

CHAPTER 4





PARK AND RECREATION NEEDS

Community needs for parks and recreation are based on two criteria: 1) the leisure opportunities that residents want now; and 2) the opportunities they desire for the future. In Gresham, what people want now is to fill existing gaps in City services. What residents want for the future is for the City and other agencies to work together to create a park and recreation system that promotes community livability and reflects their vision. This chapter identifies community needs for the future park system, based on the community's current need and future vision.

OVERVIEW

The Community Needs Assessment is a significant part of the planning effort. The purpose of the needs assessment is to calculate needs for parks, recreation facilities, and programs in the City of Gresham. Where feasible, needs are defined in quantifiable terms, such as parkland standards. However, some needs are more intangible, such as the need to improve facility maintenance and condition, or expand programming opportunities. The key needs for parks and recreation are summarized below.

- *Maintenance:* Currently, the City provides maintenance at the lowest level of service possible. A shortage of funds and staff limit the care that maintenance staff can provide for City parks and facilities. The result has been a large number of deferred maintenance projects and the steady deterioration of City assets.
- *Renovation:* The age of recreation facilities, along with the lack of development in many City parks, is increasing the need for renovations at several park sites. While some parks sites, natural areas, and trails need minor renovations—such as a new playground or accessibility enhancements, some sites need major renovations to meet community expectations.

- *Acquisition and Development:* The Community Needs Assessment identified a number of areas in Gresham that are unserved by parks and close-to-home recreation amenities. A three-pronged focus for park acquisition and development would help meet these needs:
 - *Develop undeveloped parks.* Ten undeveloped park sites have been acquired in critical areas. However, these sites remain vacant because of a lack of capital funding, as well as operations funding to manage and maintain them after development. These undeveloped parks include five neighborhood parks, two community parks, and three special use areas.
 - *Acquire and develop parks in unserved areas.* Even if all undeveloped park sites are developed, based on increased population, additional new neighborhood and community parks are needed city-wide. Ten additional neighborhood parks and two additional community parks are needed as identified in the park land analysis. These new sites will have to be acquired and developed to meet nearby needs.
 - *Acquire and develop parks in future growth areas as planned.* Additional parks are planned in future growth areas in the City, such as Pleasant Valley, Springwater, and Downtown. Approximately 28 sites need to be acquired and developed in order to achieve plans for these areas. When these areas develop, the City may consider park development at a higher level of service for these specific areas than proposed citywide.
- *Programs and Services:* Financial constraints have forced the City of Gresham to eliminate nearly all of its current recreation programming. While plans are in progress to increase programming in critical areas (e.g., volunteerism, gang diversion, and special events), recent economic setbacks have threatened those options as well. Programmed parks could increase peoples' perceptions of park safety, involve volunteers as park stewards, teach outdoor/environmental skills that enhance sustainable decision-making, build a future constituency for parks and

recreation, and promote a sense of community identity and ownership of parks. To achieve these goals, this Plan identifies basic program needs in the following areas:

- *Special events;*
- *Nature and trail programs;*
- *Volunteerism; and*
- *Adult programs.*

The need for developed park land and recreation opportunities is extreme. Consequently, park, facility, and program needs are discussed in more detail in the next sections of this chapter.

PARK LAND NEEDS

The need for park land in the City of Gresham is based on the concept that residents should be served by a variety of different park types. In addition, basic recreation amenities (playgrounds, sports courts, etc.) should be provided within ½ mile (walking and biking distance) of most users. With these goals in mind, a complex GIS analysis was undertaken to determine where gaps in services existed. This analysis assumed that all undeveloped parks would be developed in the future as planned, so that gaps in service only included areas without access to nearby park land (The need for facility development in undeveloped sites is noted with facility needs.)

The geographic analysis of park access to parks in Gresham is illustrated in a series of maps presented in Appendix D. Besides park access, these maps included an analysis of park needs based on population density, park capacity, median income, and poverty levels. In addition to the GIS analysis, the Needs Assessment included a review of park needs for areas with planned development, including Springwater, Pleasant Valley, and Downtown Gresham. It also evaluated level of service based on a comparison of the City's ratio of parks per 1,000 population to other similar communities.

Citywide Park Needs

The results of the park land needs analysis were used to calculate park land standards and needs, based on a recommended level of service. Table 4-1 summarizes the recommended level of service for each park type. These standards take into account the community's demand for additional parks and recreation opportunities, as well as the challenge the City of Gresham will face in trying to increase their level of service (LOS) in so many areas.

TABLE 4-1: PARK LAND LEVEL OF SERVICE, STANDARDS, AND NEEDS*

PARK TYPE	GRESHAM DEVELOPED OR UNDEVELOPED PARKS	GRESHAM ACRES	GRESHAM EXISTING LEVEL OF SERVICE (ACRES PER 1,000 POPULATION)	PROPOSED STANDARD	ADDITIONAL ACRES NEEDED TO MEET STANDARD	
					CURRENT POPULATION 98,072	PROJECTED POPULATION (BUILDOUT) 112,100
Neighborhood Parks	16	77.9	0.79	1.50	60.43	81.47
Community Parks	9	122.1	1.24	2.00	59.55	87.61
Special Use Areas	3	40.4	0.41	0.45	3.77	10.09
Urban Plazas	2	0.0	0.00	0.20	19.61	22.42
Outdoor Recreation Areas	9	712.5	7.27	7.25	--	100.22
Conservation Areas	12	138.4	1.41	1.40	--	18.56
Greenways	2	82.2	0.84	0.85	1.16	13.09
Trails	3	20.7	0.21	N/A	--	
TOTAL	56	1,194.1	12.18	13.65	144.52	333.46

* Note: Overall City needs are more conservative than proposed for Pleasant Valley, Springwater, or Downtown. When those areas develop, the City may desire to provide park land at a higher level of service. See Table 4-2 for existing plans for those areas.

Based on the assessment of need, level of service recommendations are based on three strategies:

- *Increase the level of service for urban parks.* The community's demand for certain types of recreation experiences is strong, as documented in the public involvement findings. Based on the number of currently underserved areas, along with a greater need for recreation opportunities in the future, standards have been created to provide direction for meeting a higher level of service for neighborhood parks, community parks, special use areas, and urban plazas. As indicated in the discussion of recreation facility needs, fully developing existing and proposed sites is also a priority.
- *Maintain the current level of service for natural areas.* As the population continues to grow, the City of Gresham should at a minimum maintain the current level of service for outdoor recreation areas, conservation areas, and greenways. Additional acreage will be needed to maintain this LOS. Desired parcels should be identified on an opportunity basis. The City also should attempt to incorporate open space plans for Springwater, Pleasant Valley, and Downtown into their acquisition strategy.
- *Support trail development, using appropriate means for obtaining access to trail corridors.* This may or may not involve land acquisition. Trail development most likely will require a collaborative role where the City of Gresham partners with others to acquire some trail corridors and develops trails along planned and desired routes.

Park Needs in Future Growth Areas

The citywide park standards noted in Table 4-1 are based on a conservative estimate of needs. In contrast, the Springwater Community Plan, Pleasant Valley Concept Plan, and the Downtown Development Strategy all propose a higher level of service for park land than is needed citywide. For this reason, park needs in these future growth areas are discussed separately from other park needs.

Table 4-2 summarizes the recommended level of service for developed urban parks in Gresham based on planned and proposed parks. The table identifies the number of park sites needed citywide, in Springwater, in Pleasant Valley, and Downtown, along with the estimated acreage for these sites by park type. The acreage reflects an estimated minimum and maximum park size based on the vision for that community and information conveyed in the conceptual plans.

TABLE 4-2: IDENTIFIED NEED FOR DEVELOPED PARKS BY AREA

	CITYWIDE		SPRINGWATER		PLEASANT VALLEY*		DOWNTOWN		TOTAL	
	# of sites	Total Acres	# of sites	Total Acres	# of sites	Total Acres	# of sites	Total Acres	# of sites	Total Acres
Neighborhood Parks	10	20-60	1	6-10	6	24-72	1	5-8	18	55-150
Community Parks	2	20-40	2	25-45	1	13-90			5	58-175
Special Use Areas							1	8-10	1	8-10
Urban Plaza			2	4-8	0*	0	5	5-10	7	9-18
TOTAL PARKS	12	40-100	5	35-63	7	37-162	7	18-28	31	130-353

* Only the proposed parks within the Gresham planning area are noted here.

**The Pleasant Valley Concept Plan includes three plazas and three park blocks as design features. These may be public or private and are not counted here.

As noted in Table 4-2, approximately 130-353 acres of park land are needed for future developed parks in all of these areas. The range is based on the fact that the targeted park acquisition size may vary depending on land availability and funding at the time of acquisition. In comparison, the standards proposed in Table 4-1 are based on a need of approximately 202 acres for these same park types. This standard assumes that either fewer or smaller parks will be acquired. To achieve the vision set forth for Springwater, Pleasant Valley, and Downtown in their separate plans, the City may need to exceed the LOS standard proposed for park land citywide.

RECREATION FACILITY NEEDS



As noted in the park land analysis, several existing park sites in Gresham are undeveloped, and many others are minimally developed or have aging facilities in fair condition. There is a great need to provide more and better amenities and facilities within parks of all types. This section focuses on facility needs, which have been evaluated based on their supply, demand, and level of service.

The provision of facilities often meets a variety of goals. For example, most cities provide playgrounds in locations that create nearby recreation

opportunities. They provide sports fields in areas that are accessible to the community in order to support programming needs and spontaneous play. In addition, they provide special use facilities in accessible locations to draw people from throughout the City and region for special events and recreation opportunities. As a result, facilities should be provided in park locations that support ease of use and meet community goals.

Park Design and Development Guidelines

Since many of Gresham's existing parks are underdeveloped and more parks are needed, part of the facility needs analysis was based on an evaluation of specific design guidelines for parks. Presented in Appendix C, these design guidelines indicate what types of facilities should be located in existing and proposed parks of various types. Using these guidelines, an evaluation was conducted to determine what types of facilities are missing in existing neighborhood and community parks. These needs are summarized below.

Neighborhood Park Needs

Based on an evaluation of existing neighborhood parks, the following needs are noted:

- Four parks need playgrounds (Cedar Park, Hall Park, Hollybrook Park, and Kirk Park).

- Three parks need active recreation resources, such as those identified in Appendix C. Two of these sites (Kane Road Park and Thom Park) appear to have adequate acreage to accommodate at least one active feature. However, Cedar Park, which meets none of the neighborhood park guidelines, may be too small to accommodate any additional features. The City will have to evaluate options to improve service in this area.
- Picnic tables are needed at Hall Park and Hollybrook Park.
- Only three sites have additional resources to enhance recreation opportunities: Davis Park, Hall Park, and Yamhill Park. Further site development is warranted at other sites to increase potential recreation experiences.

Community Park Needs

Based on the results of the evaluation of existing community parks, the following needs are noted:

- North Gresham Park needs a restroom.
- North Gresham Park and Pat Pfeifer Barrier-Free Park both need sport courts.
- Three sites (North Gresham, Pat Pfeifer, and Rockwood Central) need picnic shelters to provide opportunities for group gatherings and socializing, which are highly desired by the community.
- Only two parks include additional resources to broaden play experiences: a horseshoe facility and a disc golf course. Facilities such as skate spots, off-leash dog areas, interactive water features/spraygrounds, a stage and/or amphitheater, fitness stations, etc. are needed to support the recreation experiences desired by community members.

Need for Park Development

The design and development guidelines provided in Appendix C also can be used to indicate need for additional facilities at undeveloped sites. All undeveloped parks should be developed with the minimum resources noted for those park

types. Meeting community demands for increased recreation opportunities may require providing additional resources at many sites as well.

Facility Level of Service Analysis

In addition to the design guideline analysis, facility needs were identified based on a comparison of Gresham's existing level of service to that of comparable communities. For facilities, level of service can be measured as a ratio of one facility per number of people served. The City of Gresham is above average when compared to other communities in the provision of baseball and soccer fields and slightly lower in the provision of softball fields. However, it has a significantly lower level of service in the provision of basic recreation amenities, such as playgrounds and outdoor basketball courts. Unlike the comparable communities, the City of Gresham provides no recreation/community centers or swimming pools.

The facility analysis also included a service area analysis for sport fields, playgrounds and picnic shelters, and trails (Appendix D). These analyses provided the data used to create the facility guidelines noted in Table 4-3. Because schools and other providers are significant contributors for recreation facilities citywide, the City will need to continue to collaborate with other providers to meet these needs.

Trail Needs

In the public involvement forums, walking and biking trails were noted as the top need in the City, as well as the type of project where residents were most likely to spend their tax dollars. In addition, local, state, and regional recreation trends suggest that walking is the most popular recreation activity (in terms of participation), and trail use is growing. For this reason, the need for trails and pathways deserve special attention.

TABLE 4-3: GRESHAM RECREATION FACILITY LOS, PROPOSED GUIDELINES AND NEEDS

FACILITY	HISTORIC NRPA GUIDELINES	GRESHAM EXISTING STANDARD	EXISTING FACILITIES		UNIT OF MEASURE	TOTAL	GRESHAM EXISTING LEVEL OF SERVICE	EXISTING LEVEL OF SERVICE INCLUDING OTHER PUBLIC AGENCIES	PROPOSED CITYWIDE GUIDELINE ^B	ADDITIONAL FACILITIES NEEDED	
			GRESHAM	OTHER AGENCIES ^A						98,072	112,100
MAINTAIN EXISTING LOS (MINIMUM RECOMMENDATION)											
Baseball Fields	1/ 5,000	1/ 2,500	9	31	each	40	1/ 10,897	1/ 2,452	1/ 2,450	0	6
Football Fields	1/	1/ 10,000	0	4	each	4		1/ 24,518	1/ 24,500	0	1
Soccer Fields	1/ 10,000	1/ 2,000	10	32	each	42	1/ 9,807	1/ 2,335	1/ 2,350	0	6
Softball Fields	1/ 5,000	1/ 3,000	5	26	each	31	1/ 19,614	1/ 3,164	1/ 3,200	0	4
Pools	1/ 20,000	1/ 20,000	0	6	each	6	N/A	1/ 16,345	1/ 16,000	0	1
Gymnasiums	N/A	N/A	0	18	each	18	N/A	1/ 5,448	1/ 5,500	0	2
INCREASE LOS (To Meet Identified Facility Needs)											
Community Centers	N/A	1/ 15,000	0	1	each	1	N/A	1/ 98,072	1/ 72,000	0	1
Group Picnic Areas	N/A	1/ 10,000	3	0	each	3	1/ 32,691	1/ 32,691	1/ 14,000	4	5
Outdoor Basketball Courts	1/ 5,000	1/ 1,500	8	48	each	56	1/ 12,259	1/ 1,751	1/ 1,700	2	10
Playground	N/A	1/ 2,500	16	15	each	31	6,130	1/ 3,164	1/ 2,600	7	12
Tennis Courts	1/ 2,000	1/ 4,000	0	18	each	18	N/A	1/ 5,448	1/ 5,000	2	4
Skate Parks	N/A	N/A	1	0	each	1	1/ 98,072	1/ 98,072	1/ 60,000	1	1
Trails	N/A	N/A	8.39	6.4	miles	14.79	1/ 11,689	1/ 6,631	N/A ^C		

^A The guideline is based on a recommended LOS that includes other agencies. The City of Gresham is not expected to achieve this guideline alone.

^B Includes local school districts, private providers, and other municipalities in Multnomah County; see Tables B-1, B-2, and B-3 for relevant inventories.

^C Implement Trails Master Plan and Transportation Plan. (Also, see the trail map in Appendix J.)

This Plan does not set a formal standard or guideline for the provision of trails. However, it presumes that the City will prioritize and implement the trail projects noted in the Trails Master Plan and Transportation Plan. Of the projects noted in those plans, the Parks and Recreation Division should assume responsibility for off-road multiuse pathways and recreation trails. In addition, the Division should continue to cooperate with Transportation and Streets in the development of sidewalks, shared streets, and multi-use paths in the street right of way, particularly where these improve access to parks. This Plan also recommends that the City continue to examine ways to link to the regional trail system and enhance connectivity citywide. (See Appendix J for a draft Trails Master Plan, which is part of this effort.)

PROGRAM NEEDS

Although it is the fourth largest city in Oregon, Gresham offers fewer programming options than desired or expected. Financial constraints have forced the City of Gresham to eliminate nearly all of its recreation programming. Therefore, other recreation providers play a critical role in meeting sport and recreation needs.

There are many program areas where additional services are needed to serve City residents. However, even with additional funding, the City of Gresham will be unable to meet all community needs for programming in the short term. One of the goals of this analysis is not only to identify specific program areas where programming is needed, but also to identify priority service areas where City-provided programs will serve the residents with the greatest needs. This will allow the City of Gresham to prioritize recreation programming according to available funding. The Needs Assessment analysis included an Importance-Unmet Needs Matrix, which helped assess the priority that should be placed on parks and recreation facilities and programs in the City of Gresham. Using the results of the Community Survey, the following service areas were identified as priority needs:

Top Priorities

- Special events;
- Adult fitness and wellness;
- Adult programs for 50 years and older;
- Nature programs/environmental education;
- Adult continuing education; and
- Water fitness.

Opportunities for Improvement

- Adult arts, dances, performing arts; and
- Adult sports.

Program Expansion Areas

Based on the findings of all public involvement activities, the following needs for more or better programming were noted:

- Special events;
- Nature programs;
- Volunteerism;
- Adult programs; and
- Other program areas.

Special Events

City residents expressed a strong desire for more special events in many different public involvement activities. The provision of special events fits in well with the City's goal of creating a more livable community, as well as the response from residents that community livability is one of the top benefits provided by parks and recreation. Similarly, community-oriented special events support the notion of providing more opportunities for people to meet and socialize together, which helps to build stronger neighborhoods and community. When specific social events are tied to socio-cultural and historical context of the Gresham, the events can also foster and promote community identity. For example, participants in three focus groups expressed a desire for events such as dances, markets,

and concerts. Movies in the park, family fun days, sports tournaments, trail-oriented events, ice cream socials, etc., would also support the community's desire to attend more special events. Because creating a livable City is an interest of many community groups and businesses, the City should be able to collaborate in the provision of special events. Partnerships, sponsorships, and even community-organized and hosted events at City parks and facilities should be pursued to support special events programming in Gresham.

Nature Programs

Natural areas, greenways, and trails are very important to residents in the City of Gresham. To improve recreation opportunities, it makes sense to take the programs to the places where people recreate. According to respondents, trails and natural areas are two of the most frequently-use recreation areas. Outdoor activities, environmental programming, and trail-related opportunities are types of nature programs that should be considered. These programs may include environmental education, and a variety-of trail programs as noted in the examples below:

- *Organized trail events:* Dog walks, tour de Gresham, turkey trots, power walk races, family fun runs, treasure hunts.
- *Trail clubs:* Senior hiking, bird watching, lunch in the park, stroller walks; mountain biking.
- *Self-directed trail opportunities:* Nature walks, interpretive trail experiences.
- *Volunteer-guided nature programs and hikes:* Flora and fauna identification, tree talks.

Volunteerism

Volunteerism has been increasingly recognized as a significant program area, as more and more people spend their leisure time engaged in volunteer efforts. Plus, volunteers in parks can provide many benefits for the City's park system. The City of Gresham should consider ways to expand its current volunteer programs by investing staff time in recruiting,

organizing, supporting, and recognizing volunteers. Public involvement activities suggest that there are many groups and many different ages of residents who may be interested in volunteering. These include teens/youth, who expressed an interest in volunteering at special events, such as providing youth-run concessions, parking, trash pick-up, and security (in some cases) at concerts and in the parks. These also include seniors, who indicated that they would like to have opportunities to volunteer with groups (such as Gresham Seniors) to provide programming. In addition, family opportunities could be provided.

Volunteerism provides a win-win situation for the City and for the volunteers themselves. It also provides a way to increase community support and stewardship of parks, reduce maintenance and programming costs, provide opportunities for no-cost recreation by trading volunteer hours for recreation credits, and promoting youth skill-building, training, and development. Below are examples of volunteer areas that can be developed or expanded:

- *Parks maintenance and stewardship:*
 - Adopt-A-Park, Adopt-A-Trail, Adopt-A-Stream
 - Parks Appreciation Days, Volunteers in Parks
 - Sport Field Caretakers (sport organizations who take on field maintenance and set-up for games)
 - Neighborhood Park Caretakers (local residents or homeowners' associations who pick up trash, maintained landscape beds, and report other maintenance needs)
 - Park Patrols
- *Naturalist volunteers*
- *Special event volunteers*
- *Program volunteers*

Adult Programs

Following special events, the two types of programs for which residents expressed the strongest need were adult fitness and wellness programs and adult continuing education programs. Currently, youth have far more program opportunities than adults. This translates into a far greater demand for adult programming than programs for any other demographic.

There are many different areas where adult programming can be provided. Adult fitness and wellness programs can help the community improve physical health and fitness, which was one of the most desired benefits of parks and recreation. As the population tends to age nationwide, programs for young seniors and older adults (50+) are gaining in popularity. These include both active recreation (exercise classes, tennis, dancing, and non-contact sport leagues or drop-in opportunities, such as pickleball, badminton, softball) and passive opportunities (such as classes to promote life-long learning, skill-building, and socialization).

The provision of adult programming will, to some extent, depend on City facilities or partnerships to provide space for programming. On the other hand, as the City develops new facilities, opportunities to increase adult programming should be considered. Mt. Hood Community College is one potential partner.

Other Program Areas

Residents identified several other desired program areas in the feedback they provided at public involvement activities. Two significant ones include:

- *Aquatics programs:* Youth learn to swim and water-based special events.
- *Youth programs:* Sports and camps, youth outdoor/nature programming, or family-oriented special events.

In the short term, partners may be better situated to meet these needs. However, the City should collaborate if feasible to support these program areas.