community pride and identity*.