

PARKS, PEOPLE, & PLANNING: Open Spaces in Small Places



Lessons learned from a Parks and Open Space Master Plan Update in Coburg, Oregon

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Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	6
Problem	7
What makes Parks Planning in Small Towns Unique?	7
Methodology	8
Research Questions	9
CHAPTER 2: CURRENT PRACTICES FOR PARKS PLANNING.....	11
The History of Public Spaces	11
Small Town Parks Planning	12
Level of Service Guidelines.....	13
Strategies for Public Participation	16
Awareness.....	16
Education.....	17
Access	19
Usefulness.....	20
Funding and Project Prioritization	21
Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan.....	21
CHAPTER 3: PROCESS.....	23
Inventory	24
Public Participation	25
Survey.....	25
Community Workshop.....	27
Citizen Advisory Board.....	28
CHAPTER 4: SUCCESSES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND CHALLENGES	29

Public Participation	29
Citizen Advisory Board	30
Resources	30
System Development Charges	31
Funding	31
Urban Growth Boundary.....	32
CHAPTER 5: LESSONS LEARNED	35
1. Set appropriate Level-of-Service standards	35
2. Make public participation as easy as possible	36
3. Embrace existing culture and values	36
4. Choose low-cost, high yield projects.....	37
5. Understand maintenance costs.....	38
6. Emphasize project prioritization	39
7. Be prepared to deal with resistance to change	39
8. Expect your timeline to be pushed back.....	40
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS	42
APPENDIX A: UTILITY BILL QUESTIONNAIRE.....	44
APPENDIX B: YOUTH SURVEYS.....	48

Executive Summary

As a small, rural city of only 1000 residents, Coburg faces many challenges in updating their Parks and Open Space Master Plan. There are issues of size, density, quality, capacity, and use that are not accounted for in traditional park planning guidelines, which often favor large, urban settings. Current guidelines for parks planning are standardized and methodical, but often fail to provide clear guidance about the more qualitative measures such as public input.

When starting the process of preparing the Parks and Open Space Master Plan Update for the City of Coburg, it seemed that addressing the issue of outdated and misrepresented level-of-service guidelines would be the biggest barrier to a successful plan. However, challenges with organization, community stakeholders, funding mechanisms, and the political issue of expanding the Urban Growth Boundary made the process much more interesting than the content of the plan itself and provided valuable lessons for myself as a student.

This project first began in the summer of 2015, when the City of Coburg approached me with the opportunity to update their parks master plan. While the project has taken longer than initially expected, this left time to learn, grow, and analyze the results of my continued efforts. Since the plan is only half complete at this time, it made more sense to look closely at the tasks that have been accomplished and distill the process into a set of lessons learned.

There is much to be gleaned from the community, the process, and the implementation that may be useful to other planners in pursuit of creating the perfect small town parks plan. Small town open space planners are often limited in staff and funding capacity, face opposition from long-time residents, and juggle multiple responsibilities at once. With the inventory and community outreach portions of the plan complete, there is now time to reflect on the successes and challenges of this process and look for opportunities moving forward.

Eight key lessons were assembled from the process that can be applied to future parks planning in Coburg, or adapted to other planning processes moving forward. These lessons include:

1. Set appropriate Level-of-Service standards
2. Make public participation as easy as possible

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- 3. Embrace existing culture and values
 - 4. Choose low-cost, high yield projects
 - 5. Understand maintenance costs
 - 6. Emphasize project prioritization
 - 7. Be prepared to deal with resistance to change
 - 8. Expect your timeline to be pushed back

These are issues that are relevant to likely all facets of planning, however they are even more evident when dealing with limited resources and funding capacity. While this is not an exhaustive list, it seeks to highlight the highest and lowest points of the update process and suggest recommendations for other planners looking to develop or update a parks and open space master plan.

Chapter 1: Introduction



Figure 1 Map of Coburg, Oregon

Parks and open space provide physical, social, psychological, and economic benefits, along with aesthetic and environmental advantages to communities of all sizes. With increased attention focused on park planning at the turn of the 20th century, city planners asserted that parks should no longer be viewed as amenities, but rather necessities (The Trust for Public Land, 2006). According to the Naturally Fun Report by the Arlington Parks and Recreation Department, parks are essential to, “maintaining the quality of life...and ensuring the health and wellbeing of our residents and visitors.”¹ If parks are so important to overall self and community health, why don’t we spend more time ensuring they meet the needs of communities?

This report seeks to determine how the City of Coburg can plan parks that create and support positive, meaningful relationships between residents and public open spaces. More specifically, this report will focus on the 2016 Parks and Open Space Master Plan process in Coburg, OR. Coburg’s first park master plan was adopted in 2005 and was set to steer the next 20 years of growth with a clear vision for park improvements and land acquisition. Now that 10 years have passed, it is time to update that vision and reimagine what the future holds for Coburg’s parks and open space.

Coburg is located just seven miles north of Eugene in the Willamette Valley. The city has a modest population of just over 1000 people, but is expected to triple in size in the next 20 years after recently upgrading their wastewater system, effectively lifting a long-standing moratorium on growth.

With change imminent, there presents a unique need for a Parks and Open Space Master Plan that can respond to current resident needs, prepare for a future of growth, and identify common themes that help a potentially changing demographic connect with parks and other public open spaces. Data collected from an existing parks inventory and the public participation portion of the parks planning process will be used to evaluate the existing best practices for small town

¹ Arlington Parks and Recreation Department. (2014). *Naturally Fun Report*, Arlington, VA.

parks planning and determine how best to proceed with Coburg's plan for parks and open space.

Problem

As mentioned above, parks and open space are necessary to health and wellness of communities, but small towns with limited resources often have to deal with more pressing issues before grappling with parks. The City of Coburg has operated for a quite some time with only a single planner, who also serves as the City's administrator. Additionally, Coburg is expected to nearly triple in size over the next 20 years. There are plans to deal with this growth by the addition of a new wastewater system and plans to expand the Urban Growth Boundary in the works. More recently, Coburg added a part-time planner and has emerged from a 12-year-long general fund deficit. With all of these changes, it is now necessary for parks and open space planning to take center stage.

What makes Parks Planning in Small Towns Unique?

Currently, many parks are planned based on Level of Service (LOS) guidelines that use the ratio of acres per 1000 residents to determine if the community's needs are being met.² Though in recent times planners have discovered that this measurement of quantity is not sufficient, there is no new standard for how to determine if the quality of current and future parks meets resident's needs. Some places, like Colorado, have determined new LOS standards specific to towns and cities smaller than 10,000 people. Recognizing the expense of land and limited capacity of small towns, Colorado has significantly lowered the threshold for LOS guidelines within their smaller communities.³ This means that less acreage is required per 1000 residents.

In a state like Oregon that requires growth management in the form of Urban Growth Boundaries, space is limited and expansion is often a lengthy process, requiring that existing open spaces be used to their full potential. Further, budgetary constraints do not allow for the

What are Level of Service standards?

"Level-of-service (LOS) standards are measures of the minimum amount of a public facility which must be provided to meet that community's basic needs and expectations. LOS measures are typically expressed as ratios of facility capacity to the number of users. For example, a community may set a standard for how many park acres are needed per 1000 population."²

² Level of service standards. (2016, January 8). Retrieved May 27, 2016, from <http://mrsc.org/Home/Explore-Topics/Planning/General-Planning-and-Growth-Management/Level-of-Service-Standards-in-Plain-English.aspx>

³ State of Colorado. *Small Community Park & Recreation Planning Standards*. RPI Consulting Inc. (2003) http://www.town.ridgway.co.us/parkscommittee/2003_Parks_Standards_DoLA.pdf

“The parks are beautiful and need to be maintained, as they are at the center of our town. Clean, manicured, landscaped parks show community pride.” – Anonymous Coburg Resident

necessary research to be conducted determining what level-of-service standards should exist and often limit options when considering park improvements. Finally, small towns also face the issue of staff capacity and limited resources and are unable to engage the public in the process as much as they would like.

There is very limited research on small town parks planning procedures, especially local resources specific to Oregon. With master plans a lengthy yet required part of the planning process, small towns should have resources available to them to prepare a comprehensive and extensive parks and open space plan that can be used for the next 20 years of parks planning.

Methodology

This report will focus on the process of conducting a Parks and Open Space Master Plan update, with specific interest in ensuring quality over quantity in park facilities and amenities as the City moves into the next phase of growth. Existing amenities will be inventoried and a public survey will allow residents to determine where gaps exist in service. Community workshops and social media hosted by the city will provide additional opportunities for public participation.

Through applied, practical research, I will present lessons learned from the experience of updating the City of Coburg’s Parks and Open Space Master Plan, with the hope that this information can be used to guide this process in other small towns. Additionally, I will research existing public participation processes that dive deep into user preferences, develop an inventory and site analysis of open spaces or parks in Coburg, and determine how these parks are being used in their current form. A community workshop, input from a Citizen Advisory Board, and a city-wide questionnaire will ultimately help to inform the 2016 City of Coburg Parks and Open Space Master Plan.

This research will use qualitative analysis to determine how residents and visitors interact with Coburg's parks in their current form and use this data to inform the 2016 Parks and Open Space Master Plan update process. It will also determine best practices for other small towns to consider when planning for parks and open space. This research will use the following methodology:

- Consult secondary research on the topic of best practices for small town parks and open space planning, focusing specifically on the public participation process and level-of-service guidelines.
- Develop an inventory of existing parks and open space, as well as complete a site analysis all parks.
- Obtain data from the Coburg Parks and Open Space Master Plan public participation process. This information includes opinions of the Citizen Advisory Board, community workshop data, and public survey information.

The information gathered will be used to create a list of lessons learned from the update process that can be used as best practices for other small towns looking to create a Parks and Open Space Master Plan. These lessons will focus on overcoming the challenges of resource capacity, funding, and the public participation process by answering the following research questions.

Research Questions

This report seeks to answer the following questions:

- How can we plan high-quality outdoor spaces that anticipate growth, but uphold the values of a small, rural town?
- How can we do this while facing challenges of capacity, size constraint, and funding?
- What are some lessons other small towns can learn from the Coburg Parks and Open Space Master Plan Update?



Figure 2 Agenda for the Coburg Community Workshop

These research questions will guide the process of developing the first part of the plan, and ultimately lead to determining a set of lessons learned that will help guide future creation and application of the plan. This report will highlight some of the important history of park planning, discuss a variety of current guidelines for parks planning, and walk through the process of the Coburg Parks and Open Space Master Plan update. The lessons learned will emerge from both this research and field work in community participation.

Chapter 2: Current Practices for Parks Planning

Previous literature on parks and open space planning has commonly focused on the environment, infrastructure and urban design, economic benefits, and social and psychological constructs. While these topics are often explored in detail for urban centers, this report will focus mainly on how small towns can capitalize on this existing research and best practices and apply it to smaller spaces.

The History of Public Spaces

Jane Jacobs was a pioneer in the study of public spaces, often working in her urban home of Greenwich Village, with a focus on cities as integrated systems.⁴ She did not have a formal education, but instead used observation and experience to guide her principles. She asserted that parks should not be seen as stand-alone or isolated features of a city, but rather should be planned holistically with attention to how people feel and act when using a public space. Her work can easily be translated into small town parks planning procedures, despite the fact that she resided in a city. A small town like Coburg has a concentrated population, and not coincidentally, park spaces near the city center. Activity in their parks is what keeps people feeling safe and what draws them in to use the facilities.

Though Jacobs was one of the first to identify that we need eyes on public spaces, behavioral research of park users began with William H. Whyte in the 1970's with his project, *Street Life Project*.⁵ For 16 years he observed pedestrians in New York City before publishing his book on the matter, *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces*.⁶ Whyte believed in planning parks from the bottom-up, rather than top-down, by observing how people interact with public spaces and did not just focus on those within the park. He found that those who simply appreciate the park



Photo credit: Craig Tomlinson

⁴ Jacobs, J. (1961). *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Vintage Books.

⁵ Whyte, W. H. and P. f. P. *Spaces* (2001). *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces*, Project for Public Spaces.



Photo credit: Trip Advisor 1

from a distance, or walk by the park daily should also be considered in parks planning. This is the beginning of the idea that as planners, we should meet people where they are to engage in the public participation process. Often, we request that people attend a workshop or fill out a survey, but we don't always make it easy or welcoming for them to be there. Whyte's research suggests that those who are not engaging in the common forms of a public participation process should still be engaged somehow, though methods for participation vary.

Finally, a Danish architect by the name of Jan Gehl, author of *Life between Buildings*, focused his research on the form and use of public space.⁷ His contribution to this field of study lies in developing the methodology for how to use qualitative research to assess public spaces and their users, as well as defining and activating public urban spaces. Additionally, Gehl introduced the idea of well-designed parks being necessary for optional recreational activities. He suggested that people will always use public open spaces for necessary outdoor activity, regardless of design or aesthetics, but questioned if people would use these same spaces for optional activities, for example socially interacting with neighbors and friends in a park. He determined that users must be drawn into the space for the optional activities, and that parks need an increase in optional activity-users in order to thrive.

Though many of these professionals focused on city life, they did so at a neighborhood scale, making the translation to small town planning much easier. Though limited research has been conducted on the specifics of small town parks planning, likely due to issues of funding, interest, or capacity, some states and counties have put together information that takes what Jacobs, Whyte, and Gehl observed and presents strategies for improving the small town planning process.

Small Town Parks Planning

Parks planning in small towns is not unlike planning parks for big cities, however greater challenges present themselves with the inability to dedicate time and money to creating the plan. Small cities face additional challenges of dealing with scale. Park sizes that may be appropriate

⁷ Gehl, J. (2011). *Life between Buildings: Using Public Space*, Island Press.

for large cities are not appropriate for small towns, though it may still be suggested that parks 15+ acres in size be developed. Some larger cities even have a dedicated staff member just for parks and open space, something a small town would never have. Thus, small towns must rely on existing research and materials to complete the process. Two documents that are often used are the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) level of service (LOS) guidelines and the State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP).

Level of Service Guidelines

In 1983, the NRPA set level of service standards for minimum facilities in acreage needed for each 1000 people.⁸ In this method parks are classified by size into the categories of: mini parks (between 2500 sq. ft. and 1 acre), neighborhood parks (5-10 acres), school parks (size varies), community parks (30-50 acres), natural resource areas, greenways, sports complexes, and private parks, all of varying sizes. A service radius is then drawn around each park to determine how many potential users each park has, and the number of park acres/resident is calculated. If not enough and the ratio is too low, that park type must be increased.

For many years, this was a reliable and standardized tool used for parks planning. It uses hard data to determine if park systems are adequate, and served as the “business-as-usual” model for planners. This method uses size as a primary evaluation tool, but does not take into account distance to park, quality of park amenities/experience, and connectivity of the park system. Additionally, it is based on urban needs, and not those of rural communities. Research of Jacobs, Whyte, and Gehl determined that these missing qualities are all important to building spaces that are welcoming and accessible to the public.

More recently however, the NRPA has recognized the limitations of setting quantity-based LOS standards, and as such, they are now referred to as guidelines. These guidelines can be both appropriate and useful for planners looking for information about how big a football field should be or if they are in the range of having adequate parkland for their population. These guidelines should not be used as indicators of sufficiency, but rather as the beginning steps for determining where to grow and by how much.

⁸ National Recreation and Park Association. (n.d.). Retrieved May 23, 2016, from <http://www.nrpa.org/>

What do you like most about Coburg's parks? "[They are] walking distance from homes. The walking trails combine the nature element with the city." –Anonymous Coburg Resident

Park System Model

In response to the dated NRPA park system model, a new model sets similar standards, but looks at the park system holistically, taking into account accessibility, connectivity, and quality. Seymour Gold, a professor and leading researcher in the field of park use and recreation planning, was a pioneer in expanding the way planners think about size-based level-of-service planning. Instead, he suggested that planners think about non-spatial factors of parks planning, most importantly people.⁹ He also focused on the non-use of parks, and stated quite frankly that if parks aren't working in their current location they should be relocated or reimagined to fit the users need.

While this model works in theory, there are certain aspects of it that are not easily adapted to small town parks planning. The idea that if a park space isn't working then it should be abandoned and relocated is not feasible without resources and additional land acquisition. Additionally, this is a rather academic and idealistic way of thinking about parks planning, concerned primarily with abstract ideas and is not an implementation-focused strategy. Reimagining park space, however, may be an important task for small town planners to grapple with. Often with the NRPA guidelines we are concerned about acquiring more land, but maintenance of existing parks can sometimes be lost in the excitement of developing new spaces.

Modified LOS for Small Towns

Colorado recognized the need for small towns to be able to properly plan for parks and open space easily and on an appropriate level. As most of the governmental jurisdictions fall into a category of less than 10,000 people, and traditional parks planning methods are meant for urban locations, the state decided to develop a guide specific to the needs of communities 10,000 people or less. The report states that, "Every jurisdiction should have confidence in the applicability, appropriateness, and defensibility of standards presented in this report but all communities should engage in at least minimal planning and community input prior to utilizing general park standards."³

⁹ Marcus, C. C. and C. Francis (1997). *People Places: Design Guidelines for Urban Open Space*, John Wiley & Sons.

One standard set by the State of Colorado looks at demand and capacity to determine the need and feasibility of acquiring new land, rather than looking strictly at acreage per 1000 residents to determine a need for more space. The report suggests using the following questions to calculate the need and demand for new spaces.³

- 1) What is the citizen demand for various parks and recreation resources? That is, how much or how often are small community residents using softball fields, bike trails, playgrounds, etc?
- 2) What is the capacity for various recreation resources? That is, how many citizens can a softball field or playground accommodate? Or put another way, if there is demand for softball fields, how many will our community need to meet that demand?
- 3) Given demand and capacity for certain facilities, how much land will be needed to accommodate those facilities? This is typically expressed in acreage per capita. Or more specifically, acreage per 1000 residents.

Further, the report suggests that planners completely change the way they look at LOS guidelines. Currently, cities use the NRPA model because it is easy and methodical, and much cheaper than preparing a lengthy study on quality, use, or spatial location. Instead of breaking parks and open space into separate categories based on size and amenities, planners should set a standard guideline for open space acreage for small communities. In this report, Colorado uses 14 acres/1000 residents, to be split up by size depending on the community.³

Additionally, small town park planners should look at characteristics other than size to determine park and open space needs. Especially in a town like Coburg, that barely exceeds 1000 residents, other methods for standards should be considered. These may include proximity to residents and dense neighborhoods, quality of current park facilities and amenities, or participation in and use of parks.



Figure 3 Coburg Community Workshops

Modern Parks Planning

Other professionals have begun using quality as a standard for parks planning rather than quantity. David Barth, AICP, is a prominent parks planner in modern times. A planner and landscape architect by profession, Barth has taken a typical parks planning process to the next level by developing what he calls, “High Performance Public Spaces®”. These spaces are created through “statistically valid quantitative techniques, including random mail/telephone surveys and GIS-based level-of-service analysis of park acreage, facilities, programs, access and quality.”¹⁰ These integrated techniques provide a broader picture of the needs present within the community because they incorporate somewhat ambiguous qualities of open spaces that cannot be calculated without talking directly to the people using these spaces. Access and quality especially, are often overlooked in the planning process, but are essential to creating welcoming public spaces.

Strategies for Public Participation

The literature on public participation strategies for planning seems to highlight four main factors that are necessary to properly engaging the public. These include making the public aware of the planning process, educating the public about the issues, making the spaces accessible, and making it useful for all parties involved.¹¹ Combining all four techniques ensures that you are reaching the largest audience possible to receive the most valuable public input for a most holistic park and open space master plan.

Awareness

The first step to a successful public participation process is making the public aware that the plan is being prepared, that there are various ways to provide input, and that there will be an effort to build consensus. It is important to broadcast information over a variety of channels

¹⁰ Bartram, S. (2014, September 01). Advancing Parks and the Public Realm. *Parks & Recreation*. Retrieved May 16, 2016, from <http://www.parksandrecreation.org/2014/September/Advancing-Parks-and-the-Public-Realm/>

¹¹ Mishkowiak, D. (2004, November). *Crafting an Effective Plan for Public Participation* from https://www.uwsp.edu/cnr-ap/clue/Documents/publicProcesses/Crafting_Effective_Plan_for_Public_Participation.pdf

including print, media, and word of mouth. Recently, social media has become a new method by which governments can draw-in crowds they might not usually see at community workshops, such as young professionals or limited English speakers.¹²

Another key to awareness is transparency. According to a manual released by Raleigh Department of Parks and Recreation, it is of the utmost importance to be clear about the roles and responsibilities of the government and the public in this process.¹³ Creating a clear timeline and communication plan and advertising the event in multiple, straightforward ways is essential to successful community involvement.

Education

Oftentimes, participants have limited knowledge of what comprehensive parks plans say and do. In order to provide input, a participant should understand the purpose of the document, what kinds of input they are being asked to give, how this input will be used in the future, and what the ultimate goal of the document is. Some possible techniques to present this information include presentations, exhibits, and open houses.¹³

Understanding the purpose and content of the document is important, however, it is also important for the participants to understand the options and alternatives.¹⁴ When preparing for a community workshop the information presented, including all the options and alternatives, should be objective and not leading. The participant should be able to make educated decisions and provide input that shows clear understanding and is not based on the bias of the leader. When there are active participants engaging in the conversation, they are more likely to learn and grow from one another as well.

¹² Public Participation and Social Media. (n.d.). Retrieved May 16, 2016, from <http://web1.ctaa.org/webmodules/webarticles/anmviewer.asp?a=2336>

¹³ Raleigh (North Carolina). Public Participation Guidelines for Park Planning. City of Raleigh, North Carolina. (2012).

¹⁴ Sauk County (Wisconsin). *Sauk County Comprehensive Plan: Public Participation and Education Plan*. (2008) From <http://sauk.uwex.edu/files/2010/08/Sauk-Public-Participation-Plan.pdf>

2016 Parks and Open Space Master Plan Update for Coburg, Oregon



WHAT?

This Master Plan will provide a long-range vision for parks and open space planning in Coburg. It will guide the appropriate use of lands and determine what improvements should be made and where.

WHY?

Open spaces provide physical, social, psychological, and economic benefits to communities of all sizes. The City of Coburg developed their first parks plan in 2005 to plan for the next 20 years of growth. Since 10 years have passed, it is now time to update the vision and create a capital improvements plan for future projects.

HOW?

Working with a Citizen Advisory Board comprised of members of Coburg's Parks/Tree Committee, a graduate student from the University of Oregon will develop a Parks and Open Space Master Plan Update using the methodology below.

PARK	CLASSIFICATION	SIZE (ACRES)
Norma Pfeiffer Park	Neighborhood Park	1.73
Pavilion Park	Mini Park	0.48
Jacob Spores Park	Mini Park	0.30
Wetland Park	Natural Area Park	21.01
Coburg Community Charter School	Other: School Grounds	5.90
The Booth-Kelly Trail	Linear Park	1.17

*Other open spaces includes Coburg Loop Path, Armitage County Park, and Green Island
 **Classifications not present in Coburg: Community Park and Pocket Parks

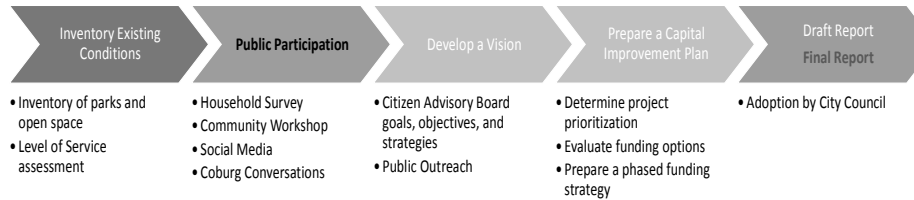


Figure 4 Handout for community workshop

Access

In order for all people to have the opportunity to experience the wealth of benefits that come with using urban parks, the space itself and the opportunity to help plan it must be easily accessible. Defining accessibility can be tricky because it can refer to either “place” accessibility or “people” accessibility.¹⁵ Note also that accessibility is a perceived notion, and that this term can vary in meaning from user to user. The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines accessibility as being, “able to be reached or approached, and easy to appreciate or understand.”¹⁵ With increasing importance placed on accessibility, it is necessary for park planners to make a clear distinction between the two, while also seeing the two points-of-view as necessary lenses with which to view the planning process. Planners can do this by both by physical means and by removing social, political, racial, or gender-based barriers that prevent users from feeling comfortable in public open space.

Place Accessibility

One definition, or lens, of accessibility is “place” accessibility. This refers to the physical space and geographic location of the park, or how people can physically access the park.¹⁵ Maybe a park is not located near a residential community or has a gate surrounding it, closing it off to visitors and making the space feel unsafe or unwelcoming. Additionally, a park may be in a nice residential neighborhood, but if not a single person uses it, this might allude to place inaccessibility. In either case, good park design can play a role in increasing traffic, interest, and eyes on the park.

People Accessibility

The lens of accessibility that focuses on people can be slightly more abstract and complex as it is a perceived feeling that goes beyond the spatial dimensions of the site. An open space can be perceived as accessible to one party, while inaccessible to another. Good park planning works to degrade social, informational, and behavioral constructs that prohibit certain users



Figure 5 Community workshop flyer

¹⁵ Wang, D., Mateo-Babino, I., Brown, G. (2013) *Rethinking Accessibility in Planning of Urban Open Space Using an Integrative Theoretical Framework*. State of Australian Cities Conference.

from feeling comfortable in a space, by looking at both the spatial and non-spatial aspects of the park.¹⁵

A new notion in public participation is to “meet people where they’re at”¹⁶. Instead of planning a community workshop in City Hall and asking the public to come to you, research suggests you should bring the workshop to the public. This might mean attending citywide events, going to a park and engaging users who are already there, or targeting a specific demographic by entering into their space. Some of the populations left out of the process may include the elderly, children, non-white populations, disabled, or non-English speakers. Special care must be taken to ensure these voices are heard.

Usefulness

The content of the community workshop should have a clear purpose and goal, and the time spent should be useful to both the participant and the leader. A useful process requires all three of the previous steps of making the public aware of the event, making the event accessible, and educating the participants about the process and the content of the document. Public interaction and public partnerships are two of the highest types of participation according to a public participation guide created by Sauk County, Wisconsin.¹⁴ An example of public interaction could be doing a visioning exercise during a community workshop that allows participants to voice concerns about issues and decide on the future of parks and open space in their community. An example of public partnership could be a citizen advisory board coming to agreement on an issue and deciding what types of projects to implement in the future.

¹⁶ Minnesota. Department of Transportation. *Engaging Stakeholders in the Safe Routes to School Planning Process*. Alta Planning & Design. (2014). From http://www.dot.state.mn.us/mnsaferoutes/assets/downloads/srts_engagement_guide.pdf

Funding and Project Prioritization

Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan

The Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan is a document created by the state as a five-year vision of parks and open space planning.¹⁷ The document is required for any state that wishes to receive funding from the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). Further, the SCORP is used by local jurisdictions to help guide parks and open space planning by providing information and recommendations at a statewide level.

The most recent iteration of the SCORP in Oregon is entitled *2013-2017: Ensuring Oregon's Outdoor Legacy*, and was developed by the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD). OPRD conducted a statewide survey receiving over 8,000 responses and making it the first statistically reliable SCORP survey in the U.S. The plan identified the top five statewide planning initiatives to be:

- Providing adequate funds for routine and preventative maintenance and repair of facilities.
- Funding major rehabilitation of existing outdoor recreation facilities at the end of their useful life.
- Adding more recreational trails and better trail connectivity between parks and communities.
- Recognizing and strengthen park and recreation's role in increasing physical activity in Oregon's population.
- Recommending a standard set of sustainable park practices for outdoor recreation providers.

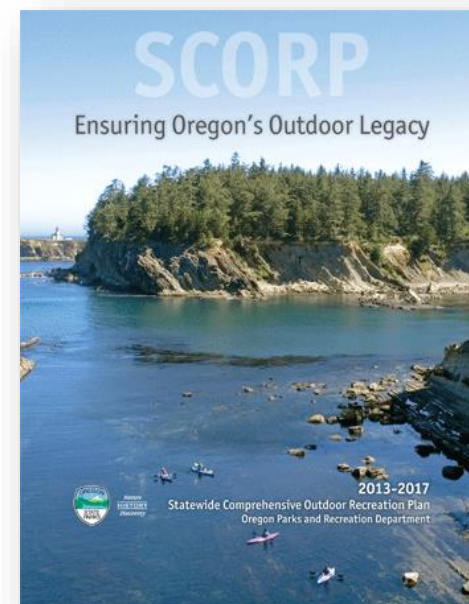


Figure 6 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan 2013-2017

¹⁷ Oregon. Oregon Parks and Recreation Department. *2013-2017 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan: Ensuring Oregon's Outdoor Legacy*.

These issues help the state understand and prioritize what kinds of projects they will fund using the Land and Water Conservation Fund. The state has developed an Open Project Selection Process to provide clear objectives and guidelines for the grant funding process. These criteria include: SCORP Criteria (consistency with statewide priorities, local needs and benefits, and long-term commitment to maintenance), Overall Site Sustainability Criteria, Community Support and Financial Commitment Criteria, and Discretionary Support Criteria.

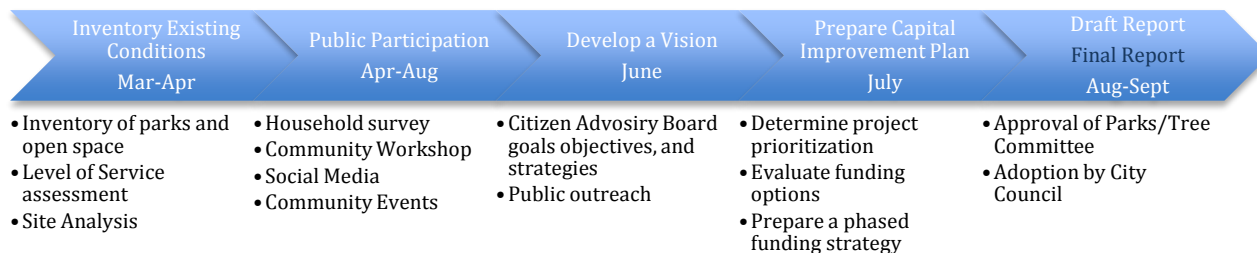
It is important for small communities to prioritize projects based on the needs identified in the SCORP if they would like to receive state funding. The project selection process conducted by LCWF is based on the criteria above and is out of 100 possible points, 65 of which are dedicated to meeting SCORP criteria. The higher the score your project receives, the greater the chance a community will have to receive funding.

The current practices for parks planning highlighted above have informed Coburg's Parks and Open Space Master Plan Update process and will be used to conclude the public participation process, develop a strong and succinct vision moving forward, and ultimately help to determine the order and type of projects Coburg will see in the future.

Chapter 3: Process

Planning for this project first began in spring of 2015 by identifying the need for a Parks and Open Space Master Plan update. The previous iteration of the plan was completed in 2005 with the intention of serving future populations with a vision for improved open space and park improvements. This plan identified that Coburg’s population in 2004 was 1,050 people, but that it was expected to increase to 3,327 by 2025. The population stagnated over the past 10 years, and remains steady at 1,065 (2014), however according to a 2014 Urbanization Study, by 2034 the population is expected to triple to 3,363.¹⁸

The scope of work for this project dictated that due to the magnitude of work, the project be broken up into two phases. In Phase 1, the inventory of existing parks be completed, a survey of all residents be distributed, and a community workshop be developed to provide general direction for vision and improvements. Additionally, the City’s Parks/Tree Committee was asked to serve as a Citizen Advisory Board, providing recommendations and guidance along the way. Phase 2, which has not yet been completed, will continue to focus the vision and goals, identify a five-year capital improvement plan, and evaluate funding options for a phased strategy for land acquisition and park improvements.



¹⁸ Coburg (Oregon). *Coburg Urbanization Study Update*. Lane Council of Governments. (2014). http://www.coburgoregon.org/sites/default/files/documents/urbanization/2010_2014CoburgUrbanizationStudy_withADDENDUM.e.pdf

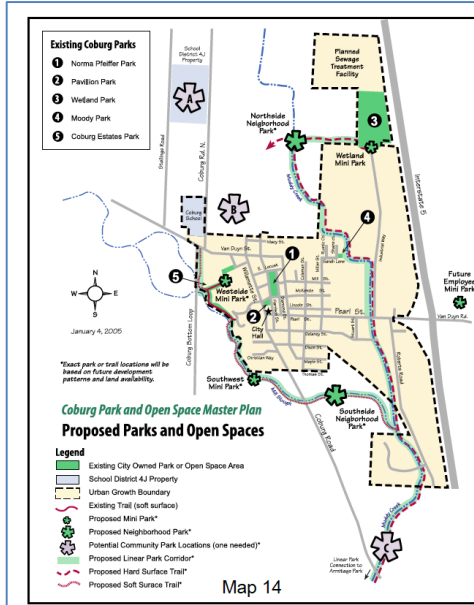


Figure 7 Existing parks in Coburg from the 2005 Parks and Open Space Master Plan

Inventory

A complete parks and open space inventory was completed based on NRPA standards to begin identifying future open space needs. Since no new parks have been added since the previous iteration of the Parks and Open Space Master Plan, updates were only made to names, and sizes were documented. Additionally, new amenities have been added to the parks such as a covered community picnic area, and most recently a new playground structure. These will be documented in the site analysis portion of the report.

The inventory of parks includes six total as shown in the table below.

SIZE (ACRES)	1.73	0.48	0.30	21.01	5.90	1.17
NAME	Norma Pfeiffer Park	Pavilion Park	Jacob Spores Park	Wetland Park	Coburg Community Charter School	The Booth-Kelly Trail
CLASSIFICATION	Neighborhood Park	Mini Park	Mini Park	Natural Park Area	Other: School Grounds	Linear Park

The majority of Coburg's parks are under 2 acres, which are not particularly useful for large community events. The Wetland Park is over 20 acres, however in its current state it is nearly unusable. The park is primarily wetland area, and it not maintained enough for extensive use. Additionally, public feedback has shown that this park is rarely used anyway. Though the school's acreage is ideal for a community park, it is only accessible on the weekends and after school hours. The missing piece from Coburg's park is space that is larger than 2 acres, and well suited for large events.

Standards for park planning are primarily based on those set forth by the National Recreation and Park Association. According to NRPA standards, the City has sufficient parkland when

calculated as total park land/1000 residents, however it is lacking in the category of community parks. Community parks are greater than 4 acres, but less than 15. Right now, the City of Coburg does not own land sufficient to support a park this size; however acquiring the land was part of the previous set of recommendations for park improvements. Moving forward, the City has looked at expanding the Urban Growth Boundary, which will provide the necessary space to expand the park system.

Further analysis of open space standards will require looking at quality, density, and spatial location rather than just quantity of land as compared to the number of residents.

Public Participation

A large portion of the update process requires varied efforts of public participation. Initially, the scope of work called for a public utility bill questionnaire, community workshop, and input from a Citizen Advisory Board comprised of Coburg's Parks/Tree Committee members. As evident from the historically sufficient indicators for parks planning as indicated by the NRPA, this is the bare minimum for parks planning as it provides a statistically valid survey, the opportunity for community members at large to offer their opinions in a public setting, and allows stakeholders planning process.

Survey

Based on the survey created for the previous iteration of the Coburg Parks and Open Space Master Plan, a new survey was developed that asked 15 questions regarding demographics, current use, likes and dislikes, and needed improvements (Appendix A: Utility Bill Questionnaire). Changes to the survey were based on research of other master plan updates, input from the Citizen Advisory Board, and advice from the City's planning director. Notably, one key difference was the addition of the option to state that Coburg does not need any future upgrades, nor does it require funding any other major projects. Additionally, options for additional amenities were added such as community gardens and splash pads, which became popular only recently.



Figure 8 Coburg Parks and Open Space Master Plan Update Community Workshop

The survey was developed in April 2016, initially intended for distribution by the end of that month. Because the survey was based on a copy previously accepted by the City Council, it was not required to go through a formal acceptance process, thus making the distribution fairly simple. The topic of who would receive the survey was debated heavily, leading to a delay in the distribution. The Citizen Advisory Board recommended that all residents, including the fire district, and businesses receive the survey through a direct mailing. This decision came from the fact that many fire district residents use Coburg's parks and open space and should have a say in their future development.

This recommendation was not taken in full for two reasons. The first reason is that a direct mailing is a significant cost to the City, amounting to over \$500. Second, although residents of the fire district use many of the parks, they do not pay City taxes to help fund the improvements. It was determined that fire district residents could be invited to attend the community workshop, participate in social media surveys, and provide input during community outreach events.

Ultimately, the survey was distributed in the monthly utility bill to all tax paying residents and businesses, accompanied by an invitation to attend the community workshop. The only cost to the City was in printing, as the mailing costs were already accounted for, and the survey was also available online to anyone outside the City looking to provide input. As of June 2016, 57 survey responses were recorded.

An additional set of surveys was created and distributed to Coburg's youth. Though they were not statistically valid as they only reached children who attend the Coburg Community Charter School, they did provide insight into the activities that children enjoy doing. Two surveys were created, one for elementary and one for middle school aged children. For the younger audience, the surveys were developed so that students could draw pictures, write poems, or list words to describe what they enjoyed doing in parks and what they wish they could do in parks. The survey developed for older children was a modified version of the utility bill survey, adapted to be more accessible to a younger crowd. Examples of both surveys can be found in Appendix B: Youth Surveys.

Community Workshop

The community workshop was used to engage the public in an activity in visioning, reflecting, and dreaming. On May 12th from 5:30-7:30 pm, a community workshop was hosted in the covered area of Norma Pfeiffer Park, located just east of the City's main street. The event was advertised around town, listed on the City's website and Facebook page, and sent out in a flyer through the monthly water bill. Additionally, the neighborhood directly surrounding the park was canvassed with save the date tags and conversations with neighbors.

Eleven residents, City Councilors, Parks/Tree Committee members, and City Staff attended the workshop. Light refreshments were provided as well as handouts explaining the purpose and goals of the Master Plan, as well as agendas for the workshop. To begin the workshop, each participant shared his or her name, occupation, and favorite activity to do outdoors. This helped connect each community member and encourage them to feel comfortable sharing. The agenda included an explanation of Parks and Open Space Master Plans, an update of what had been accomplished thus far (park inventory, survey, community outreach), an introduction to vision, goals, and strategies, and three activities to help determine the future of Coburg's parks.

The first activity was entitled visioning, and asked participants to say one word they would want to use to describe the future of Coburg's parks. Many of the words included maintenance or landscaping, indicating that whatever changes are made to the park, they should be done with care and City pride. Additionally, participants were each given a book of pictures that contained 12 images of park amenities. They were asked to discuss with the group, which amenities they would like to see in Coburg, and which were not welcome there. Surprisingly, many residents were in agreement when given the opportunity to discuss their reasoning for liking or disliking something. Key takeaways from this activity were that the community was very interested in having a community park large enough to host summer events, and that they would be interested in smaller improvements such as community gardens and a splash pad water feature for kids.

The second activity was entitled reflecting, and requested that participants discuss likes and dislikes of current park infrastructure. It was made clear that the group should not get bogged down in small complaints, but rather try to keep the ideas higher level and broad ranging. This,



Figure 9 Coburg Parks and Open Space Master Plan Update Community Workshop

of course, did not happen for the entire discussion as many residents had small complaints about noise, loitering, and “riff-raff”, however some key points were made that can be used to improve Coburg’s parks. Namely, maintenance of existing structures and community pride were two of the ideas that made for the bulkiest discussion.

Finally, the third activity was dreaming. The participants were asked to design their dream community park in teams using the amenities and improvements discussed in earlier activities, while keeping in mind the visioning words developed in activity one. Each team was given approximately ten minutes to draw before being given a new task. This task was to then prioritize the implementation of each of their proposed upgrades. Each team had very similar designs, all including splash pads, band shells, and sports fields, however they prioritized them differently. Some wanted trails and landscaping done first, while others wanted the large amenities to draw the initial crowds. The team with planning staff on it wanted to prioritize acquiring the land first.

Citizen Advisory Board

A key component to both the survey development and community workshop facilitation was the Citizen Advisory Board (CAB). The CAB is comprised of members of Coburg’s Parks/Tree Committee who have volunteered to serve a yearlong term working as a recommendation body to City Council. As part of the scope of work, I acted as the City representative at the meeting, helping to answer planning related questions, relay questions and comments to other City Staff, and direct the Parks and Open Space Master Plan update process. Meetings were attended once a month, where previous accomplishments were presented and upcoming tasks assigned.

Chapter 4: Successes, Opportunities, and Challenges

Planning for high-quality parks and open spaces anywhere can be a challenge, however in small towns those challenges can sometimes seem insurmountable. Coburg is a city that is expected to nearly triple in size over the next twenty years, but does not currently have the funding, infrastructure, or support to do so. Additionally, as with any public process, planning for future growth has been slow and tedious, often facing opposition to change along the way. Throughout the Master Plan update process these challenges were taken in stride, but acknowledged so that we can learn from our mistakes.

With Phase one nearly complete, evaluating the accomplishments thus far has shown that there have been both successes and challenges that can be learned from as we move into phase two of the project.

Public Participation

The public participation efforts for the Coburg Parks and Open Space Master Plan Update so far have consisted of developing a survey for all residents, for elementary school aged children, and for middle school students, in addition to hosting a community workshop and taking comments at community events. While both of these processes have been successful, they are not sufficient to fully engage the public and allow all residents to participate.

The successes in public participation have come from working outside the box to try to gather as much input as possible. Initially, the scope of work only called for a city-wide utility bill survey, however, after conversations with the Citizen Advisory Board and looking back on the feedback gathered from the previous master plan, it was decided that youth should have the opportunity to provide input, as children are often heavier users of parks than adults. Another success can be seen in the community workshop. Although the event attracted only eleven people (1% of the population!), hosting it in the park was a good way to meet people where they already spend their time. Although it would have been wonderful to have more people, the event was small enough that every voice had multiple opportunities to share their opinions.

*“It is so important that what we have already-parks, streets, toilets-are kept clean and tidy. First impressions as a visitor mean everything.”-
Anonymous Coburg Resident*

The major challenges with public participation are engaging those who don't usually participate in the process. Many of the attendees of the community workshop were the same people who took the survey and provided input at other community events. Even after canvassing the neighborhood surrounding the City's major parks and having one-on-one conversations with neighbors, the attendees of the community workshop were all people that had previously been involved with the update or volunteered their time for the City.

After not reaching a wide enough audience for public participation efforts in phase one, there is a new plan for increased outreach. Based on the success of thinking outside of the box for the survey, a new plan for public outreach includes tabling at community events during the summer and asking for feedback using social media, such as the City's Facebook page.

Citizen Advisory Board

Many planning projects often include working with a stakeholder group as a recommending body for visioning, public participation, and project identification and prioritization. The stakeholders might emerge from an existing committee or are selected by the City to represent a wide variety of interests. For this project, the existing Parks/Tree Committee was selected to serve as the Citizen Advisory Board, acting as a recommending body for the update. While this is an integral and useful part of the planning process, many challenges have emerged from working so closely with this group.

The committee was created during the creation of the initial parks and open space master plan to work directly and specifically on that project. At that time, it was solely representing parks and open space and was known as the Park Committee. In the years that followed, the group remained active and eventually merged with the Tree Committee and developed a set of by-laws, though it is still not formally recognized.

Resources

In small towns, resources are limited and often more difficult to access. These resources refer to funding mechanisms, staff time, and existing knowledge bases. While many larger cities have parks and recreation departments, or even just a dedicated park and open space planner, small communities often have only one planner who does everything. Coburg faces this issue in that

the City's Planning Director, Petra Schuetz, is also the City Administrator, and there is only one other part time employee who does planning work. Additionally, there are Public Works staff who take care of park and tree maintenance. It seems nearly impossible that any small town, with limited funding, is able to complete a comprehensive and effective master plan without the necessary support and assistance.

Funding

Funding is a major issue for any small town. Often cities want the amenities or facilities, but do not want to raise taxes to help pay for them. Cities have the option to look for funding through a variety of means: county, state, or federal funding, grants or foundation gifts, local fundraising, system development charges, bond measures, location option tax and countless others. These venues are competitive, however, and require time and careful thought to make them a reality.

The City of Coburg is fortunate to have recently received match funding from the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department to purchase and install a new playground structure. Additionally, the update process will allow the City to be in compliance with state planning regulations and make them eligible for state funding through the SCORP.

Recently, the City updated their Park Reservation/Facilities use Permit to increase park rental fees by a modest amount. Previously, the shelters were first come first served, and rentable spaces costing somewhere between \$25-50. The fee is now \$60 to rent the shelter in Norma Pfeiffer Park, Pavilion Park, and to rent Jacob Spores Park for four hours. When brought to the attention of the Parks/Tree Committee, this change in fee structure was met with much resistance. The Committee felt like the reservation system would preclude residents from accessing the shelter because it was either cost prohibitive, or because it would be rented to outsiders too often. While the fee is not significant enough to generate much revenue for the City, it does offset maintenance costs of shelter upkeep.

System Development Charges

System Development Charges (SDCs) are addressed under Oregon Revised Statutes ORS 223.297 – 223.314, which provide local governments with the power to establish these charges in order to pay for capital improvements. SDCs are one-time fees that are collected when there is a new or increased use of a property.

SDCs can be made to include reimbursement fees to pay for any capital facility costs, improvement fees to pay for improvements and enlargements to existing facilities, or both. These charges allow newer residents to pay for the facilities they use, which might include a new or upgraded park system. SDC's are generally favorable to communities because they share the burden amongst new and future residents, however they may sometimes deter developers if costs get too high.



Figure 10 Participants at the Coburg Community Workshop

Possible Funding Sources

Though the City has faced opposition to even the smallest fees for use of park facilities, there are many opportunities for revenue to satisfy the needs of future residents without burdening current residents with the cost. System development charges placed on new residential development will bring in money to pay for parks as the City grows. Many other small cities in Oregon charge SDCs for parks such as Dundee and Gervais, which are comparable in size to Coburg. Dundee charges \$2017 per dwelling, and Gervais in the amount of \$2356.¹⁹

Coburg could also consider creating a park special district. Due to the use of parks by fire district residents, the City could capitalize on the expanded tax base and create a special district that would bring in revenue through a minimal property tax. Even with a minimal tax imposed, if Coburg collected \$10 per year from each resident within the district they could bring in over \$10,000 each year to designate to park improvements and maintenance²⁰.

Urban Growth Boundary

The City of Coburg completed an update of their Urbanization Study in 2014.²¹ The Urbanization Study dictates how and where a city will grow, namely through the expansion of their Urban Growth Boundary (UGB). Depending on the periodic review process, it is updated at least every 20 years, however the 2004 update did not adequately reflect the direction in which Coburg was growing. The report found that the City did not have enough residential land, nor did it have enough light-industrial sites to support the anticipated growth, and thus an addendum to the 2004 urbanization study was necessary.

Further, the report found that with projected population forecasts, current parks acreage was not sufficient. More specifically, in 2014 parks amounted to 28 acres. The report suggested that by

¹⁹ http://www.orcities.org/Portals/17/Premium/SDC_Survey_Report_2013.pdf

²⁰ This tax would likely be collected by household based on assessed property value, and not per resident. At this time, there is no proposed district boundary by which to determine the tax base, and thus no definitive rate can be established.

²¹ Lane Council of Governments (2014). *Coburg Urbanization Study Update* (City of Coburg). Coburg, OR.

2034, there should be 63 acres of parks and open space in Coburg. This leaves a deficit of 35 acres needed to serve future populations. Five of those acres have been accounted for in the new Coburg Loop path, however the additional 30 acres have not been planned for. Though this land does not have to be accounted for in one large park, the UGB in its current state could not support that many park acres.

This number for anticipated park acreage, however, seems to be egregiously high based on the fact that it is more than double current park acreage, and at this time the City does not have room to expand this much. The reason for this high number is that Coburg is expected to triple in size over the next 20 years, and their park acreage is doubling in size to accommodate this new growth. Thirty five acres is nearly impossible to develop, unless the City invests in acquiring the land for and developing a very large community park in addition to developing 15 acres of other park land.

Fortunately, the addendum was adopted locally by City Council in 2014, and by Lane County later that year. The Urbanization Study was presented and co-adopted with Coburg's Transportation Systems Plan. Although the measure passed at the county level, an outside group called Land Watch Lane County appealed the case to the Land Use Board of Appeals. The reason for this case is due to the fact that Coburg's proposed UGB would expand into land zoned as Exclusive Farm Use (EFU), instead of rural residential. The decision to expand into the EFU was based in part on the fact that the land is much closer to existing residential and commercial land, a decision that complies with the principles of smart growth. The option that has been suggested by others appealing the decision is that the City should expand to an area called Stallings Lane, which is much further out from the city center and disconnected from other residential areas.

The delay in expanding the UGB presents a challenge for the future of Coburg's park system. If the appeal to LUBA is successful, future parks may be located further out than residents would like them. According to preliminary survey results and feedback from community outreach events, residents appreciate that parks are located close to their homes and close to downtown. This would not be possible if the only land available after a UGB expansion is located on Stallings Lane.

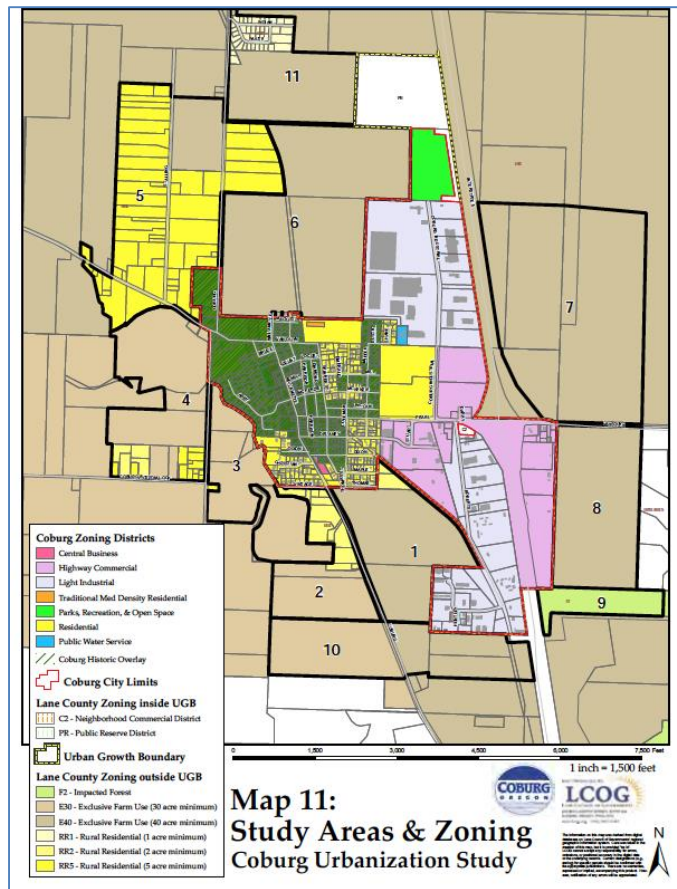


Figure 11 Study Area Zoning for land inside the UGB and count land surrounding from the 2014 Urbanization Study

Chapter 5: Lessons Learned

Many lessons were learned throughout the first phase of the Coburg Parks and Open Space Master Plan Update. Though the scope of work took longer to complete than expected and roadblocks emerged along the way, the outcomes of this research have resulted in eight lessons that can be applied to future small town parks planning efforts. These lessons deal with issues of inventory, public participation, project development, and funding and implementation.

Working with the public on parks projects can bring up many questions. Why do we want more parks? Who is going to pay for the upgrades? How can we respect the culture and values that exist, but also modernize the park system? Questions like these from the public can be jarring and require critical thought about how best to take conflicting thoughts and opinions and meld them into one clear vision. The lessons below were developed by reflecting on the challenges and successes of the public participation process and through research of existing best practices to develop strategies that better get at the answers to those questions. Many of the recommended solutions that are presented were found in the literature, then adapted to fit the needs of small town parks planning, and ultimately tested in practice.

1. Set appropriate Level-of-Service standards

As mentioned in the existing literature above, small cities should set their own level-of-service standards that are developed with the specific community needs in mind. The LOS guidelines developed by NRPA may be required by the State in order to receive funding, however additional standards can be set so that park space needs are determined based on quality, spatial location, and density rather than purely quantity.

This may be of specific interest to the City of Coburg with the proposed expansion of their UGB. The Urbanization Study suggests that park acreage should double in size over the next 20 years, which would add an additional 35 acres of parkland to a town that at this time is only 1 square mile. Though the City does anticipate growth, the acquisition of that much open space may be difficult. Additionally, if the City would like to meet the needs of residents, future parks should continue to be located near dense residential neighborhoods and in close proximity to the downtown and school system.

*“Keep the small town feel and quit trying to make us like Eugene!!”
– Anonymous Coburg Resident*

Additional efforts should be taken to ensure that quality measures are being met as well. One way of doing this is by utilizing GIS to determine the number of households within a certain walking radius of each park. If there are spaces that are not covered, it can be interpreted that those places are underserved in terms of parks and open space. It can also provide information about the density surrounding each park, and other amenities that fall within the walking boundary. Other quality measures may include: site analysis, surveys about specific park features, maintenance surveys, etc.

2. Make public participation as easy as possible

Every planner should strive to meet people where they're at for most of the community outreach and public engagement opportunities in a master plan update. With modern technology there are now ways to reach people through email, social media, and websites. This allows planners to reach a wider audience of youth that perhaps do not usually engage in the same way that adults do. Further, research has shown that for effective public outreach, we should be meeting people in locations that feel comfortable to them, such as in community centers, previously scheduled community events, or in the parks themselves. This means meeting people where they are located, rather than requesting that they attend a meeting specifically for parks planning.

There are also opportunities to get creative and makes public participation fun. Social media is a great way to reach out with survey questions, advertise for events, or ask for feedback. Community workshops can consist of games and activities instead of presentations and feedback. The more fun you make it, the more people will be willing to share their ideas.

This summer, Coburg staff plan to attend the summer concert series, citywide events, and craft and quilt shows to increase the amount of participation in the update process. In addition, a website was created to expand opportunities to take the survey and to better broadcast community workshop events.

3. Embrace existing culture and values

One issue that was brought up many times throughout the existing literature and in public comment was embracing the history and culture of a community. Coburg has a rich history of agriculture and railroads, both of which should be celebrated, rather than diminished in

importance. Two of Coburg's most prominent parks are located close to the main street and within the national historic district. The City has made efforts with recent park upgrades to take pieces of their past and integrate them into more modern park designs. This can be seen in the installment of a playground structure celebrating the railroad history in Coburg. The park features an interpretive panel that describes the historical significance of the park design. There has also been discussion that a piece of the original railroad that ran through town will be displayed at the park as a public art piece.

Another comment that was made at the community workshop was that some residents don't fully appreciate the history or current importance of the agricultural industry in Coburg and that the history is not often brought into the parks enough. Their suggestion was that more should be done with the planning of our open spaces to compliment the many residents that still work in the agricultural sector. This might mean having more events that celebrate that part of the history, or installing public art that commemorates some part of the life of a farmer.

On a larger scale, many residents value the small city feeling of all their amenities. In one comment, a resident stated, "keep the small town feel and quit trying to make us like Eugene!" Taken out of context, this sentiment might be taken as hostile or regressive, however this persons point is completely valid and understated. The small town feel of the community is what makes it unique from other surrounding areas and the reason why many people moved here. To lose that cultural identity to growth would be devastating, although this is a necessary issue the City must face. Accepting and encouraging growth is necessary, however doing it in a way that works to promote small town values is the true challenge.

4. Choose low-cost, high yield projects

Many suggestions that were offered through the public participation process were low-cost or merely based on increasing maintenance within the existing park system. Some of the highest rated park improvements were amenities such as community gardens or hanging baskets along Main Street. These low cost options could be somewhat easily implemented with limited funding required. They might even become projects completed by the local parks committee or garden club. Other low-cost projects included installing a horseshoe pit, or lawn games that could be rented from City Hall.

One specific comment that was resounding throughout the survey and community workshop was that the Booth-Kelly Trail is completely overgrown and makes the trail nearly useless during the growing season. Many of the suggestions for park improvements revolved around developing new walking/biking paths, an issue that could at least be partially eliminated by making the spaces Coburg currently has more easily accessible. Minor maintenance, which could be completed by volunteers throughout the summer, would provide Coburg residents with better walking and/or biking trails to improve local quality of life.

Another option is to install community gardens. There were many comments that pointed to a lack of pride within the town because of poorly mowed lawns or lack of flower baskets hanging in town. Community gardens bring people together by providing a purpose to an empty lot and requiring daily maintenance of the landscape. Many community gardens have public art pieces or invite local children to see how food grows. There is a lot in downtown Coburg that is owned by a resident that has stated she would be glad to donate it to be used as a community garden. In this case, the funding to install garden beds and provide water would be seemingly minimal. Grant funding exists from organizations such as The Ford Family Foundation for community building events such as this one that would make implementation much easier.

5. Understand maintenance costs

Coburg's park system is considered by many to be sufficient (based on preliminary results from the city-wide survey) in terms of facilities and amenities. What many feel is lacking is adequate maintenance of existing parks. Common complaints stated that the lawns were mowed infrequently and that trashcans are not emptied often enough. It is important when planning for new parks or open space that the additional maintenance costs be figured into the budget to ensure that the same problems Coburg's residents are facing today do not continue. It is also important to deal with issues within existing parks before adding an additional parcel of land into the inventory. Like the lesson above in choosing low-cost, high-yield projects, the City does not have to be responsible for maintaining all of the parks. The Park/Tree Committee can complete service projects once a quarter, or a garden club can be instated to allow residents to plant flowers, clean trash out of parks, or cut brush away from trails.

In order to pay for the current and expected maintenance costs, Coburg could consider a parks district to impose a tax on residents both inside and outside the current UGB. This district would collect a small tax based on assessed property value that would feed into a parks and recreation fund within the city. The benefit of this is that almost all users of the park would share the burden of paying for maintenance, as well as reap the benefits of having clean and tidy parks.

Additionally, as suggested previously, System Development Charges of around \$2000 per new residential unit could provide the funding required to develop and maintain Coburg's park system.

6. Emphasize project prioritization

In accordance with the SCORP, City Council goals, the Comprehensive Plan, and other local priorities, specific project costs should be identified and projects should be prioritized. Funding is a key component for small town parks planning projects, and often comes from a variety of sources. Through state funding, matching grants, donations, system development charges, and other designated local funds parks projects can become a reality even under the most dire of circumstances. In Oregon, the priorities set by the SCORP determine which projects receive funding and which don't. It's important to take into consideration which projects can be funded more feasibly based on conditions such as these. Additional strategies for prioritization include community desire, land availability, cost, or spatial impact.

7. Be prepared to deal with resistance to change

Many lessons can be learned from planning with the public in mind. Often, residents have competing ideas, which may not apply to what is considered the greater good. While I believe the Citizen Advisory Board is essential to conducting a transparent and impartial public outreach process, their ideas may not necessarily represent all members of the public. The committee in its current state is primarily older, white women who I assume live in single-family dwellings. Future residents of Coburg may not retain the same characteristics, though their voices are not accounted for. With varied housing stock expected in Coburg in the coming years, residents may not have access to private open spaces and will require that the City provide them with parks, gardens, and open space amenities to suit their needs. Some current parks committee members have expressed that most residents have access to their backyards, so certain amenities

are not necessary for the City to invest in. Although they are aware that multi-family housing will make its way to Coburg, some have resisted that acknowledgement and stated that they would like Coburg to retain its current housing style and charm.

This resistance can also be seen with new funding structures, ordinances, investments or the addition of staff. Even a modest increase in facility use fees were met with resistance, though to serve the greater good these fees are necessary.

Coburg is facing change as a whole, and although it is coming quickly, many residents are not prepared to deal with the side effects. After the installation of the wastewater plant, Coburg effectively lifted a moratorium on growth and has since added multiple new businesses to their downtown, with more on the way. While planners see this as a good thing because it increases the tax base, brings in tourism money, and helps to spur additional economic development downtown, residents can be alarmed by the newness of it all. Often, this concern can be quelled with education about the public process. Coburg is a highly educated place, but also rather conservative in values. They want nice things, but struggle to feel okay with increasing taxes to get them. Framing the conversation by saying that increased tourism and a broader commercial tax base will lower the overall burden on them might be helpful.

8. Expect your timeline to be pushed back

The scope of work for this project was delayed or altered for many reasons. As a student, learning the process task-by-task, revelations along the way and systems out of my control altered the project tasks and delayed the timeline. It took much longer to push a survey out than I expected. After developing the survey and requesting feedback from the Parks/Tree Committee, the committee asked for an additional timeframe to make comments that were not accounted for in the initial scope of work. This delayed the formatting and approval of the survey, which then delayed its distribution. As a first-timer, I hadn't learned to facilitate the process in the way I should have.

Additionally, there were a few tasks that were added to the scope after the project began. The creation of youth surveys, additional community outreach events, and the development of a website have all pushed the scope back a marginal amount. There are expected delays with the

visioning process, however the input of the Parks/Tree Committee has been minimized to expedite the process.

Chapter 6: Conclusions

Preparing a Parks and Open Space Master Plan Update is a challenging and extensive task requiring preparation, community participation, and dedication to serving the vision of current and future residents. However, parks and open space are essential to health and wellness, economic development and tourism, and to providing residents with an overall high quality of life. Many best practices exist to alleviate the stresses of the planning process, though challenges always seem to arise that place barriers in the way of our success. Current planning practices are often focused on serving large, urban areas, leaving rural cities to figure out how to adapt established practices to fit small town needs. This is difficult when also faced with lack of capacity in terms of funding, staffing, and resources.

There are however, new methods being developed to help small town parks planners in their efforts to create effective and useful plans. The State of Colorado's guide to small town (less than 10,000) planning is a step in the right direction, as it identifies the futility of the NRPA standard LOS model. Additionally, the NRPA and other state and national parks planning organizations have come to terms with the fact that these models are outdated and do not fully represent the needs of future park users. One must also take into account use of current facilities, density of proposed neighborhood for development, quality of existing and future structures, and location to other amenities. Of course, there are likely countless other service indicators that could be useful in determining park needs.


Once the initial inventory is complete, there are still challenges to be faced in terms of community outreach. Planners often find themselves dealing with contentious groups and stakeholders who feel their opinion should be heard the loudest. Further, there is a constant struggle of engaging the public in the planning process. Finding new and creative ways to get the word out about surveys, workshops, and other events is essential to effective public participation strategies. The Coburg Parks and Open Space Master Plan Update utilized mail, flyers, social media, and a website to successfully inform participants of the community outreach events. This new form of outreach in social media is a great example of meeting people where they're at.

The actual projects and implementation of said projects will likely cause planners some grief as well. State guidelines such as the NRPA LOS guidelines, as well as the SCORP are guiding documents that must be used when determining what types of projects to move forward with and how to prioritize them. Projects should be selected based on what community members desire, what your town's capacity is, and what the feasibility of the project is. This balancing act is no easy task and will likely leave at least one person unhappy.

Funding for these projects can come from many sources and determining project prioritization and developing a capital improvements plan can help cities to more easily make these ideas a reality. Though funding exists from grants, donations, and state and federal funding, these are not steady streams of income that can help with maintenance and upkeep costs. For these, cities can look to SDCs and local option taxes through special districts. In Coburg, the city might look into creating a parks special district to include the current fire district and generate a larger tax base. The added money from a yearly tax can offset capital construction costs for new playground equipment or help keep the grass mowed and the lights on in the shelters. This tax ensures that the burden and the benefit for new development is shared by all current users as well as future residents.

The final lesson from this update is that a parks planners should always plan with the city's culture and values in mind. Parks are for the people, and are made to celebrate the history and novelty of the past, while making great open spaces for future generations. Coburg has a rich history of agricultural landscapes and railroad industries that residents love to reminisce about. Celebrating this history and bringing modern amenities to the area will have a lasting impact for years to come.

Appendix A: Utility Bill Questionnaire



The City of Coburg
Parks and Open Space Masterplan Update 2016
User Survey

Greetings! Every 10 years, the City must update their Parks and Open Space Master Plan in order to prepare for and accommodate the next 20 years of growth. As part of this process, we are trying to gather as much input from the public as we can. Today, we invite you to fill out this survey to help us better understand where we should focus our energy as we move forward in this process. Please return your completed survey to Sammy Egbert at City Hall by Friday, May 27th, 2016. Thank you!

<p>[1] My age is...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Younger than 14b. 5 - 17c. 18 - 24d. 25 - 34e. 35 - 44f. 45 - 54g. 55 - 64h. 65 or older	<p>[4] Please circle all that apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. I reside within the City of Coburgb. I own a business within the City of Coburgc. I reside within the Coburg Fire Districtd. I work within the City of Coburg
<p>[2] Which of the following best describes you?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Maleb. Femalec. _____ (fill in the blank)	<p>[5] How long have you lived or worked in Coburg?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Less than a yearb. 1 - 4 yearsc. 5 - 10 yearsd. More than 10 years
<p>[3] How many people live in your household?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. 1b. 2c. 3d. 4e. 5f. More than 5	<p>[6] How important are parks and open space to Coburg's quality of life?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Very importantb. Importantc. Not very importantd. Not importante. Unsure



The City of Coburg
Parks and Open Space Masterplan Update 2016
User Survey

[7] What do you like most about Coburg's parks?

[8] What, if anything, do you like least about Coburg's parks?

[9] How often in the past 12 months have you used any of the following parks or public open space areas in Coburg? Please indicate using an "X" below.

Park Name	1-5 Times	6-11 Times	12+ Times
Norma Pfeiffer Park (between Harrison/McKenzie/Diamond/Locust Sts.)			
Pavilion Park (between Willamette/Harrison/McKenzie Sts.)			
Wetland Park (end of N Coburg Industrial Wy.)			
Coburg Community Charter School (outside of school activities)			
Jacob Spores Park (corner of Sarah Wy., formally Moody Park)			
The Booth-Kelly Trail (west of Abby St., formally Canterbury or Mill Slough Trail)			
Other:			

[10] If you use parks in Coburg less than 5 times per year, what is your main reason for not using them more frequently? Please circle all that apply.

- a. Not aware of parks
- b. Not enough time
- c. Lack of facilities
- d. Too far away from my home
- e. Poorly maintained
- f. Not accessible to people with disabilities
- g. Other:



The City of Coburg
Parks and Open Space Masterplan Update 2016
User Survey

[11] In the past 12 months, have you used a park, open space, or recreational facility located outside of Coburg? If no, skip to 13.

- a. Yes
- b. No

[12] If you answered “Yes” above, what types of facilities do you use?
Circle all that apply.

- a. Walking/biking trail
- b. Swimming pool
- c. Picnic area
- d. Athletic fields
- e. Playground
- f. Wildlife viewing area
- g. Golf course
- h. Skate park
- i. Other:

[13] Choose three of the following outdoor recreation facilities that are most needed in Coburg. Please indicate your top three choices by writing #1 for your first choice, #2 for your second choice, and #3 for your third choice. If you think the current recreation facilities are adequate, please indicate below.

- Off-street multi-use paths
- Walking/running trails
- Natural areas for wildlife viewing
- Community gardens
- Tennis courts
- Picnic facilities
- Playground
- Outdoor area to hold large community events
- Golf course
- Fenced, off-leash dog park
- Outdoor water play park (spray park)
- Skate park
- Athletic Fields
- Other:
- Coburg's recreational facilities are adequate



The City of Coburg
Parks and Open Space Masterplan Update 2016
User Survey

[14] From the following list of major projects, please tell us which are most needed in Coburg. Please indicate your top three choices by writing #1 for your first choice, #2 for your second choice, and #3 for your third choice. If you think Coburg does not require any of the projects, please indicate below.

- Update and renovate existing parks
- Purchase or otherwise preserve agricultural lands and natural areas on the perimeter of the city
- Acquire parkland for future park development
- Develop a multi-use community center
- Develop a large, multi-use community park
- Develop a sports park
- Other:
- Coburg does not require any further major projects

[15] Is there anything else you'd like to add about parks and open spaces in Coburg?


Thank you!

Please return to Sammy Egbert at City Hall.

If you have any further questions about the Parks and Open Space Master Plan update,
please contact:

Dana Nichols
danan@uoregon.edu

Appendix B: Youth Surveys

 The City of Coburg Parks and Open Space Masterplan Update 2016 Grade School Survey	
Hello! The City of Coburg is creating a new plan for their parks and we would like you to help us make our parks better by answering a few questions. You can draw pictures, write poems, or answer any way you want! Thank you!	
[1] I am in...	[2] I am a...
a. First Grade b. Second Grade c. Third Grade d. Fourth Grade e. Fifth Grade	a. Boy b. Girl
[3] What is your favorite thing to do when you go to a park? (Write or draw a picture below)	
[4] What is one activity you wish you could do in the park that right now you cannot? (Write or draw a picture below)	

Draft: 'Middle/High School' Survey'

1. What grade are you in?''

- a. 6th
- b. 7th
- c. 8th
- d. 9th
- e. 10th
- f. 11th
- g. 12th

2. Which of the following best describes you:'

- a. Male'
- b. Female'
- c. _____'(fill in the blank)'
- d. Prefer not to disclose'

3. How important are parks and open space in Coburg to you?'

- a. Very important'
- b. Important'
- c. Not very important'
- d. Not important'
- e. Unsure'

4. How often in the past 12 months have you used a park in Coburg?''

- a. Not at all'
- b. Once or twice'
- c. Once every few months'
- d. Once a month'
- e. Once a week'
- f. Every day'

5. What do you like most about Coburg's parks?'

_____'

6. What do you like least about Coburg's parks?'

_____'

7. In the past 12 months, have you used a park, open space, or recreational facility located outside of Coburg?'

- a. Yes'
- b. No'

8. If so, what type of facilities do you use?

- a. Walking/biking trail
- b. Swimming pool
- c. Picnic area
- d. Sports field
- e. Playground
- f. Wildlife viewing area
- g. Golf course
- h. Skate park
- i. Other: _____

9. Choose three of the following outdoor recreation facilities that are most needed in Coburg. Please indicate your top three choices by writing #1 for your first choice, #2 for your second choice, and #3 for your third choice. Please write an answer if your choice is not listed.

- a. Off street multi use paths
- b. Walking/running trails
- c. Natural areas for wildlife viewing
- d. Community gardens
- e. Tennis courts
- f. Picnic facilities
- g. Playground
- h. Outdoor area to hold large community events
- i. Golf course
- j. Fenced, off leash dog park
- k. Outdoor water play park
- l. Skate park
- m. Park facilities in Coburg are adequate

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

10. Is there anything else you'd like to tell us about Coburg's park system?

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