

# LAKE OSWEGO

## Parks, Recreation and Natural Areas System Plan





## INTRODUCTION



To determine community desires and needs, an extensive community involvement process was initiated as part of Parks Plan 2025. Approximately 1400 residents, visitors and employees have been involved in the planning process up to this point.

Parks Plan 2025 public input activities were timed to allow close integration with the City of Lake Oswego's Comprehensive Plan update "We [Heart] LO". The updated plan will, when complete, be the policy framework that all City services, including Parks and Recreation, will work under.

## PARKS PLAN 2025 COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT PROCESS

The front end community involvement process included more than fifteen events as well as an on-line questionnaire. The design of this process ensured that Lake Oswego residents, visitors and employees had multiple, varied opportunities to respond to questions and learn about how this process will shape the park, recreation and natural areas system. Each public involvement activity completed is described below.

- *On-line Questionnaire:* An on-line questionnaire was widely promoted and provided an opportunity for all residents to participate in the planning process. A total of 1110 responses were received to the questionnaire.
- *Community Intercept Events:* Residents had an opportunity to provide input for the Parks Plan 2025 during three community events held in August 2010, including a community concert, a movie in the park and the Lake Oswego Farmers Market. Over 150 residents provided input at these events.
- *Community Open House:* An open house was held in December 2010 to provide an additional opportunity for all residents to participate in the planning process. Approximately 30 residents participated in this event.
- *Focus Groups:* A series of focus groups were held to obtain input from specific user groups, including business community leaders, Luscher Farm partners, natural resource interests, neighborhood association representatives, recreation program users, team sports



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representatives and City Commission members. Over 50 individuals participated in the focus groups.

- *Stakeholder Interviews:* Several one-on-one or small group interviews were conducted, including interviews with representatives of Friends of Luscher Farm, the Historic Resources Advisory Board, School District leadership and the City's Economic Development Director.
- *Staff Workshop:* Recreation program and maintenance staff participated in a workshop to identify their future vision for parks, recreation and natural areas as well as needed improvements. 36 Lake Oswego Park and Recreation staff members participated in the workshop.
- *Youth Workshop:* Lake Oswego Staff and Teen Lounge participants organized and executed a workshop targeted at Lake Oswego youth. This workshop included a facilitated discussion, board exercises and a questionnaire developed and executed by the teens. Eighteen teens participated in the workshop and 12 responses were received to the questionnaire.
- *Steering Committee, PRAB, NRAB and City Council:* A project steering committee, the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board, the Natural Resources Advisory Board, and City Council are providing oversight and guidance throughout the Parks Plan 2025. Each individual on these boards and committees is contributing many hours of valuable time during this process.



Several themes have developed during the public input process and the key findings are divided to discuss the following topics.

- What are the key benefits that parks, recreation, and natural areas provide to the City of Lake Oswego?
- What is the desired character of local, neighborhood-serving parks?
- What recreation opportunities should be provided close to home for all Lake Oswego residents?
- What activities currently have the greatest level of participation in Lake Oswego? What additional activities are desired?
- What types of recreation program improvements are desired?
- What improvements to parks, recreation and natural areas are viewed as the highest priority by residents?
- What other issues were important to residents?

## KEY BENEFITS



Protecting important places (habitats, historic sites, etc.), enhancing health and well-being and bringing neighbors and people together were the benefits of parks, recreation and natural areas that residents thought were most important:

- Nearly all intercept event and community open house participants thought that parks, recreation and natural areas are very important to quality of life in Lake Oswego.
- The most important benefits to these participants were: protecting important places (habitats, historic sites, etc.), enhancing health and well-being and bringing neighbors and people together.
- About 54% of respondents to the on-line questionnaire indicated that parks, recreation and natural areas are very important to quality of life in Lake Oswego. Removing those who did not answer this question raises this number to 80%.
- The most important social/community benefits were: health and fitness (48%); positive activities and fun environments for youth (36%); and places for neighborhood and family gathering (27%). Making the city aesthetically appealing (42%), protecting important habitats (40%), and providing hands-on interaction with nature (32%) were the most important environmental functions and benefits cited by participants.

## DESIRED CHARACTER

For local parks, most residents desired a hybrid park character, that provides both natural and developed features, or an entirely natural character:

- According to on-line questionnaire respondents, residents would most like parks closest to their home to have an integrated character (activities and features intermingled with the natural environment) (32%) or a mostly natural park character (26%).
- Community open house participants favored a natural character for local parks. The hybrid park types that include both natural and developed features (side-by-side and integrated character) were more popular than a more developed character.
- Neighborhood focus group participants were satisfied with the diversity of activities available and thought the site's existing features should be considered when determining future park character.

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### CLOSE-TO-HOME AMENITIES

Residents identified the need for children's play, opportunities to experience nature and opportunities to exercise most frequently as the amenities needed close to home:

- Intercept event participants identified the following as the most important recreation opportunities to have within walking or biking distance to every home: experience nature; group gatherings; and play for children and exercise.
- Open house participants identified the following as the most important recreation opportunities to have within walking or biking distance to every home: experience nature; exercise; group gatherings; and getting involved (gardening, volunteering, etc.).
- According to on-line questionnaire respondents, the following activities are most important to have close-to-home: experience nature (38%); exercise (37%); play sports (34%); and play for children (32%).
- Participants in the teen workshop and survey emphasized gathering spaces and indicated that they typically go to parks to hang out with friends or attend special events.



### RECREATION PARTICIPATON

- According to the on-line questionnaire results, the recreation activities with the greatest participation among Lake Oswego residents are:
  1. Walking for exercise
  2. Walking for pleasure
  3. Dog walking/dog parks
  4. Gardening
  5. Jogging/running
  6. Nature walks
  7. Tennis
  8. Bicycling
  9. Volunteer activities
  10. Swimming
  11. Golf
  12. Yoga/pilates

- Six of the 12 activities with the highest participation levels could be supported by trails: walking for exercise, walking for pleasure, dog-walking, jogging/running, nature walks and bicycling.
- According to the on-line questionnaire results, activities respondents would like to be doing more often than they currently are include: concerts, festivals and special events; education/special interest classes; rowing, canoeing, kayaking; fishing; arts/culture; and swimming.

## RECREATION PROGRAMS



Overall, residents appear satisfied with the recreation programs offered in the community. Swimming was frequently mentioned as a need in Lake Oswego as well as the need for major facilities to support recreation programs, such as an aquatic center, community center and the implementation of the 2009 Golf and Tennis Feasibility Study recommendations. Findings include:

- On-line questionnaire respondents most frequently rated current programs provided by the City as very good (39%) or satisfactory (21%).
- Aquatic programs/swimming (26%); adult sports (23%); youth sports (20%); fitness (19%); and environmental programs (18%) were the programs that on-line questionnaire respondents thought were most needed or should be expanded.
- On-line questionnaire respondents reported that lack of time (32%) and inadequate facilities (22%) prevented their participation in Parks and Recreation Department programs and activities.
- Intercept event participants selected aquatic programs and swimming; special events; and adult sports (with a special interest in tennis) as the most needed recreation programs in Lake Oswego. Fitness programs, environmental programs and education/special interest classes also received a significant number of responses.
- The teen workshop and survey echoed the programming desires of other public input, including aquatics and special events.
- Community open house participants selected aquatic programs and swimming; fitness programs and environmental programs as the most needed recreation

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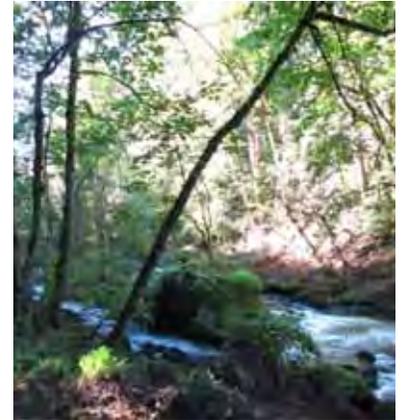
programs in Lake Oswego. Youth sports and special interest classes were also perceived as a need.

- Focus group participants saw the need to increase information about programs and activities provided to the community.
- Focus group participants identified the following as recreation program needs: services for the 55+ community, younger families, young children and middle school children; drop-in programs with childcare; and volunteer activities.

## HIGHEST PRIORITY IMPROVEMENTS

Maintaining existing parks, developing major new indoor facilities, expanding trails and restoring natural areas were frequently mentioned as high priority improvements in multiple community involvement venues:

- According to on-line questionnaire respondents, the top priorities for improving parks, recreation and natural areas in Lake Oswego are: repair and maintain existing parks and facilities (40%); add major new indoor facilities (pool, community center, tennis center, etc.) (37%); expand the trail network (25%); and restore or protect creeks, forests and hillsides (23%).
- Staff workshop participants identified the following as the highest priority improvements:
  - Expanding community gardens
  - Improving trails and connections
  - Developing an intergenerational community center
  - Developing an aquatics center
  - Increasing the role and visibility of the Adult Community Center
  - Creating a composting facility
  - Maintaining appropriate staffing
  - Developing a maintenance facility
  - Developing a recreation shuttle service
  - Improving existing parks
  - Improving skateboarding opportunities
  - Developing the golf learning center
  - Addressing the use of waterfronts on rivers and lakes
  - Developing additional dog parks and improving residents' dog etiquette



## OTHER THEMES

The following issues were identified as themes from focus groups and other community involvement events:

- Maintenance of existing parks should be a priority, especially the restoration of natural areas.
- Improve sustainability by reducing unnecessary turf, eliminating pesticides, reducing energy use, creating living buildings, etc.
- Provide adequate funding for parks and recreation.
- Improve trail access and amenities to make Lake Oswego a 20-minute city – where most destinations can be accessed in 20 minutes by walking or biking.
- Develop soft-surfaced jogging paths adjacent to hard-surfaced trails.
- Develop a high quality rowing facility in partnership with the current rowing club.
- Improve athletic opportunities by providing equitable distribution of fields, improving communications and enhancing relations with the School District.
- Expand fields for younger players and consider more artificial turf fields.
- Serve the senior population, which represents a significant percentage of the population.
- Develop major facilities, such as a community center and aquatic center.
- Implement the 2009 Golf and Tennis Feasibility Study.
- Provide covered facilities, such as playgrounds and basketball courts, for year-round play.
- Remove the barriers to volunteer activity and expand site stewardship programs.
- Recognize the unique combination of elements at Luscher Farm to attract residents and visitors – programs, urban agriculture and historic elements.
- Recognize the potential of historic tourism as an economic development tool, such as the Iron Trail currently under development.
- Utilize recreation programs to attract residents and visitors to downtown and other retail areas, such as special events and packaged experiences.
- Consider expanding use or reuse of School District facilities.
- Improve signage and wayfinding.

For complete results of all of the Parks Plan 2025 public involvement efforts, visit the project website,

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parcsplan2025.org or contact Ryan Stee, Project Manager, at 503-697-6575 or rstee@ci.oswego.or.us.

## WE [HEART] LO COMMUNITY VISION DEVELOPMENT

As part of the City's Comprehensive Plan update, the community is creating a new vision which will guide the community's development and City policy through 2035. The comprehensive plan update process has included extensive public input, including workshops, an online survey and discussions with numerous community groups. The vision statement is the culmination of all of these efforts. The current draft of this vision (released December 20, 2010) is expressed through a series of focus statements, presented below. The overall vision is broken down into statements describing each of the seven focus areas. Following each statement, (in italics) are descriptions of ways that the parks, recreation and natural area system can contribute to achieving this vision. These statements are based on community input received to date as part of the Parks Plan 2025. While park, recreation and natural area policies in the updated comprehensive plan will be focused in the Community Culture and Healthy Ecosystems areas, this discussion illustrates how integral parks, recreation and natural areas are to all areas of the identity and future of this community.

## A VISION FOR LAKE OSWEGO

**In 2035, Lake Oswego is a thriving, sustainable city, meeting the community's needs without compromising the needs of future generations.** Our community is recognized for its quality of life, exceptional schools and excellent local government. Our multigenerational neighborhoods, healthy natural resources, vibrant mixed-use shopping, employment districts and diverse services and activities are accessible to all.

*Parks, recreation and natural areas play a key role in the look, feel and experience of Lake Oswego. The Parks and Recreation Department provides diverse, high-quality recreation experiences that are accessible to all.*

## COMMUNITY CULTURE

**Our educational, cultural and recreational opportunities strengthen the social fabric of the community.** Our top-rated schools offer excellent education and reinforce the value of the community as a desirable place to raise a family. Our outstanding library, parks, and community amenities provide a wide range of programs and special events while public art and historic resources enrich our cultural identity.

*The Parks and Recreation Department provides special events throughout the year that create community. In addition, it offers facilities for family, neighborhood and business gatherings. Many of the community's most valued historic resources lie within our parks and natural areas, offering residents opportunities to understand their cultural heritage. The public art program and recreation programs administered by the Parks and Recreation Department enrich the community's cultural identity. These recreation and cultural opportunities help make Lake Oswego a desirable place to live, work and raise a family.*

## COMPLETE NEIGHBORHOODS AND HOUSING

**We manage growth by providing the opportunity for a variety of attractive and compatible housing opportunities that serve a range of ages, incomes and households.** Our distinct and walkable neighborhoods contribute to the city's small town feel. Mixed-use districts enhance adjacent residential areas by providing access to quality jobs, housing, transit, entertainment, services and shopping. Higher density housing is located along transportation corridors and town centers to preserve the character of our existing neighborhoods. We have safe, efficient and convenient transportation choices. There are frequent and reliable public transportation options that make it easy to move around our city and the region. Pathways, sidewalks, roadways and bike routes encourage residents of all neighborhoods to walk and bike safely.

*Parks, natural areas and beautification efforts overseen by the Parks and Recreation Department contribute to neighborhood character and livability. Pathways and trails provide opportunities for safe walking and biking to reduce our carbon footprint.*

## **A CONNECTED COMMUNITY**

**We are a community where people can live, work, play and meet their daily needs for goods and services.** We build upon the intellectual capital of the community to attract new ventures, retain local businesses and connect to the global economy. We are business-friendly with a regional model for employment and mixed-use centers that attracts quality jobs.

*Recreation facilities, programs and special events attract residents and visitors to downtown and other business districts, building community and contributing to the City's economic success. The Parks and Recreation Department strives to meet the recreation needs of residents so that they do not have to travel to other communities to access services. The variety and availability of parks, recreation and natural areas attracts residents and businesses to the community.*

## **HEALTHY ECOSYSTEMS**

**We are good stewards of our environment.** Our urban forest, natural areas and watersheds are valued and cared for as essential environmental, economic and cultural assets. We are recognized for effectively balancing today's community needs with the need to preserve clean air, water and land resources for future generations. The built environment is designed to protect, enhance and be integrated with natural systems.

*The Parks and Recreation Department can lead the way to ecological and economic sustainability. The city's natural areas promote clean air and water, providing relief from urban development and an opportunity to connect with nature. Proximity and access to these green assets also contributes directly to the values of residential and commercial property. Park and natural area design and management practices help create a sustainable community for this and future generations. The Parks and Recreation Department provides educational and volunteer opportunities for residents that inform them about their natural heritage and enable them to contribute to a more sustainable future. These educational and volunteer opportunities build the environmental stewards of tomorrow.*

## COMMUNITY HEALTH AND PUBLIC SAFETY

**Our community is a safe place to live and supports lifelong active and healthy living.** We are known for excellent public safety response systems that work together with an involved community to ensure peace and safety. There are opportunities for active lifestyles that promote the health and social interaction of our residents. Easily-available foods from local community gardens and farmers' markets support healthy nutrition.

*The Parks and Recreation Department provides opportunities for residents of all ages to achieve an active, healthy lifestyle. The Department provides safe facilities and programs that support fitness, educational opportunities that inform residents about health and wellness issues and opportunities to obtain healthy, local foods, such as community gardens, community-supported agriculture programs, healthy meals for older adults and farmer's markets.*

## INSPIRING SPACES AND PLACES

**Our architecture and natural setting inspire people to live here.** Development respects the physical environment and meets the highest quality of community design to foster the distinctive character and beauty of this special place. We are a regional leader. By sharing the example of our successes and our active engagement with other metropolitan area governments, we help preserve the region's quality of life and Lake Oswego's unique place in it.

*Signature park facilities often leave the most lasting impression on visitors and help activate the surrounding commercial and residential neighborhoods, creating vibrant inspiring places. The Parks and Recreation Department works with developers and other City departments to ensure that the physical environment meets recreation needs, preserves natural and historic resources and enhances community character. The Department shares its successes with and learns from other metropolitan governments throughout the region and state to help preserve quality of life in the Portland Metro Area and throughout Oregon.*

Additional information about the comprehensive plan update can be found at <http://welovelakeoswego.com/>.