SLOW

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Parks, trails, and recreation spaces play a central role in fostering a vibrant community; they connect people to nature and to each other, promote environmental and climate resilience, support physical and mental wellbeing, and breathe life into the local economy. City leadership and community members recognize the vital importance of parks, recreation, and trails for Gresham's future and have a shared vision to maintain, enhance, and invest in these assets moving forward.

PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

Gresham Parks 2035: Parks, Recreation and Trails Plan (Gresham Parks 2035 or the Plan) represents a multi-year effort by the City of Gresham to establish a renewed vision to guide development, improvements, and management of parks, recreation, and trails for the next 10 years and beyond. Building upon the 2009 Parks & Recreation, Trails and Natural Areas Master Plan and aligning with recent and current City initiatives, Gresham Parks 2035 addresses shifts in community needs, demographics, planned growth, budget realities, and priorities to guide the City and the Parks Program in making sound decisions regarding the investment, management, and operations of its park and recreation system.

The plan provides guidance on Gresham's dedicated park and recreation system which includes the City's parks, recreation facilities, trail corridors, and other resources that are managed and maintained by the Parks Program for public use. Parks range from large community parks that support play and gathering, such as Main City Park to smaller neighborhood parks that provide close-to-home recreation opportunities such as Butler Creek Park. The system also has numerous nature parks that support connections with nature and passive recreation such as Nadaka Nature Park. Connecting the system is a series of trail corridors that provide regional and community connectivity to the City's parks and recreation facilities, other city destinations, and neighboring jurisdictions. Beyond these sites, the city is home to a large network of natural areas that provide visual greenspace and other ecological functions rather than active recreation. These areas are not included within the Gresham Parks 2035 dedicated park system.

Through a community-wide engagement process, Gresham Parks 2035 identifies an investment strategy to improve existing parks and develop existing undeveloped park properties as well as new parks and facilities to serve community needs and future growth. Altogether, Gresham Parks 2035 will serve as a framework for future decision making, priority setting, and annual budgeting. The key directions included in the Plan are intended to support the desired future for the community, while providing the Parks Program with the flexibility needed to achieve City goals and priorities.

RECENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Much has been accomplished since adoption of the 2009 Parks & Recreation, Trails and Natural Areas Master Plan, paving the way for Gresham Parks 2035. Some key highlights include:

- Development of Nadaka Nature Park;
- Development of Hogan Butte Nature Park (renamed to Shane T. Bemis Nature Park);
- Addition of the Children's Fountain at Arts Plaza;
- New amenities associated with the Spur Trail project at Main City Park;
- Expansion of Gresham's Japanese Garden with Ebetsu Plaza, Kyoudou Center, and the addition of accessibility and cultural enhancements to Tsuru Island;
- Acquisition of the Shaull property;
- Development of new futsal courts;
- Development of a new playground and sensory play at Kirk Park and updates to the site's Master Plan;
- Concept Plans for Gresham's six undeveloped park sites;
- Adoption of the Gabbert Butte Nature Park Master Plan;
- Addition of new community garden installations;
- Expansion of recreation programming and City events such as Gresham's Lilac Run and Movies in the Park;
- Development of new pickleball courts;
- Creation of the 30-person Gresham Parks and Recreation Community Advisory Group that developed the core values of Equity, Safety and Accessibility for the park system;
- Completion of phase 2 development of Gradin Community Sports Park;
- Safey enhancements at Vance Park; and
- Initiated design process of two new community parks.

Nadaka Neighborhood and Nature Park Grand Opening

Kirk Park

PLANNING PROCESS

The City of Gresham led a nearly two-year planning process for Gresham Parks 2035, beginning in Winter 2023 and concluding in Winter 2025. The Plan was organized around a four-phase process that combined extensive community engagement with data-driven technical analysis to identify community needs and inform key directions and projects. In addition, this process was preceded by and built on the Parks and Recreation Community Advisory Group process conducted in 2021-2022. That process established core values for the park system (Safety, Access, and Equity); evaluated financial conditions and potential funding sources for parks; and reviewed the feasibility of a new community center.

As noted in Figure 1-1 on the next page, the Gresham Parks 2035 planning process included:

- Updating the City's park and facility inventory and analyzing the existing system;
- Identifying community needs based on technical analysis and community outreach;
- Developing updated core values and key directions;
- Creating site-specific recommendations and strategies for existing and new parks; and
- Preparing Gresham Parks 2035 for community review, refinement, and adoption.

Throughout the process, an array of community outreach activities and advisory and community meetings contributed to the development of the Plan. These included formation of and meetings with the Parks Task Force (PTF) and Technical Advisory Team (TAT); meetings with Gresham City Council; multilingual targeted community member meetings; two online questionnaires; and pop-up activities at various City events. These activities helped identify key themes and priorities which were carried forward throughout the development of the Plan. Outreach findings are described in Chapter 3.

Rockwood Plaza Gresham Parks 2035 Pop-Up

FIGURE 1-1: GRESHAM PARKS 2035 PLANNING PROCESS

PLAN INPUTS

The Gresham Parks 2035 planning process was driven by a wide range of inputs ranging from qualitative community outreach findings to information from other citywide and site-specific planning efforts to data from multiple different technical analyses. Figure 1-2 summarizes the various inputs that informed creation of the Plan.

FIGURE 1-2: GRESHAM PARKS 2035 INPUTS

Nadaka Neighborhood Park

PLAN ORGANIZATION

Gresham Parks 2035 is organized into seven chapters with additional supportive documentation in seven appendices.

- **Chapter 1. Introduction** introduces Gresham Parks 2035, describing the planning process, related planning efforts, recent accomplishments, as well as opportunities and challenges for the future of parks and recreation in Gresham.
- **Chapter 2. Community and System Overview** describes Gresham's setting and context, community profile, park classification system, recreation facilities, park conditions, as well as programming and partnerships.
- **Chapter 3. Community Needs** summarizes the Gresham Parks 2035 community engagement process, identifies key themes, and identifies community needs for parkland, trails, recreation facilities, and accessibility as per the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- **Chapter 4. Systemwide Key Directions** presents the core values and key directions that will guide the parks and recreation system over the next 10 years.
- **Chapter 5. Recommended Park and Facility Improvements** details the recommendations for existing, undeveloped, and proposed parks, facilities, and trail corridors.
- **Chapter 6. Capital Improvement Plan** outlines a 10-year list of capital projects and associated maintenance costs, including the priority projects for implementation.
- **Chapter 7. Implementation and Funding** describes the 10-year action plan and funding strategy for maintenance, improvements, and other capital projects identified in Gresham Parks 2035.

APPENDICES

Appendices provide additional background information and provide a snapshot of the key deliverables provided throughout the planning process. Many of these documents serve as "point-in-time analysis documents" created in early phases of the planning process. As a result, the appendices may include different data counts or other information in comparison to this final Plan document. Where this is the case, the data included in the body of Gresham Parks 2035 represents the most current data and information.

- **Appendix A. Park and Facility Inventory** provides an inventory of parks, trail corridors, and recreation facilities within Gresham.
- **Appendix B. Maintenance and Operations Analysis** provides an analysis of Gresham's current maintenance budget, an itemized cost model for developed parks, and potential approaches for improving the operation and maintenance of existing and future park facilities.
- **Appendix C. Americans with Disability Act (ADA) Facility Assessment Report** assesses the physical barriers to accessibility in seven of Gresham's parks and provides recommendations to address these barriers.
- **Appendix D. Community Engagement Activities** includes individual summaries of numerous community outreach and engagement opportunities.
- **Appendix E. Underserved Neighborhood and Planned Growth Area Recommendations** summarizes recommendations for new park acquisition and development in underserved neighborhoods and planned growth areas in Gresham. These recommendations directly informed the development of Appendix F, although not all identified recommendations are included in the Gresham Parks 2035 Capital Improvement Project List.
- **Appendix F. Capital Improvement Project List** presents the planning level cost estimates, site maintenance costs, and cost assumptions for all Gresham Parks 2035 capital projects.
- **Appendix G. Revenue Projections and Funding Strategy** summarizes Gresham's current funding sources and anticipated revenues for the park and recreation system, along with a discussion of potential strategies to increase available funding for capital projects and operations and maintenance.
- **Appendix H. Trails and Paths Map** provides a detailed map of all of Gresham's trails and paths, both existing and proposed, to be used for planning purposes. The map will be periodically updated to reflect current conditions, completed projects, and future planned improvements.

RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER PLANNING EFFORTS

Gresham Parks 2035 builds on findings from several previous plans, planning efforts, and studies. It also was developed simultaneously as several other City efforts. This coordination and consultation with other planning efforts is described below.

GRESHAM COMPREHENSIVE PLAN (LAST AMENDED 2025)

Gresham's Comprehensive Plan identifies goals, policies, and action measures to guide future decision-making, growth, and development across a wide range of topic areas, including parks and recreation. Gresham Parks 2035 responds to the Comprehensive Plan's long-range goals to align with the community's overarching vision. Various sections of the Comprehensive Plan have been amended to reflect updated information in recent years.

PARKS & RECREATION, TRAILS AND NATURAL AREAS MASTER PLAN (2009)

The 2009 Parks & Recreation, Trails and Natural Areas Master Plan established goals, objectives, and recommendations for the maintenance, conservation, and development of high-quality parks, facilities, trails, and natural areas. Gresham Parks 2035 builds on the 2009 Master Plan, while integrating renewed community values and key directions along with recommended improvements that align with broader City goals and priorities, as well as current conditions, opportunities, and challenges.

GRESHAM STRATEGIC PLAN 2022-25

The City's Strategic Plan acts as a blueprint to implement the City Council and community's shared vision for the future. Driven by a series of guiding principles, the Strategic Plan focuses City resources on five strategic priorities through 2025, including financial sustainability, community safety, thriving economy, housing for all, and community vibrancy. These guiding principles and strategic priorities act as a foundation for Gresham Parks 2035. The community vibrancy priority is particularly relevant to Gresham Parks 2035 as the primary goal of this topic area is to provide community members and visitors with a wide choice of activities and opportunities to enjoy recreation and nature with an emphasis on celebrating the City's many cultures and neighborhoods.

GRESHAM PARKS CONCEPT PLAN REPORT (2020)

The Gresham Parks Concept Plan Report was developed to identify potential recreation improvements for six undeveloped parks in the city. The central goal of this Report was to help the City explore and better understand costs, maintenance needs, and prioritization of improvements to prepare for future funding opportunities. Through this planning effort, two community parks and four neighborhood parks were identified for future improvements. The sites reviewed included: Southwest Community Park, Southeast Community Park, Columbia View Neighborhood Park, Jenne Butte Neighborhood Park, East Gresham Neighborhood Park, and Southeast Neighborhood Park. Recommendations from this report are incorporated into and refined as part of the Gresham Parks 2035 Plan process. Ongoing and future individual master planning efforts for these sites also will be used to continue to refine the concepts.

PARKS & RECREATION COMMUNITY ADVISORY GROUP SUMMARY REPORT (2022)

In 2021, the City established the Parks & Recreation Community Advisory Group task force, a group of 30 diverse community members and institutional representatives to evaluate Gresham's Parks & Recreation services and to recommend strategies for improved community outcomes. This summary of their findings revealed untapped community resources that could be leveraged with existing assets and additional funding to make modest improvements to the system. The ultimate goal for this task force and the work they completed was to create a more equitable, accessible, and safe park system for all community members. Strategic guidance and recommendations from this process directly informed the Gresham Parks 2035 planning process.

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA) TRANSITION PLAN (LAST UPDATED 2024)

To make Gresham more accessible to people with disabilities and a broader range of users, the City adopted the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Transition Plan in 2020, last updated in 2024. The ADA Transition Plan guides the City in making its buildings, parks, programs, and public right-of-way accessible to all. An ADA Facility Assessment Report was conducted as part of the Gresham Parks 2035 planning process for select park facilities to support the City in fulfilling the requirements of federal civil rights legislation and to support the City's ADA Transition Plan update (Appendix C). An assessment of other parks and trails will be completed in 2026.

CITY OF GRESHAM NATURAL AREAS MANAGEMENT STRATEGY (TBD)

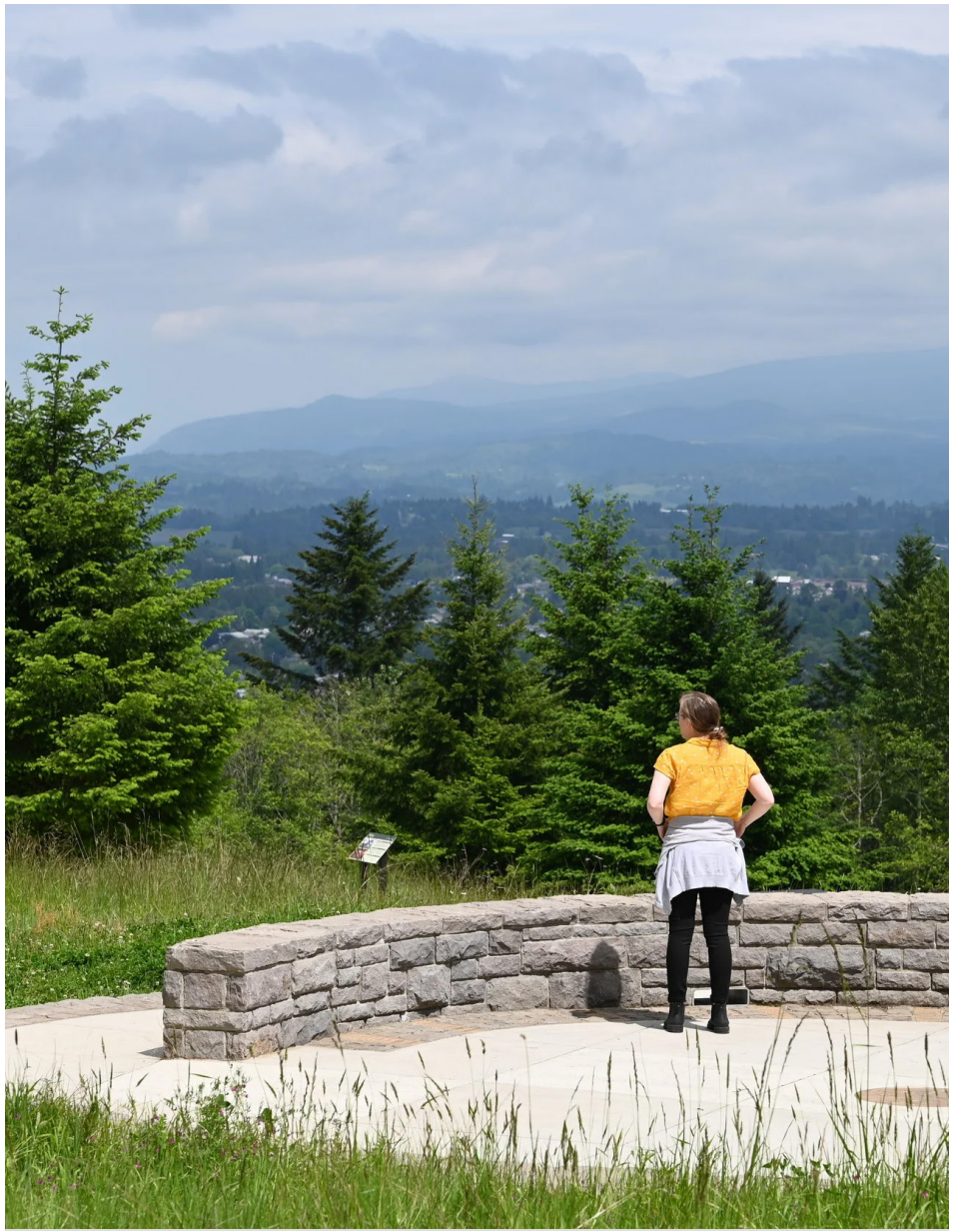
The City of Gresham's Parks Program manages a diverse portfolio of developed parks, trails, sports fields, and natural areas. While the Program maintains an active operations program for developed parks and recreation facilities, it does not currently have a dedicated natural areas management program. Gresham's natural areas are open to the public and provide valuable opportunities for access to nature; however, maintenance activities are limited to addressing safety concerns and essential infrastructure needs, such as responding to hazard trees, repairing failing culverts, and maintaining basic trail access. The City does not perform ecological restoration or active habitat management within these areas. Establishing a formal natural areas management program remains a long-term goal to support ecological health, habitat stewardship, and safe public enjoyment of these spaces. As of 2025, the Gresham Watershed Division is in the process of developing a Natural Areas Master Plan which will provide guidance for some of these areas.

Gabbert Butte Nature Park (Metro)

OTHER RELATED PLANS

In addition to the plans described in detail here, several additional systemwide, specific area, and facility master plans were considered through the planning process.

- City of Gresham Housing Needs Analysis (2022)
- City of Gresham Housing Production Strategy (2023)
- City of Gresham Red Sunset Park Detention CDs (2010)
- City of Gresham Transportation System Plan (2024-2025)
- Columbia View Park Path Map and Rendering (2024)
- Gabbert Butte Nature Park Master Plan (2019)
- Hogan Butte Environmental Education Center Concept Plan
- Hogan Butte Nature Park (now Shane T. Bemis Nature Park) and Regner Road Neighborhood Park Master Plan Report (2008)
- Kirk Park Master Plan (1988)
- Kirk Park Master plan Revisions (2019)
- Main City Park Master Plan (2008)
- Mayor Charles Becker Park Rendering (2017)
- Nadaka and Nelson Property Master Plan (2010)
- Pleasant Valley Neighborhood Park (now Piper Ridge Neighborhood Park) Concept Plan
- Rockwood Central Park Proposed Improvements (2023)
- Vance Vision Plan (2022)
- Zimmerman Heritage Farm Master Plan (1999)



Shane T. Bemis Nature Park (GreenWorks)