

EUGENE CITY COUNCIL

AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY



Work Session: State of Parks and Recreation Facilities

Meeting Date: January 13, 2016
Department: PW/ LRCS
www.eugene-or.gov

Agenda Item Number: B
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ISSUE STATEMENT

This is a summary report to the council regarding Eugene's Parks and Recreation System. In 2014, the council reviewed a report which described existing conditions and a funding gap to operate and maintain City parks and recreation facilities. The focus of this year's report is to update the council on where the process is at to establish a new vision for the future of the parks and recreation system.

BACKGROUND

Eugene enjoys and benefits from over 4,300 acres of parks which includes: playgrounds, sport fields and ball courts, trails and pathways, gardens, and natural areas, as well as six community centers, three swimming pools and six satellite recreation facilities that extend services by leveraging local partnerships. These parks and recreation assets work together as a system that provides essential social, environmental, and economic benefits that contribute to the overall health, safety, and vitality of the community.

Over the last five years, both Parks and Open Space (POS) and Recreation Services divisions have contributed to reducing the City General Fund budget deficit by restructuring and operating more efficiently, reducing operating budgets by trimming services, increasing revenue targets, shifting funds out of the General Fund into other dedicated funds, and pursuing partnerships and grants. By working together, staff from POS, and Recreation, have helped make the organization stronger and better able to meet the ever increasing demands of maintaining the parks and recreation system. However, successive years of budget cuts, and absorbing cost increases, while still meeting the changing needs of a growing community, has resulted in many critical maintenance needs not being met.

As part of the ongoing search to find ways to improve the delivery of parks and recreation services, the divisions sought to engage the community in discussions about the system, and to envision a new future for the community's parks and recreation facilities. In 2015, POS and Recreation Services divisions launched a process to establish a plan for the future of the Parks and Recreation System. The intended outcome is for the council adoption of this plan in the winter of 2016/2017, and the initiation of funding strategies to implement this plan soon after.

PARKS and RECreate System Planning

PARKS and RECreate: Picture. Plan. Play. is a community conversation to help the City identify priorities for the next 10-plus years of Parks and Recreation in Eugene. The resulting plan will serve as a road map for capital investments, put into place mechanisms for sustained maintenance, and renew or identify new partnerships for enhanced services to the public. Eugene's Parks and Recreation system has a strong history of community investment and support - from the earliest land donation in 1906 that created Hendricks Park, to two successful bond measures in the past 16 years, totaling over \$52 million in capital investment. The system is highly valued and serves as the cornerstone of a healthy, active community. Through statistically valid polling it has been learned that 90 percent of Eugene residents view Eugene Parks and Recreation as very or somewhat important to their quality of life. Planning for the responsible growth and stewardship of the system is therefore a critical component to Eugene's continued and future livability.

The PARKS and RECreate process has set out to ensure that plans for the future are responsive to the community's values and aspirations.

The PARKS and RECreate Process

The first phase in the planning process is complete. This phase entailed the collection of information from many sources to gain a thorough understanding of the current state of parks and recreation in Eugene. Traditional public outreach tools were combined with new innovative approaches to reach out to more individuals than ever before. Approximately 7,000 voices were heard:

- Pop-up Events - 30 mobile meetings/parties popped up where people were already gathered. 2,600 individuals participated.
- Latino Community Outreach - This specialized outreach involved a partnership with the office of Human Rights and Neighborhood Involvement, University of Oregon students, UO Professor Gerardo Sandoval, and public engagement specialist James Rojas. 350 Eugene and Springfield residents participated.
- Online-survey, statistically-valid survey, Recreation facility survey - surveys covered general topics such as overall system usage, service satisfaction, concerns, priorities for the future and the effect of facility conditions on the recreation experience. 3,700 surveys were completed.
- Stakeholder and staff listening sessions - Informal, open-ended meetings with staff and individuals who partner or regularly interact with Parks and Recreation Services were held. 130 stakeholders and 105 staff participated.
- Website and social media - Online tools were utilized to make available information about the project and opportunities for involvement on a 24/7, wherever-you- are basis.

In addition to community engagement, a variety of technical analyses were conducted to help staff better understand the system of today and opportunities for the future. These analyses included

equity mapping to show geographic distribution of facilities; benchmarking of Eugene's system against other comparable cities; trends analysis; and facility assessments.

What Has Been Learned: Needs Assessment Findings

The Needs Assessment Report synthesizes the collected information and identifies key findings. Some of the findings are as expected, and some are surprising. Together they lay a solid foundation from which recommendations for the future can be built.

System-wide findings are described in terms of strengths, challenges, opportunities and trends. These findings are summarized in the Needs Assessment Executive Summary found at <https://eugparksandrec.atavist.com/>. This online platform for providing information in a multi-media presentation is designed to be a friendly and accessible format for gaining a quick overview of the findings. The complete Needs Assessment Report is included as Attachment A and includes more detailed descriptions and findings. The Needs Assessment Report thoroughly cites all sources, many of which are included in the Report Appendix that will be available on January 12 at www.eugparksandrec.org.

Guiding themes are a distillation of what has been learned and will serve as guiding principles for draft recommendations. They are:

- *Serve the entire community* - Provide equitable and welcoming access to parks, recreation facilities and programs regardless of geography, culture, ability or income.
- *Care for what the City has* - Ensure that basic amenities are provided and that they are safe and clean. Be responsible stewards of current assets and infrastructure by making the best possible use of what the City has.
- *Grow responsibly* - Understand where growth of the system is required to meet the needs of the community. Focus on quality of life and build on existing strengths.
- *Integrate with other systems* - Make regional connections and recognize the interdependence of Parks and Recreation with public health, transportation, land use, green infrastructure, education, art and culture, and economic development.
- *Invest in partnerships* - Continue to leverage Eugene's assets and expand services to the community through effectively partnering with public agencies, non-profits, the private sector, and community volunteers.

Next Steps

As the City moves forward with the next phases of the project, staff will be working closely with the Trust for Public Lands, which brings significant regional and national experience and expertise in aligning park and recreation planning efforts with community needs and in finding sustainable solutions to the challenges of funding parks and recreation systems.

Public workshops are planned for early February to present the needs assessment findings and get early input into recommendations for the future. Following these workshops, recommendations will be drafted that identify priority capital investments and define future maintenance and operation levels. These recommendations will be shared for community input and feedback over the summer. A final plan is anticipated for council adoption in the winter of 2016/2017.

RELATED CITY POLICIES

- Council goal for Accessible and Thriving Culture and Recreation (*a community where arts and outdoors are integral to our social and economic well-being and are available to all*).
- Council goal for Fair, Stable and Adequate Financial Resources (*a government whose ongoing financial resources are based on a fair and equitable system of revenues and are adequate to maintain and deliver municipal services*).

COUNCIL OPTIONS

This is an informational work session; no action is required at this time.

CITY MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION

No action is required at this time.

SUGGESTED MOTION

No action is required at this time.

ATTACHMENTS

A. Parks and Recreation System Needs Assessment Report, January 2016

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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