



# CHAPTER 3 COMMUNITY NEEDS



# Community Needs

Gresham is a diverse community with unique needs and varying priorities for parks, trails, recreation facilities, and programs. This chapter provides an overview of Gresham Parks 2035's engagement activities and technical analyses. Together, these efforts identified key community needs for Gresham's park and recreation system.

## ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

The Gresham Parks 2035 planning process was driven by a robust and inclusive community engagement process to understand unique and evolving community priorities. Ranging from in-person facilitated meetings to online questionnaires, the engagement approach strived to gather and reflect the diverse voices, needs, and aspirations of the Gresham community. Appendix D provides individual summaries of the Gresham Parks 2035 engagement activities.

FIGURE 3-1: ENGAGEMENT SNAPSHOT



## GRESHAM PARKS 2035 ENGAGEMENT GOALS

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Gresham Parks 2035 was driven by an engagement strategy that applied the following eight goals to ensure authentic, diverse, and inclusive opportunities for broad community participation throughout the planning process.

- » **Build on previous work.** Ensure that City efforts acknowledge and leverage results of previous planning and engagement efforts, including the prior park planning work.
- » **Uplift communities and voices that have been historically excluded and/or underrepresented in parks planning processes.** Create opportunities that enable participation among these groups. Identify and remove existing or potential barriers where possible to ensure the full participation of all community members.
- » **Leverage local networks and existing community engagement efforts.** Build on the variety and depth of existing community involvement initiatives within Gresham to engage the public effectively and efficiently in the development of Gresham Parks 2035. Tap into existing community-based networks and groups to connect with a wider range of community members.
- » **Ensure an accessible planning process.** Ensure the engagement process is accessible, understandable, and welcoming to all who wish to participate.
- » **Ensure accountability.** Create and use feedback loops to report back to the community and decisionmakers about how their input was used to shape the Plan. Frame questions in a way that allows for constructive feedback.
- » **Build long-term capacity for civic engagement around park design, development, and programming.** Continue to build and reinforce the support network for those engaged through the planning process to stay involved and support implementation through volunteerism, donations, and additional participation.
- » **Set realistic expectations.** Ensure the community has the opportunity to dream but also understands what is possible within existing City constraints.
- » **Improve the community's understanding of how the park system has been developed and functions.** Educate community members on recent and future park investments and funding.

## TARGETED OUTREACH MEETINGS IN MULTIPLE LANGUAGES

The Project Team held two rounds of meetings specifically with Russian, Ukrainian, and Spanish speakers to assess their park and recreation needs, priorities, and desired improvements at key points during the planning process. The City recruited meeting participants through connections with local partners, church groups, commercial centers, and other community groups, and through social media platforms and direct contact with community liaisons. Each meeting included translators, a presentation paired with interactive activities and discussion questions, stipends, food, and on-site childcare to encourage inclusive participation.

## COMMUNITY ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE

From June 26 to September 8, 2024, the Project Team administered a nine-question, online questionnaire to assess systemwide needs and priorities for parks, recreation facilities, and services. The questionnaire was available on the Engage Gresham website in multiple languages and received over 300 responses.

## POP-UP EVENTS

The City of Gresham hosted several in-person, informal pop-up events throughout the planning process at City events including Movies in the Park, Rock the Block, and the Rockwood Community Market. The events included information about the planning process and interactive exercises on different types of park enhancements participants would like the Plan to address. Pop-up activities were also used as an opportunity to encourage online questionnaire participation. The City made about 300 connections with community members during these events.

## NEIGHBORHOOD COALITION MEETINGS

The Project Team facilitated two Neighborhood Coalition meetings in September 2024 and November 2025 to provide an update on Gresham Parks 2035 and solicit input from Gresham's recognized neighborhood associations. Attendees were briefed on the planning process, community engagement results, and technical analysis findings.

## CITY COUNCIL MEETINGS

The Project Team met with the Gresham City Council at key points throughout the process to report on outreach and technical findings, provide updates on the planning process, identify key opportunities and priorities, and ensure the process was headed in the right direction.



Targeted Outreach Meeting

## PARKS TASK FORCE AND TECHNICAL ADVISORY TEAM

The Project Team convened a Parks Task Force and Technical Advisory Team to provide advisory guidance throughout the planning process. The Parks Task Force was composed of a diverse group of community members with a strong interest in parks and recreation, including individuals who served on the Gresham Parks and Recreation Community Advisory Group. The Technical Advisory Team included a broad group of Gresham and partner agency staff that could provide technical guidance on Gresham Parks 2035 analyses. The Project Team met with the two groups three times at key points throughout the planning process. Many meetings included a presentation and/or facilitated discussion in response to the materials presented organized around questions related to system conditions, goals and objectives, park and recreation needs, systemwide and site-specific recommendations, technical analyses, project priorities, and funding strategies.

## COMMUNITY ONLINE PRIORITIZATION QUESTIONNAIRE

In the final stages of the planning process, the City launched a second community survey to help prioritize future projects for implementation over the next 10 years. The survey was available online from September 11 to October 2, 2025, and received a total of 80 responses.



Celtic Festival Gresham Parks 2035 Pop-Up



Movie in the Park Gresham Parks 2035 Pop-Up

## COMMUNITY OUTREACH KEY THEMES

The following community outreach themes emerged from the community engagement activities and advisory guidance conducted throughout the planning process.

### PARK SAFETY

Ensuring the safety of parks and recreation facilities emerged as a top priority across engagement activities. Respondents called out safety issues associated with the condition and cleanliness of amenities and facilities, appropriate park use, issues with crime and homelessness in parks, and concerns such as park lighting, visibility, and even hours of use. “Safety concerns/Don’t feel safe” was the top barrier to visiting parks identified by respondents in the Community Online Questionnaire. Participants in targeted outreach meetings with Spanish, Russian and Ukrainian speaking residents repeatedly cited safety in parks as a significant concern. Safety also was one of the three core values identified by the Parks and Recreation Community Advisory Group that provided a basis for Gresham Parks 2035. Specific improvements include lighting, cameras, accessible walkways and paths, improved sightlines and visibility, and security or park ranger presence.

### PARK MAINTENANCE AND IMPROVEMENTS

One of the greatest priorities identified by Gresham community members is the need to improve the maintenance and condition of existing parks. Respondents noted concerns around routine maintenance, park cleanliness, broken amenities and facilities, and worn or outdated equipment/structures. Residents want the City to prioritize upgrading and improving existing parks and facilities, which is a greater priority than adding new parks and facilities. Desired improvements include improved restrooms,

lighting, drinking fountains, benches, wayfinding signage, and updated infrastructure.

### NATURE PARKS AND CONNECTIONS TO NATURE

Access to and stewardship of nature parks and natural areas was a consistent priority highlighted across all Gresham Parks 2035 engagement efforts. Residents see the local environment as a place to play, to socialize, and to find peace. Residents want their parks to highlight and protect natural assets and local ecosystems within Gresham’s parks and nature parks. Engagement participants also highlighted the importance of nature parks in promoting climate resilience and environmental sustainability.

### TRAILS AND CONNECTIVITY

A desire for trails (both new and improved) was vocalized by respondents who want a more accessible park system and walkable, bikeable community. Trails and other connective paths were noted as a favored recreation activity across many different outreach activities. Outreach findings revealed that the public wants more trails and better connectivity and wayfinding for recreation, improved park access, and active transportation to reach other destinations.

### ACCESS AND ADA IMPROVEMENTS

Many outreach efforts desired improved access to Gresham’s parks, facilities, and trails as a general community need. Physical improvements to park features and amenities are needed to remove barriers and support park use and visitation for all ages and abilities.

## PARK ACTIVATION AND PROGRAMS

Engagement efforts noted the importance of increasing activities, programs, services, and special events in parks to improve safety, social cohesion, and residents' quality of life. There is particular interest in increasing programming for youth and teens (e.g. summer camps, afterschool programs, teen club, etc.) and older adults. Community input also highlighted that there are additional opportunities to increase recreation opportunities and programs through partnerships with community organizations and local schools.

There is also a desire for a greater variety of recreation activities. Many Community Online Questionnaire respondents requested more diverse facilities, such as fenced dog parks, sports fields and courts, large picnic shelters, community gardens, new or improved playgrounds, trails, and indoor recreation space (e.g., community center).

## EXISTING UNDEVELOPED PARKS

Development of Gresham's existing undeveloped park properties was identified across outreach efforts as a key opportunity to improve park access and recreation opportunities across the city. There are several undeveloped parks that are planned for future development in Gresham. These parks, such as Southwest Community Park and Southeast Community Park, are in areas where most residents lack access to a park within a half-mile walking distance. Their development will represent significant progress in addressing service area gaps in those areas. Community members desire the development of these sites over acquisition of additional sites.



Examples of Park Activation and Games at Hidden Creek Park West (Hillsboro, Oregon)



Southeast Community Park (Undeveloped)

## PARKLAND AND TRAIL NEEDS

An important first step to promoting an equitable and accessible park and recreation system requires understanding the distribution of parkland and trails across the city. Not only does the City want to ensure access for all residents, the City also wants to improve park services for neighborhoods or populations that are traditionally underserved and have higher levels of social vulnerability. This section presents results of a geographic-based analysis that examines park distribution, access, and equity.

### PARK DISTRIBUTION AND ACCESS

Access to parks and recreation spaces is essential for the well-being of individuals and communities alike. Ensuring that everyone has access to these spaces promotes healthier lifestyles, supports mental and emotional well-being, and encourages a sense of community. Moreover, ensuring equitable access to parks and recreation spaces is a critical step toward creating sustainable, vibrant cities where all residents can thrive, regardless of socioeconomic status or location.

There are many ways to evaluate whether parks and facilities are well distributed to provide economic, social, and health benefits (Figure 3-2). One way is to identify the residents who have access to a park within walking distance from their home. NRPA and the Trust for Public Land (TPL) champion a general industry-wide standard for providing parks within a 10-minute walk (or within a half mile) of all residents. This ½-mile metric has been used by the City of Gresham to guide their provision of parkland. The half-mile distance is generally considered the maximum distance most people would walk to get to a park.

The Project Team used a digital mapping program (ArcGIS Network Analyst™) to identify areas currently served and underserved by developed City parks that provide play or social gathering opportunities. Although access to all types of parks is important, the analysis focuses on access to play and gathering opportunities since these were identified by the City as the most important opportunities for all residents to have access within walking distance. Parks with play and social gathering opportunities are defined as sites that offer formal amenities that facilitate play or gathering such as playgrounds, athletic opportunities, and picnic shelters or pavilions. Nature parks and special use sites were excluded from this analysis because they typically do not include the same types of amenities. In addition to mapping areas served by existing parks, the mapping analysis also identifies areas of the city that will be served by existing undeveloped neighborhood parks and community parks once they are developed, since these will be developed to include play and gathering opportunities.



Mayor Charles Becker Park

Figure 3-3 illustrates areas within a 10-minute walk to developed neighborhood and community parks, other developed City parks that provide social gathering space or a place to play (such as Shane T. Bemis Nature Park and Arts Plaza), and undeveloped neighborhood and community parks. The map shows numerous residential areas across the city that are not currently served by these sites, as shown by the light-yellow shaded areas. Figure 3-3 also shows that developing the City’s undeveloped neighborhood parks and community parks would greatly expand park access in the Centennial, Southwest, Hogan Cedars, Powell Valley, and Kelly Creek neighborhoods. However, even once these facilities are developed, several neighborhoods will still include underserved residential areas.

Given limitations on funding and lack of large vacant, buildable parcels, it likely will not be feasible to create new parks in all areas that show service area gaps. Depending on funding and community priorities, new park development may be prioritized in areas where residents are less likely to drive to parks, in areas where vacant land is available, and/or in areas with the lowest service levels. New parks will also be needed in future growth areas where land availability and funding via System Development Charges may make it easier to acquire and develop new parks.

**FIGURE 3-2: IMPORTANCE OF EQUITABLE PARK AND RECREATION ACCESS**

### WHY IS EQUITABLE PARK AND RECREATION ACCESS IMPORTANT?

**Parks and recreation promotes healthy, connected, and resilient communities.** 

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**Parks and recreation increases physical activity, reducing the risk of chronic diseases, obesity, and cancer.**
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**Parks and recreation improves mental well-being and productivity by reducing stress, anxiety, and depression.**
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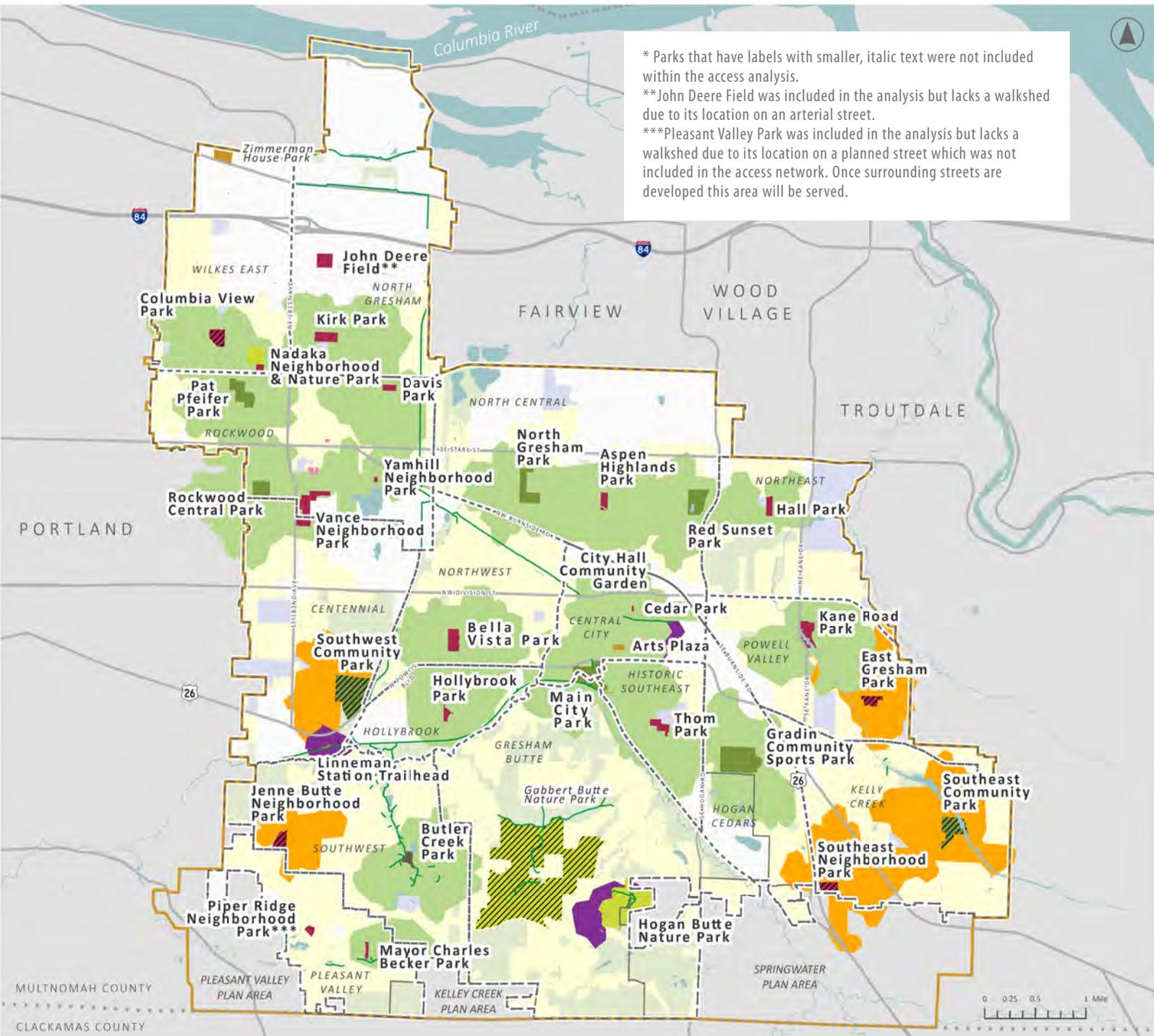
**Parks and recreation encourages community connectivity by decreasing social isolation and the associated risks of dementia, heart disease, and stroke.**
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**Parks and recreation reduces crime rates and encourages community safety, trust, and capacity.**
- 

**Parks and recreation improves environmental health and climate resilience by providing cleaner air and water, reducing urban heat, and protecting against natural hazards and disasters.**
- 

**Parks and recreation promotes economic activity, a high quality of life, and place-based tourism.**

*Source: The Health Benefits of Parks and Their Economic Impacts (Urban Institute)*



**FIGURE 3-3: ACCESS TO CITY PARKS WITH PLAY OR GATHERING OPPORTUNITIES (10-MINUTE WALK)**

VIA REGIONAL TRAILS, LOCAL STREETS, AND COLLECTOR STREETS

**Park Walksheds**

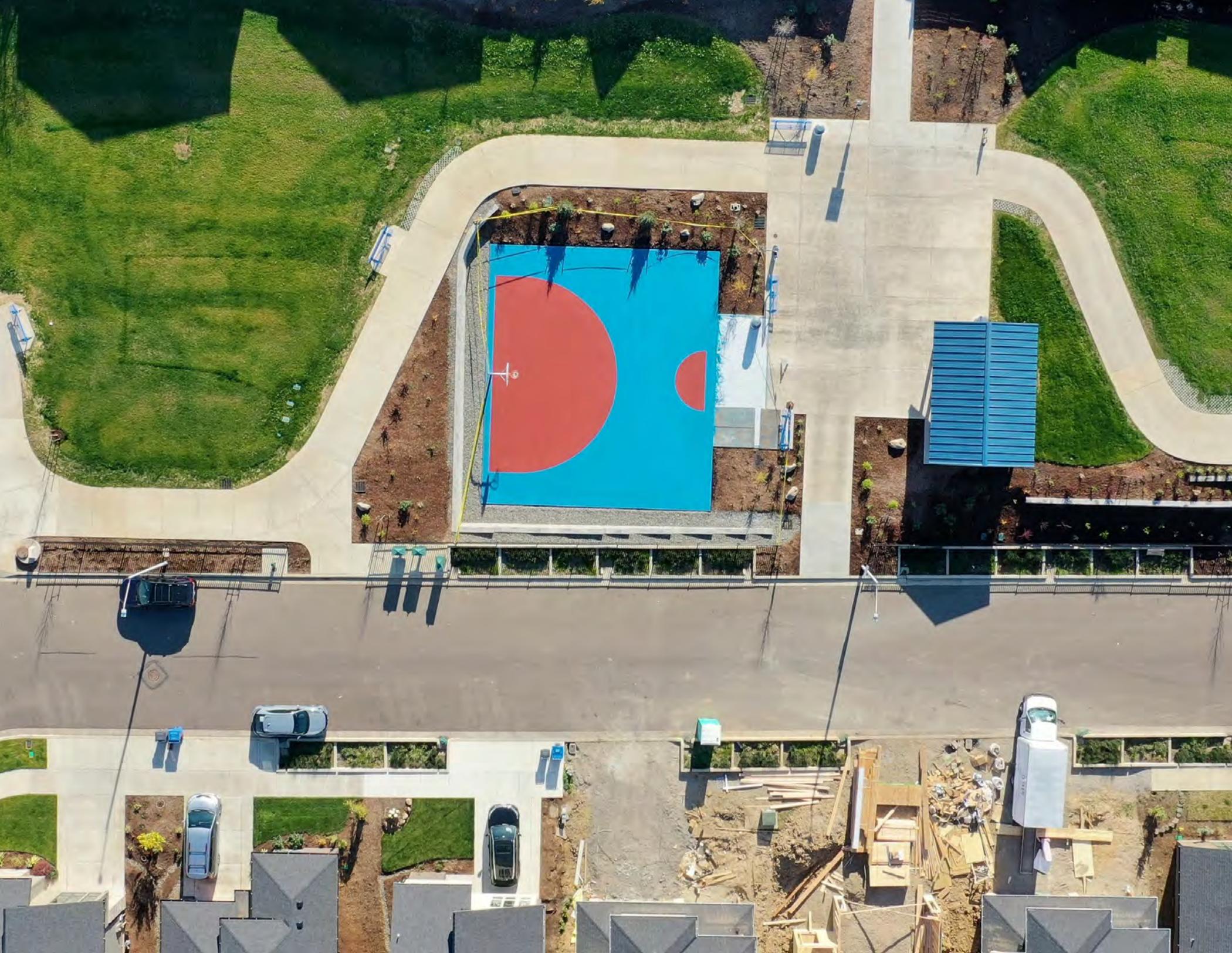
- 1/2-mile Walkshed to Developed Neighborhood & Community Parks
- 1/2-mile Walkshed to Developed City Parks that Provide Social Gathering Space or a Place to Play
- 1/2-mile Walkshed to Undeveloped Neighborhood Parks & Community Parks

**Gresham Parks and Facilities**

- Community Park
- Nature Park
- Neighborhood Park
- Special Use Area
- Undeveloped Park
- Trail Corridor

**Base Map Features**

- Neighborhood Boundary
- Planned Growth Area
- City Boundary
- County Boundary
- Urban Services Boundary
- Residential Area
- Non-City Owned Park
- Other Green Space
- School
- Water Body
- Major Arterial



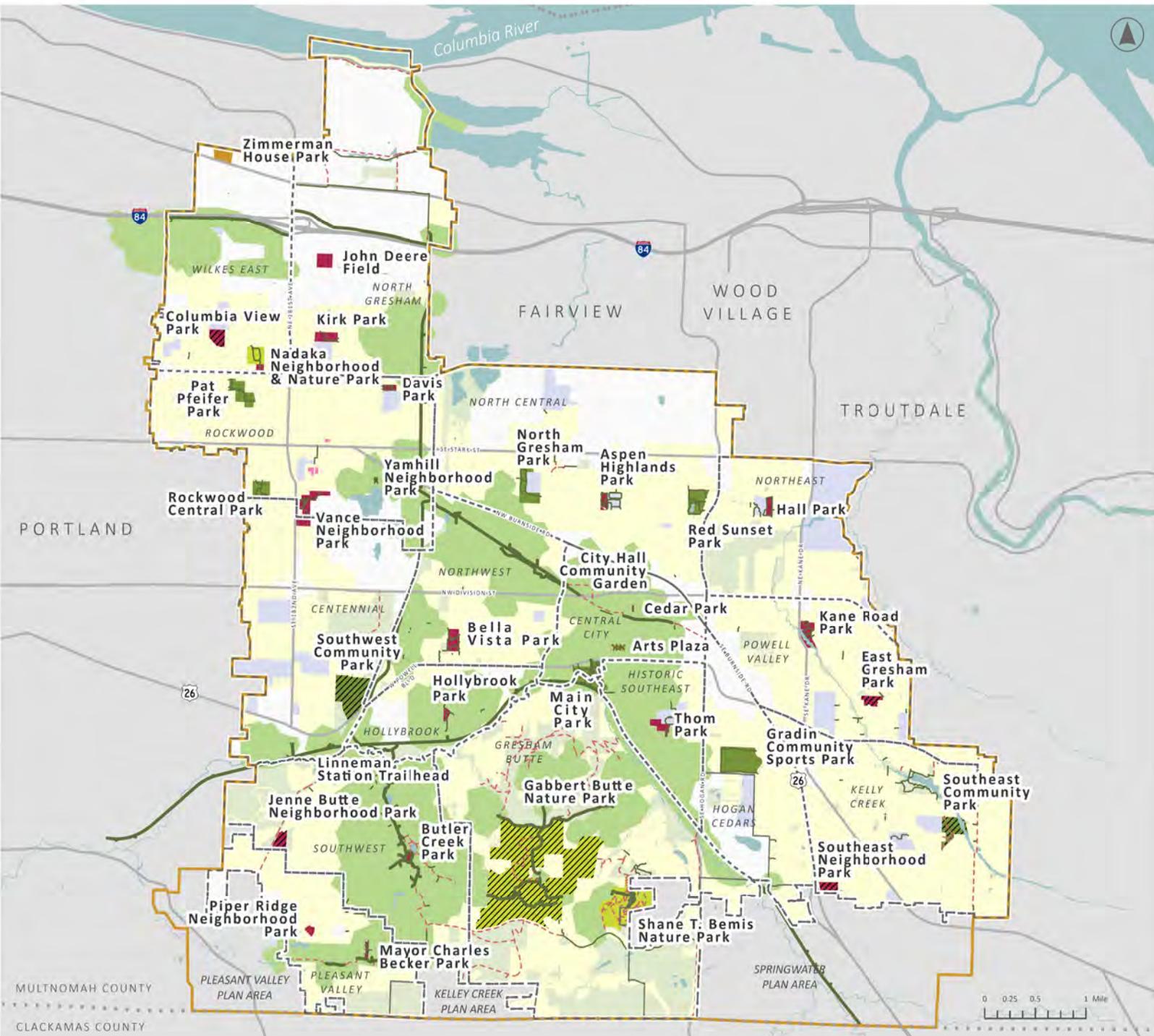


Japanese Garden at Main City Park (Metro, Fred Joe)

## TRAIL ACCESS

Gresham also prioritizes access to trails that support regional and citywide connectivity as an integral part of an accessible and interconnected park and recreation system. Figure 3-4 identifies areas within a 10-minute walk to existing regional and community trails utilizing the same access network and methodology as Figure 3-3. Regional and community trails include trails such as the Springwater Corridor Trail, Gresham/Fairview Trail, East Buttes Power Line Corridor Trail, WY'East Way Path, and the Gresham Butte Trails. Many of the City's parks also provide internal park trails that support site circulation. However, these trails were not included in the analysis as they do not directly contribute to regional and community connectivity. Figure 3-4 also shows planned regional and community trails to highlight future trail connectivity improvements.

Figure 3-4 shows that regional and community trail access within a 10-minute walk is largely concentrated in the central, northeast, and southeast neighborhoods of the city. Nearly all neighborhoods to the north and east of Burnside Road lack access to a regional or community park within a 10-minute walk. Portions of the Rockwood, Wilkes East, Centennial, Gresham Butte, and Pleasant Valley neighborhoods also lack community and regional trail access. Planned regional and community trails in these areas, shown by a red dashed line on Figure 3-4, should be prioritized for development as resources allow. Additional opportunities for regional and community trail connections are needed to expand connectivity in underserved areas.



**FIGURE 3-4:  
ACCESS TO REGIONAL  
AND COMMUNITY  
TRAILS**

**(10-MINUTE WALK)**

VIA LOCAL AND COLLECTOR STREETS

**Regional and Community Trail Walkshed**

1/2-mile Walkshed to Regional and Community Trails

**Gresham Trails**

- Regional or Community Trail
- Other Trail
- Planned Regional or Community Trail

**Gresham Parks and Facilities**

- Community Park
- Nature Park
- Neighborhood Park
- Special Use Area
- Undeveloped Park

**Base Map Features**

- Neighborhood Boundary
- Planned Growth Area
- City Boundary
- County Boundary
- Urban Services Boundary
- Residential Area
- Non-City Owned Park
- Other Green Space
- School
- Water Body
- Major Arterial

## EQUITY ANALYSIS

To better understand how different population groups across the city are impacted by areas that lack nearby parks and recreation opportunities, the Project Team conducted an equity analysis based on Metro's Social Vulnerability Index and tree canopy data from the Growing Shade Gresham tool generated as part of the City's Neighborhood Tree Plan.

Figures 3-3 and 3-4 show the differences in needs for park and trail access in unserved gap areas based on the social vulnerability of Gresham residents. The equity index (Figure 3-5) visualizes areas of the city with higher levels of social vulnerability; darker shaded areas indicate areas with greater vulnerability. Figure 3-5 also shows areas with less than 15% tree canopy; areas shown with a black hatch. Figure 3-6 shows areas of the City with the highest population density based on American Community Survey data; darker shaded areas indicate areas with greater population density. These findings in combination with the access analyses help inform where to target future projects to improve equitable park and trail access, with a particular focus on high vulnerability, low tree canopy, and high-density areas.

## METRO SOCIAL VULNERABILITY INDEX

Metro has prepared the Social Vulnerability Index for the Portland metropolitan region, including the Gresham area and other east county cities. The Index integrates a wide variety of data and indicators of social vulnerability. Mapping for Gresham Parks 2035 includes the overall index. More information about Metro's Social Vulnerability Index and measurements across individual sub-indicators can be found [here](#).

The index incorporates the following indicators:

- » Race and Ethnicity
- » Limited English Proficiency
- » Poverty
- » Low Income
- » Low Per Capita Income
- » Low Median Household Income
- » Without High School Diploma
- » Unemployed
- » Uninsured
- » Under 5 Years of Age
- » 5 to 17 Years of Age
- » 65 Years of Age and Over
- » Renters
- » Overcrowded
- » Severely Overcrowded
- » Without Vehicle
- » Multi-Unit Residences
- » Mobile Homes
- » Health (Asthma, Blood Pressure, Cancer, Coronary Heart Disease, COPD, Diabetes, Chronic Kidney Disease, Obesity)

**FIGURE 3-5:  
EQUITY INDEX**

SOCIAL VULNERABILITY INDEX AND  
LOW TREE CANOPY

**Equity Index**

- Lowest Social Vulnerability
- Low
- Moderate
- High
- Highest Social Vulnerability
- Tree Canopy > 15%\*

**Park Walksheds**

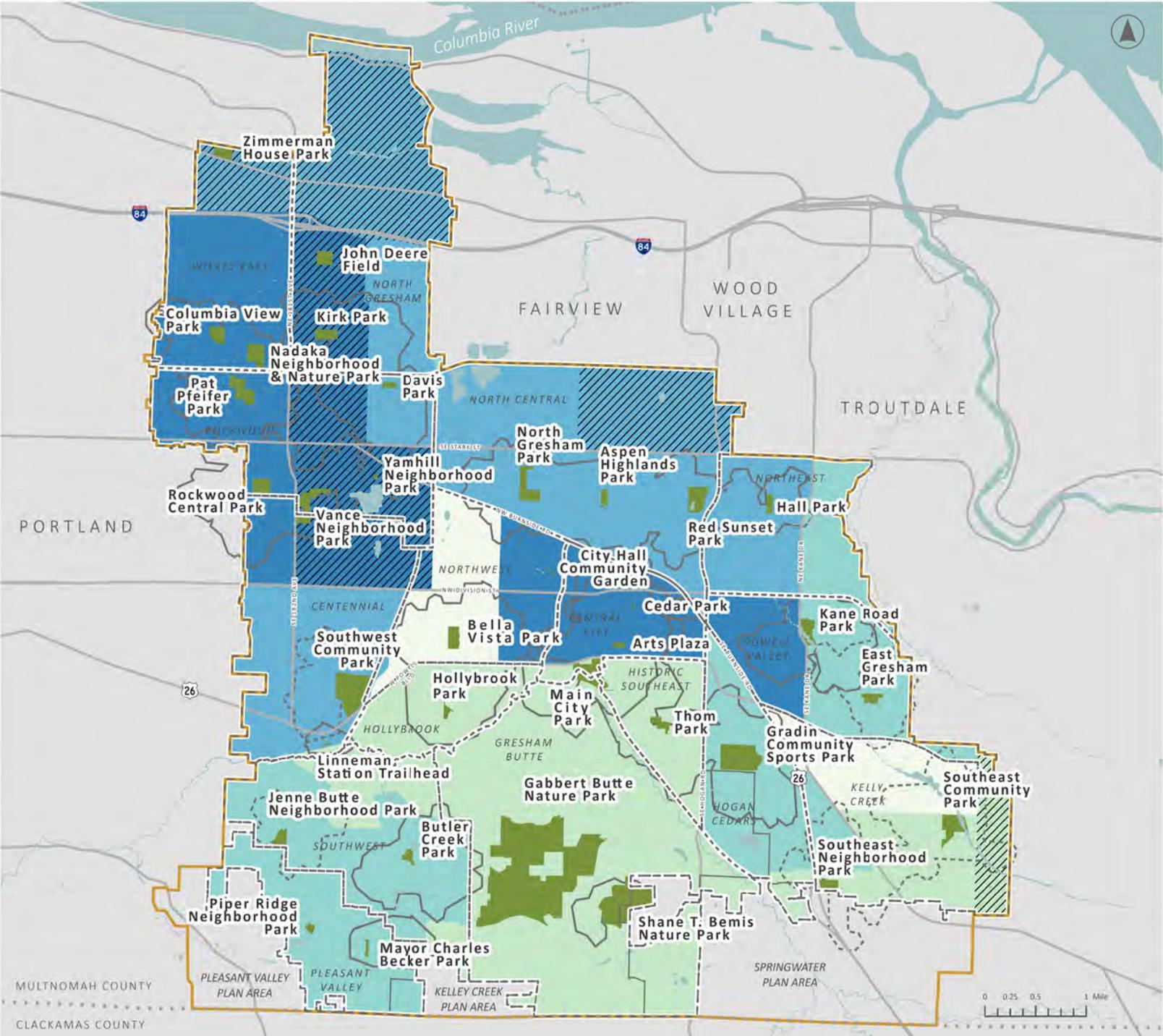
- 1/2-mile Walkshed to Developed City Park
- 1/2-mile Walkshed to Undeveloped City Park

**Base Map Features**

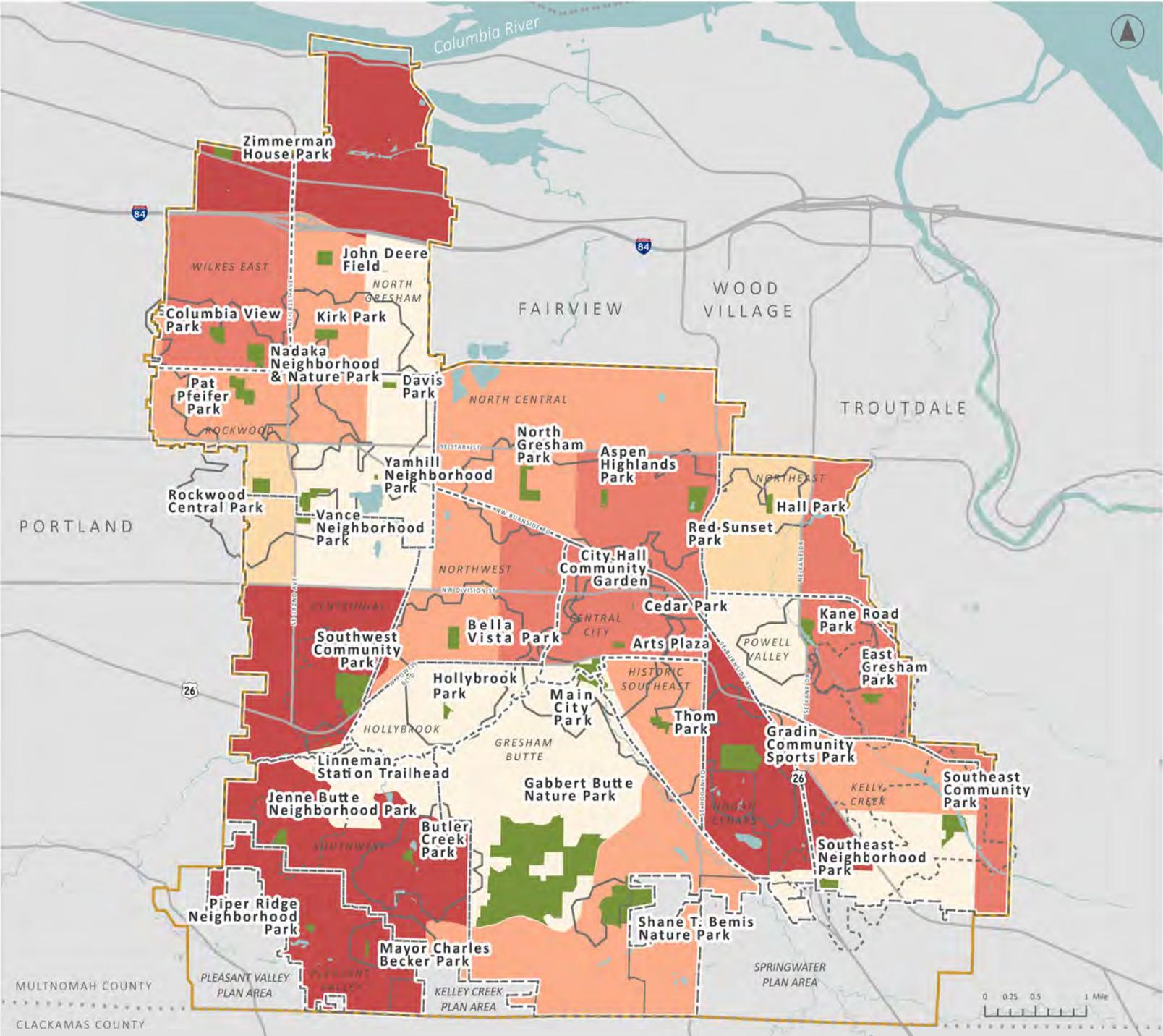
- Gresham Parks and Facilities
- Neighborhood Boundary
- Planned Growth Area
- City Boundary
- County Boundary
- Urban Services Boundary
- Water Body
- Major Arterial

\*These areas represent areas of the city with less than 15% tree canopy utilizing data from the Growing Shade Gresham tool generated as part of the Neighborhood Tree Plan.

SOURCES: City of Gresham, Metro RLIS, Metro Social Vulnerability Index 2024, Growing Shade Gresham



**FIGURE 3-6:  
POPULATION DENSITY**



**Population Density**

- Lowest Population Density
- Low
- Moderate
- High
- Highest Population Density

**Park Walksheds**

- 1/2-mile Walkshed to Developed City Park
- 1/2-mile Walkshed to Undeveloped City Park

**Base Map Features**

- Gresham Parks and Facilities
- Neighborhood Boundary
- Planned Growth Area
- City Boundary
- County Boundary
- Urban Services Boundary
- Water Body
- Major Arterial

SOURCES: City of Gresham, Metro RLIS, 2018-2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Table 3-1 summarizes these findings at the neighborhood level and lists potential opportunities to improve equitable park and trail access. Potential opportunities include developing undeveloped parks and planned regional and community trails, pursuing potential partnerships with school sites in underserved areas, and acquiring/developing vacant land in underserved areas where vacant land is available and future funding sources are sufficient. Addressing the City’s many sidewalk gaps and adding additional signalized pedestrian crossings through interdepartmental coordination is needed to expand safe pedestrian access to parks and trails within both served and underserved areas.

Neighborhoods with the highest social vulnerability, lowest tree canopy, and highest population density will need future investments to ensure equitable access to park and recreation opportunities. These neighborhoods are largely concentrated in the northern half of the city, as shown in Figure 3-5. However, there are also some high-density areas in the southern half of the city, as shown in Figure 3-6. Most of these are either already served by an existing developed park or will be served when an undeveloped park is developed.

**TABLE 3-1: PARK EQUITY AND ACCESS GAPS BY NEIGHBORHOOD**

Neighborhood	Parks with Play & Gathering Opportunities	Undeveloped Parks	Social Vulnerability Index Score <sup>1</sup>	Population Density	Tree Canopy >15%	Existing Park Access <sup>2</sup>	Trail Access <sup>3</sup>
North Gresham	John Deere Field, Kirk Park		Highest, High	Highest, Moderate, Lowest	✓	Moderate	Moderate
Wilkes East	Columbia View Park, Nadaka Nature & Neighborhood Park		Highest, High	Highest, High	✓	Moderate	Moderate
Rockwood	Pat Pfeifer Park, Rockwood Central Park, Yamhill Neighborhood Park, Davis Park, Vance Neighborhood Park (split)		Highest, High	Moderate, Lowest	✓	Moderate	Low
North Central	North Gresham Park, Aspen Highlands Park, Red Sunset Park		High	High, Moderate	✓	High	Low

**TABLE 3-1: PARK EQUITY AND ACCESS GAPS BY NEIGHBORHOOD (CONTINUED)**

Neighborhood	Parks with Play & Gathering Opportunities	Undeveloped Parks	Social Vulnerability Index Score <sup>1</sup>	Population Density	Tree Canopy >15%	Existing Park Access <sup>2</sup>	Trail Access <sup>3</sup>
Centennial	Vance Neighborhood Park (split), Linneman Station	Southwest Community Park	Highest, High	High, Low, Lowest	✓	Low	Low
Northwest	Bella Vista Park, City Hall Community Garden		Highest, Lowest	High, Moderate		Low	Moderate
Northeast	Hall Park		High, Moderate	High, Low		Moderate	Low
Central City	Cedar Park, Arts Plaza, Main City Park (split)		Highest	High		High	High
Powell Valley	Kane Road Park		Highest, Moderate	Lowest		Moderate	
Hollybrook	Hollybrook Park		Low	Lowest		High	High
Gresham Butte	Main City Park (split), Hogan Butte Nature Park	Gabbert Butte Nature Park	Low	Moderate, Lowest		Low	Moderate
Historic Southeast	Thom Park, Main City Park (split)		Low	Moderate		High	High
Southwest	Butler Creek Park	Jenne Butte Park	Moderate, Low	Highest, Lowest		Low	Moderate
Hogan Cedars	Gradin Community Sports Park		Moderate, Low	Highest		Moderate	Low

**TABLE 3-1: PARK EQUITY AND ACCESS GAPS BY NEIGHBORHOOD (CONTINUED)**

Neighborhood	Parks with Play & Gathering Opportunities	Undeveloped Parks	Social Vulnerability Index Score <sup>1</sup>	Population Density	Tree Canopy >15%	Existing Park Access <sup>2</sup>	Trail Access <sup>3</sup>
Kelly Creek		Southeast Community Park, Southeast Neighborhood Park	Lowest, Low, Moderate	Highest, High, Moderate, Lowest	✓	Low	Low
Pleasant Valley	Piper Ridge Neighborhood Park, Mayor Charles Becker Park		Moderate	Highest		Low	Moderate

<sup>1</sup>Social vulnerability was scored on a five-point scale from lowest to highest using the Metro Social Vulnerability Index (2024). Some neighborhoods have multiple levels of social vulnerability present.

<sup>2</sup>Level of park access was scored on a three-point scale from low to high based on the amount of unserved residential areas (areas not within a 10-minute walk of a developed park) in the neighborhood. Areas with a low score are the least well served and have the highest needs for new parkland and facilities.

<sup>3</sup>Level of trail access was scored on a three-point scale from low to high based on the amount of unserved residential areas (areas not within a 10-minute walk of a regional or community trail) in the neighborhood. Some neighborhoods may have access to other types of trails that are not classified as regional or community trails. Many parks have internal park trails.

## PARKLAND LEVEL OF SERVICE

The City's 2009 Parks System Plan identified the City's park Level of Service (LOS) in terms of acres of parkland per 1,000 residents. It described both existing (as of 2009) and proposed future LOS targets. These types of standards have been commonly used in park system plans to measure whether a city is providing enough park acreage to meet community needs. These metrics can be useful for measuring a community's progress in providing sufficient parkland relative to their population. They also can be useful in identifying the need for new parks in growth areas where new development is anticipated to occur. Finally, they frequently are incorporated in the methodology for calculating System Development Charges (SDCs) – fees which are used to cover the costs of new or enhanced park and recreation facilities necessitated by new growth and development.

At the same time, LOS targets and benchmarks have several limitations and drawbacks if not set based on the real opportunities and constraints for land acquisition and partnerships. Community goals, available funding sources, differing approaches to measuring LOS, and the amount of facilities vary significantly across communities, making it more difficult for built-out communities to increase their amount of park acreage to be in line with a national average.

In addition, setting and meeting high LOS standards is more challenging and problematic in areas that are largely developed, with limited opportunities to acquire and develop larger properties for new parks. As a result, current best practices for measuring the sufficiency of parks and facilities combine LOS standards with design and development guidelines, as well as the travel distance to parks and facilities as described in the previous section.

Instead of acquiring parkland in some areas, the focus may be more on adding amenities to existing parks, partnering with other park or recreation providers to expand opportunities, or developing smaller play areas, community gathering spaces, or other facilities as part of redevelopment projects, particularly multi-family housing (e.g., apartments) or mixed-use developments.

As a result, the City may find that setting a LOS standard (as measured by park acres per 1,000 residents) may not be as important as focusing on opportunities to address deficiencies in park access through non-traditional recreation options. However, the City may continue to track and monitor this measurement and compare it with other cities using data available from the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA). In 2023, Gresham's parkland LOS was 10.2 acres of parks per 1,000 residents, which is higher than average for most cities across the nation, according to NRPA's Parks Metrics. The City's adopted LOS standard, as established in the 2009 Plan was 12.18 acres of parkland per 1,000 people. The City will need to update its LOS standard to collect SDCs until its SDC methodology is updated.



## RECREATION FACILITY NEEDS

In addition to parkland, the number and type of recreation facilities provided by the City is important to meet community needs. As the City's population continues to grow and change, the City should strive to provide sufficient recreation facilities that cater to a diverse range of activities and consider shifting needs. Between December 2023 and January 2024, the Project Team toured representative sites and sections of two trails to discuss site specific issues, opportunities, and challenges. Findings from those visits along with community feedback and technical analysis uncovered the following recreation facility needs.

## IMPROVEMENTS TO EXISTING FACILITIES AND AMENITIES

Parks Program staff identified several deferred maintenance needs for facilities across the park and recreation system, such as restroom replacements, pathway repaving projects, and playground equipment replacement or upgrades. Site visits conducted by the Project Team as well as engagement efforts also highlighted these issues. The repair and replacement of outdated or worn facilities will ensure the comfort and safety of users. This was identified as a higher priority than the development of new recreation facilities by outreach participants.

## AMENITIES AND FACILITIES IN UNDERSERVED AREAS

As described in the previous section of this chapter, several areas in Gresham lack access to neighborhood or community parks. As a result, these areas also lack adequate recreation facilities and amenities such as play areas, picnic shelters, gathering spaces, and other high priority facilities identified by community engagement activities. In unserved areas, the current demand for facilities exceeds the supply. Potential opportunities to address these needs include adding recreation facilities at partner sites, working with partners to expand community access to their facilities, and/or adding additional amenities along trails and paths or in city-owned green spaces (e.g., outdoor fitness equipment, linear play opportunities, picnic tables, nature viewpoints and interpretive features, etc.).

## PARK SAFETY AND COMFORT

Community engagement efforts identified the need for improvements to increase user safety and comfort in the City's parks and trails. Specific improvements that would address this need include enhanced lighting, call boxes or other ways to notify public safety personnel of safety issues, cameras, improved sightlines and visibility, and accessible walkways and paths. Outreach participants also highlighted the desire for additional comfort amenities to improve the user experience such as restrooms, seating, drinking fountains, trash receptacles, and signage.

## INDOOR RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES

Community engagement activities also indicated that residents desire additional indoor recreation opportunities such as a multiuse community center. As part of the PRCAG process in 2021-2022, the City studied the feasibility of constructing a new community center. The study evaluated the implications and impacts of adding this type of major facility to Gresham's park and recreation system and estimated the resources needed to maintain and operate it. The study suggested that the cost to build and program such a facility is likely not attainable with current and projected near-term resources. Therefore, development of such a facility will likely require a bond measure or similar capital funding tool and additional revenue sources for subsequent operation, programming, and maintenance. It would also require identification of a facility operator and/or changing the focus of the Parks Program to focus more strongly on the provision of recreation programs.

In the short term, the City could explore ways to increase the provision of indoor, year-round recreation programs in existing buildings, such as the new library and/or schools, and through partnerships or the use of contract staff. In the long term, the City will need to continue to explore market changes and the financial feasibility for the development and operation of a community center.



Interpretive Features at Main City Park



East County Library, Planned Completion 2026 (Holst Architecture, Multnomah County Library)

## RECREATION ACTIVITY AND SERVICE NEEDS

Through partnerships, the City of Gresham offers a diverse mix of programs, ranging from sports camps to nature programs. Though Parks Program staff do not host and provide the majority of these programs directly, they do provide coordination and assistance for community partners or other City departments to implement them in City parks. As participation trends evolve and community needs shift, ongoing engagement and responsive programming are essential to ensure continued relevance and value.

### EXPAND AND DIVERSIFY RECREATION PROGRAMS

Community members across engagement activities indicated a need for more recreation programs for all ages. Community Online Questionnaire respondents identified youth/teen programs and older adult programs as their top programmatic needs. While most of the City's programs and activities are run by partner organizations, these needs could be addressed by increasing outdoor programs through partnerships in parks either through expanding existing programs or supporting partners to develop new programs.

If the Parks Program decides to expand recreation programs managed by the City, it likely will need to identify staff to oversee, coordinate, and implement programs whether that be through in-house staff, independent contractors, and/or current and future partner organizations. Currently, recreation programs provided by the City are administered by the Youth Services Department, rather than the Parks Department. As a result, coordination of resources and staffing between these two departments also will be needed.

### GROW EXISTING AND IDENTIFY NEW PARTNERSHIPS

Without expanded partnerships and additional resources, the City will likely continue to provide limited programmatic offerings and will need to continue relying upon partner organizations to provide opportunities to meet community needs. It is important for the City to continue to leverage existing partnerships and seek out new ones with organizations that can enhance and expand services. If demand for programs and events continues to grow, the City should consider targeted outreach that explores programmatic needs within the community to better identify the types of partners and/or contract staff they could enlist to provide opportunities.



Columbia Symphony Performance at Nadaka Nature Park

## MAINTENANCE AND OPERATIONS NEEDS

Maintenance and operations are key to creating inviting and welcoming spaces that are vibrant, clean, and sustainable. Overall, parks in Gresham are generally well-maintained, showcasing diligent efforts by the maintenance team. At the same time, several conditions and issues impact current and future maintenance needs and costs. This section summarizes Gresham's needs to improve maintenance and operations systemwide.

## FUNDING AND STAFFING

The City of Gresham lacks sufficient resources (staffing and funding) to take care of its existing parks, facilities, and trails to the level desired by many community members. In addition to the maintenance funding and staffing needed to take care of the existing park system, the City will need additional resources when new parks are developed.

To explore needed maintenance and associated funding, the Project Team conducted a Maintenance and Operations Analysis as part of the Gresham Parks 2035 planning process. The analysis found that the City will need five more maintenance staff and significantly more funding to meet the community's desired level of service to take care of existing parks. Future parks will likely require even more resources. Beyond staffing and funding, the analysis also suggested the following potential maintenance approaches may be needed:

- » Reallocate Downtown parking lot FTE hours;
- » Establish Maintenance Hubs throughout the City;
- » Leverage best-suited staff;
- » Improve asset management with scheduled maintenance;
- » Improve asset quality;
- » Establish tree team/hire arborists;
- » Hire park rangers;
- » Hire contractors for specific park maintenance;
- » Establish a rapid response team;
- » Increase field grass area; and
- » Use landscape fabric in shrub beds.

Refer to Appendix B for the complete Maintenance and Operations Analysis.

## ASSET MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE SCHEDULING

Currently, Gresham does not have a robust asset management plan to manage its amenities, resulting in the gradual deterioration of these vital resources, which diminishes their functionality, and in turn, requires more FTE hours to maintain or repair those amenities. This deficiency affects maintenance staff's ability to strategically allocate resources, prioritize maintenance efforts, and maximize the longevity and functionality of its assets. To address this challenge, there is a critical need for an improved maintenance scheduling policy to maintain Gresham parks' assets.

By planning and identifying the frequency of each maintenance task for each park, the Parks Program can establish clear guidelines and timelines for routine maintenance activities, preventive inspections, and corrective interventions. Maintenance staff can transition from a reactive stance to a proactive stance, enhancing operational efficiency, prolonging asset lifespan, and elevating the overall quality of park maintenance services for the benefit of park users. A maintenance schedule may also partially reduce the distances that maintenance staff need to travel for repairs and improve efficiency by grouping maintenance tasks by area.

## ADA ACCESSIBILITY NEEDS

As part of Gresham Parks 2035, an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Facility Assessment Report (ADA Facility Assessment) was conducted for select park facilities to support the City in fulfilling the requirements of federal civil rights legislation and the Parks and Recreation Community Advisory Group's core value of providing an equitable and enjoyable visitor experience for people with disabilities. Detailed accessibility surveys were conducted at seven parks to identify physical barriers. These assessments supplement previous assessments conducted for other individual facilities and sites. The seven sites were selected based on several evaluation criteria, such as prevalence of underserved population, presence of known ADA deficiencies, park type, and results of previous facility visits. These assessments were done in conjunction with the City's 2024 ADA Transition Plan.

The assessments at these parks were limited to areas where community members engage in City programs, activities, and services within the park boundaries. Sidewalks, ramps, street parking, and other elements within the public right-of-way were not included. See Appendix C for the complete ADA Facility Assessment.

The ADA Facility Assessment uncovered a variety of needs that the City must address to comply with federal law and to provide a more enjoyable and inclusive experience for all community members. The need to address ADA and accessibility concerns was also prioritized across community engagement activities. While the Parks Program is not responsible for addressing all needs, such as improving sidewalks on streets and sidewalks managed by other City departments, it can make internal park

## ADA FACILITY ASSESSMENT SITES

The seven facilities included in the assessment were:

- » Bella Vista Park
- » Hall Park
- » Nadaka Neighborhood and Nature Parks
- » North Gresham Park
- » Pat Pfeifer Park
- » Red Sunset Park
- » Rockwood Central Park

improvements such as creating pathways within parks and making sure park entrances and features are accessible. Specific approaches to improve systemwide accessibility include:

- » Regrading surfaces;
- » Installing signs;
- » Reducing or eliminating openings;
- » Adjusting door kick plates;
- » Modifying operating mechanisms;
- » Increasing or providing clear floor areas; and
- » Providing accessible routes and paths.

Many of these recommendations are incorporated into the Gresham Parks 2035 capital improvement project list (Appendix F), as discussed in Chapters 5 and 6.

***"Parks that provide play areas for all ages and ability levels would be amazing."***  
***—Community Online Prioritization Questionnaire Respondent***

