

# NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND LEVEL OF SERVICE EVALUATION

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### Purpose and Overview

The City of Gresham is updating its Parks, Recreation, Trails, & Natural Areas Master Plan (Gresham Parks 2035) that will guide priorities and investment over the next 10 years. This *Needs Assessment and Level of Service Evaluation (Needs Assessment)* is one component of that overall planning process. It summarizes park land and trail needs, facility needs, recreation activity and service needs, maintenance and operation needs, ADA accessibility needs, as well as the results of community engagement activities that were used to assess the park system needs. It also briefly describes the next steps in the planning process and includes a set of supporting appendices. The findings in this document will help inform systemwide and site-specific recommendations which will be identified as part of the next steps for this effort.

### Key Findings

The *Needs Assessment* uncovered various needs and opportunities for the City of Gresham. This section includes some of the key findings of this assessment.

### Community Engagement

Community engagement activities indicate that a significant number of community members who participated in engagement activities visit parks, recreation facilities, trails and natural areas on a regular basis. For example, approximately 36% of online questionnaire respondents say they visit park and recreation facilities daily or almost daily, and other 32% visit them once a week.

Participants in the online survey and targeted outreach meetings also noted safety as a top concern, noting that safety concerns or not feeling safe is the number one barrier to visiting the City's parks and trails. Targeted outreach meeting participants more specifically expressed safety

This report includes **8** sections and **4** appendices.

1. Introduction
2. Community Engagement Summary
3. Park Land and Trail Needs
4. Recreational Facility Needs
5. Recreation Activity and Service Needs
6. Maintenance and Operations Needs
7. ADA Accessibility Needs
8. Moving Forward

**Appendix A:** Online Questionnaire Results

**Appendix B:** Targeted Outreach Meeting Summary

**Appendix C:** Maintenance and Operations Analysis Report

**Appendix D:** Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Facility Barrier Report

concerns related to the presence of homeless individuals or encampments, lack of adequate lighting, and concern about potential law enforcement response times. Participants also noted lack of maintenance and poor condition of parks areas as a barrier to participation (ranked #3 as a barrier by online survey participants) and emphasized the need to maintain existing facilities before building new ones (emphasized in Targeted outreach meetings).

Additional needs and priorities identified by outreach participants are described in more detail in subsequent sections of this report.

### **Park Land and Trail Needs**

The Trust for Public Land (TPL) and the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) champion a general industry-wide best practice of providing parks within a 10-minute walk (or half mile) of all residents. The City of Gresham seeks to achieve this same goal in its neighborhoods where feasible. A study conducted for the City in 2023 by the TPL indicated that the City of Gresham provides approximately 75% of its residents with access to a park within a half-mile walk.

To provide additional, more detailed information on this topic, a park access analysis and an equity analysis were conducted for this planning process. This analysis will help us to better understand where service gaps are located and how unserved areas impact different population groups across the city. The analysis showed that the neighborhoods with the highest social vulnerability and lowest tree canopy are largely concentrated in the northern half of the city

At the same time, the greatest park need identified in the Parks 2035 planning process to date is the development of undeveloped parks already owned by the City. Development of these areas is needed to provide access to park services in larger areas in southern Gresham where service does not currently exist; it is a key priority for city leaders; and it has been noted as a high priority for the City for the last several years. The City has developed conceptual plans for these parks and is in the process of preparing more detailed master plans for some of them.

In developed residential areas outside of the undeveloped park sites already owned by the City, there are relatively limited opportunities to acquire and develop larger sites for neighborhood or community parks. In these areas, a variety of approaches may be needed to improve access to parks. Opportunities to consider towards this end include enhancing pedestrian access to existing parks through improvements to sidewalk and pathway facilities; partnering with the Gresham-Barlow School District and others who own parks and open space; and improving or developing new trail connections. Adding improved, signalized pedestrian crossings also will enhance safe pedestrian access to parks. In considering priorities for these types of improvements, information related to social vulnerability and tree canopy should be considered as a key evaluation criterion.

In future growth areas such as the Pleasant Valley and Springwater areas, the City also will need to focus on the integration of parks and recreation spaces as new development ensues. This will include continuing to implement and potentially refine recommendations in those plans related to the number and location of parks needed in those areas. The City also may need to examine and update its current development codes and park acquisition and development guidelines to support the creation and/or dedication of sufficient, high-quality parks or recreation facilities and spaces

when new developments occur.

### **Recreational Facility Needs**

Based on analysis and feedback during the Parks 2035 planning process to date, facility needs listed in priority include the following:

- Providing more neighborhood park facilities (such as playgrounds, community gardens, picnic areas, and sports courts) in unserved areas through development of undeveloped parks, enhanced partnerships with other providers, addition of amenities along trails, or creation of smaller facilities as part of multi-family or mixed use developments;
- Providing more sports fields, loop trails, and other specialized recreation opportunities in the larger undeveloped community parks where space and funding are available;
- Improving the safety in parks and recreation facilities by adding amenities such as lighting, cameras, and/or call boxes; and
- If feasible, adding indoor recreation space through partnerships using existing buildings and/or the new library.

Based on the prior Parks & Recreation Community Advisory Group process conducted in 2022-2023 and feedback from some participants in the online survey conducted for Parks 2035, over time the community would also like to consider the development of a new community recreation center. However, this would substantially increase maintenance, programming, and operational needs beyond the resources anticipated to be available in the next 10 years and beyond and likely is not a realistic priority for earlier development.

### **Recreation Activity and Service Needs**

Community members have expressed interest in expanding recreational programs and services to include more youth, teen, and active adults/senior programs. The City of Gresham primarily utilizes community partnerships to offer recreational programs and services. Without an increased financial investment, the City likely will not be able to play a role as a primary program provider. Instead, city staff will need to continue leveraging partnerships to meet community needs. If the City is developing facilities that require staffing, operations, and programming (such as community gardens, indoor facilities, etc.) or expanding its youth programs, it may need to increase staff FTEs or find an existing partner—in advance of developing a facility—to manage and operate it.

### **Maintenance and Operations Needs**

The City of Gresham has limited resources for routine/preventative park maintenance and an abundance of deferred maintenance issues to be addressed. The maintenance and operations analysis found that the City expends the most full-time (FTE) resources maintaining community parks, removing litter/trash, landscaping, and maintaining downtown parking lots. As the City adds new parkland, it will need additional maintenance staff and resources to support park operations. When developing maintenance-intensive facilities, such as spray grounds, community gardens, sports fields, etc., the City will need to determine first whether it will have the staff and resources to maintain these assets. If not, volunteers and/or maintenance reductions in other areas may be

needed to give high-maintenance facilities the attention they need.

### **Park Access and ADA Accessibility Needs**

An ADA assessment report prepared as part of the Parks 2035 process highlights various needs to be addressed to improve accessibility within the City’s neighborhood and community parks (see Appendix D). The assessment noted a need to improve and/or create accessible pathways within parks, ensure that entrances and park features are accessible, and address a variety of other issues related to the use of specific park amenities by people with physical disabilities. This study also will be used to help inform the City’s broader city-wide ADA Transition Plan.

## **2. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY**

The community engagement process included various digital and in-person methods to collect input from residents, city leaders, stakeholders, and advisory groups within the community. Categorized into Community Outreach Activities and Current and Previous Advisory Guidance, this section provides an overview of the results of key engagement activities to date.

Key findings and themes across these activities will contribute to the Plan’s development and will inform subsequent phases of the planning process. Additional input will be collected to help shape Plan recommendations for inclusion in the Gresham Parks 2035 document.

### **Engagement Overview**

#### *Community Outreach Activities*

#### **Targeted Outreach Meetings #1 & 2 (Russian/Ukrainian/Spanish language)**

Targeted Outreach Meetings 1 & 2 were held in-person in May 2024, targeting native Russian, Ukrainian, and Spanish language speakers to assess their park and recreation needs and priorities. Most participants stated that they visit parks, recreation facilities, trails and natural areas 2-3 times a week and on weekends. Main City, Red Sunset, and Nadaka were among the most frequently visited locations. Participants mentioned that a focus on increased safety and maintenance would help to improve the parks system. They also emphasized the importance of maintaining existing facilities before building new amenities. When asked what is missing or most needed in the City’s parks, participants most frequently emphasized the need for more unique play features, improved lighting, sports fields, indoor recreation facilities, green spaces and natural areas, and shelters/pavilions and gathering places. This group will reconvene in fall 2024 to discuss more specific recommendations for parks and recreation facility improvements. A detailed summary of these meetings is included as Appendix B to this report.



### Online Questionnaire

The Project Team administered a nine-question, online questionnaire that ran from June 26 to September 8, 2024. The questionnaire’s aim was to assess the needs and priorities of the community at large as it pertains to parks, recreation facilities and services. The questionnaire was available on the Engage Gresham website with translation services integrated into the platform allowing for the survey to be taken in multiple languages. There were 870 views and over 300 responses in total. While 36% of respondents indicated that they visit parks, recreation facilities, trails and natural areas at least once a week, daily or almost daily, safety was a concern and barrier to visitation, followed by lack of amenities, and perceived poor maintenance of parks. The enhancement to existing facilities most frequently recommended by survey participants include restroom availability, improvements to other amenities (e.g., play facilities, benches, shelters, etc.), and more frequent mowing and other maintenance. When asked to identify their top three improvements if funding is limited, participants most frequently recommended natural areas or nature parks, upgraded walkways or trails, an indoor community center, playgrounds, and youth/teen programs and activities. See Appendix A for a more detailed summary of the results of the online questionnaire.

### In-person pop-up events

The City of Gresham led several in-person pop-up events throughout the summer 2024, to inform community members of the parks planning process and to encourage participation in the online questionnaire. These pop-up activities were held in conjunction with events already planned by the City including Movies in the Park, Rock the Block, and the Rockwood Community Market. The City made about 300 connections with community members during these events. Adult and youth participants engaged in dot activity exercises where they provided input on their current use of the park system and what enhancements they would like to the project address. Top ranking amenities included water play areas (highly ranked by youth and adults), playgrounds (highly ranked by adults), and youth and teen programs (highly ranked by youth). When asked about improvements to existing amenities, participants’ top choices were access to restrooms, other improved amenities, and more youth/family programming or events. Pop-up activities were also used as an opportunity to encourage online questionnaire participation.



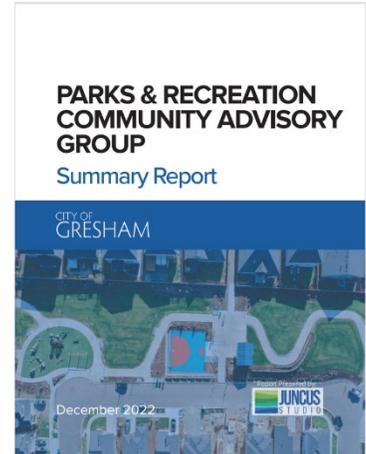
### Neighborhood Coalition Meeting

In September 2024, a Neighborhood Coalition meeting was held to provide an update on Gresham Parks 2035. Attendees were briefed on the highlights of the planning process to date including the

System Evaluation and Assessment report, community engagement to date, upcoming technical analysis, and next steps in the planning process.

### *Current and Previous Advisory Guidance* [PRCAG Process](#)

The Parks & Recreation Community Advisory Group (PRCAG) was brought together in 2021 to evaluate Gresham’s Parks & Recreation services. During this process, the PRCAG advisory group’s work was used to establish three key objectives related to parks: identify, inventory, and explore. Additionally, PRCAG established accessibility, equity, and safety as core values or guiding principles for future park and recreation planning efforts and recommended keeping these at the forefront when considering parks and recreation investments and the prioritization of programs and projects in the future. The group also reviewed and provided guidance regarding the results of a number of other analyses and studies which will inform the Parks 2035 projects. These included conceptual plans for six undeveloped parks, an assessment of funding options prepared by the Trust for Public Lands, an analysis of parks and recreation gaps, and a feasibility study for a new community center. The members of this group were invited to participate in the Parks Task Force (PTF), which serves as an advisory group for Parks 2035 (see more information below).



### [City Council Interviews](#)

The Project Team connected with four of the seven council members in virtual interviews in February 2024 where they were provided a brief overview of Gresham Parks 2035 including background information on the current system, the planning schedule, and the engagement process and key objectives. During the interviews Council members provided input on opportunities & challenges, funding priorities, key messaging, and partnerships. Maintenance and safety, developing undeveloped parks, and continued engagement with stakeholders were key priorities for the Council members who participated.

### [Parks Task Force Meeting #1](#)

The first Parks Task Force (PTF) meeting was held virtually in April 2024. The PTF is made up of individuals who served on the PRCAG and continue to have a strong interest in providing feedback for Gresham Parks 2035. During the first PTF meeting, attendees were introduced to the planning process, reviewed their role in the process, and were given the opportunity to provide input on their needs and priorities related to the park system. Among PTF members, Main City, East Gresham, Gradin and Pat Pfeifer parks were the most frequently visited. Improved accessibility, more restrooms, and increased safety were mentioned most often as areas needing improvement to enhance the park system. Funding priorities included increased safety enhancements, ADA improvements, and maintenance of facilities.

This group will meet again in the fall 2024 and in early 2025 to review and provide guidance on this *Needs Assessment* Report and subsequent recommendations for system improvements and strategies.

### Technical Advisory Team Meeting #1

The Technical Advisory Team (TAT) is intended to be a broad group of Gresham and other agency staff. Different members of the TAT will provide guidance on specific technical analysis issues as the project moves forward. A subset of the TAT held its first meeting in May 2024. The purpose of this meeting was to provide the TAT with relevant project information and to have them provide input for the Level of Service and Gap Analysis mapping and analysis methodology. That group has continued to review and comment on interim work products associated with this task. A second subset of the group met in October to identify potential opportunities related to existing or potential future park, recreation, trail, and natural area sites that could help provide multiple community benefits such as stormwater management, regional connectivity, water provision, climate resiliency, or other similar benefits or services. The group identified a number of examples of types of facilities and specific locations where those needs could be met for further consideration in identifying both system-wide recommendations and site-specific improvement projects.

### Key Community Engagement Findings

Several key findings emerged from the community engagement activities and advisory guidance conducted to date. These, along with findings from the technical analyses will guide the direction of recommendations provided in Gresham Parks 2035.

#### **Park System Usage**

Many community members who have participated in the online survey and targeted outreach meetings with Spanish, Russian and Ukrainian speaking residents visit parks, recreation facilities, trails and natural areas frequently. About one third of the survey respondents do so 'Daily or almost daily' and another 30% visit them 'About once a week.' Most targeted outreach meeting participants visit them 2-3 times per week. These levels of participation may be higher than for the community as a whole.

#### **Safety, Maintenance, and Amenities**

Across community outreach activities, increased safety, maintenance, and improving or updating existing amenities were identified as key areas of investment to enhance the park system. "Safety concerns/Don't feel safe" was the top barrier to visiting parks identified by respondents in the online questionnaire, followed by "Lack of amenities", and "Poor condition or maintenance of parks." Participants in targeted outreach meetings with Spanish, Russian and Ukrainian speaking residents repeatedly cited safety in parks as a significant concern. Safety also is one of the three core values identified by the PRCAG.

#### **Community Needs and Funding Priorities**

Throughout the engagement activities, participants were asked to provide their opinions on park system needs and to identify their top funding priorities. There were a variety of responses to these

questions, some of which included the addition of new facilities, adding new programs, improving safety, and maintaining assets in the system. The list below was developed through a combination of feedback from the first online questionnaire, targeted engagement meetings, and council member interviews. The following lists are in alphabetical order and do not reflect priority or frequency mentioned.

Park and facility needs generally noted by engagement respondents included the following:

- Accessible walkways and paths
- Better infrastructure (upgraded walkways/trails, covered areas, separate paths for pedestrians)
- Fenced dog parks
- Functional water stations
- Indoor recreation space (e.g., community center)
- Large picnic shelters
- Play structures
- Protected natural areas or nature parks
- Safety features (more lighting, cameras)
- Sports fields
- Support features (additional restrooms, benches, park signs)

Operational and programming needs noted by community members include:

- Maintain existing assets/overall maintenance
- Maintenance of support features (e.g., restroom cleaning)
- More programming and park activation
- Natural resource protection and stewardship
- Safety staffing (police presence, camera monitoring)
- Recreation opportunities through partnerships

When asked to identify the types of facilities or improvements that are needed most if funding is limited, participants in the online survey and targeted outreach meetings recommended the following facilities and programs. Like the lists above, these items are listed alphabetically and are not ranked in order of relative importance. However, notes are included regarding priorities among different outreach activity participants.

- Accessibility and ADA and improvements
- Community center (ranked #3 by online survey respondents and Task Force members)
- Developing undeveloped parks (ranked highly by City Council members, Task Force)

members and targeted outreach meeting participants)

- Natural areas or nature parks (ranked #1 by online survey participants and noted frequently by other outreach activity participants))
- Play structures (ranked #4 by online survey respondents and ranked highly by targeted outreach meeting participants)
- Safety features such as more lighting, accessible walkways and paths, police presence, cameras (strong emphasis by targeted outreach meeting participants)
- Staffing (programs, maintenance, safety)
- Upgraded walkways/trails (ranked #2 by online survey respondents and ranked highly by targeted outreach meeting participants)
- Youth and Teen programming

### 3: PARK LAND AND TRAIL NEEDS

An important first step to promoting an equitable park and recreation system requires understanding the distribution of park land and trails across the city and focusing on neighborhoods or populations that are traditionally underserved by public services and have higher levels of social vulnerability. This section presents results of a geographic-based analysis that examines park access and equity.

#### Park Distribution and Access

Park proximity impacts the frequency of park use and maximizes the many economic, social, and health benefits parks provide (Figure 3-1). There are many ways to evaluate whether parks and facilities are well distributed to provide these types of benefits. 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 in past planning processes and is used for that purpose in this analysis. The half-mile distance is generally considered the maximum distance most people would walk to get to a park. In 2018, the TPL, NRPA and Urban Land Institute launched a national campaign to ensure all people have access to a quality park within a 10-minute walk from their home. According to TPL’s ParkServe data, nearly one quarter (24%) of City of Gresham residents do not have a developed park within

**Park Access:** The just and fair quantity, proximity and connections to quality parks and green spaces, recreation facilities, as well as programs that are safe, inclusive, culturally relevant and welcoming to everyone. When people have just and fair access, our health and social well-being improve, and our communities can protect and better recover from environmental, social, and economic challenges.

*Source: Equity Language Guide, Glossary of Terms, NRPA, updated 10/21/21.*

a 10-minute walk from their home.<sup>1</sup> This is better than the average across the nation, where one in three U.S. residents do not have a park or green space within a 10-minute walk of home.

To further evaluate park access, the Project Team used a digital mapping program (ArcGIS Network Analyst™) to identify areas currently served and unserved by developed City parks that provide play or social gathering opportunities. 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 may provide informal spaces for play and gathering and they may sometimes be used for group activities (such as nature walks); however, the focus of this analysis is to identify areas in need of additional formal amenities to support these opportunities such as play areas, picnic shelters, playing fields, community gardens, etc. These are the types of essential recreation opportunities that the City of Gresham would like all residents within City limits to have within walking distance. (Gresham, along with most other cities, acknowledge that more specialized recreation opportunities are sufficient if provided within biking or driving distances.)

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. Map 3-1 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 Hogan Butte and Arts Plaza), and undeveloped neighborhood and community parks. Nature parks, special use areas, and other sites that do not provide play or social gathering opportunities were excluded from the analysis since they do not provide the amenities the City would like all residents to have access to within walking distance. Limiting the analysis to sites that provide play and gathering opportunities will help the City identify areas that need the addition of formal play and gathering opportunities to provide equitable park and recreation access citywide. These findings will directly inform the Plan's recommendations that will be formulated in future phases of the planning process. Since the City strives for safe pedestrian access to parks, access was analyzed via the City's existing local streets, collector streets, and regional trails. Sidewalks were excluded from the access network due to the high quantity of sidewalk gaps present throughout the city and a lack of sufficient data and data analysis capability to incorporate this aspect of the system into our network analysis. While sidewalks typically enhance pedestrian accessibility, their absence does not significantly limit access to parks via local or collector streets. Citywide, interdepartmental coordination should be prioritized to address sidewalk gaps and to add signalized pedestrian crossings, particularly along arterial streets, to expand safe pedestrian access to parks. The methodology also considers physical barriers such as Interstate 84, US Route 26, arterial streets, railroads, private property, and other barriers that impact safe pedestrian access to parks. Neighborhood boundaries and residential areas are shown on the maps with a white and black dashed line and yellow shading respectively to help visualize served and unserved areas. Table 3-1 later in this section breaks down findings from the mapping analyses by neighborhood.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: <https://parkserve.tpl.org/mapping/#/?CityID=4131250>

Map 3-1 shows numerous residential areas across the city that are not currently served by developed neighborhood parks, community parks, or other City parks that provide social gathering space or a place to play (Hogan Butte, Arts Plaza, and Linneman Station). Map 3-1 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. Development of these undeveloped sites should be a top priority. However, even once these facilities are developed, a number of neighborhoods would still include unserved residential areas. Given limitations on funding and lack of large buildable parcels, it likely will not be feasible to create new parks in all of the areas that show service area gaps. Development of new parks could be prioritized in areas with more significant equity issues, in areas where vacant land is available, and areas with the lowest service levels. They also are expected to be developed in future growth areas where land availability and funding via System Development Charges offer opportunities for land acquisition and new park development. Table 3-1 later in this section identifies preliminary opportunities to expand park access that could be explored in these unserved areas by neighborhood, along with additional considerations such as trail access, social vulnerability, tree canopy, and other nearby park and recreation facilities.

### Trail Access

Gresham also prioritizes access to trails that support regional and community connectivity as an integral part of an accessible park and recreation system. Map 3-2 identifies areas within a 10-minute walk to existing regional and community trails utilizing the same access network and methodology as Map 3-1. Regional and community trails include trails like the Springwater Corridor, Gresham/Fairview Trail, East Buttes Regional Trail, Wy-East Way Path, and the Gresham Butte Saddle Trails. Many of the City's parks provide internal park trails that support site circulation. These trails were excluded from the analysis as they do not contribute to regional and community connectivity. Map 3-2 also shows planned regional and community trails to highlight future trail connectivity improvements.

Map 3-2 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. The Rockwood, Wilkes East, Centennial, Gresham Butte, and Pleasant Valley neighborhoods also include large residential areas that lack community and regional trail access. Additionally, it is important to note that Gresham Butte has large lots, low population density, and a significant amount of open space and that Pleasant Valley is a developing plan area. Planned regional and community trails in these areas, shown by a red dashed line on Map 3-2, should be prioritized for development. Additional opportunities for regional and community trail connections should also be explored to expand connectivity in unserved areas. Table 3-1 later in this section identifies the neighborhoods with planned trails, along with additional considerations such as park access, social vulnerability, tree canopy, and other nearby park and recreation facilities.

Figure 3-1: Importance of Equitable Park and



PLACEHOLDER FOR MAP 3-1: ACCESS TO CITY PARKS WITH PLAY OR GATHERING OPPORTUNITIES

[insert PDF]

PLACEHOLDER FOR MAP 3-2: ACCESS TO REGIONAL AND COMMUNITY TRAILS [insert PDF]

## Equity Analysis

To better understand how unserved areas impact different population groups across the city, historically underserved communities, or those who may experience more significant barriers to access, this section provides results of 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. Together, Map 3-3 incorporates the following indicators:

- » Race and Ethnicity
- » Limited English Proficiency
- » Poverty
- » Low Income
- » Per Capita Income
- » 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)
- » Tree Canopy Cover (Growing Shade Gresham)

Maps 3-1 and 3-2 show the differences in level of access to parks and trails for Gresham residents. The equity index (Map 3-3) visualizes areas of the city with higher levels of social vulnerability; darker shaded areas indicate areas with greater vulnerability. Map 3-3 also shows areas with less than 15% tree canopy; areas shown with a black hatch. Map 3-4 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.

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 unserved areas, and acquiring/developing vacant land in unserved areas where vacant land is available and future funding sources are sufficient. As mentioned previously, addressing the City’s many sidewalk gaps and adding additional signalized pedestrian crossing through interdepartmental coordination should also be a top priority to expand safe pedestrian access to parks and trails within both served and unserved areas. Future phases of the planning process will explore these opportunities further. Neighborhoods with the highest social vulnerability, lowest tree canopy, and highest population density should be prioritized for 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 Map 3-3 although there are also some high-density areas in the southern half of the city as shown in Map 3-4. Large portions of the high-density areas in the southern half of the city are either already served by an existing developed park or will be served when an undeveloped park is developed.

PLACEHOLDER FOR MAP 3-3: EQUITY INDEX [insert PDF]

PLACEHOLDER FOR MAP 3-4: EQUITY INDEX [insert PDF]

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>	OTHER PARK & RECREATION FACILITIES	OPPORTUNITIES TO ADDRESS EQUITY & SERVICE GAPS
North Gresham	John Deere Field, Kirk Park		Highest, High	Highest, Moderate, Lowest	✓	Moderate	Moderate	Hartley Elementary School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Add planned trails serving residential areas</li> <li>Consider partnership with Hartley Elementary</li> </ul>
Wilkes East	Columbia View Park, Nadaka Nature & Neighborhood Park		Highest, High	Highest, High	✓	Moderate	Moderate	Zimmerman House, Nadaka Nature Park, Hauton B Lee Middle School, Wilkes Elementary School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider partnership with Wilkes Elementary</li> </ul>
Rockwood	Pat Pfeifer Park, Rockwood Central Park, Yamhill Neighborhood Park, Davis Park, Vance Neighborhood Park (split)		Highest, High	Moderate, Lowest	✓	Moderate	Low	Rockwood Rising Plaza, Neighbors Park, Davis Elementary	
North Central	North Gresham Park, Aspen Highlands Park, Red Sunset Park		High	High, Moderate	✓	High	Low	Clear Creek Middle School, Gresham Arthur Academy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop planned trails, consider partnership with Clear Creek Middle School</li> <li>Acquire new parkland (vacant land present)</li> </ul>

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>	OTHER PARK & RECREATION FACILITIES	OPPORTUNITIES TO ADDRESS EQUITY & SERVICE GAPS
Centennial	Vance Neighborhood Park (split), Linneman Station	Southwest Community Park	Highest, High	High, Low, Lowest	✓	Low	Low	Centennial Middle School, Lynch Meadows Elementary, Centennial High, Eastside Christian School, Portland Adventist Elementary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop Southwest Community Park</li> <li>Develop planned trails</li> <li>Consider partnerships with school sites</li> </ul>
Northwest	Bella Vista Park, City Hall Community Garden		Highest, Lowest	High, Moderate		Low	Moderate		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop planned trails</li> <li>Acquire new parkland (vacant land present)</li> </ul>
Northeast	Hall Park		High, Moderate	High, Low		Moderate	Low	Mt. Hood Community College and Recreation Center, Hall Elementary School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop planned trails</li> <li>Pursue partnerships</li> </ul>
Central City	Cedar Park, Arts Plaza, Main City Park (split)		Highest	High		High	High	Alpha High School, Gresham High School, West Gresham Elementary School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop planned trails</li> </ul>
Powell Valley	Kane Road Park	East Gresham Park	Highest, Moderate	Lowest		Moderate		Gordon Russell Middle School, Powell Valley Elementary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop East Gresham Park</li> <li>Develop planned trails</li> <li>Consider partnership with</li> </ul>

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>	OTHER PARK & RECREATION FACILITIES	OPPORTUNITIES TO ADDRESS EQUITY & SERVICE GAPS
									Gordon Russell Middle School
Hollybrook	Hollybrook Park		Low	Lowest		High	High	Hollydale Elementary School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop planned trails</li> </ul>
Gresham Butte	Main City Park (split), Hogan Butte Nature Park	Gabbert Butte Nature Park	Low	Moderate, Lowest		Low	Moderate		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop Gabbert Butte Nature Park (consider including play and gathering opportunities)</li> <li>Develop planned trails</li> </ul>
Historic Southeast	Thom Park, Main City Park (split)		Low	Moderate		High	High	Dexter McCarty Middle School, East Gresham Elementary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop planned trails</li> <li>Consider partnerships with school sites</li> </ul>
Southwest	Butler Creek Park	Jenne Butte Park	Moderate, Low	Highest, Lowest		Low	Moderate	Butler Creek Elementary School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop Jenne Butte Park</li> <li>Develop planned trails</li> <li>Consider partnership with Butler Creek Elementary School</li> </ul>
Hogan Cedars	Gradin Community Sports Park		Moderate, Low	Highest		Moderate	Low	Hogan Cedars Elementary	

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>	OTHER PARK & RECREATION FACILITIES	OPPORTUNITIES TO ADDRESS EQUITY & SERVICE GAPS
Kelly Creek		Southeast Community Park, Southeast Neighborhood Park	Lowest, Low, Moderate	Highest, High, Moderate, Lowest	✓	Low	Low	Kelly Creek Elementary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop Southeast Community Park</li> <li>• Develop Southeast Neighborhood Park</li> <li>• Develop planned trails</li> </ul>
Pleasant Valley	Pleasant Valley Neighborhood Park (undeveloped), Mayor Charles Becker Park		Moderate	Highest		Low	Moderate		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop planned trails</li> <li>• Acquire new parkland (vacant land present)</li> </ul>

<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.

## Systemwide Level of Service

The City's existing Parks System Plan (2009) evaluates and summarizes the City's parks Level of Service (LOS) in terms of acres of parkland per 1,000 residents for the system as a whole and for different categories of park facilities. It includes both existing (as of 2009) and proposed future LOS targets. These types of standards have been commonly used in park system plans in many communities to measure whether a city is providing enough acreage to meet community needs. These metrics can be useful for benchmarking a community's progress in providing a certain level of parks relative to their population. They also can be useful in identifying the relative need for new parks in growth areas where new development is anticipated to occur and land is expected to be available for acquisition and development of new parks.

At the same time, LOS targets and benchmarks have a number of 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 makeup of park system 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, using an LOS analysis or set of targets 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 entail combining LOS standards with a more nuanced approach to identifying proximity and access to parks in specific neighborhoods or areas, such as that described in the previous section. The reason that two different approaches are needed is because these metrics represent two entirely different ways to measure the sufficiency of park land (acreage vs. access).

Instead of acquiring park land 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 of 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 an 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 in the Parks 2035 planning process. 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). The most current NRPA measurement of LOS for Gresham (2023) is 10.2 acres of parks per 1,000 residents. The City's current LOS standard, as established in the current Parks System Master Plan (prepared in 2009) is 12.18 acres of park land per 1,000 people. The City also may need to continue to use the LOS standard to apply and collect System Development Charges (SDCs) until such time as a comprehensive overhaul of the SDC methodology is undertaken. As part of completion of Parks 2035, the City may decide to adjust the current standard to be more in line with its current ability to acquire and pay for additional acres of park land and new facilities.

## Approach to Meeting Park Needs in Growth Areas or Within New Developments

Future growth continues to be anticipated in the Pleasant Valley and Springwater Planning areas. The City has developed concept plans for those areas that identify the need for future neighborhood and/or community parks. The City also currently is undertaking a study to determine how best to meet a full set of community needs in the Pleasant Valley area, including recommendations for addressing park site acquisition and development needs there. Those recommendations may also be applicable to the Springwater area.

Following is a brief summary of preliminary recommendations from that effort. These will be described in more detail in subsequent facility improvements and systemwide recommendations prepared as part of the next steps in the Parks 2035 planning process and in some cases, recommendations will need to be refined to ensure consistency with the ability of certain types of property (e.g., linear or pocket parks) to meet recreation needs.

- Incorporate recommendations from the Pleasant Valley Plan District Plan in Parks 2035, including possible refinements related to park locations and the number of parks proposed in Pleasant Valley and vision for the community park currently identified in the Pleasant Valley Plan. The Plan currently calls for nine (9) neighborhood parks and one community park in the area. The City also may want to include updated guidance for whether/to what extent Neighborhood Parks can include resource areas, geographic distribution and access considerations, what type of streets they should be adjacent to in addition to, and appropriate siting flexibility to best coordinate with future development applications.
- Consider the value of sites that could be acquired opportunistically, such as linear or pocket parks surplus land from other infrastructure projects; and/or land currently owned by the School District in Pleasant Valley as a potential community park site if the District determines that it is not needed for a school as originally intended.
- Consider how any potential changes to Parks SDCs or other funding mechanisms would impact the ability to acquire park land in Pleasant Valley.
- Negotiate dedication of park land at the point of annexation of new areas into the City where possible. This coincides with the point where the City has the most leverage to negotiate land dedication.

As part of a proposed update to the Pleasant Valley Plan District Plan, the City also is proposing to require residential developments over 1.5 acres to provide a certain percentage of open space. The open space can be dedicated as public if the City is interested in accepting it.

In addition to addressing future park land and facility needs in future growth areas where more significant levels of development are expected to occur, the City also needs to determine how to ensure that parks and recreation facilities are incorporated in smaller developments or redevelopments, including denser residential or mixed-use developments. Beyond requiring that a certain percentage of most developments are dedicated to landscaping, the City's development

code currently does not require creation or dedication of park or recreation facilities as part of residential or mixed-use development. The City should explore such requirements as part of this process.

## **4: RECREATIONAL FACILITY NEEDS**

In addition to parkland, the number and type of recreational facilities provided by the City is important to meet community needs. As the City's population grows and changes, the types of recreational facilities provided will need to evolve to ensure they meet shifting expectations. Over a quarter of Gresham's population is under 20 years old and the City also has one of the fastest growing populations of older adults over 60 within the state. This indicates a need for multi-generational recreational facilities, services, and programs to meet the diverse needs of its population.

### **Facility Condition and Related Improvement Needs**

Between December 2023 and January 2024, city staff and the consultant team toured representative sites and sections of two trails to discuss site specific issues, opportunities, and challenges. Findings from those visits and additional analyses uncovered the following issues associated with recreation facility needs.

### **Deferred Maintenance/Asset Management Needs**

Parks Department staff have identified a number of specific deferred maintenance needs in the parks system, including projects totaling approximately \$11.5 million in costs. Examples include restroom replacements, pathway repaving projects, playground equipment replacement or upgrades, and others.

In addition to the improvements included in the City's formal list of deferred maintenance needs, site visits conducted by the project team showed that some playgrounds had worn and outdated equipment and included engineered wood fiber or artificial turf surfacing. These will need to be replaced with more durable materials as part of capital improvement and deferred maintenance projects.

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 the 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, park management 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. This may also partially address the distances that maintenance staff need to travel for repairs. If these were scheduled, perhaps additional tasks that need to be completed within the local area could improve efficiency.

### Facility Needs in Undeveloped Parks

There are several undeveloped parks that are planned for future developments 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. Juncus Studio has prepared concept plans for these parks and the City is in the early stages of preparing detailed master plans for two of the parks. The concept plans include several common amenities such as walking paths, picnic shelters, and nature play areas. Some of the concept plans also feature sports courts, community gardens (aimed at addressing food sufficiency goals), and other amenities. The City's leadership places a high emphasis on developing these undeveloped parks. As indicated in the community engagement efforts, developing undeveloped parks is a key priority to meet the needs of those in underserved communities. In addition, these facilities, particularly where they are larger community parks, also may offer opportunities for larger footprint facilities and nature interpretation. For example, the Southwest Community Park is adjacent to a natural area purchased through the Metro natural area bond measure and represents this type of opportunity.

### Needs for Amenities/Facilities in Unserved Areas

As described in the previous section of this report, several areas in the City lack access to neighborhood or community parks. As a result, these areas also lack adequate recreational facilities and amenities such as play areas, picnic shelters and gathering spaces, and other facilities identified as needed in community engagement activities, all of which were identified as priorities by participants in community engagement activities. In these areas, the current demand for facilities exceeds the supply. In those areas, it may be possible to address facility needs by adding more elements at partner sites, working with partner facilities to expand community access to their facilities, and/or by creating additional amenities adjacent to or along trails (e.g., outdoor fitness equipment, linear play opportunities, picnic tables, nature viewpoints and interpretive features, etc.).

### Facility Needs to Support Park Safety

As described in the Community Engagement section of this report, many community members have identified the need for measures to allow them to feel safe within the City's parks and trails so that this is not a barrier to their use. In addition, safety was identified as a foundational value in the PRCRAG planning process. And the City recently passed a public safety levy to improve public safety throughout the community. Specific types of needed improvements could include enhanced lighting, call boxes or other ways to notify public safety personnel of a safety issue, cleanup of hazardous trash, and improved management or removal of homeless encampments where they pose health and safety risks.

### Future Needs – Community Center

Community engagement activities also indicated that residents would like to see a community center built in Gresham in the future. As part of the PRCAG process in 2021-2022, the City has studied the feasibility of constructing a new community center. The study evaluated the implications and impacts of adding this type of major facility to its parks and recreation system and estimated the resources needed to maintain and operate it. However, the cost to build such a facility and the resulting need to develop and implement programs within it is likely not attainable with resources currently available or expected to be available in the near term. Development of such a facility is likely to require use of a new bond measure or similar capital funding tool and development of additional sources of revenue for subsequent operation, programming and maintenance. It would also require identifying a facility operator or changing the focus of the Parks Department to focus more strongly on the provision of recreation programs.

In the short term, the City may want to explore ways to help foster the provision of programs in existing buildings, such as the new library and/or schools, 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 prior to moving forward with development of a recreation or community center.

## 5: RECREATION ACTIVITY AND SERVICE NEEDS

This section provides an overview of existing partnerships and programming, potential gaps based on community identified needs and includes a general approach to addressing uncovered gaps.

### Existing Partnerships and Programming

Leveraging partnerships, the City of Gresham has increased and expanded programs and activities since the 2021-22 fiscal year. Though City staff do not host and provide these programs directly, they do provide coordination and assistance for partners to implement them in their parks. Most of these programs and activities have been led by external community-based organizations or in conjunction with other City departments and divisions. City parks currently support programs and activities within three categories: Access to Nature, Community Gathering, and Sports. Table 3.2 includes a list of current programs and individual parks being used for programming or organized activities, as well as the names of the organizations who administer each program.

Table 3.2: Recreation Programs Matrix

Recreation Category	Program Name	Program/ Event Description	Hosted or Supported By	Location(s)
<b>Access to Nature</b>	Community Gardens	About 200 community garden plots for rent	Outgrowing Hunger	Gresham City Hall Gardens Nadaka Nature Park and Garden Vance Park Gardens Central City Garden Yamhill Gardens Thom Park Gardens
	SKIP	Summer Kids In the Park, youth-oriented activities	YMCA / Play Grow Learn	Nadaka Red Sunset Main City Park Rockwood Village
	Pruning Program	Courses on pruning and plant knowledge and skills	Friends of Gresham Japanese Garden	Kyoudou Center
	Bonsai Workshop	Workshop to explore the art of growing and creating Bonsai displays	Friends of Gresham Japanese Garden	Kyoudou Center
	Ikebana for Every Season Workshop	Workshop to learn about the basic concept techniques, tools and equipment, and plant care for Ikebana	Friends of Gresham Japanese Garden	Kyoudou Center
	Monthly Cleanups	Residents within NCNA to perform monthly cleanups at the park	North Central Neighborhood Association (NCNA)	Red Sunset Park
	Gresham Senior Center	Senior oriented activities	Gresham Senior Center	Multnomah County East Building
	Lilac Run	Fun Run – 5K/10K/Half Marathon	City of Gresham-led	Gresham Springwater Trail
	Movies in	Free community movies in	Portland	Various Parks

<b>Community Gathering</b>	the Park	rotating park locations	Event Productions	
	Wag n Walks	Group dog walking and training tips	Hounding Around	Various Parks
	Explore Gresham	Explore Gresham parks, optional backpack checkout program for kids	City of Gresham-led	Various Parks
	Reindeer in Rockwood	Free holiday event with live reindeer	City of Gresham-led	Rockwood Plaza
	Hidden Snow Globes	Snow globes hidden in parks	City of Gresham-led	Various Parks
	Music Mondays	Free concert series featuring live music at	Center for Arts Foundation	Arts Plaza
<b>Sports</b>	Fri/Sat Night Basketball	Free open gym for MS/HS youth	POIC	HB Lee Middle School Friends of the Children
	PlayEast	Soccer, Lego, Art, Basketball, Parkour, Summer Camps	City of Fairview	Gresham City Hall East Gresham Elementary Various Parks
	Playball	Youth baseball clinics	Friends of Baseball	Gresham Pat Pfiefer Park
	Saturday Hoops	Free basketball practices, skill building, and game play for MS/HS youth	Friends of the Children	Gresham Pat Pfiefer Park
	Youth Rock Climbing	Free weekly community rock climbing days	Rock Haven	Rock Haven Climbing Gym
	Holton Basketball Camps	Free basketball camps during school breaks	Holton Basketball Academy	Oliver Middle School HB Lee Middle School

Source: City of Gresham

## Potential Gaps Based on Community Identified Needs

Community Members across engagement activities indicated a need for more recreation programs for all ages. Online Questionnaire respondents identified Youth/Teen programs and Active Adult/Senior 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 such as those summarized in Table 3.2 related to community gatherings and access to nature or by finding partners to develop new programs.

If the City decides to add a community center or to significantly expand recreational programs managed by the City, it likely will need to invest in staff that will oversee, coordinate, and implement programs with in-house staff, independent contractors, and/or current and future partner organizations. Currently, recreational programs 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.

## Approach to Addressing Gaps

Without partnerships and additional resources, the City likely will 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 the demands of City residents for programs and events continue 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.

## 6: MAINTENANCE AND OPERATIONS NEEDS

Maintenance and operations are key to creating inviting and welcoming spaces that are vibrant, clean, and sustainable. During this planning process, an Operations, Maintenance, and Organizational Analysis was conducted to assess operations, maintenance, and staffing considerations for the City's park system. The analysis provided the City with an Itemized Maintenance Cost Model for Developed Parks, Park Maintenance Budget Scenarios, and Potential Approaches for improving the operation and maintenance of existing and future park facilities. Highlights from the analysis are included in this section.

Overall, parks in Gresham are generally well-maintained, showcasing diligent efforts by the maintenance team. Amenities viewed during site visits by the project team as part of this process appear to be in fair to good condition, including well-groomed lawns, clean picnic areas, and functional playground equipment, reflecting a commitment to preserving these outdoor spaces for public enjoyment.

At the same time, a number of conditions and issues impact current and future maintenance needs and costs. For example, the City's current budget does not include provisions for natural disasters and post-storm cleanup operations, despite the additional efforts being needed to address issues such as removing fallen trees and other debris caused by storm events. Other challenges such as vandalism and littering demand consistent monitoring and proactive measures to ensure the safety, cleanliness, and aesthetic appeal of the parks are maintained at satisfactory levels. In addition, natural hazards like erosion and laminated root rot, as seen at Kane Park and Southwest Community Park require additional attention and mitigation efforts from the maintenance staff. Recognition of these issues in future planning is essential.

### Current Maintenance Practices

The Operations, Maintenance, and Organizational analysis described the tasks and sites that require the most maintenance support. These impact operations within the Department:

- Community parks require significantly more FTE hours than any other park type, both because of the acreage in community parks and also because a higher level of maintenance is needed to support programs and sports held in those types of parks.
- Red Sunset Park requires the most FTE hours within the park system.
- Litter/garbage and landscape maintenance tasks require the most FTE hours of all tasks performed.
- Downtown parking lot maintenance requires the most FTE hours per acre to maintain.

### Existing Maintenance Cost Per Acre

The Itemized Cost Model was developed to estimate the cost of maintaining future new parks and/or the expansion or development of major new amenities in existing parks at current service levels. The cost model includes a detailed estimated breakdown of direct maintenance costs and staffing hours needed to operate and maintain a variety of specific park elements (e.g., playground equipment, turf or

lawn areas, drinking fountains, sports courts or fields, etc.). Materials and supplies costs were derived from the fiscal year 2023/2024 budget and calculated on a cost per acre basis. The analysis revealed that the City's average cost per acre for park maintenance is approximately \$2,300 per acre. The full Maintenance and Operations report can be found in Appendix C.

### Current Maintenance Needs and Available Funding

The City of Gresham lacks sufficient resources (staffing and funding) to sufficiently take care of its existing parks, facilities, and trails. Due to insufficient resources, the City focuses on maintaining developed parks and facilities, but it spends significantly fewer resources on the stewardship of natural resources and maintenance of undeveloped park areas. As shown in Appendix C, Gresham's maintenance expenditure per acre is significantly lower (approximately half) than the expenditures of the Tualatin Hills Parks & Recreation District (THPRD). The comparison shows that Gresham has fewer maintenance staff per population served, and each maintenance staff person is responsible for maintaining more acres. In addition, maintenance staff are spread over a much larger geographic area in comparison to THPRD, adding further challenges and costs to maintaining the City's facilities.

The City needs more maintenance resources. However, it lacks the funding sources it needs. For this reason, Appendix C identifies three scenarios to describe the potential amount of funding needed to maintain the existing park system. Those scenarios project that the City will need two more staff and a minimum \$0.3 million more annually for park maintenance. To provide the level of service desired by the community, it would need approximately five more staff and an additional \$1.2 million annually — or a total of \$3.7 million annually to take care of the existing parks system. At the highest level (Scenario 3), this is based on a maintenance cost per acre of \$3,400, which is still significantly below THPRD's rate of \$4,600 per acre.

### Future Maintenance Costs

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. The Cost Model was applied to six of the City's undeveloped parks and found that the City will need an additional \$873,000 (rounded) annually to maintain the six new parks. For the planned developed parks, this is based on a cost of \$13,200 per acre, which includes staffing (\$8,500 per acre) and materials and supplies (\$4,700 per acre). These sites are anticipated to have much higher maintenance costs because of the level of development of these new sites.

## Potential Maintenance Approaches

The Maintenance and Operations Analysis identified several potential maintenance approaches that can help improve operations. These recommendations are described in more detail in Appendix C and will be incorporated in System-Wide Recommendations to be prepared in a subsequent phase of this process.

Figure 3.2: Potential Maintenance Approaches

- Reallocate downtown parking lots FTE hours.
- Establish maintenance hubs throughout the City.
- Leverage best-suited staff.
- Improve asset management with scheduled maintenance.
- Improve asset quality.
- Establish tree team/arborists.
- Establish an Adopt-A-Park Program.
- Hire Park Rangers.
- Hire contractors for specific park maintenance.
- Establish Rapid Response team.
- Increase field grass areas.
- Use landscape fabric in shrub beds.

## 7: ADA ACCESSIBILITY NEEDS

As part of Gresham Parks 2035, an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Facility Assessment was conducted for selected park facilities to support the City in fulfilling the requirements of federal civil rights legislation and its accessibility core value of providing an equitable and enjoyable visitor experience for people with disabilities. Detailed accessibility surveys were conducted on seven park facilities, and physical barriers were identified at those locations. These assessment supplements previous assessments conducted for other individual facilities and sites. The seven sites were selected based on a number of 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 seven facilities included in the assessment were:

- Bella Vista Park
- Hall Park
- Nadaka Park
- North Gresham Park
- Pat Pfeifer Park
- Red Sunset Park
- Rockwood Central Park

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. Barriers are related to the following five categories listed in order of importance:

1. **Navigation.** Barriers to physically entering the facilities should be removed as a first priority.
2. **Participation.** Barriers to using the facility for its primary intended purpose – in this case, enjoyment of the facilities' outdoor recreation features – fall under the second priority.
3. **Comfort.** Barriers to use of restrooms, drinking fountains, and similar amenities should be a third priority for removal.
4. **Other elements.** Barriers to other elements may not be essential to use of the facility, but nonetheless affect a visitor's experience of inclusion. This category may be used for duplicate features not required for use of the site, or for which programmatic solutions are preferred.
5. **Opportunities.** Recommendations for universal design features outside the scope of required standards, that would improve the user experience.

Table 3.3 summarizes the barrier counts by category within each of the seven park facilities. Navigation barriers (category 1) were the most prevalent with 106 cited barriers, followed by Comfort (category 3) with 86, Participation (category 2) with 59 times, and Opportunities (category 5) with 4 recommendations to improve user experience. Other Elements (category 4) were not

noted for any of the assessed sites. See Appendix D Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Facility Barrier Report for more information.

*Table 3.3: ADA Barrier Counts by Category*

Facility Name	Category 1	Category 2	Category 3	Category 4	Category 5
Bella Vista Park	15	8	8	-	1
Hall Park	-	3	6	-	-
Nadaka Nature Park	2	2	20	-	3
North Gresham Park	2	6	11	-	-
Pat Pfeifer Park	23	18	12	-	-
Red Sunset Park	43	12	16	-	-
Rockwood Central Park	21	10	8	-	-
<b>Subtotals</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>

### ADA Systemwide Needs and Approaches

The City of Gresham Parks and Recreation Department strives to provide an equitable and inclusive park system that meets the diverse needs of the community with an emphasis on its three core values: Accessibility, Equity, and Safety. The City's ADA Transition Plan along with the ADA Facility Assessment Report highlight the City's investment in putting its core values into practice. The ADA Facility Assessment Report uncovered a variety of needs that the City must address to comply with the law and to also provide a more enjoyable experience for community members. The need to address ADA and accessibility concerns was also mentioned across community engagement activities and was the second highest need identified in the Online Questionnaire. While the Department may not be able to address all of the needs like improving sidewalks on road facilities managed by other departments, it can make

improvements by creating pathways within parks and making sure park entrances and features within parks are accessible.

Suggested approaches to address needs include the following, which will be addressed in more detail in the System-Wide Recommendations element of the planning process:

- Regrading surfaces
- Sign installations
- Reduction or elimination of openings
- Adjustments to door kick plates
- Modifying operating mechanisms
- Increasing or providing clear floor areas
- Providing accessible routes

## **8: MOVING FORWARD**

This report, which defines system needs and opportunities, will be reviewed by members of the Park 2035 Task Force and selected members of the project's Technical Advisory Team. It will be revised, as needed to reflect the results of that review. The *Needs Assessment* will then provide a foundation for developing strategic directions and recommendations, including both system-wide recommendations and specific facility improvements which will be the subject of subsequent report for this project. Ultimately, the results of all that work will be included in the Final Plan.

## **APPENDICES**

Appendix A: Online Questionnaire Results

Appendix B: Targeted Outreach Meetings Summary

Appendix C: Maintenance and Operations Analysis Report

Appendix D: Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Facility Barrier Report