

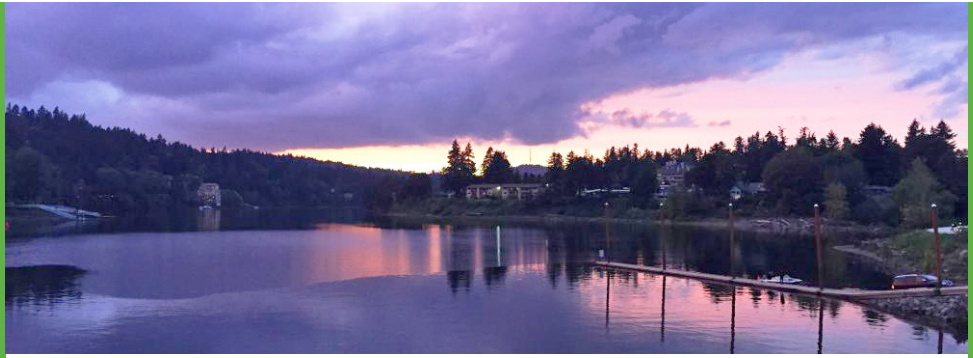


Background Report: Parks & Recreation

Milwaukie Comprehensive Plan Update

Block 2 Topic Area

Prepared for the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee
August 2018



Introduction

The City of Milwaukie has a robust system of parks, recreation facilities and trails. The City's existing and planned parks are summarized in Table 1 and shown on the map in Figure 1. This list does not include recreational facilities at local schools (public and private), as public access to those facilities can be limited. However, schools are illustrated on Figure 1, for context.

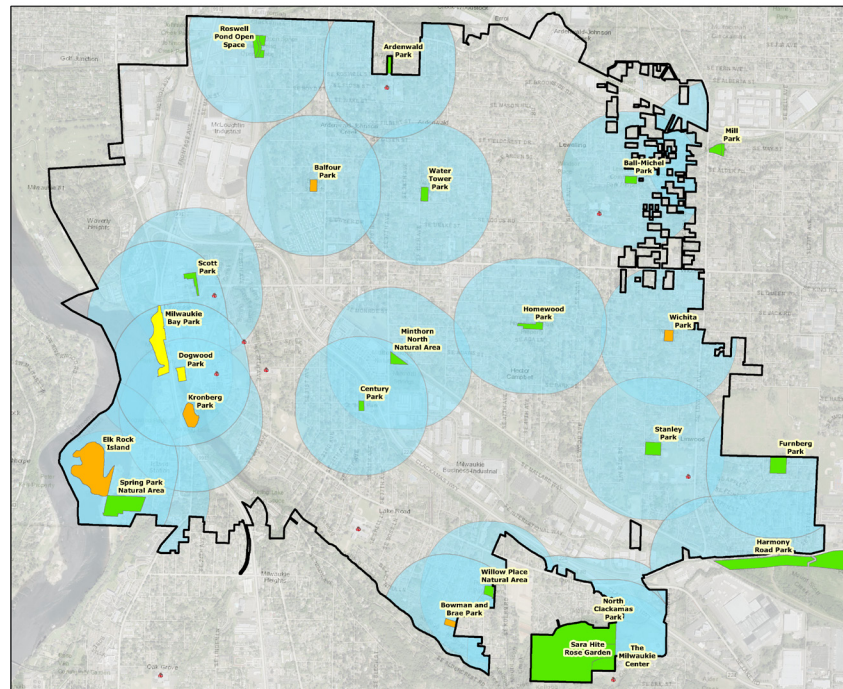


Figure 1. Areas within 1/4 mile of Milwaukie Parks

Parks & Recreation

All of Milwaukie's parks are owned by the City but managed by the North Clackamas Parks & Recreation District (NCPRD) in coordination with the City under an intergovernmental agreement. NCPRD was formed in 1990, and serves residents of a 36 square mile area of north Clackamas County that includes Happy Valley (which as of late 2018 was in the process of leaving the District), Milwaukie, and a large unincorporated urban portion of the county. The agency manages the operations, maintenance, and programming of all its parks, including Milwaukie's parks. Funding for the agency is provided through property taxes and system development charges (SDCs).

Table 1. Milwaukie Parks Inventory

Name	Size acres	Neighborhood	Amenities
Neighborhood Parks			
Ardenwald	0.8	Ardenwald/ Johnson Creek	Playground, shelter, parking
Ball-Michel	0.8	Lewelling	Picnic area, playground, shelter, parking
Century	0.6	Lake Road	Basketball court, playground, tennis court, parking
Dogwood	2.8	Historic Milwaukie	Picnic area, parking
Furnberg	2.6	Linwood	Picnic area, playground, soccer field
Homewood	1.2	Hector Campbell	Playground, parking
Scott	0.6	Historic Milwaukie	Amphitheater, parking
Stanley	2.0	Linwood	Picnic area, parking
Water Tower	1.0	Ardenwald/ Johnson Creek	Basketball court, picnic area, playground, parking
Balfour (planned, unfunded)	0.8	Ardenwald/ Johnson Creek	<i>Planned to include:</i> nature play area, flexible open lawn, community garden, pathways, other park elements
Bowman-Brae (planned, unfunded)	0.7	Lake Road	<i>Planned to include:</i> picnic shelter, accessible play area, picnic tables, meandering path
Kronberg (planned & funded)	4.5	Island Station	<i>Planned to include:</i> multi-use path, native species habitat restoration, interpretive signage, overlooks, bird blinds, seating, picnic tables, nature play area
Wichita (under construction)	1.0	Linwood	<i>Planned to include:</i> playground, picnic tables, disk golf basket, mulch trail, and open lawn
Minthorn North	1.2	Milwaukie Business Industrial	Trails, natural wetland areas
Spring Park	7.8	Ardenwald/ Johnson Creek	Trails, natural areas, picnic facilities, playground, parking
Elk Rock Island	13.6	Island Station	Trails, natural areas
Community Parks			
North Clackamas	43.6	Lake Road	Milwaukie Center building, baseball/ softball fields, picnic facilities and shelters, off-leash dog area, playgrounds, parking
Milwaukie Bay	6.8	Historic Milwaukie	Boat launch, walkways, parking, fishing, natural areas
Gardens			
Sara Hite Memorial Rose Garden	1.0	Lake Road	Brick plaza, rose beds, other plantings and pathways

The current Parks and Recreation element of the Comprehensive Plan (located in the Land Use chapter and titled “Recreational Needs Element”), has had very few updates since it was first prepared and generally does not reflect current park and recreation resources and conditions in the city. However, several individual park facility master plans have been prepared and adopted as ancillary or supporting elements of the Comprehensive Plan. While these documents provide a more current picture of selected parks, the ultimate design of the parks has not always been consistent with the master plans, creating additional conflicts between current conditions and the

Comprehensive Plan. This situation will be addressed as updated Comprehensive Plan policies are drafted. The updated Parks and Recreation element will more accurately describe existing and planned future facilities and include policies that guide implementation of future improvements to park and recreation facilities in coordination with NCPRD and Milwaukie residents.

Planning for Park & Recreational Needs

Oregon has a set of 19 Statewide Planning Goals, which serve as the foundation of the state's land use planning program that is implemented at the local level through the Comprehensive Plan. [Statewide Planning Goal 8](#) is called Recreational Needs and seeks to "satisfy the recreational needs of the citizens of the state and visitors and, where appropriate, to provide for the siting of necessary recreational facilities including destination resorts."

The City of Milwaukie complies with Goal 8 by working with NCPRD to continue to plan for, operate, and maintain future local park and recreation facilities. The City has completed Park Master Plans for most of the City's parks between 1990 and 2015. The oldest Master Plan is for Scott Park (1990) and the most recent are for Balfour, Bowman-Brae and Kronberg (2015). The NCPRD 2015 Master Plan assesses the level of service for parks and recreation facilities and programs throughout the district. While it does not explicitly address level of service within the City of Milwaukie, the following observations can be made based on NCPRD's analysis:

- In terms of access to all components of the parks system, most of the City is reasonably well served, both in general and in comparison to other areas within the District. The southeast corner of Milwaukie has the highest levels of service, while the central portion of the city has relatively lower levels of service.
- Very few areas in Milwaukie are below NCPRD's service threshold. In contrast, other areas of the District outside of Milwaukie do fall below this threshold.
- While Milwaukie has access to different types of parks and recreation service provided by NCPRD, most areas of the city have only low to moderate levels of "walkable access" (i.e., the ability to walk to a park in about 15 minutes or less). Large portions of the city do not meet NCPRD's threshold for this indicator.
- Because the northern and western portions of Milwaukie are close to the Springwater Corridor and Trolley Trail, respectively, Milwaukie rates better than most of the rest of the District in terms of its access to trails and trailheads.

Parks & Recreation and Milwaukie's Comprehensive Plan

[Chapter 4 - Land Use](#) of Milwaukie's existing Comprehensive Plan is broken into five individual elements, including the Recreational Needs Element. This element includes one Goal Statement, seven (7) objectives, and 23 policies which are focused on addressing park and recreational needs. As already mentioned, the element has had few updates over the years and generally does not reflect current park and recreation resources and conditions in the City. Recreational Needs Element objectives are summarized below:

- *Objective 1 – Park Classifications*
Establishes park classifications and standards to guide provision of parks and other public open space throughout the city.
- *Objective 2 – Parks and Recreation Master Plan*
Calls for the creation of a city-wide Parks and Recreation Master Plan, guided by the policies and standards outlined in the Recreation Needs Element. The City has never created the master plan called for by this objective. However, NCPRD does have a Master Plan that guides park development and management with the city of Milwaukie and other areas of Clackamas County.
- *Objective 3 – Intergovernmental Cooperation*
Calls for the City to continue working with other governmental agencies in providing park and recreational facilities and services. Agencies mentioned include North Clackamas School District No. 12, Metro, and Clackamas County, but does not mention

NCPRD, as the District was formed in 1990, after the Milwaukie Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 1989.

- *Objective 4 – Private Recreation Opportunities*
To ensure that new development does not overburden existing recreation facilities, this objective calls for new residential development to contribute to parks and recreation opportunities in the city through dedication of land, provision of space and facilities for recreation, and payment of system development charges, where appropriate and applicable.
- *Objective 5 – Neighborhood and Community Parks*
Calls for the provision of neighborhood parks that are convenient to residents within each neighborhood of the city. Also calls for large community parks with specialized functions or unique locational characteristics to serve residents city-wide.
- *Objective 6 – Maximization of Existing Parks*
Encourages the City to maximize the use of existing City parks consistent with their natural features and carrying capacity through development of appropriate facilities, improved access, and enlargement when feasible.
- *Objective 7 – Riverfront Recreation*
Calls for maximizing the recreational use of the Willamette River shoreland and waterways through development of existing waterfront park lands, by ensuring public access to the waterfront in mixed-use development, by potentially connecting to the 40-mile loop trail system, and by preserving the environmental integrity of sensitive areas.

Parks & Recreation and Milwaukie’s Community Vision

In 2016-2017, the City of Milwaukie underwent an extensive public process to craft a vision and action plan. The process resulted in a new vision statement, with action items to achieve stated goals over the next 20 years. The vision, goals, and actions received input from a variety of people and groups. The City received input from the Vision Advisory Committee (VAC), staff, a technical advisory group, town halls, surveys, City Council, Planning Commission, and many more.

The following priority actions from the [Milwaukie 2040 Vision and Action Plan](#) capture the community’s priorities that are associated with parks and recreation planning:

Place 1.1: Improve walkability and bikeability within the network by creating dedicated bike paths and walking trails that connect transit, neighborhood business hubs and public spaces, including Milwaukie Bay Park

Place 3.1: Ensure that our parks and green spaces are safe, green and clean, with amenities like restrooms, seating areas, play structures, walking paths, parking and covered recreational facilities

Place 3.2: Complete Phase 3 of Milwaukie Bay Park to create spaces for community gathering and the arts and promote the park as a community destination with year-round programming

Place 3.4: Make improvements to Milwaukie Bay Park in a manner that celebrates the river and increases opportunities for waterfront events and access for boats and other water-related recreational activities

Prosperity 3.4: Develop a new public plaza in the south downtown area that can be used for year-round events and enhance the Milwaukie Farmer’s Market

Assets & Trends for Incorporating Parks & Recreation in Planning

It is important to consider Milwaukie’s unique assets, as well as local and national recreation trends when planning for parks and recreation. A few of the most relevant assets and trends are discussed below.

Willamette River is a Key Asset

The Willamette River forms Milwaukie’s western boundary and provides the city with tremendous opportunities for recreation, active transportation, access to nature and scenic beauty, as well as tourism and economic development. Enhancements to the Milwaukie Bay Park provide city residents with improved access to the riverfront, serving as a focal point for community gathering and recreation in the downtown area. Milwaukie’s Vision and Action Plan calls for further park improvements and year-round programming that make Milwaukie Bay a community destination. Elk Rock Island Park and Natural Area and Spring Park Natural Area are also key assets on the river.

Partnership with NCPRD

As discussed above, all of Milwaukie’s parks are owned by the City but managed by the North Clackamas Parks and Recreation District under an intergovernmental agreement. This partnership has a number of benefits. By owning all of its parks, the City exerts some control over where they are located and how they are developed. And the City saves money by allowing NCPRD to manage the operations, maintenance, and programming for the parks. Without the District in place, the City would have to use general fund revenues (diverted from other activities) to manage and maintain its parks and implement parks and recreational programs. Still, this partnership can also present challenges for the City, as discussed under the Opportunities & Challenges section below.

Key Industry Trends

Milwaukie should consider local, regional, and national industry trends in planning for future parks and recreation needs. Both the NCPRD Master Plan, adopted in 2015, and Oregon’s Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) provide research into key industry trends—primarily related to changing community characteristics and evolving preferences and behaviors around parks and recreation. Some of the trends most relevant to Milwaukie are:

- **Active Transportation, Physical Activity and Health** – According to the U.S. Center for Disease Control (CDC), physical activity and active transportation have declined compared to previous generations. The lack of physical activity is a major contributor to the steady rise in rates of obesity, diabetes, heart disease, stroke and other chronic health



Dogwood Dash 5k departs from Milwaukie Bay Park

conditions in the United States. SCORP research indicates that people in Oregon with ready access to outdoor recreation opportunities are healthier than people residing in areas without access to such resources. In response to these implications, communities throughout Oregon are creating programs to support active transportation and to increase access to outdoor recreation—particularly trails for walking, jogging, and biking.

- **Growing Parks Usage in Oregon** – Evidence suggests that park and recreational area usage in Oregon is growing. According to the Oregon Parks & Recreation Department, visits to state parks have generally increased each year. While recent data for local park visits is not available, this trend is likely to have spillover effects for local and regional parks, as general interest in outdoor recreation increases.
- **Interest in Natural Amenities** – The SCORP reported on a statewide survey asking Oregon residents about their priorities for future park planning. Top priority needs are for soft surface walking trails, access to waterways, nature and wildlife viewing areas, playgrounds with natural materials (natural play areas), picnic areas for small groups, and off-street bicycle trails. A survey by NCPRD yielded similar results, with respondents ranking natural area preservation and recreation as their top planning priorities. This represents a clear trend toward interest in natural park amenities, rather than more traditional amenities like manufactured play equipment, baseball fields, etc.
- **Changing Demographics** – Both the NCPRD Master Plan and the Oregon SCORP reported on demographic trends that are influencing future parks planning. Some of the key trends include the aging population and increasing racial and ethnic diversity.
 - *Aging Population:* The SCORP reported that there will be nearly 50 percent more elderly Oregonians in 2020 than in 2010; as of 2018, longer-term projections were unavailable. Accordingly, parks providers have the opportunity to help promote and preserve the health of older adults by encouraging and facilitating their involvement in active outdoor recreation. They should also expect increases in the number of parks visitors with physical or mental disabilities; therefore, accessibility accommodations will be critical.
 - *Increasing Diversity:* Although the minority population in Milwaukie is relatively small, it is steadily growing (as it is in Oregon overall). For example, between 2000 and 2010, the Hispanic and Latino population in the city increased from 4% to 7%. As the population changes, it will be important to understand how different ethnic and racial groups participate in outdoor recreation and the constraints that limit their participation. A series of focus groups conducted by SCORP in 2007 asked Asian-American and Hispanic/Latino community members to discuss their interests and needs related to outdoor recreation. Some of the resulting recommendations included developing facilities (such as picnic areas) large enough for extended families, focusing youth programs on academic enhancement, and various ways to improve marketing and communication to minority groups.

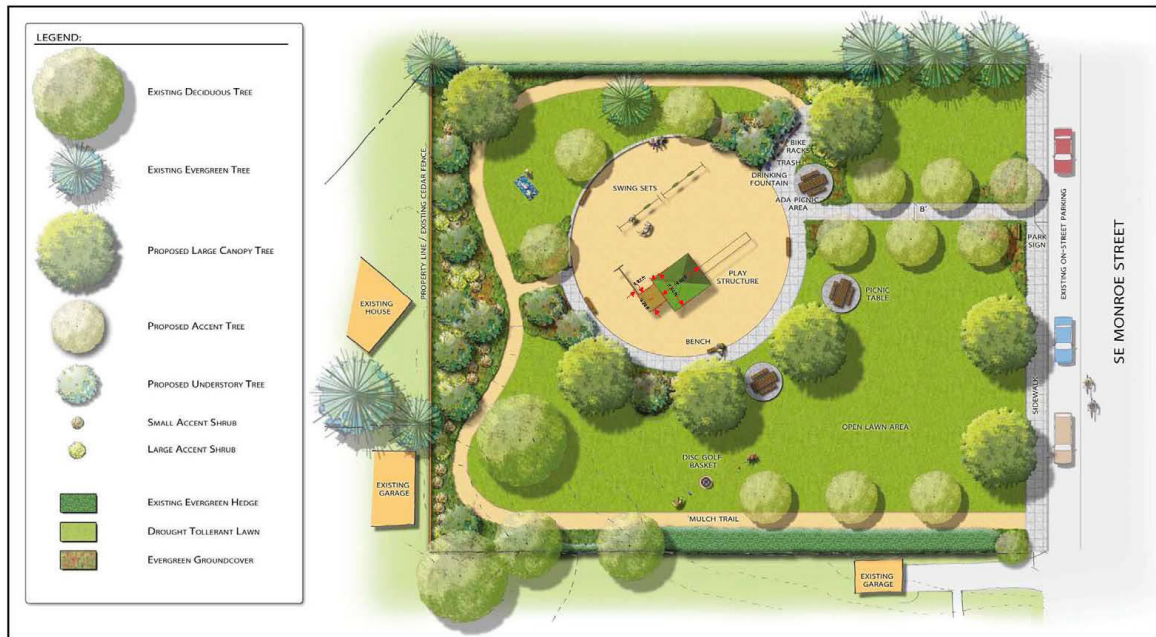
Opportunities & Challenges Influencing Parks & Recreation Planning

In addition to the assets and trends identified above, the City can also take advantage of opportunities to enhance the community’s approach to parks and recreation planning, while recognizing the challenges that Milwaukie currently faces or may face in the future. A few of these key opportunities and challenges are discussed below.

New Parks and Open Spaces

As of 2018, Milwaukie is in the planning and development stages for four new parks or natural areas, in partnership with NCPRD. These parks present opportunities to further the City’s vision, goals, and policies around parks and recreation planning with new facilities.

- **Wichita Park** is a 1-acre parcel in the Linwood neighborhood. The original master plan was adopted into the Milwaukie Comprehensive Plan in 1999 and updated in 2014. In October 2016, NCPRD and the City were awarded a \$265,000 grant from the State of Oregon’s Land and Water Conservation Fund to cover half of the cost. Construction is anticipated to begin in summer 2018, with completion by the end of that year.



Wichita Park Master Plan

- **Balfour Park** is a 0.8-acre, undeveloped neighborhood park site located in the Ardenwald/Johnson Creek neighborhood. The park master plan, adopted in 2015, includes a nature play area, a flexible open lawn, a community garden area, pathways and other neighborhood park elements. The City is currently seeking funding for the park, in partnership with NCPRD.
- **Bowman-Brae Park** is a .69-acre undeveloped neighborhood park located at the intersection of Bowman and Brae Streets, for which funding has not yet been identified. The park master plan, adopted in 2015, includes a small picnic shelter, an accessible play area, picnic tables, a meandering path, and plantings.
- **Robert Kronberg Nature Park** presents a major opportunity to restore native habitat and improve pedestrian and bicycle connections to downtown Milwaukie. The park site comprises approximately 5 acres between Kellogg Lake and McLoughlin Boulevard, just south of the downtown area. In 2016, the City was awarded a nearly \$1.2 million grant from the State of Oregon to build a multi-use path through the nature park, which will connect the Kellogg Creek bike and pedestrian bridge to the Trolley Trail. Also as part of the project, NCPRD will restore habitat for native species and install interpretive signage, overlooks, bird blinds, seating, picnic tables, and a nature play area.

Improved Bicycle and Pedestrian Connections

The City is working to enhance bicycle and pedestrian connections to parks by improving sidewalks, pathways, greenways and bike facilities. This is done primarily through the City’s Bicycle and Pedestrian Accessibility Program that is being funded by the Safe Access For Everyone (SAFE) program. These improved connections will provide safer and more convenient access to parks for more of Milwaukie’s residents. In turn, park trails and pathways provide key connections within the City’s overall bicycle and pedestrian networks, as is the case with the Kronberg Park multi-use walkway discussed above.

Available Land for Parks

Aside from the undeveloped park spaces identified above, Milwaukie is generally built out and has limited land available for new parks. As the city continues to grow, it may be challenging to serve its growing population with adequate park space. Milwaukie’s Comprehensive Plan identifies park provision standards for each of its park classifications (e.g., for neighborhood parks the standard is 1 acre per 1,000 residents). Without opportunities to acquire new park land, the City may be challenged to meet these standards as it grows.

Partnership with NCPRD

As mentioned above, the City's partnership with NCPRD can be seen as both an asset and a challenge. Although Milwaukie saves money by delegating parks management to NCPRD, the City has limited control over how parks are operated and programmed. For example, there have been concerns that the City's neighborhood parks have seen fewer NCPRD-sponsored activities than larger community parks in the District. NCPRD has also faced significant parks funding challenges. According to the 2015 Master Plan, funding is inadequate to maintain the current level of service provided by NCPRD throughout the District or to support additional system growth. The agency has identified finding new funding sources for both capital improvements and strengthened programming and ongoing operations as key action items. The Master Plan also identified the need to update its intergovernmental agreement with Milwaukie to reflect current priorities and operational inefficiencies.

Regulatory Challenges

The way parks are currently regulated in Milwaukie poses a challenge to parks planning. Master Plans for each City park are adopted as ancillary documents to the Comprehensive Plan. This means that any major changes to a park require a Comprehensive Plan amendment, which is a significant barrier to efficient planning. The parks approval process can also be a barrier. Parks are allowed in most zones, but are subject to the Type III Community Service Use review process.

Policy Questions, Observations, and Implications

In determining how the Comprehensive Plan Update can support Milwaukie's Community Vision goals and action items, as well as assets, trends, and challenges, we can consider the following questions and observations:

- Should the updated Recreational Needs Element continue to call for a citywide Parks and Recreation Master Plan, which to-date has never been developed?
 - The Comprehensive Plan should have policies around coordination with NCPRD to effectively guide this critical partnership.
 - Comprehensive Plan policies should better reflect the lack of available land for building new parks.
 - How can the Comprehensive Plan account for current industry trends, including the connections between active transportation and health, increasing parks usage, and increasing interest in natural amenities?
 - How should parks planning adapt to current demographic trends, including the aging population, and increasing ethnic and racial diversity?
 - Should land use regulations for parks be modified to streamline and simplify the approval process? Considerations may include divorcing park facility master plans from the Comprehensive Plan; applying a new parks and open space zoning district (which has already been done for portions of the downtown area); and removing the requirement for Community Service Use review.
 - How can the City continue to improve its pedestrian and bicycle network, with parks serving as key connectors as well as key destinations?
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