



City of Albany Parks Master Plan



FINAL | FEBRUARY 2021

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CITY OF ALBANY PARKS MASTER PLAN

Final | February 2021

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Albany’s 2021 Parks Master Plan provides critical direction for enhancing the City system of parks, recreation facilities, trails, and open space. Underway when the 2020 pandemic and affiliated recession hit, the plan evolved to directly respond to City opportunities and challenges:



A \$5 million backlog of deferred maintenance and capital projects.



The temporary cancellation of programs/events and facility closures to respond to COVID-19 health restrictions.



A recent round of budget cuts, a shortage of operations funding, and competing funding needs.



35.5 acres of undeveloped park land to build, plus 900+ acres to maintain.



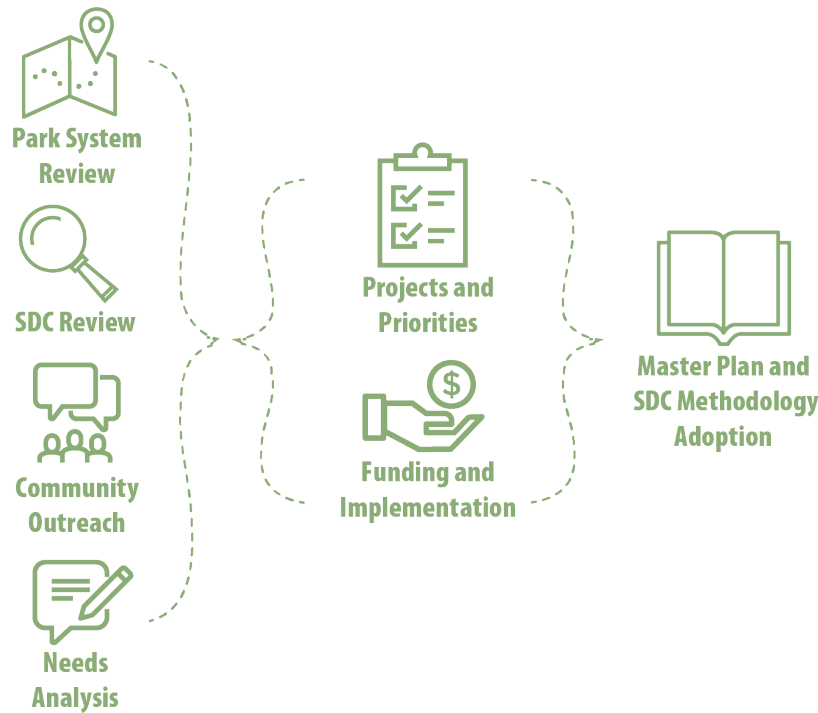
A growing population and employment base increasing the demand for parks, facilities, programs, and trails over the next 10 years.

Informed by community input and priorities, this Parks Master Plan provides a realistic assessment of the park system, identifies future trends and needs, and defines 5- and 10-year action plans to invest in the City’s highest priority projects (Figure 1).

Developed concurrently with a revised Systems Development Charge (SDC) methodology, the Parks Master Plan provides a framework to guide the City in setting priorities and making decisions about the provision of parks, trails, open space, natural areas, recreation facilities, and programs.



Figure 1: Planning Process



A COMMUNITY-DRIVEN PLAN

More than 1,650 residents participated in the planning process to guide the development of the Parks Master Plan goals, recommendations, and prioritized projects. This included involvement in an online questionnaire conducted in English and Spanish, six pop-events to reach participants at key recreation facilities and events, and an online forum to review and confirm project priorities as noted in the Parks Master Plan.

In addition, the Parks Master Plan was guided by the Parks & Recreation Commission as well as by the Parks Task Force that involved community leaders and recreation partners citywide to ensure the Parks Master Plan leveraged community resources and reflected community needs.

ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE PRIORITY RANKINGS

- 1 Repair or replace worn or older park features.
- 2 Build more trails and paths.
- 3 Improve the daily maintenance of parks (e.g., litter pickup, restroom cleaning)
- 4 Add more or a greater variety of features in parks.
- 5 Build a new indoor community and recreation center.

PARKS MASTER PLAN GOALS

Based on the community's priorities as identified through outreach, the Parks Master Plan responds to six overarching goals.

- **Maintenance.** Address the City's aging park infrastructure and improve maintenance of developed parks and natural areas.
- **River Connections.** Prioritize the river corridor as a tremendous downtown asset and part of Albany's unique identity.
- **Activity.** Meet the needs of all ages and a variety of interests, including families.
- **Equity and Access.** Provide inclusive parks, interconnected trails, and recreation services for all residents, addressing the unique needs of lower income-residents, an aging population, Hispanic and Latino residents, and other historically underrepresented groups.
- **Stability.** Prioritize the City's investment in parks, facilities, and programs while it responds to the current COVID-19 pandemic and economic challenges.
- **Sustainability.** Develop a funding and partnership strategy for implementation of a short- and longer-term capital improvement program.

In Chapters 2 and 3, the Parks Master Plan also identifies community needs and opportunities to enhance the parks and recreation system while addressing 11 key trends.



PARKS MASTER PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

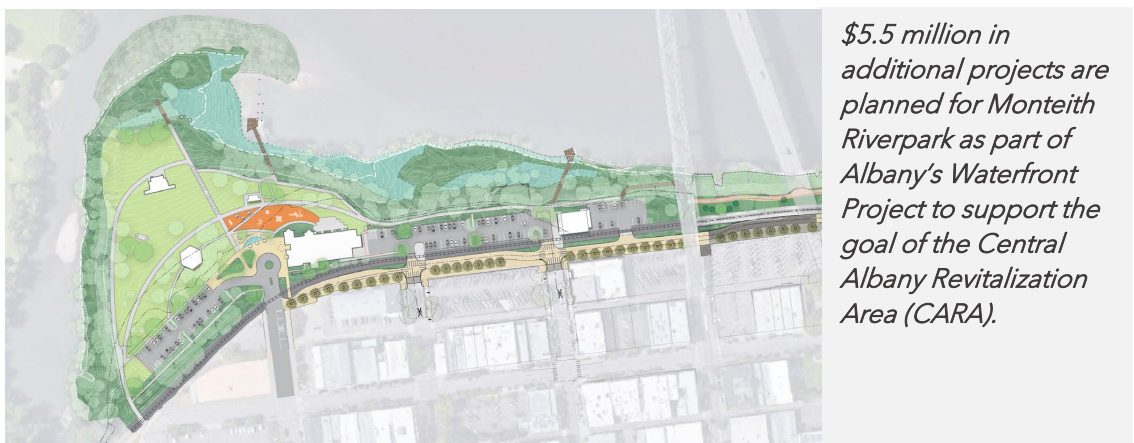
Both systemwide changes and site-specific recommendations are defined in Chapter 4 of the Parks Master Plan to support the City's goals and objectives for parks and recreation. Together these policies and projects will enhance the quality of parks and recreation services within Albany.

SYSTEMWIDE RECOMMENDATIONS

Systemwide guidance is provided to ensure that the City leverages and invests resources to support critical operations and services.

- **Increase Maintenance Resources.** Increased operations funding, maintenance efficiencies, and strategic investments in capital projects and divestment of surplus sites could supplement maintenance resources to enhance park stewardship across the community.
- **Link Parks and Community Destinations with Trails.** Off-street trails and enhanced sidewalk connections will build loops and connections between parks, schools, downtown Albany, and the riverfront.
- **Implement Albany's Waterfront Plan.** The vision for an improved waterfront is strongly supported by the Parks Master Plan and includes projects at Monteith Riverpark and the Dave Clark Trail.
- **Increase Programming Resources.** The City will have to evaluate its cost-recovery strategy to fund programming, while striving to ensure that the cost to participate does not create additional barriers. This will include both events and activities provided by the City directly as well as those provided at City facilities by community partners such as sports groups.
- **Coordinate Planning over the Long-Term.** While this plan includes a long-term vision for Albany's park system, community needs, priorities, and resources are continuously evolving. Implementation will require coordination with several City initiatives, the City's Transportation System Plan (TSP) and an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Transition Plan to ensure the success of the park system.

Figure 2: Albany Waterfront Plan



SITE RECOMMENDATIONS

The future parks and recreation system will be made up of existing and proposed sites, activated through engaging facilities, interconnected by a series of trails. The Parks Master Plan identifies recommendations for over 80 existing and proposed parks and trails to enhance the experience at those sites. The details of these recommendations are provided on a site-by-site basis in Appendix C, with further detail of costs and anticipated timeline for implementation in Appendix D.

Figure 3: Top Five Types of Recommended Park Improvements



Total 10-Year Recommendations

- Approximately \$66.8 million in park projects
- Approximately \$55.6 million in trail projects

Short-Term 5-Year Action Plan

- Approximately \$8.2 million in essential park projects



ACTION PLAN

While the entire Parks Master Plan documents more than \$122.4 million in community priorities and needs moving forward in the next 10 years and beyond, the City should strive to implement \$8.2 million in projects in the next five years. The short-term action plan focuses on 13 essential projects categorized in five strategic areas (Table 1).

CAPACITY ENHANCEMENT PROJECTS

To maintain a minimum level of service, Albany should strategically expand the park system to serve new residents. Key projects include completing Timber Ridge Neighborhood Park and developing access and interpretive features at East Thornton Lake Natural Area and adding new features to Bowman Park.

STRATEGIC OPERATIONS AND EFFICIENCIES

Strategic investments in capital projects and operations will either increase operational efficiencies or strategically address some of the City's deferred maintenance and site maintenance needs in key areas across the city. Short-term projects include minor investments into the COOL! Pool and Deerfield Park.

ENHANCEMENTS TO EXISTING/PARTNER SITES

Improving existing parks or developing facilities at partner sites is a cost-effective way to enhance recreation opportunities without incurring additional maintenance costs. Renovations to play areas and courts at Burkhart Park and Henderson Park are good examples of this approach and the pickleball court development at Linn-Benton Community College (LBCC) leverages Albany's construction experience and resources, along with LBCC's ability to host and maintain the new courts.

DIVESTMENTS

Not all of Albany's park properties are in suitable locations or meet the needs of the community. Two properties are recommended to be sold or repurposed: the North Pointe property and Hazelwood Park. Both were intended to serve as neighborhood parks but are not well suited for this purpose. With an ongoing crunch on operational funding, the City should take these off the parks inventory and identify alternative owners or uses.

ADVANCED PLANNING

The department is initiating an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Transition Plan that will identify the barriers that keep people with different abilities from participating in park and recreation activities. The ADA Transition Plan as well as a revised Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) will help the City identify where new projects are needed to address State and national standards and ensure user safety. The City should make the next five-year capital improvement plan update toward the end of this first action plan.

Table 1: Short-Term (5-Year) Action Plan

| PARK | PLANNING COST* | DESCRIPTION |
|---|--|--|
| Capacity Enhancement Projects | | |
| Bowman Park | \$ 225,000 | Nature play area and non-motorized boat launch |
| East Thornton Lake Natural Area | \$ 5,684,000 | First phase of development, neighborhood and nature park features at existing site |
| Timber Ridge Neighborhood Park | \$ 1,185,000 | Develop neighborhood park at a City-owned property. |
| Subtotal | \$ 7,094,000 | |
| Strategic Operations and Efficiencies | | |
| Deerfield Park | \$ 250,000 | Improved play area, shade, paths, and naturalized area |
| COOL! Pool at Swanson Park | \$ 100,000 | Pool upgrades to reduce future maintenance costs |
| Increased maintenance staffing | No capital cost | Added operational resources to sustain park system |
| Subtotal | \$ 350,000 | |
| Enhancements to Existing/Partner Sites | | |
| Burkhart Park | \$ 240,000 | Additional play features, additional amenities, and sports court |
| Henderson Park | \$ 175,000 | Improved play area and creek edge enhancement |
| LBCC pickleball courts | Already funded. No additional capital cost | Partnership project already under way |
| Subtotal | \$ 415,000 | |
| Divestments | | |
| Hazelwood Park | No capital cost | Sell or transfer site |
| North Pointe property | No capital cost | Sell or transfer site |
| Subtotal | No capital cost | |
| Advanced Planning | | |
| ADA Transition Plan | \$ 350,000 | Access improvements identified by ADA Plan |
| 5-Year CIP Update | \$ 20,000 | Review of capital plan at the end of 5 years |
| Subtotal | \$ 370,000 | |
| Total | \$8,229,000 | |

* Estimated costs are preliminary, planning-level estimates detailed in Appendix D.

FUNDING STRATEGIES

While the \$8.2 million in short-term project costs is significant, it represents capital costs only. To implement some new projects, both capital and operational funds will be needed to maintain and program new parks and features when they are developed. In addition to working with community partners, businesses, and potential sponsors, the strategies outlined below and presented in Chapter 5 present several ways for the City to fund the parks and recreation system.



CAPITAL FUNDING

PARKS SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT CHARGE

The City should adopt the Parks System Development Charge (SDC) methodology developed in parallel with this plan and increase the associated rates to be more in line with comparable communities.



CAPITAL FUNDING

BONDS AND DEBT

For the portion of park projects left unfunded by SDCs, the primary supplement to consider would be a voter-approved General Obligation (GO) bond or a full faith and credit bond approved by the Albany City Council and repaid from the general operating funds.



OPERATIONS FUNDING

UTILITY FEE

The City of Albany should pair any capital funding with a parallel increase in operational funding. A park utility fee would offer a significant and stable revenue stream primarily to support park maintenance and operations.



CAPITAL FUNDING

GRANTS

Albany's parks and recreation projects, particularly those along the Willamette River or serving low-income or historically underserved populations, are well-positioned for grant funding from a number of state and federal sources. Typically, these grants are competitive processes that fund only capital costs.



OPERATIONS FUNDING

ADDITIONAL SOURCES

The City could consider a mix of other funding sources in the long term to help fund projects and services. These include local improvement districts (LID), urban renewal districts, and special districts.



CAPITAL FUNDING

Since the General Fund is a revenue source for multiple services, providing alternative funding sources for other City services would allow the City to allocate more revenue to parks. A local fuel tax, street utility fees, and other cost allocation strategies could benefit parks indirectly and allow the City to address additional park needs.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

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1 INTRODUCTION

Located in the heart of the Willamette Valley and at the confluence of the Willamette and Calapooia rivers, Albany has a deep connection to outdoor spaces and natural areas. The traditional land of the Kalapuya people, the City was incorporated in 1848 and now hosts a population of over 50,000. Albany has retained a unique identity as a community with a walkable downtown, historic districts, and diverse recreation opportunities.

Within its 18 square miles, Albany has an extensive inventory of parks, trails, and recreation facilities that support a variety of recreation activities and programs, including award-winning community festivals. These parks, facilities, and programs are integral to the quality of life for residents, visitors, and employees in Albany. For this reason, it is critical to have an investment strategy in place to sustain and enhance the City's parks and recreation opportunities.

PURPOSE OF THE MASTER PLAN

The Albany Parks Master Plan (Parks Master Plan) serves two purposes. The first is to identify community priorities through an extensive outreach and engagement process. Ultimately, this will help inform leaders on future decisions that will directly and indirectly impact programs and services for the next 10-years. Second, the Parks Master Plan will recommend ways to improve and enhance parks, recreation facilities, trails, programs, events, and related services since the last Parks Master Plan was developed in 2006. In addition, the Parks Master Plan was developed concurrently with a new System Development Charge methodology, a revenue stream that will support new parks and facility development as the community grows and recover costs for completed projects.



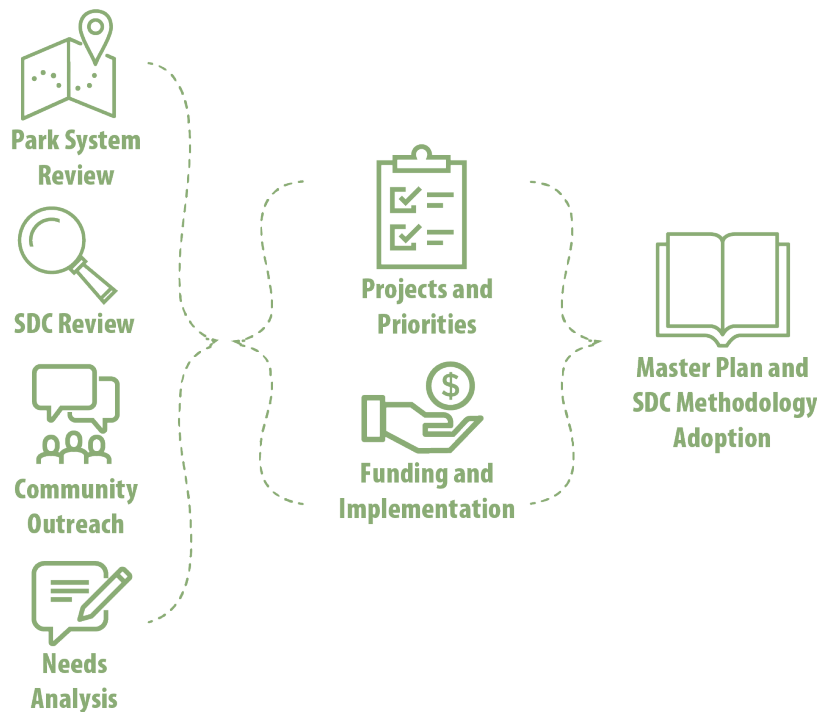
The goals for the Parks Master Plan include:

- **Maintenance.** Address the City's aging park infrastructure and improve maintenance of developed parks and natural areas.
- **River Assets.** Prioritize the river corridor as a tremendous downtown asset and part of Albany's unique identity.
- **Activity.** Meet the needs of all ages and a variety of interests, including families.
- **Equity and Access.** Provide inclusive parks, interconnected trails, and recreation services for all residents, addressing the unique needs of lower income-residents, an aging population, Hispanic and Latino residents, and other historically underrepresented groups.
- **Stability.** Prioritize the City's investment in parks, facilities, and programs while it responds to the current COVID-19 pandemic and economic challenges.
- **Sustainability.** Develop a funding and partnership strategy for implementation of a short- and longer-term capital improvement program.

PLANNING PROCESS

The Parks Master Plan was guided through a multiphase planning process that obtained input from community members, City staff, and other City and community leaders who are dedicated to creating vibrant parks and rewarding recreation experiences. The three phases of the planning process are illustrated in Figure 1-1.

Figure 1-1: Planning Process



PHASE 1

Phase 1 included four areas of emphasis:

- A park system review, which examined the number, quality, and types of parks, facilities, and recreation programs offered to the community.
- The System Development Charge methodology, originally developed in 1993, was reviewed and updated to meet the park needs of the growing community and to support new park and facility development in both residential and commercial/business areas.
- A community outreach portion, which included several pop-up and intercept events, an online questionnaire, and Parks Task Force meetings to inform the recommendations and identify the priorities for the community.
- The needs analysis, which identified gaps in Albany's parks and recreation system, needs for enhanced services, and opportunities to meet those needs.

PHASE 2

Phase 2 focused on the development of recommendations for capital improvements as well as operations and funding strategies to implement these projects.

PHASE 3

The final phase of the Parks Master Plan process includes the presentation, review, and adoption of the Parks Master Plan and SDC methodology.



PLAN ORGANIZATION

The Parks Master Plan includes five chapters and five appendices.

Chapter 1: Introduction defines the purpose of the plan, the planning process, and plan organization.

Chapter 2: State of the System provides an overview of the existing parks, facilities and programs and presents the observed strengths and issues of the park system.

Chapter 3: Needs and Opportunities reviews the park system needs and presents the unique opportunities that Albany could offer including streamlining essential services, prioritizing the riverfront, enhancing pedestrian and bike connectivity, supporting a healthy, active community, and providing inclusive, equitable services.

Chapter 4: Recommendations presents systemwide policies and strategies along with a summary of park and facility recommendations for existing and proposed sites.

Chapter 5: Action Plan presents the 10-year Action Plan and next steps in the context of the City's level of investment.

Appendix A: Inventory summarizes and classifies park and facility inventory.

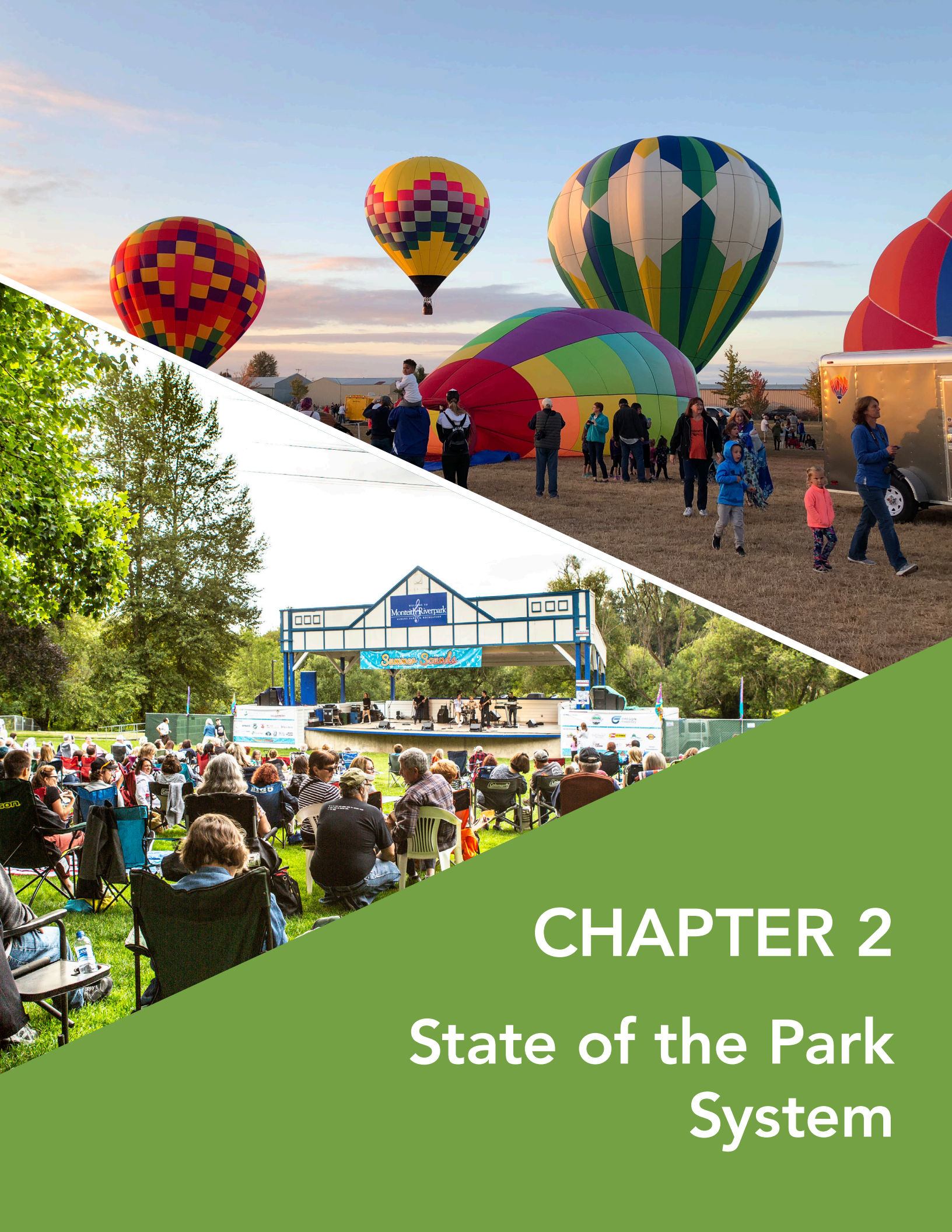
Appendix B: Parks and Recreation Trends details local, regional, and national trends impacting Albany's future parks, facilities, and services.

Appendix C: Site & Facility Recommendations provides specific deferred maintenance recommendations for each site and facility listed in the Inventory.

Appendix D: Capital Improvement Plan presents the list of capital projects, included estimated costs, phased in the short, medium, and long term.

Appendix E: Prioritization and Partnership Tools introduces criteria the City can use to evaluate whether a request or proposal meets the goals and objectives of the Parks Master Plan.





CHAPTER 2

State of the Park System

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2 STATE OF THE PARK SYSTEM

The City of Albany is known for its riverfront parks and natural areas, community-oriented facilities such as the COOL! Pool, and popular events such as River Rhythms and the Northwest Art & Air Festival. Over the last 15 years, the City has made the most of limited funding by investing in park renovations and partnership projects to add new recreation opportunities. However, the City continues to grow and diversify and has fallen behind on the park improvements and ongoing system maintenance. Now a pandemic and recession further strain resources as the City strives to sustain its expansive amount of parkland, recreation facilities, trails, and community-serving programs. This chapter provides a park systems status report, including system strengths and issues the Parks & Recreation Department will address by implementing this Parks Master Plan.

EXISTING PARKS, FACILITIES, AND PROGRAMS

The City of Albany is responsible for planning, maintaining, and programming a little more than 900 acres of parkland, open space, and recreation facilities. Map 2-1 illustrates the distribution of these parks across the city.

PARK LAND INVENTORY

The City has five types of parkland as well as several undeveloped sites that have been acquired for future park development. Most of these parks are in relatively good condition. They offer popular and well-visited spaces for recreation, sports, social gatherings, and connections to nature and the outdoors. However, many have aging or worn amenities and facilities that will need repair or replacement in the next ten years. Several sites have natural resource challenges, such as drainage issues, periodic flooding, streambank erosion, and dumping.





NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS | 17 SITES | 85.9 ACRES

The City of Albany has 17 neighborhood parks that provide close-to-home spaces to play, exercise, and gather. These parks are located in residential areas and range from 0.44 acres to 11.22 acres in size, with the larger sites including undeveloped natural areas.

Examples: Deerfield Park, Lexington Park, Periwinkle Park, Teloh Calapooia Park



COMMUNITY PARKS | 2 SITES | 21.6 ACRES

Community parks provide a range of passive and active recreation opportunities for multiple neighborhoods or a portion of the city. They include play areas, picnic areas and shelters, open lawns areas, sports courts, sports fields, and, in some cases, specialized recreation opportunities.

Examples: Bowman Park, Kinder Park

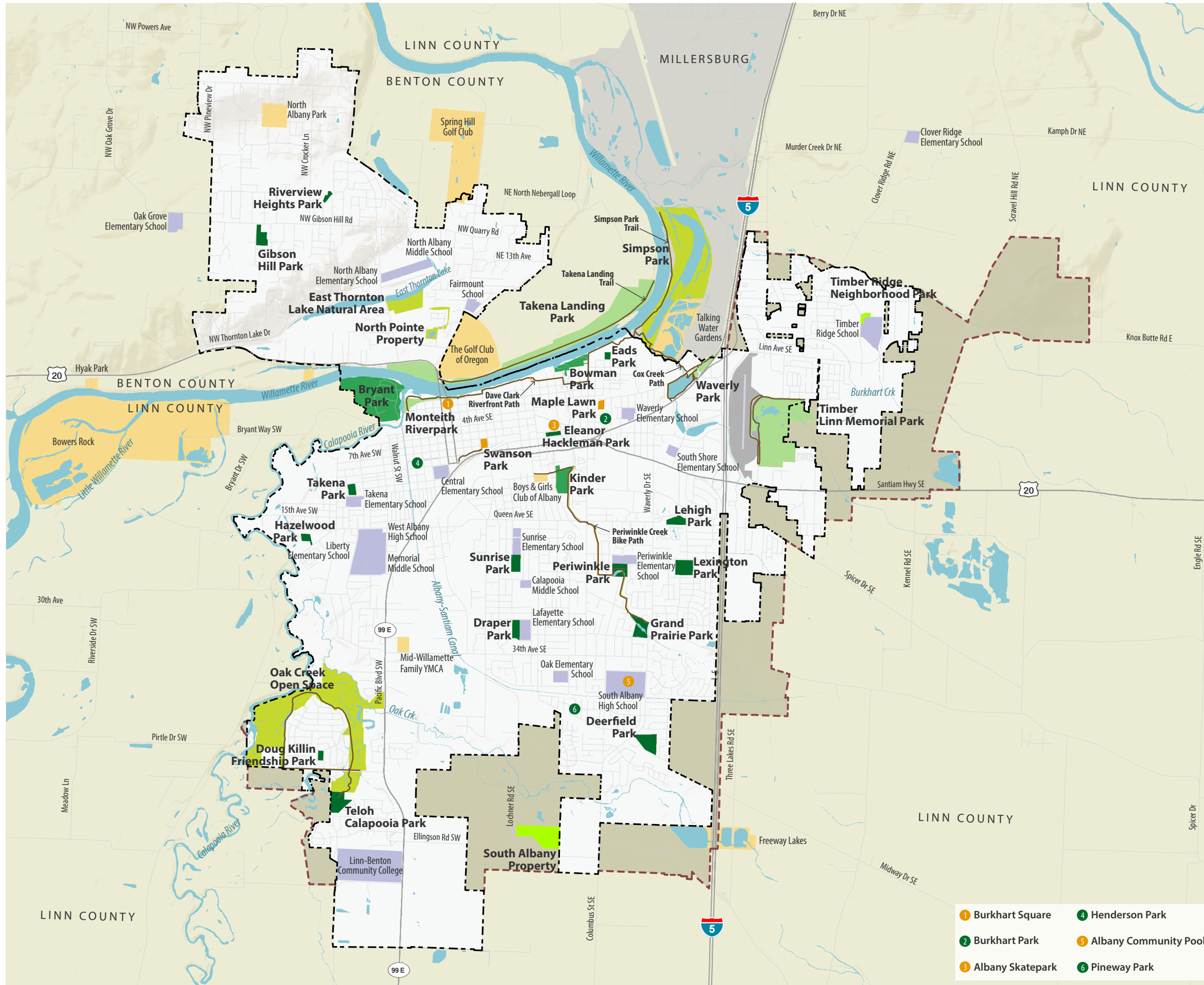


CITYWIDE PARKS | 5 SITES | 335.4 ACRES

There are five citywide parks ranging in size from 8.5 to 133.0 acres. Citywide parks are large parks that provide unique recreation opportunities and serve the entire community. They typically include specialized facilities and space for large group gatherings, programming, and events.

Examples: Monteith Riverpark, Bryant Park, Timber Linn Memorial Park

Map 2-1: Existing Parks and Recreation System



City of Albany Parks

- Neighborhood Parks
- Community Park
- Citywide Park
- Undeveloped Park Properties
- Natural Areas
- Special Use Sites

Other Parks and Facilities

- Other Parks and Recreation Facilities
- Schools and Colleges

Trails

- Trails and Off-Street Bike Paths

Base Map Features

- City of Albany Boundary
- Major Streets
- Waterbodies
- Albany Municipal Airport
- City of Millersburg
- Urban Growth Boundary

- 1 Burkhart Square
- 4 Henderson Park
- 2 Burkhart Park
- 5 Albany Community Pool
- 3 Albany Skatepark
- 6 Pineway Park

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SPECIAL USE SITES | 7 SITES | 9.9 ACRES

Special use sites support unique recreation opportunities serving all or most of the Albany community. These single-purpose sites may include specialized recreation facilities not found elsewhere in the parks system. Urban plazas, skateparks, and pools are considered special use sites.

Examples: Albany Skatepark, COOL! Pool, Albany Community Pool, Maple Lawn building



NATURAL AREAS | 4 SITES | 420.43 ACRES

Natural areas typically allow for nature-based activities and low impact uses such as walking, hiking, and wildlife watching. These natural areas include trails and associated greenways that link destinations in the community. A large portion of these sites are undeveloped, protecting greenspace and open space in the city.

Examples: East Thornton Lake Natural Area, Oak Creek Open Space, Simpson Park



FUTURE PARK PROPERTIES | 2 SITES | 28.41 ACRES

There are two undeveloped park sites, Timber Ridge and South Albany, that are designated for future park development.

Examples: South Albany property, Timber Ridge Neighborhood Park

RECREATION FACILITIES

Albany residents have access to a variety of facilities that provide spaces for indoor and outdoor recreation, community gatherings and events, and arts and culture. Within its parks and recreation system, Albany has outdoor recreation facilities including playgrounds, picnic areas, a dog park, amphitheater, skate park, boat launches, disc golf courses, horseshoe pits, outdoor sports courts, and sports fields. The City also has partnership agreements with Linn-Benton Community College for pickleball courts and the Boys & Girls Club and Timber Ridge School for their gymnasiums.



Albany has several major recreation facilities that provide specialized uses:

- **Albany Community Pool**, a 50-meter, Olympic-size pool open year-round offering swim lessons, exercise classes, rentals, and other aquatics programming.
- **Albany Senior Center**, an indoor multi-purpose community center offering classes and drop-in activities for seniors as well as rental space.
- **Albany Skate Park**, an outdoor skate park that features a concrete bowl, ledges, and rails.
- **Maple Lawn Building**, a city-owned building that contains the Maple Lawn Preschool, which since early 2020 has been funded by Greater Albany Public Schools.
- **Monteith Riverpark Stage**, an outdoor amphitheater in Monteith Riverpark that has hosted the River Rhythms summer concert program since its creation in 1984.
- **COOL! Pool**, an outdoor pool located at Swanson Park Action Center that features water slide, spray park, and zero-depth entry.
- **Takena Landing and Bowman boat ramps**, located in separate parks, Albany's boat launches offer direct access to the Willamette River.
- **Timber Linn Amphitheater**, an outdoor amphitheater in Timber Linn Memorial Park the location of the annual Northwest Art & Air Festival.

Most of these facilities require a greater investment in staffing for maintenance, operations, and programming. Several generate revenue for the City through the programs and events offered, offsetting some of the operations costs. However, the 2020 COVID-19 restrictions, which limited large group gatherings and indoor programs, has affected facility operations and use.

RECREATION PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

The City of Albany is a well-rounded provider of recreation programs, events, and activities. Award-winning events such as River Rhythms, Summer Sounds, and the Northwest Art & Air Festival also draw in large crowds and an estimated \$5 million in direct economic impacts. Facility operations at the Albany Senior Center, Maple Lawn Preschool, and pools drive much of the programming offered.

Partnerships and agreements between the City and other local serving agencies and organizations increase the City's capacity to meet the recreation needs of Albany residents. Over 140,000 people attend Albany events and festivals, and many others participate in the variety of program areas offered including performance and cultural arts, adult recreation, aquatics, sports, and family and youth recreation.

Albany offers programs and services in the following areas:

- Aquatics
- Older adult and senior programs
- Preschool, youth, and family programs
- Special events and festivals
- Sports and fitness
- Volunteerism
- Facility, field, and equipment rentals





PARKS SYSTEM STRENGTHS AND ISSUES

The Parks Master Plan identified several factors that affect the provision of services across Albany's park and recreation system. Eight factors are described below.

PARKS USE AND BENEFITS

According to the Outdoor Industry Association, 144.4 million Americans participated in at least one outdoor activity in 2016 and collectively went on 11 billion outdoor outings. Activities such as hiking, picnicking, swimming, fishing, camping, boating, and biking promote wellness, social interaction, and a connection to the outdoors. The Baby Boomer generation and Millennials are the largest population segments driving this new outdoor lifestyle trend.

Today, the active outdoor lifestyle has gone mainstream, and people are looking for ways to be outdoors in urban areas. The opportunity and challenge for towns and cities is to provide meaningful outdoor activity in urbanized environments. It requires a realignment of parks, recreation, and open space—moving beyond an investment in highly manicured space—to emphasize and connect people to local creeks and waterways, the urban tree canopy, gardens, and other natural areas.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shed an even bigger light on the essential role of local parks and recreation. Parks and open spaces have been increasingly relied upon as spaces where people can experience the health benefits of nature such as reduced stress or increased energy. Parks and recreation departments have a unique ability to serve communities and connect people to essential programs, services, and spaces. While some facilities have remained closed during re-opening phases, Albany's Parks & Recreation Department has continued to provide recreation opportunities to residents.

2006 PARKS MASTER PLAN PROGRESS

The 2006 Park and Recreation Master Plan established several goals for parks and recreation with a range of supporting recommendations and projects to build the system. The list of projects was aspirational, with most projects dependent on significant funding opportunity or partnership beyond available City resources.

2006 PLAN ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The City has completed or initiated several of the short-term projects identified under the 2006 plan. These include:

- Swanson Park pedestrian loop
- City’s first dog park at Timber Linn Memorial Park
- Playground replacement at Sunrise Park
- Use of two gymnasiums through partnerships
- Lexington Park improvements
- Riverview Heights Park improvements
- Swanson Park improvements
- Takena Park improvements
- Teloh Calapooia Park improvements

In addition to the capital projects, the City has actively pursued several recreation programs and initiatives.

FUTURE PRIORITIES

There are many projects from the previous plan that have not been initiated or that are no longer a priority due to changing conditions. An additional \$16.9 million in funding (in 2006 dollars) would be needed to complete all projects identified under the 2006 master plan. This plan update revisits community needs and priorities, future trends, service levels, and resources to update the list of recommended projects for implementation.

STAFFING AND FUNDING

Albany’s Parks & Recreation Department staff are responsible for park and building maintenance, urban forest management, community festivals and events, and recreational and arts programming. Funding for the parks program comes primarily from Fund 202 which spends more than three quarters of its almost \$10 million dollar budget on operating services. Parks and recreation services must compete with other department budgets based on value to the community.

The City currently funds its parks and recreation program with a mix of property tax, other general revenues like user fees, transfers from other funds, and SDCs. Albany’s parks program is heavily reliant on property taxes, which is the program’s fastest

Parks & Recreation Services by Category

- Park Administration
- Resource Development & Marketing Services
- Performance and Cultural Arts
- Children/Youth/ Family Recreation Services
- Adult Recreation Services
- Sports Services
- Aquatic Services
- Park Maintenance
- Parks SDC Projects
- Senior Center Foundation
- Parks Capital Improvement Projects

growing revenue. However, at a growth rate of 2.7%, it is unlikely that property tax can keep up with the rising costs. The program is also funded through gifts and donations of cash and in-kind services, 190 sponsorships by businesses and other organizations, and volunteer hours. As the city expands, additional park sites, facilities, and services will be needed for Albany's new residents, requiring additional staffing and funding.

VOLUNTEERISM

Albany has a strong and active volunteer base that assists with events, programming, and maintenance of certain facilities. The City's Adopt-A-Park program is a way for individuals, groups, or businesses to help keep parks, green spaces, and facilities clean and safe through a variety of routine tasks and activities. Albany's volunteer hours per year roughly translate to the equivalent of 18 full-time staff.

ASSET MANAGEMENT

Without adequate maintenance, City parks and recreation assets will deteriorate over time. Since the adoption of the 2006 Park and Recreation Master Plan, the demand on parks maintenance has increased with a growing population, maintenance backlog, and new sites that have been added to the system inventory.

A recent inventory of the park system identified just over \$5 million in current reinvestment needs, ranging from irrigation heads to replacing sports field lights, as well as several long-standing needs to expand the use of existing facilities. The largest deficiencies are in Timber Linn Memorial Park, Bryant Park, and Monteith River Park. Each of these represents a significant but aging investment the community made in facilities in the past, when the population was smaller and more concentrated. As the city has grown, increased demands and use will make park assets wear more quickly.

As the City reinvests, the appropriate scale and location of facilities that serve city-wide needs should be carefully considered. Community input supports park reinvestment; the top funding priority that emerged through the public engagement process was repairing or replacing worn and older park features.



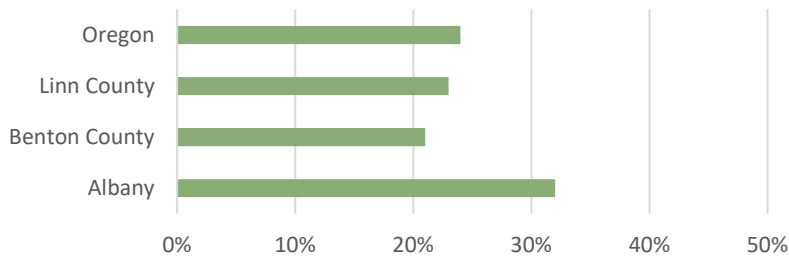
ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES AND CONSTRAINTS

Albany’s location gives it the highly diverse natural vegetation and resources that both residents and visitors value. Albany has unique areas of habitat, many of which coincide with its wetlands, water resources, or urban tree canopy. While a vital natural resource, Albany’s wetland resources and adopted wetland management program limit public infrastructure and development across waterways and significant wetlands through the city. Due to the city’s location on the Willamette and Calapooia rivers, many areas within Albany area are prone to flooding, particularly as more land is developed with impervious surfaces that can increase the magnitude and frequency of flooding. These environmental resources and factors restrict the developable lands within the city.

CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS

Albany is the 11th largest city in Oregon, the largest city in Linn County and the second largest in Benton County. The City is poised for continued growth, with projections of nearly 9,000 additional residents and 3,500 new employees in the next ten years. Albany has also experienced a greater change in growth compared to either Linn or Benton county or the state at large.

Figure 2-1: Change in Population since 2000



Source: US Census Data, PSU Population Research Center

AGING POPULATION

Consistent with national trends, Albany has a growing population of seniors as the Baby Boomer generation gets older. At the same time, the percentage of younger people has remained steady within the population. Compared to state and national averages, Albany has a similar share of households with children as the national average, but higher than the statewide figure. The share of population over 65 is similar to state and national figures. Staying healthy and interacting with others is especially critical to the wellbeing of older residents. As the population continues to age and as adults live longer than previous generations, parks and recreation services will play an even greater role.

HOUSEHOLD INCOME

Albany’s estimated median household income was \$61,000 in 2019. This is higher than the Linn County median of \$56,000 and slightly lower than Benton County’s median of \$62,000 and the state median of \$63,000. According to the US Census, the official poverty rate in Albany is an estimated 15.4% which is roughly 8,500 individuals. In

comparison, the official poverty rate in Linn County is 16%, Benton County is at 17%, and the state level is 17%.

Figure 2-2: Household Income

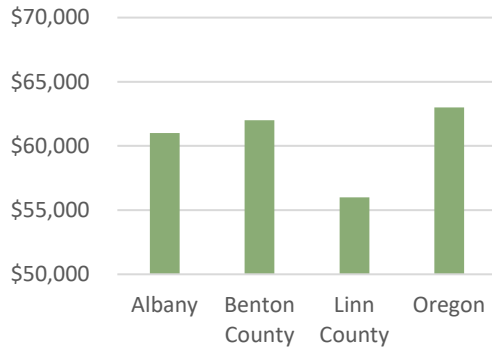
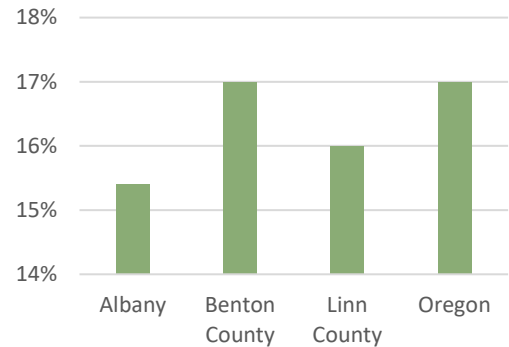


Figure 2-3: Poverty Rate



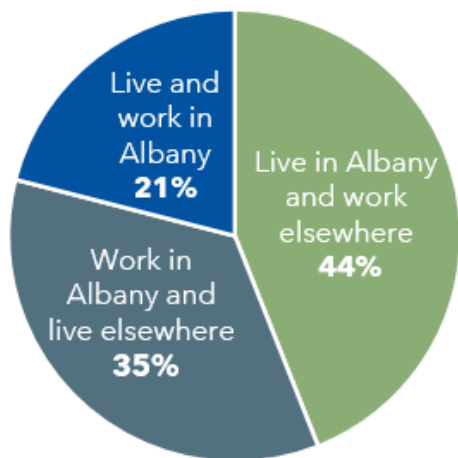
Source: US Census Data, PSU Population Research Center American Community Survey Profiles 2015-2019

Albany was home to an estimated 21,750 households in 2019, an increase of 5,200 households since 2000. The percentage of families remained steady between 2000 and 2019, making up 65% of all households.

GROWING ECONOMY

As of 2017, the Census estimated there were 21,350 “covered employment” jobs (jobs eligible for unemployment insurance) located in Albany. Of these, 7,800 or 36.5%, are held by local residents, while over 13,500 employees commute into the Albany from elsewhere. This pattern is fairly common among most communities. As outlined in Albany’s Housing and Residential Land Needs Assessment completed in 2020, of the estimated 24,800 employed Albany residents, 68% of them commute elsewhere to employment. The most common destinations for Albany commuters are Corvallis, Salem, and Eugene.

Figure 2-4: Commuting Patterns



Albany features a healthy jobs-to-households ratio. There are an estimated 29,500 jobs in the city of Albany, and an estimated 21,750 households in Albany.

Affordability is an issue in the region which impacts quality of life and the ability to live in the city. Based on recent estimates, over 33% of Albany households pay more than 30% of income towards housing costs. However, Albany has a greater share of homeowner households than renter households.



RECREATION TRENDS

Several demographic and recreation trends have been seen across the region, state, and nation. Albany’s services will also be impacted by the evolving trends shown below. While Albany has made an effort to respond to several of these trends, the City often hasn’t had the resources to fully embrace and implement the changes needed in parks, facilities, and services to address them. Understanding future recreation trends will help Albany plan for parks, facilities, and services and provide context for community preferences and priorities. Refer to Appendix B for detailed descriptions of each trend.

Figure 2-5: Parks and Recreation Trends



COORDINATION WITH OTHER INITIATIVES

This Parks Master Plan coincides with or builds from several other key City plans and initiatives.

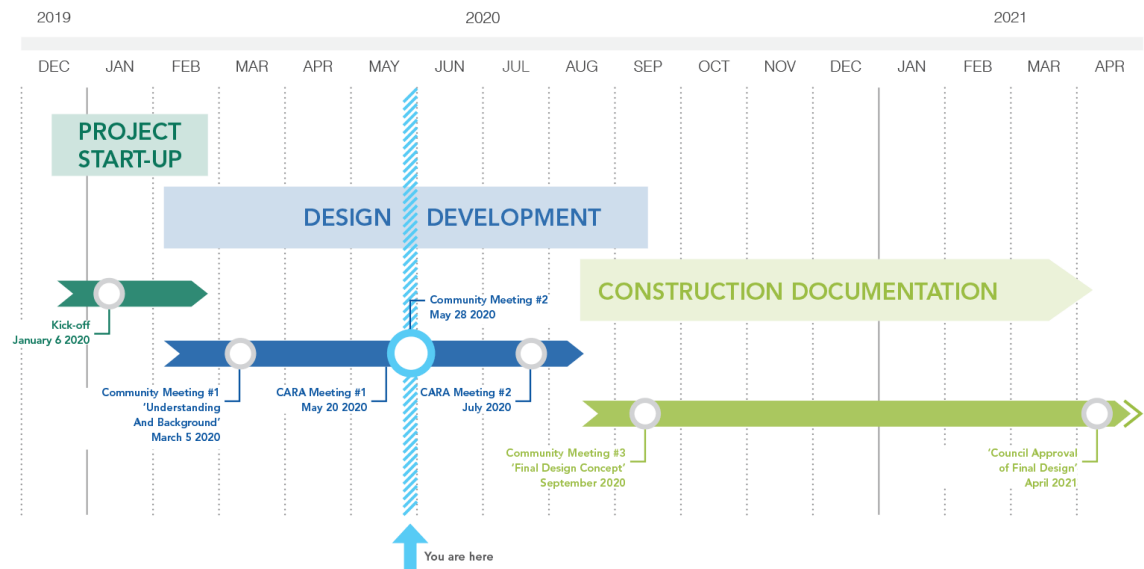
CENTRAL ALBANY REVITALIZATION AREA (2001)

The goal of the Central Albany Revitalization Area (CARA) is to increase the economic vitality of the area, encourage the use of vacant and underused land and buildings, and rehabilitate structures while increasing property values both in CARA and the city overall. To date, every dollar spent on public improvements in CARA has brought in roughly six dollars of private investment. Programs created to spur revitalization efforts in the district included architectural assistance and storefront revitalization grants, loan programs, and other small grants.

ALBANY WATERFRONT PROJECT (JANUARY 2020 - PRESENT)

Over time, the City has taken steps to reestablish downtown Albany’s connection with its rivers. In recent years, the City has been preserving waterfront properties for public use, using the Central Albany Revitalization Area to make strategic investments in downtown, and planning improvements to Water Avenue and the waterfront parks. Now the City is taking the next step in this long-standing effort to improve Albany’s waterfront and how it connects to downtown. The expectation is that new waterfront redevelopment will create one of the most unique downtowns in the state of Oregon. When complete, the riverfront will be a major downtown anchor, re-connecting the community to the river where Albany began.

Figure 2-6: Albany Waterfront Project Timeline



The Albany Waterfront Project kicked off in January 2020 and was developed simultaneously with this Parks Master Plan update. The Waterfront Project identified priority projects for riverfront parks which are included in this plan.

TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM PLAN (2010)

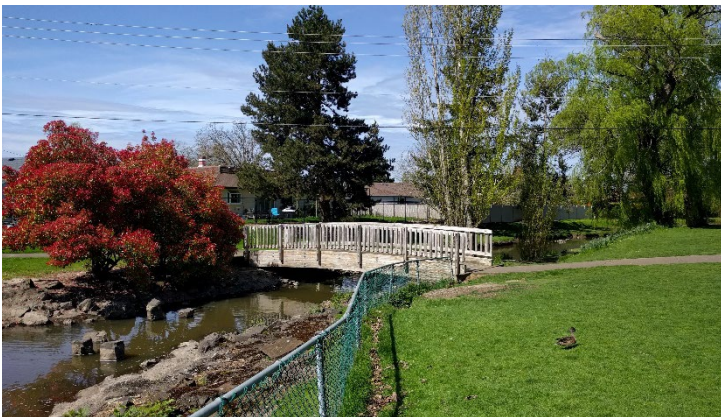
The Transportation System Plan (TSP) guides the management and development of appropriate transportation facilities within Albany, incorporating the community’s vision, while remaining consistent with state and other local plans. This plan supports the Comprehensive Plan, providing the majority of its required transportation elements. The TSP takes into account pedestrian, bicycle, and other transportation needs in relation to planned parks, trails, and recreation facilities.

EAST ALBANY REFINEMENT PLAN (2019 - PRESENT)

The City has received a Transportation and Growth Management program grant to provide funding for an integrated land use and transportation plan in east Albany. The East Albany planning project will build upon findings from the Housing Needs Analysis and Economic Opportunities Analysis. The East Albany Plan intends to refine street and transportation system plans to address the needs associated with future I-5 interchange improvements, natural resource constraints, and growth, as well as determine more precise land use designations and future zones for urban fringe land.

SOUTH ALBANY AREA PLAN (2013)

As a holistic planning effort, the South Albany Area Plan (SAAP) integrates land use, infrastructure, parks and recreation, economic development, natural and cultural resources, and placemaking to refine the vision for the area. SAAP proposes a complete, walkable, and welcoming community that is a thriving employment center and gateway to Albany.



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CHAPTER 3

Needs & Opportunities

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3 NEEDS & OPPORTUNITIES

The Albany community believes that great parks, a trail network, and a variety of indoor and outdoor facilities and programs are important to their quality of life. This chapter highlights community needs for parks and recreation, as well as opportunities for future enhancements as identified during the planning process.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH PRIORITIES

To meet the goal of the Parks Master Plan and identify priority projects to implement and invest, the planning process included a robust public engagement and outreach strategy. The results suggested that residents would like to see a greater investment in the maintenance and stewardship of parks and facilities, the variety of recreation opportunities, the number of trails and pathways, the availability of events and programs, and the quality of major facilities.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE

A questionnaire was available in English and Spanish, online and on paper, from August 8 to September 22, 2019. A total of 1,084 respondents participated, providing 730 full responses, 354 partial responses, with 10 full responses in Spanish. The City also provided a paper survey on request for those who did not have access to the internet; these were consolidated with other responses.

POP-UP EVENT

The City of Albany hosted six pop-up events to collect input regarding needs, funding priorities, and the right level of investment for parks, recreation facilities, trails, programs, and events. Approximately 539 people participated in these pop-up events.

Figure 3-1: Needs Identified in a Technical Analysis

Current & Future Needs



35.5 ACRES OF UNDEVELOPED PARK LAND



MULTI-USE, MULTIGENERATIONAL RECREATION CENTER



PARKS & SERVICES FOR 15,000 MORE RESIDENTS BY 2035



FUNDING PRIORITIES



ADDITIONAL FUNDING FOR PARK MAINTENANCE & IMPROVEMENTS

Figure 3-2: Funding Priorities from the Online Questionnaire and Pop-Up Events

ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE RANKINGS

- 1 Repair or replace worn or older park features.
- 2 Build more trails and paths.
- 3 Improve the daily maintenance of parks (e.g., litter pickup, restroom cleaning)
- 4 Add more or a greater variety of features in parks.
- 5 Build a new indoor community and recreation center.

POP-UP EVENT RANKINGS

- 1 Protect natural areas or riverfront.
- 2 Build more trails and paths.
- 3 Offer more community events and festivals.
- 4 Improve the daily maintenance of parks (e.g., litter pickup, restroom cleaning)
- 5 Repair or replace worn or older park features.

KEY FINDINGS

- **Desired Level of Investment.** Community members would like to see a higher level of investment in parks and recreation. Across all activities, respondents wanted to see more funds invested in trails, major recreation facilities, recreation programs, and the variety of recreation opportunities. Respondents indicated that the City should invest the same (as noted in pop-up activities) or more (as noted in questionnaire results) in park maintenance as well as the amount of City parks. This suggests that there is a current deficiency in the parks and recreation opportunities provided, plus a greater need for investment as the community grows.
- **Funding Priorities.** While funding priorities varied between activities, taking care of park assets and building more trails ranked high in all results. Local park improvements were more popular with online participants than at intercept events.
- **Trails and Pathways.** The popularity of and desire for more trails and pathways was echoed in findings to several separate questions. Walking/biking is the top activity people would like to see more of. Building more trails and paths was ranked as the second most important funding priority in both the online questionnaire and pop-up activities.
- **Favorite Parks.** Larger parks such as Bryant Park, Monteith River Park, and Timber Linn Memorial Park were most frequently named as favorite parks in both questionnaire and pop-up responses. Two of those sites are located along the river. Location, natural character, and condition were three key factors that shaped responses.

- **Riverfront Recreation.** People are drawn to the rivers in Albany. River access for recreation activities and protecting the riverfront scored high in two separate questions.
- **Enhanced Recreation Programming.** There is room to improve recreation programming, with teens and pre-teen children (6-12) seen as underserved by the current system and services.
- **Funding Strategies.** Respondents would like to see park system enhancements supported by grants, partnerships, and volunteers. Less than a third were in favor of increasing taxes or fees.
- **Children and Youth Priorities for Play.** Illustrations of favorite parks showed a desire to have more unique and challenging play opportunities as well as opportunities to explore natural areas.



PARKS AND RECREATION NEEDS

One of the most visible public services of the City of Albany, the parks and recreation system is an ongoing investment in the identity of the community and the quality of life of residents. Community needs for parks, recreation facilities, trails, events, programs, and services are driven by a variety of factors. Some of these factors include:

- Evolving community expectations.
- Changing recreation trends.
- Residential and business growth.
- Availability of funding or resources, existing deficiencies in the park and recreation system.
- Condition of existing assets.
- Demographic diversity of the community.
- Roles that partners play in providing parks and recreation opportunities.

This section identifies needs for parkland, facilities, and recreation opportunities based on an analysis of the quantity of land available, park/facility development and improvements since the 2006 Park & Recreation Master Plan, resource constraints and reinvestment needs. Public input gathered in the first stages of the Parks Master Plan update was also taken into consideration.

NEED 1. SUSTAIN PARK ASSETS

The Albany Parks & Recreation Department maintains and sustains its assets through two different types of services: routine maintenance like mowing, tree pruning, sports field maintenance, trash collection and facility cleaning and long-term asset management including the replacement and renovation of park amenities, facilities, and landscaping as the features age and wear. Proactively planning for and addressing facility replacement can avoid:

- Aged facilities that are more and more expensive to maintain.
- Safety issues or hazards due to failing parts or equipment.
- Dying landscaping (from irrigation equipment failures or lack of maintenance).
- Removal of features, such as an old play area, without replacement.

Current repair/replacement maintenance backlog exceeds \$5 million and is estimated to increase by \$100,000 annually. Table 3-1 summarizes the total for each site. Increased demands and high park use from growth, the City's popular events, and even more people taking advantage of opportunities to be outdoors during the pandemic all contribute to park assets aging and wearing more quickly.

Reinvestment creates an opportunity to assess if the facility is still located in the most appropriate area and if it is the right type of facility to provide for future use and meet future needs. Deficiencies in the system should be weighed against the lifecycle of the facility, the frequency of use, and community identified priorities when planning for the upcoming fiscal year. By having a comprehensive list guiding the budgetary decisions for the department, a reinvestment program would be beneficial for the continual repair and replacement of worn and aging features.

Online Survey Community Priorities

55% said convenient location was the most important aspect of Albany's parks and recreation system.

45% said condition and quality are the most important aspects of Albany's parks and recreation.

Repairing or replacing worn and older park features was the top funding priority.

Table 3-1: Identified Park Deficiencies by Site

| Park Site | Site Total | % of System Total |
|--|--------------------|-------------------|
| Timber Linn Ballfields | \$594,000 | 12% |
| Skateboard Park | \$519,400 | 10% |
| Bryant Ball Fields | \$416,500 | 8% |
| Timber Linn Memorial Park | \$402,500 | 8% |
| Monteith Riverpark | \$354,800 | 7% |
| Periwinkle Creek (G.P. to 21st Ave.) | \$239,600 | 5% |
| Grand Prairie Park | \$226,000 | 4% |
| Bryant Park | \$213,000 | 4% |
| Draper Park | \$186,000 | 4% |
| Periwinkle Creek (21st to Kinder Park) | \$182,600 | 4% |
| Lehigh Park | \$179,800 | 4% |
| Deerfield Park | \$178,400 | 3% |
| Waverly Park | \$142,850 | 3% |
| Takena Park | \$107,780 | 2% |
| Henderson Park | \$100,200 | 2% |
| Clark Trail | \$94,225 | 2% |
| Simpson Park | \$93,400 | 2% |
| Maple Lawn | \$90,500 | 2% |
| Lexington Park | \$87,000 | 2% |
| East Thornton Lake | \$82,000 | 2% |
| Takena Landing Park | \$81,600 | 2% |
| Pineway Park | \$62,200 | 1.2% |
| Eleanor Hackleman Park | \$58,900 | 1.1% |
| Timber Linn Dog Park | \$49,500 | 1.0% |
| Burkhart Square | \$48,750 | 0.9% |
| Burkhart Park | \$38,300 | 0.7% |
| Timber Linn shop area | \$35,500 | 0.7% |
| Kinder Park | \$35,100 | 0.7% |
| Bowman Park | \$30,000 | 0.6% |
| Swanson Park | \$29,500 | 0.6% |
| Teloh Calapooia Park | \$28,900 | 0.6% |
| Gibson Hill Park | \$27,500 | 0.5% |
| Periwinkle Park | \$22,540 | 0.4% |
| Lyon Street Path | \$20,000 | 0.4% |
| Riverview Heights Park | \$14,400 | 0.3% |
| Gazebo | \$13,850 | 0.3% |
| Community garden | \$12,500 | 0.2% |
| Waverly medians | \$8,500 | 0.2% |
| Simpson to Waverly | \$7,200 | 0.1% |
| Couplet | \$6,000 | 0.1% |
| Eads Park | \$5,900 | 0.1% |
| North Albany Park and Ride | \$4,500 | 0.1% |
| Hazelwood Park | \$2,600 | 0.1% |
| Doug Killin Park | \$1,500 | 0.0% |
| Albany Station | \$1,000 | 0.0% |
| Sunrise Park | N/A | N/A |
| Totals | \$5,136,795 | 100% |



NEED 2. ENHANCE EXISTING PARKS AND FACILITIES

The technical needs analysis and community outreach results identified several areas where parks, facilities, and programs could be enhanced to better support recreation.

- **Enhanced Play Opportunities.** The benefits of play for children and adults are well researched. Play areas can encourage active play, cooperation, creative problem-solving, exploration, skill development, and socialization. For older adults, senior centers and active aging programs can provide opportunities for continued enrichment learning, create opportunities to connect with others who have shared interests, foster a sense of community, and be a place of refuge for seniors who do not have or have limited access to close family. Albany's existing play areas are mainly traditional post and platform structures. There are many opportunities to better support universal play, nature play, water play, adventure play, and thematic and destination play areas that are more appealing to all ages, not just the two traditionally supported age groups (2-5 and 6-12).
- **Convenient Access to Opportunities that Support Health and Wellness.** With more demands on their time, people are interested in making fitness part of their everyday routine with an emphasis on wellness and quality time with family and friends. These and similar outdoor activities promote wellness, social interaction, and a connection to the community. Due to the demands of family and jobs, convenience and accessibility are critical. Parks are obvious locations where people will gravitate to be outside. Additionally, people are increasingly looking to jurisdictions to provide affordable and equitable solutions to engage with each other as well as connect children with nature, arts, and recreation opportunities.
- **ADA and Universal Access.** In the past, park design and recreation programming focused on the needs of specific age groups, such as children or seniors, rather than incorporating universal design principles to serve all ages and abilities. As Albany's parks are renovated, there are opportunities to update

them according to the latest standards in the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and best practices in universal design and programming. While not every element in a park needs to be accessible, many parks have isolated play areas and picnic 'dots' without access paths to them, and large soggy turf area can be an obstacle for those with reduced mobility. An ADA assessment and transition plan would help identify access requirements and enhancements needed.

- **Year-Round Recreation Opportunities.** Weather can also be an impediment to outdoor programming participation and park visitation. In response to year-round interest and limited good weather seasons, more jurisdictions are finding ways to move outdoor activities, such as climbing walls, field houses and covered or indoor courts, into multi-purpose community centers.
- **Flexible Programming.** Flexibility is the key to adapting to the changing trends in recreation. This can come in the form of park features that serve multiple activities or can be repurposed for an emerging trend. Sports courts are a good example of this, with many communities transitioning aging and underused tennis courts to pickleball or futsal courts. The ultimate expression of this flexibility is not in the built facilities but in the recreation programming. Programming creates opportunities to introduce residents to fitness, culture, and learning new skills in parks, classrooms, and fitness rooms.
- **Multigenerational Programming.** Albany has a growing senior population, while the number of younger people has remained steady as a share of the population. Considering the needs of these different groups and evolving recreation interests, there is a need to creatively program existing parks and facilities. As the population ages, it will be important to respond to these changing demographics and maximize the variety of uses in not only multi-functional facilities but also multi-generational spaces to justify the substantial investment in building and operating them.



NEED 3. MEET NEEDS FOR NEW GROWTH

Due to the City’s projected growth, the 2006 Master Plan identified five new park sites to serve the needs of new residential development. Since 2000, the City of Albany has seen a 33% increase in growth, which means the City is growing at a faster rate than the State of Oregon, Linn County, and Benton County. Figure 3-3 provides a status update on those sites and identifies them on a map, showing areas with major housing subdivisions completed since 2006 (highlighted in yellow).

Figure 3-3: 2006 Park Acquisition Sites and Major Housing Subdivisions (Yellow) Completed Since 2006

- NP-1** Two properties have been acquired in this area, North Pointe Property (undeveloped, but not well suited for neighborhood park development) and East Thornton Lake Natural Area (an undeveloped natural area with an opportunity for low impact park development).
- NP-2** Timber Ridge property has been acquired and is currently being designed for development as a neighborhood park.
- NP-3** Kinder Park was acquired and developed to fill this need.
- NP-4** No new property has been acquired here; no change in the status of Hazelwood Park, which is a challenging site with poor access.
- NP-5** **CP-1** The South Albany property was acquired to meet projected park needs in this area. The park is currently undeveloped. Wetlands at the site will limit future uses when this site is developed as a park.



The most suitable areas to invest in to address resident needs in growth areas are in north and northeast Albany. Development of the Timber Ridge property will address needs in northeast Albany. In North Albany, neighborhood-serving facilities could be added to the East Thornton Lake Natural Area.

Although residential development in South Albany is not anticipated to occur within the 10-year horizon of this plan, future proposals to develop the acquired property should be considered early to address the possible limitations of the existing wetlands. Future planning efforts should also address Hazelwood Park’s existing access and condition.

PARK LEVEL OF SERVICE

With an expected additional 9,000 residents in the next ten years, Albany will need additional park sites, facilities, and services for new residents to enjoy the quality of life the park system supports for current residents. A common way to establish additional parkland needs is to calculate the level of service based on the population. Level of Service (LOS) is the ratio of the number of park acres in the City compared to the number of people served, expressed in terms of acres for each thousand residents. The existing level of service provides an easy way to measure how much new park acreage will be needed to serve each additional thousand residents. It is an important metric for securing the necessary resources to acquire and develop new parks.

Since a portion of the City’s parkland is held in undeveloped natural areas or undeveloped park properties, Table 3-2 breaks down LOS into six categories that correspond to the City’s park inventory (Appendix A).

Table 3-2: Park Level of Service

| PARK CATEGORY | UNITS | 2020 QUANTITY | 2020 UNITS PER 1,000 RESIDENTS |
|--------------------|--------|---------------|--------------------------------|
| Neighborhood Parks | Acres | 85.86 | 1.53 |
| Community Parks | Acres | 21.57 | 0.38 |
| Citywide Parks | Acres | 335.35 | 5.98 |
| Special Use Sites | Number | 9.88 | 0.18 |
| Natural Areas | Acres | 420.43 | 7. |
| Undeveloped Parks | Acres | 28.41 | 0.51 |
| Total | | 901.60 | 15.8 |

Note: Acreage is not inventoried for all Special Use Sites. Trail acreage within street rights-of-way is counted in transportation planning, not as park acreage. The level of service is based on a population of 56,134 residents.

The total level of service reported in 2006 was 12.8 acres/1,000 people, lower than the current level of service. The 2006 Plan aimed to provide 6.3 acres/1,000 people for developed parks. With the acquisition of new parks and the reclassification of Tadena Landing as a Citywide Park, the City has kept ahead of the 2006 goal. For the projected 2030 population, park distribution and access are a more important driver for park needs than a deficiency in the total amount of park land. The City should primarily focus on using existing sites to meet needs in underserved areas and while selectively using new sites as well.

SUSTAIN SERVICE LEVELS AS GROWTH OCCURS

The City should maintain its existing level of service for developed parks. Because the City is exceeding its standard for parkland overall, the City should selectively consider divesting in parks and/or undeveloped sites and natural areas, where these lands pose safety, liability, or maintenance issues and are not/will not address identified needs for developed parks. Maintaining the existing level of service as a goal would leave the opportunity open to fill service gaps using existing undeveloped parkland (such as the Timber Ridge property), incorporating small, developed park areas in natural areas, or making carefully considered acquisitions or land swaps.

Meeting the needs of the growing population will require the City to implement multiple strategies in addition to buying and developing parkland. Strategies to meet those needs include:

- **Adding features or expanding existing facilities** at park sites in the City's inventory to allow more people to use the parks, specifically looking at citywide parks and facilities that serve a larger population.
- **Relocating existing amenities or facilities** to locations that can better support the use. Examples include relocating existing sports fields to other sites that can support sustained year-round use or relocating existing facilities such as the senior center to a location that could support future expansion as a multi-generational facility.
- **Expanding the existing trail network** to include new connections to existing parks when acquiring additional parkland is not feasible.
- **Thinking flexibly** about locations for new types of facilities and consider partner sites where developed facilities would be publicly accessible.





NEED 4. COLLABORATE STRATEGICALLY

Strategic partnerships between the private sector, other public agencies, and non-profit organizations to provide facilities, services, and programs is a growing trend for parks and recreation providers. Departments within local jurisdictions have become increasingly competitive for resources like funds and staffing. When faced with budgetary constraints, a community's need for roadway repairs, police services, or infrastructure upgrades will typically override the needs of parks and recreation. This has led parks and recreation providers to create strategic partnerships with other agencies and organizations to increase their capacity to meet local recreation needs.

Albany's Parks & Recreation Department has a long history of collaboration with other public agencies, non-profits, businesses, and volunteers to help imagine, build, and maintain recreation features. Potential partnerships the City could pursue to help meet community needs include:

- **Linn-Benton Community College:** The City is funding the construction of pickleball courts on the campus that the college will maintain and make available for student and public use.
- **Greater Albany Public Schools:** School sites are adjacent to many Albany parks, and both schools and neighborhood users take advantage of the expanded opportunities of shared sites. In the past, the City has been a partner in facilities such as the Albany Community Pool, located on South Albany High School's campus, and sports fields. City facilities such as the Maple Lawn building (preschool) offer partnership opportunities for the District to invest in early childhood education. In light of constrained funding, the City and District will re-evaluate investments to apply funds to serve constituent groups. The Parks & Recreation Department must focus on facilities that offer the most flexibility for public access and use.
- **Central Albany Revitalization Area (CARA):** Several parks, especially the riverfront sites, have already been identified as important to the effort to

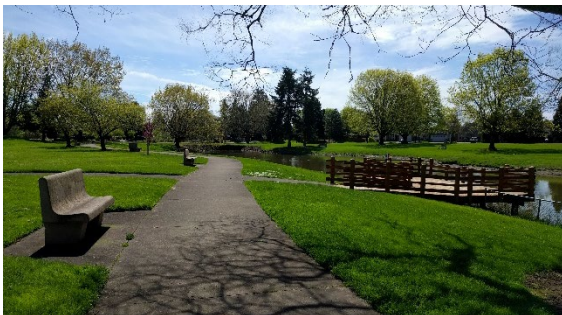
revitalize downtown Albany. Public-private partnerships may support this redevelopment.

- **Mid-Willamette Family YMCA:** The YMCA campus provides membership-based programs and facilities to City residents and others throughout the region. Recognizing the need for greater indoor recreation and sport opportunities, the YMCA is fundraising to develop additional facilities on its campus, including indoor facilities and outdoor athletic fields in an area that does not have a local park. This facility will improve recreation options and sports but would not be available to all residents.
- **Boys & Girls Club of Albany:** The Boys & Girls Club provides facilities and programming targeted to Albany's youth. Working with the City, this group assisted in the development of Kinder Park.

The community continues to indicate support for this as a strategy to advance investment in the parks and recreation system and the City should continue to pursue grants, donations, sponsorships, and partnerships as a funding strategy.

Staff time is needed to develop community support, coordinate with partners and volunteers, write grant applications, and cultivate sponsorships to support the park and recreation system. While the City does not need to take the leadership role in all partnerships and efforts, effective partnerships require additional time and attention.

The City should consider setting aside staff time and expertise to develop, formalize, and manage partnerships, volunteers, and outside fundraising such as grants. Long-term needs should focus on aligning partners around a shared vision to maximize joint efforts, identifying the strengths, and defining roles and responsibilities of each group going forward. Staff should ensure the partnership is aligned with the Parks Master Plan goals and the needs of the community.





KEY OPPORTUNITIES

Drawing on outreach findings and the technical analysis of the parks and recreation system, five key opportunities were identified:

- Streamline and define essential services
- Implement a river vision
- Support health, sports, and fitness
- Enhance pedestrian and bike connectivity
- Provide inclusive and equitable events and activities

Each opportunity has implications across the system and the potential to inspire action for Albany. Several are tied to other citywide initiatives and were discussed by Task Force members throughout the planning process.

OPPORTUNITY 1. STREAMLINE AND DEFINE ESSENTIAL SERVICES

Albany residents have access to a variety of special use recreation facilities that provide spaces for recreation programming, community gatherings and events, and arts and culture, such as the community pool, the senior center, and the Monteith Riverpark stage. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has restricted group gatherings and level of maintenance and sanitization required and has drastically changed how people interact with each other and their surroundings. Facility operations are further impacted by the revenue that facilities like the senior center and pools bring in.



This provides the City with an opportunity to evaluate its service delivery processes, streamline where possible, and define essential services. As adult sports programs are being reduced or eliminated due to the high-touch and close contact nature of adult leagues, resources could be used to support public access to open spaces and drop-in community play. Additionally, sports field maintenance is reduced because it is not necessary that the fields are kept in game-ready conditions. During this time, the City can allocate resources and define responsibilities to staff who can actively work to develop, formalize, and manage partnerships. When league play resumes, partner sports leagues may take on some field maintenance tasks for game preparation.

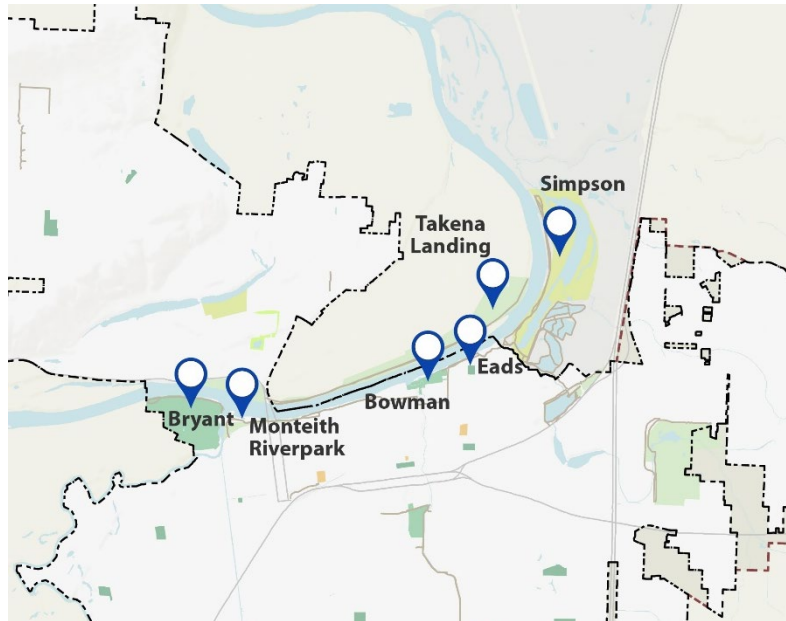
OPPORTUNITY 2. IMPLEMENT A RIVER VISION

A current trend in parks and recreation for riverfront cities is rehabilitating their waterfronts to connect people to the water and create recreation destinations. In Albany, the Willamette River has unmet potential to become a uniting feature of Albany's park system. Most of the Willamette riverfront is publicly owned with a popular riverfront trail. However, there are no direct connections linking parks to the river. Recognizing the potential of the river, the Central Albany Revitalization Area Plan (CARA) proposes enhanced connections between downtown and the riverfront. There is an opportunity to strategically invest in park connectivity, natural and traditional park amenities, safeguarding water quality, and expanding capacity at larger destination riverfront parks.

A broader community identity tied to the riverfront is an opportunity to bring people together in a variety of ways. Parks fronting the river could be designed and managed to maximize their potential in providing river access for recreation and to bring people in closer contact with the Willamette. Interactive interpretative signage could highlight the water quality and flooding challenges along the River, along with the unique ecosystem. There is an opportunity to educate and inform visitors on the importance of

the river and how the park system relies upon on the river’s health; further solidifying the Willamette as an important characteristic for the City. There is also an opportunity to improve riverfront amenities and access to boat ramps. Figure 3-4 pinpoints parks that can offer these opportunities for park and river connections.

Figure 3-4: Creating a River Vision

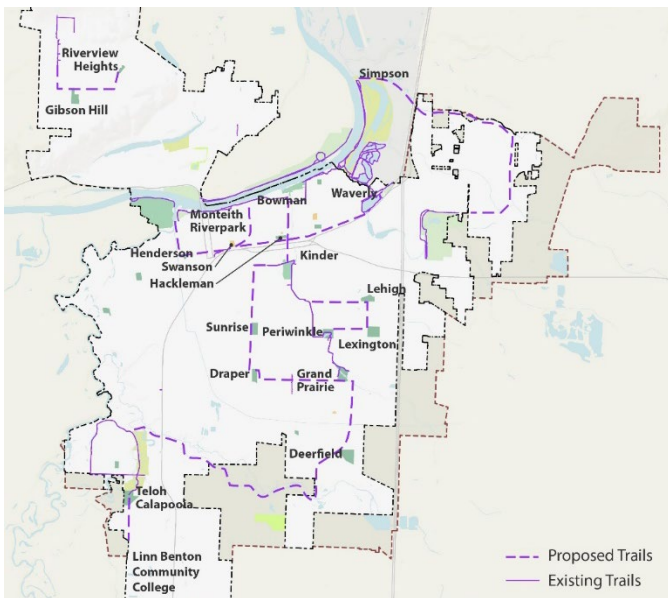


OPPORTUNITY 3. ENHANCE PEDESTRIAN AND BIKE CONNECTIVITY

Trails for non-motorized transportation and recreation continue to grow in importance. Trail-based recreation is nationally one of the most popular outdoor recreation activities, consistent across multiple demographics. Towns and cities are using a variety of strategies to meet this increasing demand, such as providing loop trails in larger

parcs, providing off-street multi-use trails, designating on-street bike routes, ensuring sidewalks are wider and accessible, providing pedestrian crosswalks and bridges over roadways to support connectivity, developing soft-surfaced nature and jogging trails, and connecting parks and community destinations with trails.

Figure 3-5: New Trail Connections



There are opportunities for Albany’s trails to provide better access to and through natural areas, making it possible to explore the city and its neighborhoods more fully by

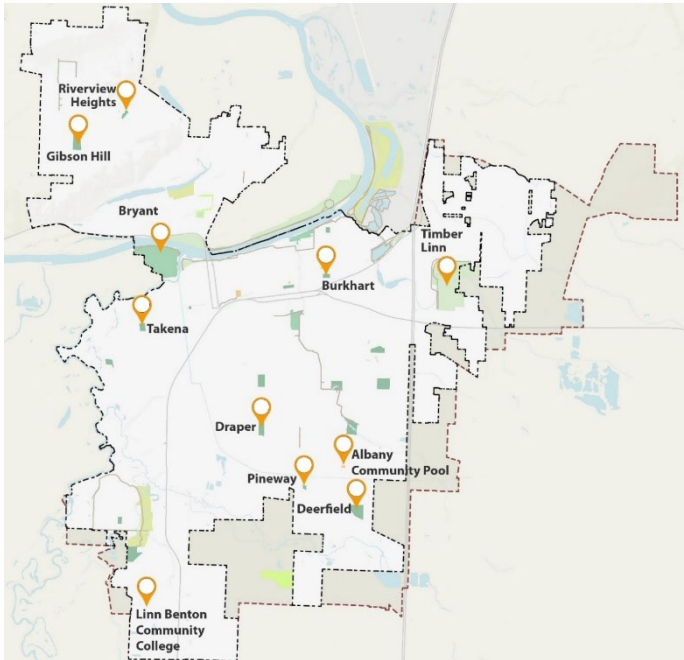


foot or bike. Albany's trails support pedestrian and bicycle access along the Willamette River and provide connections through natural areas and between several neighborhood parks. A broader concept for Albany's trails should link to the river vision and improve overall connectivity between neighborhood parks in central Albany. Hard-surface trails may also function as part of a citywide non-motorized transportation system, provide accessible trail opportunities for people of all abilities, and improve park access. Figure 3-5 highlights potential pedestrian and bike trails that could improve connectivity.

OPPORTUNITY 4. SUPPORT HEALTH, SPORTS, AND FITNESS

Sports, health, wellness, and fitness are core park services with strong ties to the community. Many cities are exploring ways to provide more active recreation opportunities in neighborhood parks within walking distance of most residents. This approach includes activities designed to fit in small spaces and showcases the national trend of cities moving more towards multi-purpose facilities versus age-specific facilities. Provision of smaller field and court uses also helps ease the demand on regulation sized facilities. Sports courts, including pickleball, futsal, badminton, shuffleboard, lawn bowling, handball, wallball and others, are being integrated into parks. Micro fields or half-field practice spaces with temporary goals or backstops are seen where limited space precludes the provision of full-size game facilities.

Sports fields figure prominently in community conversations due to unmet demand for playable field time. Many heavily used sports fields and practice spots are in areas prone to slow drainage and flooding which limit the months of use and require additional maintenance. Some fields should be relocated or retrofitted with underground drainage. Artificial turf fields that can withstand heavy uses could be increasingly part of the park system's field inventory given their durability and ability to operate continuously, especially when lit. Both are currently lacking.

Figure 3-6: Sports, Health, and Fitness

Pickleball has a high demand that is currently not met. The courts at Hackleman Park have safety concerns and need a major renovation to the structure of the courts. New pickleball courts will be available soon at Linn-Benton Community College through a partnership with the City. Albany's Community Pool and COOL! Pool play an important role in water safety and swim instructions, but there are few indoor gym and recreation spaces.

There are three strategies that could be implemented to meet this unmet need:

- **Identify new sites for larger field complexes** that are outside of flood prone areas. Developing and fostering the critical partnerships needed to maintain them will determine the City's ability to meet demand for sports fields in the future.
- **Reevaluate using fields in neighborhood parks** (such as Gibson Hill Park or Lexington Park) for sports programming or add new features for expanded use. New circuit fitness equipment could be added along high use trail segments to increase opportunities for health, wellness, and fitness. There are many opportunities to pilot new active-use features, such as small bike skills areas, pump tracks, and a variety of low- and high-impact sports courts (volleyball, badminton, shuffleboard, basketball) in locations with good visibility.
- **Explore new and expanded partnerships**, specifically with the YMCA, Greater Albany Public Schools, and other nonprofit service providers. As of 2019, the YMCA received a \$3 million grant for artificial soccer field development, so there is an immediate reason to initiate discussions of how a partnership can be mutually beneficial.

Figure 3-6 pinpoints facilities and parks where more of the above strategies can be implemented.



OPPORTUNITY 5. PROVIDE INCLUSIVE AND EQUITABLE EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

The growing demographic diversity of communities—including people of different ages, cultures, interests, and abilities—fosters an emphasis on creating welcoming and inclusive parks, recreation activities, events, and programming. Programs such as Park Stewardship Day or Sunrise Yoga encourage small groups to get together and participate in activities that reflect their shared interests. Event programming generally refers to larger gatherings with music, dance, or other cultural or skilled performance as the main attraction, and can include other supportive programming such as childcare, food carts, adult beverage vending, face painting, etc.

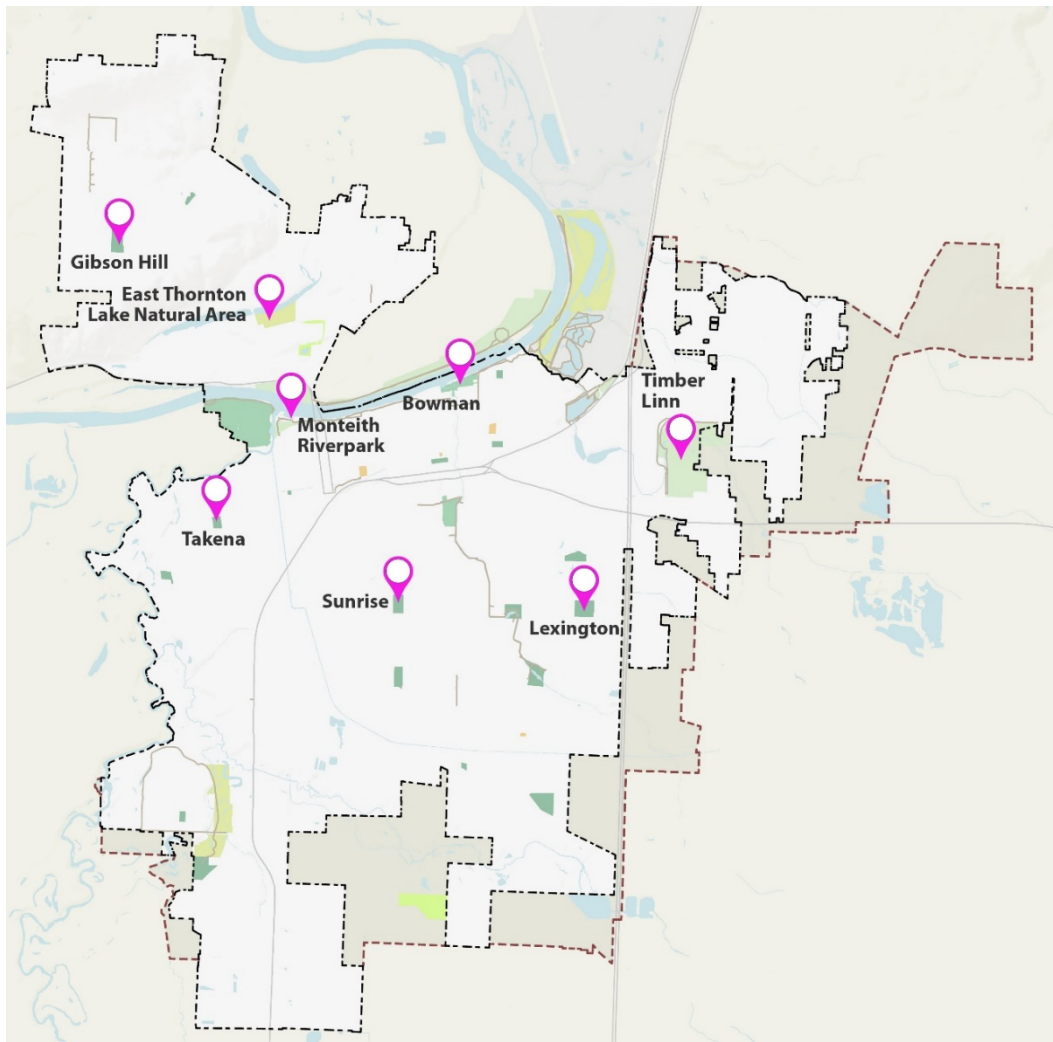
Albany hosts several large, well-attended music and performance-focused festivals, such as River Rhythms, Summer Sounds, and the Northwest Art & Air Festival which are important to community identity and provides high public visibility for the park system. These events, while successful, put high demand on park staff time. Moving smaller events to different park locations and increasing the frequency of events may alleviate this demand and reveal benefits to the department and to the community. Most importantly, this strategy allows the smaller event types to be more reflective of the culture, interest, and practices of the community living near the park and reduce the pressure on the City to provide for adequate parking therefore managing access and circulation. Specialized recreation facilities like the pools, Waverly paddleboat rentals, and picnic shelter/facility rentals provide activity hubs in the community. In addition, the Fun in the Park series provides periodic smaller-scale events in neighborhood parks.

Approximately 12% of the total population in Albany is Hispanic/Latino. The official poverty rate of the total population is an estimated 15.4% which is comparable to the rest of the state and the county. This equates to roughly 8,500 individuals. Special

events and activities are an affordable activity for all races and income levels and expose children and adults to specialized recreation, cultures, and traditions that they might have not otherwise encountered. Relocating or organizing cultural or interest-based special events near communities can address the access barrier that some might face.

There is an opportunity to provide a greater variety of community events, such as an international food festival, neighborhood movie night, park clean up and invasive species removal day, or trekkers day. Pilot programs for outdoor activities in parks can be further explored to increase community gathering opportunities. Increased park activities are also an effective way to minimize and discourage nuisance behavior in parks and increase the perception of park safety. Indoor facilities may need a comprehensive evaluation to provide more year-round opportunities for recreation and gatherings. Figure 3-7 highlights the parks where these events could take place.

Figure 3-7: Strengthen Community Cohesiveness Through Events/Activities



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CHAPTER 4

Recommendations

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4 RECOMMENDATIONS

There are a range of project opportunities that support the goals and objectives of the Parks Master Plan. Recommendations for Albany's parks system include increasing maintenance resources, prioritizing essential projects, and developing new parks, trails, and facilities. These recommendations will enhance the quality of parks for all residents and increase recreation opportunities. This chapter divides recommendations into two categories: systemwide recommendations and site-specific recommendations. The recommendations outlined in the Parks Master Plan and further detailed in Appendices C and D will help guide future planning, decisions on specific sites, and park management.

SYSTEMWIDE RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations provide direction for the system as a whole, while having implications for specific sites.

INCREASE MAINTENANCE RESOURCES

The annual funding needed to properly care for park sites and staff facilities is the most challenging part of sustaining parks and recreation opportunities. In Albany, limited maintenance resources constrain the expansion of the system. It has led to deferred maintenance and left natural resources with less stewardship than needed. With the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the economy, budgets for park operations have been cut further, even though there are more people using parks now than in previous years. Without additional funding to maintain new parks or features, the City may continue to choose to hold off on renovating or adding new parks and facilities.

Strategic investments in capital projects could reduce maintenance needs and free up maintenance resources to enhance services across the community. The projects recommended for Bryant Park—moving the regularly flooded sports fields to higher ground at another site—will enhance the quality of fields Albany can provide for community sports while reducing the effort and expense of maintaining these fields.

This Parks Master Plan recommends:

- Increase park maintenance funding. Identify staffing impacts when new parks and facilities are added.
- Reduce deferred maintenance by investing more capital funding—such as SDC reimbursement fees—into park improvements that offset the impacts of increased use and unattended maintenance needs.
- Decrease maintenance costs by divesting responsibility for assets that do not support the Parks Master Plan goals.

- Prioritize projects that increase maintenance efficiencies and decrease costs long-term.
- Apply a tiered maintenance approach that increases attention to higher use sites and decreases maintenance task frequency at lesser used sites. Ensure that all parks and natural resources receive a level of care to support the safety of park visitors.
- Increase coordination with sports leagues, user groups and volunteers to steward parks and maintain sports fields.

LINK PARKS AND COMMUNITY DESTINATIONS WITH TRAILS

The trail system is a critical resource for both recreation and non-motorized transportation in Albany. The Dave Clark Riverfront Path and Periwinkle Creek Bike Path have established links between neighborhoods and, importantly, between parks. This expands the value of each park connected to the system. The recommended off-street trails and enhanced sidewalk connections (referenced on the recommendations map and in Appendix C) build loops and connections among parks, schools, downtown Albany, and the riverfront. Importantly, this network extends to all parts of Albany, crossing barriers such as Interstate 5 and the Willamette River to serve growing areas in the north and east. Folding in recommendations from the South Albany Area Plan, an extensive loop of off-street trails is included on both sides of Oak Creek.

This Parks Master Plan recommends:

- Coordinate with the City's transportation planning and funding to develop trails that support park access and recreation, particularly in underserved areas.
- Adopt trail and sidewalk design guidelines to provide wider walking corridors and bike routes along streets where identified in site recommendations.
- Prioritize extensions to existing trails, access to the riverfront, and connections to different parts of the city. Secondly explore opportunities to connect to a regional trail system, if coordinated at the county or state parks level.

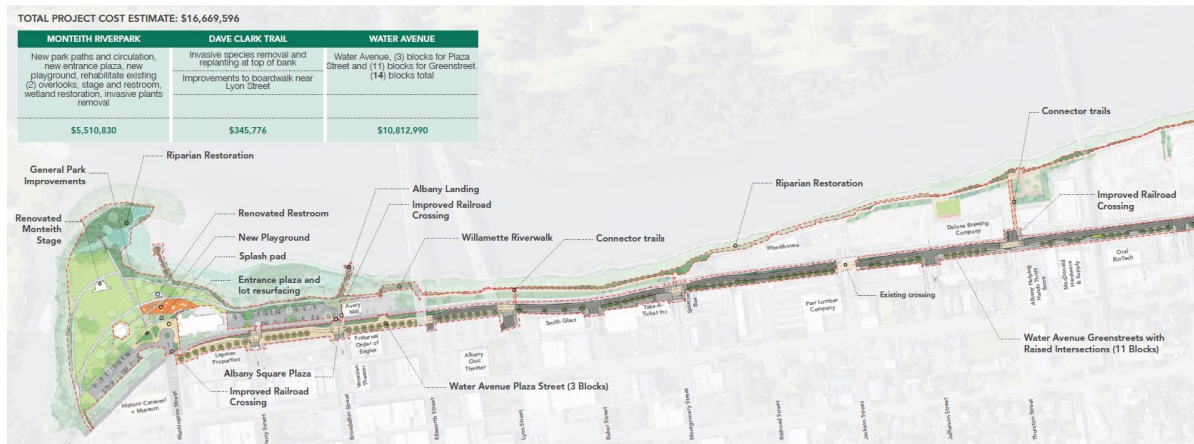


IMPLEMENT ALBANY'S WATERFRONT PLAN

The Albany Waterfront Plan, created in parallel with the Parks Master Plan, defines an expanded vision for Monteith Riverpark and the Dave Clark Riverfront Path along a key section of Albany's Willamette riverfront. The vision for an improved waterfront connection is strongly supported in this Parks Master Plan. Additionally, trail improvements on both sides of the Willamette, supporting the Willamette Water Trail, and creating new or improved crossings for pedestrians and bicyclists should be included as part of the larger effort to connect Albany residents to the Willamette. The larger trail network will play an important role in getting users to the parks, trails, and events that define Albany's waterfront.

This Parks Master Plan recommends:

- Enhance the Willamette Waterfront to support riverfront recreation, events, and large group gatherings, connecting to and enhancing the vitality of Albany's downtown.
- Focus investment on key projects associated with the Dave Clark Trail and Monteith Riverpark that serve residents throughout the park system and city, such as improving the events stage, adding a community-scale water play feature, relocating and expanding the Albany Senior Center to support multi-generational uses, and connecting to the river and water trails via piers, overlooks, and small watercraft launches.



The Albany Waterfront Project considered a community hub concept that would support the Parks Master Plan goals and connections to the river.

INCREASE PROGRAMMING RESOURCES

In response to the pandemic and the associated budget impacts, recreation programs and events were temporarily discontinued or reduced in 2020. However, the Parks Master Plan findings recognize that Albany's events, aquatics, sports, and other recreation activities are critical to residents' quality of life. As programming is restored after the pandemic, the City will have to evaluate its cost-recovery strategy to fund programming, while striving to ensure that the cost to participate does not create barriers to participation. This will include both events and activities provided by the City directly as well as those provided at City facilities by community partners such as sports groups. The City should increase its fees to cover costs, while simultaneously increasing the funding for, and availability of, scholarships and subsidy programs to provide equitable program access. This approach passes on costs to residents most able to afford program and user fees. There are many models of cities granting reduced-cost access to programming to community members who qualify for programs such as free/reduced lunch or subsidized housing programs. Some of these models incentivize volunteerism as a trade-off for receiving reduced cost services.

This Parks Master Plan recommends:

- Re-evaluate program fees and facility use/reservation fees post pandemic and every 1-2 years to increase costs in line with other cost-of-living increases.
- Create a tiered cost recovery and pay-to-play structure that subsidizes activities that more broadly benefit the community and increase revenues for activities with an individualized benefit.
- Increase scholarships or subsidized programs for marginalized or economically disadvantaged groups to support the equitable provision of programs.



COORDINATE PLANNING OVER THE LONG-TERM

In order to implement these recommendations, the City will need to coordinate over the long-term. For example, the recommended trail projects must be coordinated with the City's Transportation System Plan (TSP). Some propose different alignments than in the TSP, and most are outside of the park properties along creeks and rivers, streets, and other rights-of-way. The new trails should be incorporated into the next TSP update and prioritized alongside other transportation projects with the understanding that these serve both transportation and recreational purposes.

The City is also in the process of coordinating an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Transition Plan for all parks and facilities in 2021. This document will identify physical and programmatic barriers to facility use. The Transition Plan will identify improvements that will make parks more accessible to all. As the City makes the recommended ADA improvements, there is an opportunity to enhance other portions of the site as well.

While this plan includes a long-term vision for Albany's park system, community needs, priorities, and resources are continuously evolving as projects are completed and new ones arise. The City should plan to revisit and update plan recommendations as part of a five-year strategic plan for implementation.

This Parks Master Plan recommends:

- Coordinate Parks Master Plan implementation with the Waterfront Plan, ADA Transition Plan, and Transportation System Plan.
- Update the short-term capital improvement plan every five years. Update the entire Parks Master Plan and System Development Charge methodology every ten years to prioritize investment and respond to changing trends, growth, and community priorities.



SITE RECOMMENDATIONS

Each existing or proposed site in the system has a role to play in the overall system and a set of recommendations to enhance the experience at that park. The details of these recommendations are provided on a site-by-site basis in Appendix C, with further detail of costs and anticipated timeline in Appendix D (as described in Chapter 5). Within the appendix tables, the recommended improvements are detailed along with indications of the opportunities and needs that this set of projects would address.

Table 4-1 summarizes these recommendations by park and trail classification. The table shows the number of sites recommended for specific types of improvements. On the next page, Figure 4-1 shows the top five types of recommended park improvements.

Table 4-1: Number of Park Sites Proposed for Improvement by Park Type

| | LAND ACQUISITION | PARK MASTER PLAN | SITE DESIGN | PARK DEVELOPMENT | PLAY AREA ENHANCEMENT | ADD NEW AMENITIES | IRRIGATION SYSTEM | SHADE SHELTER | RESTROOM BUILDING | NATURAL TURF FIELD | ADD SPORTS FIELD LIGHTING | ARTIFICIAL TURF FIELD W/ LIGHTS | DIAMOND FIELD UPDGRADE | RENATURALIZE AREA | SPORT COURTS | REGIONAL RAIL | SOFT SURFACE PATHWAY |
|--|------------------|------------------|-------------|------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|-------------------|---------------|-------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------|--------------|---------------|----------------------|
| Neighborhood Parks | | | | | 8 | 7 | | 3 | 1 | 4 | | | | 8 | 7 | | 1 |
| Community Parks | | | | | 2 | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Citywide Parks | 2 | | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | | | | 1 | 1 | | 1 | 2 | | | 1 |
| Special Use Sites | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | 1 | 1 | | |
| Natural Areas | | 1 | | 1 | 1 | 1 | | | | | | | | | 1 | | |
| Proposed future parks and facilities | 8 | 9 | | 10 | 10 | | | 3 | 4 | 3 | 1 | | 1 | 1 | 9 | | 3 |
| Partner and other parks and facilities | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | | | |
| <i>Total number of sites</i> | <i>10</i> | <i>10</i> | <i>2</i> | <i>13</i> | <i>22</i> | <i>11</i> | <i>0</i> | <i>6</i> | <i>5</i> | <i>9</i> | <i>2</i> | <i>1</i> | <i>2</i> | <i>12</i> | <i>18</i> | <i>0</i> | <i>5</i> |

The most common recommended improvements for existing and proposed park sites are play area enhancements and sport courts. As shown in Figure 4-1, the top five improvements are distributed evenly across both existing and proposed park sites except for ‘park development’ which is largely in proposed park sites and ‘add new amenities’ which are only recommended in existing park sites.

Figure 4-1: Top Five Types of Recommended Park Improvements

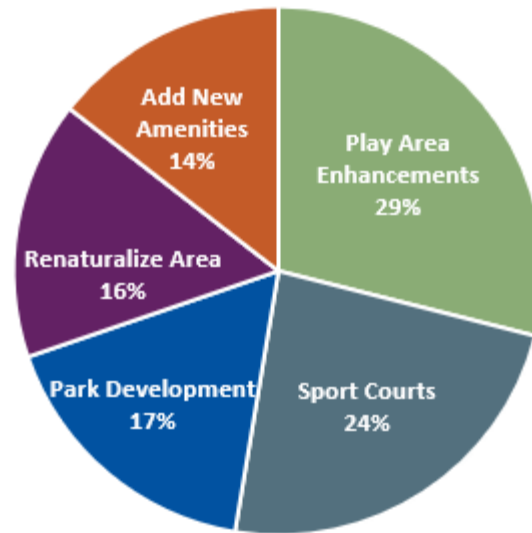
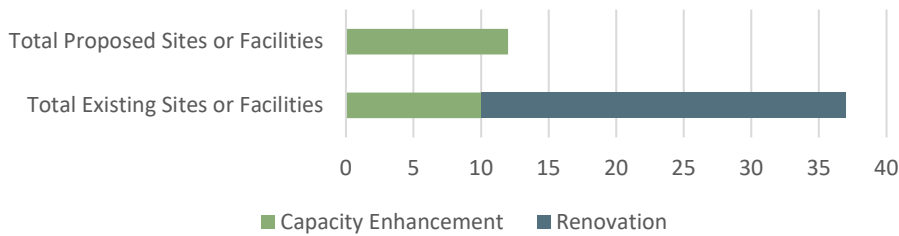


Figure 4-2 compares the number of sites that have proposed capacity enhancement projects to support new growth with those recommended for improvements and renovations. Capacity enhancements are improvements that add to the overall capacity of the system, creating more recreation space or infrastructure to support the needs of new residents. Portions of capacity enhancement projects may be funded by System Development Charges tied to growth. These funding considerations that affect the recommendation and implementation of park projects are discussed further in Chapter 5.

Figure 4-2: Number of Sites Proposed for Improvement by Capacity Enhancement or Renovation

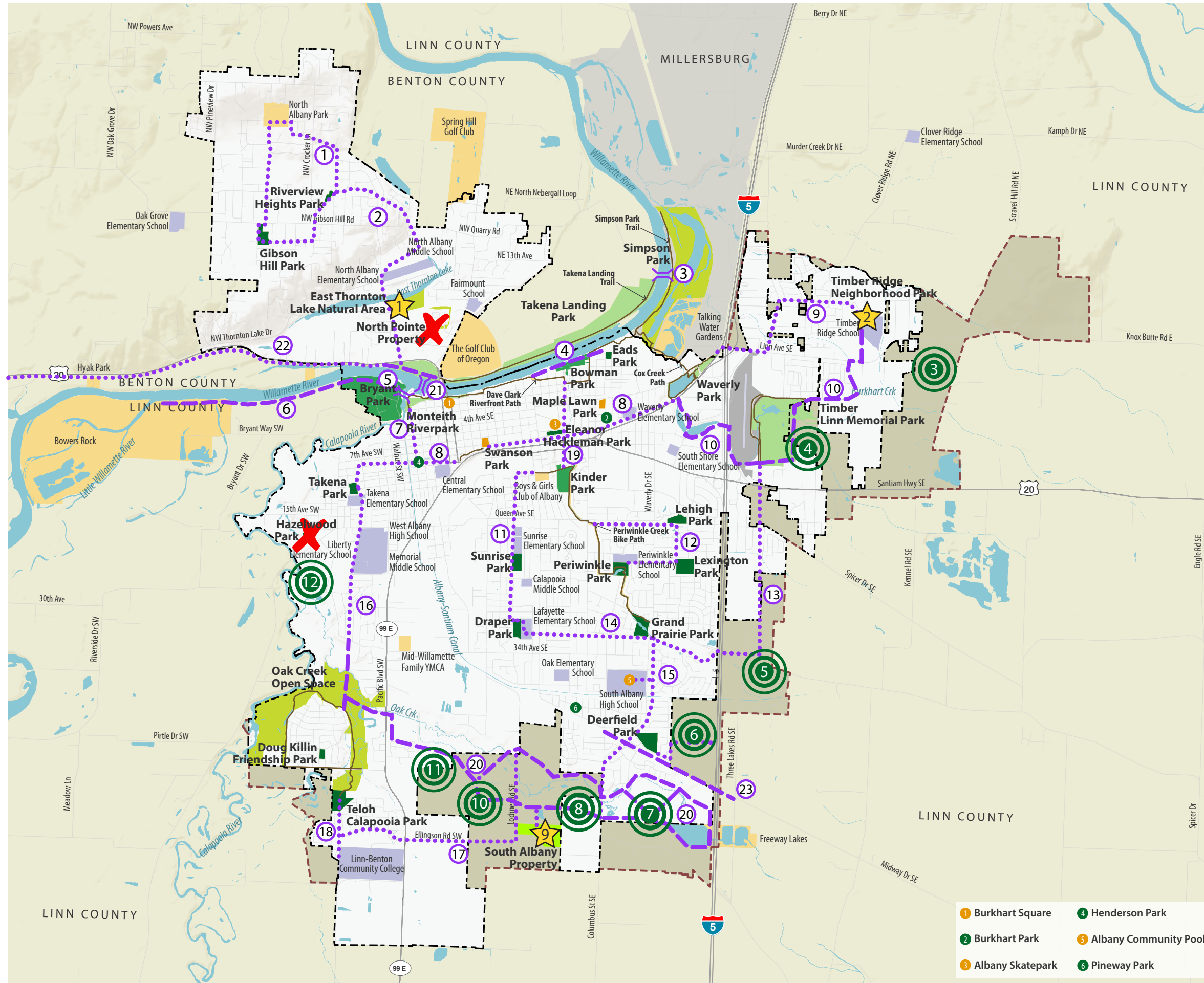


PROPOSED SYSTEM

The systemwide and site-specific recommendations detailed here and in Appendix C are illustrated in Map 4-1: Albany Parks Master Plan Recommendations. This map includes all the current and future park locations and the trail network proposed to connect them as important community destinations. The reference numbers are tied to the first column of Table C-1 and C-2 in Appendix C.

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Map 4-1: Recommendations Map



City of Albany Parks

- Neighborhood Parks
- Community Park
- Citywide Park
- Undeveloped Park Properties
- Natural Areas
- Special Use Sites

Other Parks and Facilities

- Other Parks and Recreation Facilities
- Schools and Colleges

Trails

- Trails and Off-Street Bike Paths

Base Map Features

- City of Albany Boundary
- Major Streets
- Bodies of Water
- Albany Municipal Airport
- City of Millersburg
- Urban Growth Boundary

Recommendations

- Proposed Off-Street Trails
- Proposed Enhanced Sidewalk Connections
- # Proposed Trail Number
- Proposed Trail Bridge
- @ Future Park Search Area or Acquisition
- X Proposed Surplus Property
- ★ Proposed Park Development

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1 Burkhart Square | 4 Henderson Park |
| 2 Burkhart Park | 5 Albany Community Pool |
| 3 Albany Skatepark | 6 Pineway Park |

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I
G
 January 2021
 Sources: City of Albany, Linn County, Oregon Spatial Data Library, 2019.
 United States Census Bureau, 2018.



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CHAPTER 5

Action Plan

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5 ACTION PLAN

This plan represents the evolution of a long-term vision for Albany's park and recreation system. To move forward, the City must focus on short-term actions that either advance or enable the long-term, visionary projects. The community, economic, and political interests will continue to shift throughout the ten-year lifespan of the Parks Master Plan as the only certainty will be continued change. To help guide the City in that uncertainty, this chapter details five areas for action over the next five-year period with a particular emphasis on the next year as Albany emerges from the global COVID-19 pandemic. The projects identified in each action area have a brief description and planning level cost associated with them. Additional details of these projects can be found in Appendices C and D.

PROJECT COSTS AND PRIORITIZATION

The estimated planning-level costs for all projects summarized in Chapter 4 and shown in Appendix C are approximately \$122.4 million (Table 5-1). This total is far more than the City can implement in the next ten years. This total includes:

- Approximately \$66.8 million in park projects. This includes the development of several new parks in South Albany, an area that is now anticipated to grow more slowly than originally planned. It includes City support for several partnership projects, which would only move forward if the City has sufficient funds to address its own asset stewardship.
- Another \$55.6 million in trail projects. All trail projects will be evaluated for implementation in conjunction with the City's Transportation System Plan.

Recognizing that this plan mixes shorter-term needs and deficiencies with longer-term visionary projects for the community, City staff and the Parks Task Force discussed projects to divide them into three phases. With a focus on project priorities defined in Appendix E, they considered what funding level reflected a realistic and potentially achievable level of service for the City. They also considered the impacts that the COVID-19 pandemic may have on funding in the first five years.

The result, shown in Table 5-1, was that some projects were tagged "long-term," or beyond the 10-year planning horizon for this Parks Master Plan. The remaining projects were divided into short and medium-term phasing, with a very conservative estimate on what could be achieved in the first five years.

City staff and the Parks Task Force recognize it will take more than ten years to implement all Master Plan projects. Implementation will start with a more conservative 5-Year Action Plan.

Table 5-1: Capital Improvement Plan Estimated Costs (11+Years)

| PHASING | TIMELINE | # OF SITES | ESTIMATED COSTS* |
|-------------------------------------|------------|------------|-----------------------|
| Existing and Proposed Parks | | | |
| Short term | 0-5 Years | 13 | \$ 8,229,000 |
| Medium term | 6-10 Years | 37 | \$ 50,872,000 |
| Long term | 11+ Years | 9 | \$ 7,675,000 |
| Existing and Proposed Trails | | | |
| All trail projects** | | | \$ 55,580,000 |
| Total | | | \$ 122,356,000 |

*Estimated costs are preliminary, planning-level estimates detailed in Appendix D.

**Trails projects will need to be coordinated with the City's Transportation System Plan to confirm short, medium, and long-term priorities. These are preliminarily noted in Appendix D.

5-YEAR ACTION PLAN

The City should strive to implement \$8.2 million in projects in the next five years. This focuses on several types of projects.

CAPACITY ENHANCEMENT PROJECTS

To maintain a minimum level of service, Albany should strategically expand the park system to serve new residents. Key projects include completing Timber Ridge Neighborhood Park and developing access and interpretive features at East Thornton Lake Natural Area. These two sites would serve the more recently developed portions of Albany. In addition, adding new features to Bowman Park will cost-effectively increase the capacity of the park system.

Table 5-2: Short-Term (5-Year) Capacity Enhancement Projects and Costs

| PARK | PLANNING COST* | DESCRIPTION |
|---------------------------------|---------------------|--|
| Bowman Park | \$ 225,000 | Nature play area and non-motorized boat launch |
| East Thornton Lake Natural Area | \$ 5,684,000 | First phase of development, neighborhood and nature park features at existing site |
| Timber Ridge Neighborhood Park | \$ 1,185,000 | Develop neighborhood park at a City-owned property. ¹ |
| Total | \$ 7,094,000 | |

* Estimated costs are preliminary, planning-level estimates detailed in Appendix D.

¹ The City has allocated approximately half of this funding and may add capacity to this park later.

FUNDING FOR CAPACITY ENHANCEMENT PROJECTS

This category of projects includes the majority of funding (\$7.1 million), because a portion of these projects can be funded through Parks System Development Charges (SDCs) capacity enhancement funding. SDC funds are provided by developers to offset the needs caused by new growth. City Council has an opportunity to increase the City’s SDC rate to be comparable to other similar communities. The rate adopted by City Council will determine how much funding is available to support new park acquisition and development in the future. If the SDC rate is set too low, another funding source will be needed (See Funding Strategies in the next section).

Adding new parks and facilities also will require an expansion of operations funding for maintenance. Pairing new operations funding with capital-only funding (such as SDCs) is essential to ensuring that new sites do not jeopardize the upkeep of the existing system.

STRATEGIC OPERATIONS AND EFFICIENCIES

Strategic investments in capital projects and operations will either increase operational efficiencies or strategically address some of the City’s deferred maintenance and site maintenance needs in key areas across the city. Short-term projects include minor investments into the COOL! Pool and Deerfield Park. At Deerfield Park, replacing underused turf areas with low-water, low-maintenance plantings should be the first step in exploring ways to reduce the regular maintenance load at the park, while addressing other site needs.

Table 5-3: Short-Term (5-Year) Strategic Operations Projects and Costs

| PARK | PLANNING COST* | DESCRIPTION |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|--|
| Deerfield Park | \$ 250,000 | Improved play area, shade, paths, and naturalized area |
| COOL! Pool at Swanson Park | \$ 100,000 | Pool upgrades to reduce future maintenance costs |
| Increased maintenance staffing | No capital cost | Added operational resources to sustain park system |
| Total | \$ 350,000 | |

* Estimated costs are preliminary, planning-level estimates detailed in Appendix D.

FUNDING FOR STRATEGIC OPERATIONS AND EFFICIENCIES

In past years, Albany invested more heavily in some parks and facilities, so that special use sites such as the COOL! Pool would be large enough to address community needs while Albany’s residential areas continued to grow. The City acquired Deerfield Park in 2018, following a long-term lease from the school district, adding acreage beyond the level of service required. These investments and similar ones—which provided a level of service greater than what was required at their time of acquisition and development—

positioned the City to potentially collect “reimbursement SDCs.” Unlike traditional SDCs, which are used to mitigate needs created by growth, reimbursement SDCs can be spent on improvements to existing sites. If City Council sets the future SDC rate to fully fund reimbursable projects as well as some capacity-enhancement projects, the two capital projects here could be supported by reimbursement SDCs.

These improvements represent an investment of capital funding to reduce or maintain the current level of operations funding while increasing the recreation opportunities in Albany. Decreasing maintenance needs at some sites, while increasing maintenance staffing and resources where needed, will unlock potential to expand the system without hurting care of other sites. A utility fee could be considered to address needs for maintenance resources beyond what is saved.

ENHANCEMENTS TO EXISTING OR PARTNER SITES

Improving existing parks or developing facilities at partner sites is a cost-effective way to enhance recreation opportunities without incurring additional maintenance costs. Renovations to play areas and courts at Burkhart Park and Henderson Park are good examples of this approach. The pickleball court development at Linn-Benton Community College (LBCC) leverages Albany’s construction experience and resources, along with LBCC’s ability to host and maintain the new courts.

Table 5-4: Short-Term (5-Year) Enhancement Projects and Costs

| PARK | PLANNING COST* | DESCRIPTION |
|------------------------|--|--|
| Burkhart Park | \$ 240,000 | Additional play features, additional amenities, and sports court |
| Henderson Park | \$ 175,000 | Improved play area and creek edge enhancement |
| LBCC pickleball courts | Already funded. No additional capital cost | Partnership project already under way |
| Total | \$ 415,000 | |

* Estimated costs are preliminary, planning-level estimates detailed in Appendix D.

FUNDING FOR EXISTING PARK ENHANCEMENTS

LBCC courts are already underway and funded. Burkhart and Henderson parks may also be good candidates for state grant programs or potentially, reimbursement SDCs. No additional operations funding would be needed.

DIVESTMENTS

Not all of Albany’s park properties are in suitable locations or meet the needs of the community. Two properties are recommended to be sold or repurposed: the North Pointe property and Hazelwood Park. Both were intended to serve as neighborhood parks but are not well suited for this purpose. With an ongoing crunch on operational funding, the City should take these off the parks inventory and identify alternative

owners or uses. This will require some flexibility on the part of the City and may not result in any overall financial gain. However, it would be a win for the system overall to no longer have maintenance responsibilities for these properties.

Table 5-5: Short-Term (5-Year) Divestment Projects and Costs

| PARK | PLANNING COST* | DESCRIPTION |
|-----------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| Hazelwood Park | No capital cost | Sell or transfer site |
| North Pointe property | No capital cost | Sell or transfer site |
| Total | No capital cost | |

* Estimated costs are preliminary, planning-level estimates detailed in Appendix D.

FUNDING: DIVESTMENTS

While no capital funding is necessary to sell these sites, Parks & Recreation Department staff will need to plan for and coordinate the divestment.

ADVANCED PLANNING

The department is initiating an Americans with Disabilities (ADA) Transition Plan that will identify the barriers that keep people with different abilities from participating in park and recreation activities. Advancing this work will require capital funding to complete the evaluation, and address project needs that will be identified. The ADA Plan as well as a revised Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) will help the City identify where new projects are needed to address State and national standards and ensure user safety. The City should make the next five-year Capital Improvement Plan update toward the end of this first action plan.

Table 5-6: Short-Term (5-Year) Advanced Planning Projects and Costs

| PARK | PLANNING COST* | DESCRIPTION |
|---------------------|-------------------|--|
| ADA Transition Plan | \$ 350,000 | Access improvements identified by ADA Plan |
| 5-Year CIP update | \$ 20,000 | Review of capital plan at the end of 5 years |
| Total | \$ 370,000 | |

* Estimated costs are preliminary, planning-level estimates detailed in Appendix D.

FUNDING FOR ADVANCED PLANNING

The funding to push forward planning in Albany will be essential during this five-year period. Implementing the ADA plan is a federal civil rights mandate. Some of the costs may be eligible for SDC reimbursement funding, if the SDC rate set by the City Council covers these costs. Otherwise, these costs will need to be addressed in general plan contributions or as part of a capital funding package such as a bond.



ADDITIONAL PRIORITY PROJECTS

The 5-Year Action Plan presented here is strategic and conversative. It does not represent all of the projects desired by Albany residents in the short term. Depending on evolving circumstances and funding availability, several medium-term projects could be elevated as a 5-year priority. If partners come forward with additional resources, the presence of these new or added resources could reprioritize projects. The prioritization criteria in Appendix E will help City staff make decisions on projects to move forward more quickly. Examples of projects that could move forward in the short term include (but are not limited to):

- Projects associated with the Waterfront Plan, such as a sprayground or water play feature at Monteith Riverpark.
- Trail projects funded through Transportation System Development Charges to improve park access or trail-related recreation.
- Coordination on the transition of the Maple Lawn building to another provider or partner for operations.
- Sports field or sports court improvements at multiple sites (especially if partner supported and free for the public to use).

FUNDING STRATEGIES

The total estimated cost of short- and medium-term park projects in this plan is just under \$60 million (see Appendix D). While this number is significant, it represents project capital costs only. To implement some new projects, both capital and operational funds will be needed to maintain and program new parks and features when they are developed. The shortage of operational funding has resulted in the deferral of many new projects until additional maintenance resources can be implemented. The strategies outlined below present several ways for the City to fund the parks and recreation system. Each funding source is characterized as capital or operations funding. Some sources are suitable for supporting either capital projects or ongoing operations.



CAPITAL FUNDING

PARKS SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT CHARGE

The City should adopt the Parks System Development Charge (SDC) methodology created in parallel with the Parks Master Plan and increase the associated rates to be more in line with comparable communities. As noted in the Parks System Development Charge Update Report, the City's current rate of \$2,224 per single family residential dwelling unit is two to three times lower than comparable communities, and approximately four times lower than the maximum amount the City could charge.

Once the methodology is adopted, City Council will establish a new rate in line with other goals for Albany, including fostering new development and ensuring the availability of parks to support Albany's quality of life. SDC's will not fund all capital projects. They are limited in the types of projects they will support. In addition, there are two different types of SDCs, as described below. Decisions about the SDC rate are critically important in determining whether the City can continue to provide parks at its current level of service as the community grows.

REIMBURSEMENT FEE

As noted in the 5-Year Action Plan funding strategy, an important part of the potential SDC fee is the reimbursement fee. Described in the Parks System Development Charge Update Report, this fee is less restricted in how it may be spent. Based on previous investments that exceeded the City's level of service, funds collected from this portion of the fee can be used for a greater variety of projects.

The reimbursement portion of the Parks SDC fee for a single-family dwelling unit would be just over \$2,200. Ideally, this would be the base rate to which the City adds the improvement portion of the fee intended to cover new park acquisition and development in growing areas of Albany.

IMPROVEMENT FEE

The improvement fee portion would fund capacity enhancement projects, such as the development of Timber Ridge Neighborhood Park. This portion of the fee could be as high as \$8,485 per new single family dwelling

unit, allowing the City to fund \$34.5 million of new projects over the next ten years. However, the City may opt to set the fee lower and pursue other types of capital funding in lieu of SDCs.

SDC FUNDING NEEDS

The decision on setting the SDC rate will have major impacts on future parks in Albany. Even if set at the maximum amount, a Parks SDCs would not fund all capacity enhancement projects because SDCs are limited to covering a portion of these projects equal to the current level of service. That means the City will need additional non-SDC capital funds if it intends to implement all of the capacity-enhancement projects noted in this plan. It will also need additional funds for deferred maintenance projects not covered by SDCs.

Oregon cities anticipating rapid growth and development typically set the SDC rate closer to the maximum amount possible to ensure that new residential areas will be able to fund the amount of park land needed at the desired level of service. Setting it at a lower level signifies that the City will need to find additional funding sources to provide the park level of service recommended in the Parks Master Plan.



CAPITAL FUNDING

BONDS AND DEBT

For the portion of park projects left unfunded by SDCs, the primary alternative or supplement to consider would be bonded debt. The City has multiple options for funding bonds to provide the capital resources needed for projects. The first and most common is the General Obligation (GO) bond which requires voter approval for property taxes to cover the repayment. The second, called full faith and credit, or bonds approved by the City Council only, require repayment from the general operating funds of the City (with income from existing taxes and fees).



OPERATIONS FUNDING



CAPITAL FUNDING

UTILITY FEE

The City of Albany should pair any capital funding with a parallel increase in operational funding. Previously the City considered the use of a fee charged on utility bills for non-utility City services. This type of fee can be enacted directly by the City Council, without going to voters, and can be set for any amount deemed appropriate and proportional to the use of the service.

Park utility fees have a potential to be a significant and stable revenue stream for local jurisdictions. Fees generated by the utility can finance operating and capital costs directly, as well as secure revenue bond debt that can finance capital costs. Utility fee revenue will grow with population growth, and local jurisdictions can increase the fee to reflect increased costs of providing park facilities.

A utility fee could be designated specifically for parks purposes or packaged with other City services such as the library or public safety.

As a hypothetical example, if each of Albany's roughly 21,000 households paid \$1 per month in a parks fee on their utility bill, the City could receive \$252,000 per year for park operations.

It is important to note that these flat fees disproportionately impact households with fewer resources, as the fee makes up more of their limited income. To offset this impact, some city governments have opted to exempt low-income households.



OPERATIONS FUNDING



CAPITAL FUNDING

DISTRICTS

Several types of districts are possible under Oregon law. Three that warrant consideration to help fund operations or capital projects are detailed below.

SPECIAL DISTRICT

Special districts are special-purpose taxing districts established to provide limited public services to people residing within the taxing district. An economic feasibility study must be completed prior to filing a petition for formation of a permanent rate limit for property taxes, expressed in dollars per thousand dollars of assessed value. The petition also requires the consent of a percentage of property owners or electors within the proposed district area. If the petition is approved, an election is required for formation. Creating a district and establishing permanent property tax authority can be done as a single ballot measure, requiring a majority vote for approval. A district may also adopt other financing sources that may not require a vote.

LOCAL IMPROVEMENT DISTRICTS (LID)

An LID is a geographic area in which real property is taxed to defray all or part of the cost of a public improvement. The unique aspect of an LID is that its costs are apportioned according to the estimated benefit that will accrue for each property. The three primary principles that guide LIDs are: direct service, obligation to others, and equal sharing. Under these principles, the LID charges a special assessment to property owners who receive special benefits from an improvement beyond general benefits received by all citizens of the community. In Oregon, LIDs are governed by local ordinances. To create an LID, the City of Albany would need LID participants' approval to issue bonds to pay for improvements. The assessment would be in relation to the property owner's share of the specific improvements. Bonds could then be sold in the amount of the improvement, secured directly by the assessments charged to the property owners or indirectly by the lien against the assessed property.

URBAN RENEWAL DISTRICT/TAX INCREMENT FINANCING

This funding mechanism allows for the redevelopment of communities using public investment to stimulate private

investment in areas that otherwise would have remained stagnant or undeveloped. It allows the City to freeze property tax rates at the adopted level, using the incremental increase to fund predefined priority projects.



CAPITAL FUNDING

GRANTS

Albany’s parks and recreation projects, particularly those along the Willamette River or serving low-income or historically underserved populations, are well-positioned for grant funding from a number of state and federal sources. Typically, these grants are competitive processes that fund only capital costs and require a City to commit to the maintenance and operation of the resulting facilities. Some resources will also need to be identified for matching funds. To be effective at competing for grant funding, the City will need at least one staff member focusing some time on the process, application timing, and positioning of projects with various agencies.



OPERATIONS FUNDING

INDIRECT FUNDING OPTIONS

Since the General Fund is a revenue source for multiple services, providing an alternative funding source for those services allows the City to allocate more revenue to parks. The various funding sources below would benefit parks indirectly and allow the City to address additional park needs.

LOCAL FUEL TAX

Cities can implement a fuel tax surcharge that can supplement other transportation revenues and reduce a service’s reliance on the General Fund.

STREET UTILITY FEES

The City can adopt or increase street or sidewalk maintenance fees to reduce transportation’s use of General Fund monies.

INDIRECT COST ALLOCATION

The City can re-examine its cost allocation plan to enterprise funds for administrative services such as facility or fleet maintenance to ensure the General Fund is receiving the correct amount of funding from those services.

PARTNERSHIP STRATEGY

The City has effectively engaged community partners in previous park and recreation projects. Existing and new partnerships are going to be a critical part of expanding Albany's recreation opportunities. However, the City does not have the staff or other resources to pursue every possible partnership idea, many of which do not include the sustainable operational funding that is needed for long-term success.

The key to successful partnerships includes having an evaluation process in place to provide clarity about the value of a project to achieving the Parks Master Plan goals. Appendix E includes a Community Request and Proposal Form that prospective partners or project advocates could fill out to demonstrate the ways in which their project helps achieve desired outcomes for the City. A completed proposal form could be required to demonstrate how projects address the needs and opportunities presented in this plan. This will give City staff the basic information to evaluate projects moving forward. It also makes the rationale for pursuing a project (or not) clear to the community members proposing the idea.

NEXT STEPS (1-YEAR ACTION PLAN)

PRIORITIZE ESSENTIAL PARK AND RECREATION PROJECTS

In response to the prevailing mood of uncertainty with an ongoing pandemic, social upheaval, and the unknown economic impact, Albany can and will refocus the efforts and emphasis of the park and recreation system. Starting with strong support for enhancing existing park sites and expanding the trail connections, this Parks Master Plan identifies needs and opportunities that narrow down the most essential services provided by the City and partners. The following represent the services that should be the primary focus of Albany's park and recreation efforts:

- Supporting community health by providing close-to-home opportunities to recreate or socialize outdoors
- Maintaining the community's investment in existing parks and facilities
- Integrating affordable, family and community-focused activities when it is safe to do so

All projects in the coming year should be evaluated using these priorities and advanced only if a compelling case can be made that they help Albany recover from an extremely challenging year. As the economic situation becomes more clear, additional projects should move forward based on available resources, in the action areas outlined at the beginning of this chapter.