

Salem Battle Creek Park Master Plan

Community Survey #1 Results (June 2019)

Key Take-Aways

- Of the 828 responses, more than half were from people between the ages of 18 and 44 years old, and 71% have lived in Salem for over 10 years.
- There is a preference toward a mix of passive and active uses, with a definite leaning toward passive activities and low impact active uses.
- Walking trails, natural areas and open areas are preferred. Sports fields and courts are not.
- Skate park and disc golf/frisbee golf have strong support but may have opposition.
- Having the park be a good neighbor is very important to nearby residents.
- Nearby neighbors are particularly concerned with the potential for increased traffic and parking on the neighborhood streets, especially on Doral Drive.
- Addressing the flooding issue, both at the park and for the nearby residential neighborhoods, should be a key driver for the master plan and future park uses.
- There appears to be general excitement about having a place to be outdoors, be active and engage with others in South Salem. Benefits mentioned relate to generally getting outside, exploring nature in an urban area and general community benefits (more eyes on the park, economic boost to South Salem).
- Almost half of the respondents do not use the park currently, yet 66% of the respondents live on or within walking distance the park or in South Salem.

Survey Demographics

- 828 surveys were completed.
- **Responses were relatively equally divided between those who self-identify as: living next to Battle Creek Park (17.7%); living in South Salem (23.9%); living within walking distance of Battle Creek Park (24.5%); and living in another part of Salem (28.3%).** Approximately 77% of the respondents live in three Salem zip codes: 97301, 97302 and 97306.
- Approximately 5.5% (43 responses) do not live in the Salem area.
- **Most survey respondents (71%) have lived in Salem for more than 10 years.** Approximately 20% of survey respondents have lived in Salem between 2 and 10 years.

Respondents living in Salem for 0-1 years	3.2%
Respondents living in Salem for 2-5 years	11.7%
Respondents living in Salem for 6-10 years	8.5%
Respondents living in Salem more than 10 years	71.2%
Respondents who don't live in Salem	5.5%

- **More than half of survey respondents (62%) are between 18 and 44 years old.** Approximately 26% of survey respondents are 45 years old or older.

Respondents who are under 18 years old	11.7%
Respondents who are 18-24 years old	20.4%
Respondents who are 25-34 years old	22.2%
Respondents who are 35-44 years old	18.9%
Respondents who are 45-54 years old	10.5%
Respondents who are 55-64 years old	7.9%
Respondents who are over 65 years old	8.3%

- Approximately 43% of the survey respondents do not currently use Battle Creek Park.
- **Respondents who currently use the park, use it to walk for exercise or to walk dogs and explore nature.** Others stated that they use the park to watch nature/take photos, bike in the area or play disc golf. Approximately 40% of those who responded “other” mentioned skateboarding/skate/skatepark.

Walk for exercise	33.9%
Explore nature	31.4%
Walk dog	20.6%
Walk to school	3.9%
Other uses	10.2%

Future of Battle Creek Park

- **Most people (53%) value the opportunity for a combination of natural beauty and recreation at Battle Creek Park.** The number of people who value either natural features or recreation uses for the site were approximately the same.

Combination of natural beauty and recreation	52.6%
Natural features	22.9%
Recreation	24.5%

- Over half of the responses (52.2%) identified a **mix of active and passive recreation uses as the feature they like best about urban parks**, with space to walk and explore a close second (49.5%).

Mix of active and passive recreation uses	52.2%
Space to walk and explore	49.5%
Amenities like restrooms and drinking fountains	34.1%
Unique views and settings	29.9%
Place to bring family to gather	25.1%
Ease of parking and access	19.2%
Place to come for community gatherings	17.9%
Other	8.3%

- **Passive recreation uses are four of the five top activities people are “most excited” about for Battle Creek Park (31% - 47%).** A skate park was the number one response, with almost half the respondents (47%) identifying it as an activity they would be “most excited” about in the park. Disk golf/frisbee golf (25%) and playgrounds (24%) also received significant support.

Activity “most excited” about	
Skate park	47.2%
Natural areas	46.6%
Unpaved trails for walking and jogging	37.8%
Open meadows / fields	37.6%
Paved paths for walking and jogging	31.0%
Disk Golf / Frisbee Golf	25.1%
Playground	24.1%
Off-leash dog park	21.6%
Picnic areas	21.6%
Picnic shelters / covered shelters	19.9%
Splash pad	19.5%
Community garden	18.1%
Stage	11.8%
Basketball courts	10.8%
Soccer Fields	10.3%
Baseball/softball fields	9.9%
Futsal courts	8.3%
Pickleball courts	6.0%
Tennis courts	5.9%

- **Organized sport courts and fields received the least support,** with well over 50% of the responses identifying futsal courts, pickleball courts, baseball/softball fields, tennis courts, and soccer fields as the activities that respondents are “least excited” about having in Battle Creek Park.

Activity “least excited” about	
Futsal courts	77.0%
Pickleball courts	70.1%
Baseball/softball fields	65.1%
Tennis courts	61.1%
Soccer Fields	60.7%
Stage	51.9%
Basketball courts	49.4%
Splash pad	45.9%
Disk Golf / Frisbee Golf	44.9%
Off-leash dog park	43.8%
Community garden	40.3%
Skate park	36.6%
Playground	36.3%

Picnic shelters / covered shelters	34.8%
Paved paths for walking and jogging	26.9%
Picnic areas	26.6%
Unpaved trails for walking and jogging	23.6%
Open meadows / fields	23.3%
Natural areas	15.3%

- **The desirability of a future skate park at Battle Creek Park is unclear.** Although 47.2% identified a skate park as the activity they are “most excited” about, 36.6% also identified it as the activity they are “least excited” about.
- **There was relative agreement about certain activities are not desired in the park.** The top seven activities people are “least excited” about in the park are consistent with the lowest ranking activities people are “most excited”: futsal courts, pickleball courts, baseball/softball fields, tennis courts, soccer fields, stage or basketball courts.

Activities “least excited” about	Activities “most excited” about
1. Futsal courts	1. Skate park
2. Pickleball courts	2. Natural areas
3. Baseball/softball fields	3. Unpaved trails for walking and jogging
4. Tennis courts	4. Open meadows / fields
5. Soccer Fields	5. Paved paths for walking and jogging
6. Stage	6. Disk Golf / Frisbee Golf
7. Basketball courts	7. Playground
8. Splash pad	8. Off-leash dog park
9. Disk Golf / Frisbee Golf	9. Picnic areas
10. Off-leash dog park	10. Picnic shelters / covered shelters
11. Community garden	11. Splash pad
12. Skate park	12. Community garden
13. Playground	13. Stage
14. Picnic shelters / covered shelters	14. Basketball courts
15. Paved paths for walking and jogging	15. Soccer Fields
16. Picnic areas	16. Baseball/softball fields
17. Unpaved trails for walking and jogging	17. Futsal courts
18. Open meadows / fields	18. Pickleball courts
19. Natural areas	19. Tennis courts

- **When asked for just three choices, the top three activities desired for Battle Creek Park are: skate park (44.9%), unpaved trails for walking and jogging (28.5%) and natural areas (25.8%).** Disk golf/frisbee golf was a close fourth choice at 24.7%.

Skate park	44.9%
Unpaved trails for walking and jogging	28.5%
Natural areas	25.8%
Disk Golf / Frisbee Golf	24.7%

Paved paths for walking and jogging	20.1%
Off-leash dog park	18.5%
Playground	18.5%
Splash pad	17.0%
Open meadows / fields	14.3%
Basketball courts	11.2%
Community garden	10.0%
Soccer fields	8.9%
Stage	8.3%
Picnic shelters / covered shelters	7.9%
Picnic areas	7.3%
Baseball/softball fields	7.2%
Futsal courts	5.8%
Tennis courts	4.2%
Other (primarily bicycle riding/trails)	3.8%
Pickleball courts	3.6%

- Over half the responses **support having passive park features (51%) in areas that may flood during storm events and heavy rains** rather than protecting the area (23.4%) or allowing seasonal active recreation uses (19.6%).

Protect the flooding area from any park development or use	23.4%
Allow passive park features, such as walkways, that may not be accessible during flood events	51.0%
Allow more active park features, such as ball fields, that may not be accessible during flood events (seasonal use in the summer when the areas are dry)	19.6%
Pickleball courts	3.6%

Concerns about the Master Plan

Over 250 concerns were noted by survey respondents. The key themes, and representative statements, are below.

Preserving the natural landscape and habitat was the number one concern of those who responded to survey. Comments ranged from maintaining the current natural area as it is, being sensitive to native landscaping and protecting the area for wildlife.

- *I like to see Battle Creek Park be and stay natural and with beauty with a little makeover ... only to enhance it natural beauty.*
- *This is currently a habitat for deer, wild turkeys, red hawks and many other wild species, which should not be impacted and be allowed to thrive.*
- *Trees and creeks in jeopardy of visitors who do not respect natural areas. The more visitors, the less wildlife will stick around - birds, ducks, herons are all frequent visitors I'd like to have around.*
- *Keep it natural for people to enjoy nature. We do not need more developed facilities. Once land is developed it is lost to natural functions.*

Flooding, in the park and the adjacent neighborhoods, was also mentioned a significant number of times. Respondents want the City to address the flooding issue, and not make it worse by developing the site – specifically in the area where it is prone to flooding. There is concern that increased development of the park will have negative impacts on the flooding in the park and general vicinity.

- *The primary need to preserve this land is to mitigate flooding in and beyond the neighborhood. This needs to be the primary focus.*
- *Further development of this park will only increase the likelihood of flooding to the home around it. The park as it currently sits, is a wonderful free roaming space that serves the surrounding area nicely, as-is.*
- *Developing an area that is specifically designated as a flood site sounds like a recipe for disaster.*

There is a desire to **balance natural and developed areas** and create a park that can serve many different user groups. Although people do not want a highly programmed park, they see the benefit of having low-impact developed areas, particularly near the school.

- *Leave plenty of greenery and naturalized space but also add some fun urbanization to it that blends well.*
- *A natural area with minimal developed facilities, more paths and scattered areas for activities, family groups, play.*
- *I support natural areas but think it would be a mistake to not make the park something that would be enjoyed by a more diverse segment of the population. Please consider all people in planning the park.*
- *I'd love to see any larger recreational areas placed as far away from the neighborhood as possible. In the upper right-hand corner of the map ideally. Keeping it as natural and as family friendly as possible I believe would be a natural deterrent. Natural paths keep it accessible for learning for the nearby school. Benches along the trails for the elder community who might need to take breaks but want to enjoy the outdoors still.*
- *Please create a space inviting for our youngest so they grow up invested in Salem.*

People **appreciate the current uses in the park** – the walking paths. They do not want to see that part of the park be developed and would like more pedestrian paths.

- *I've been coming to this area for 5 years to walk my dog. I meet many people from the area who also walk their dogs. It's a great place to walk, relax, and enjoy its natural environment, love seeing the ducks, herons, frogs, etc.*
- *I don't use it now because it's undeveloped and feels unsafe to be there by myself. Open views and wide walkways will help. Would be great to get access directly to Rees Hill so we don't have to walk all the way to the north end to use the park.*

Many respondents **advocated for specific uses in the park**. A skateboard park and disc golf course being the two uses that had the most comments. Basketball and playgrounds were not advocated for as many viewed the school basketball courts and playground as adequate for the area.

- *We need another skate park in Salem. The skatepark here is old and dated. A new, modern skatepark-like plaza would be wonderful.*
- *My main concern is that you have always lumped disc golf in with other active participation activities, and while it is an active sport, the installation of a disc golf course has minimal impact*

to the natural surroundings of the park and has the added benefit of mitigating unwanted traffic in a larger area than a single ball field.

- *With a school next door, it does not seem necessary to have a playground but who knows.*
- *I'm all for adding more baseball fields to the City, however, adding fields in a flood prone area is ridiculous and will cost a ton of money to maintain.*

The park **should not try to be too many things for too many people**: too many ideas will result in over development. Over development of the park has the potential to negatively impact the animal habitat in the park.

- *I would hate to see over-development of this area. The area isn't as large as Bush's Pasture Park, so I'd like to see the open space maintained instead of cramming it full of organized sporting fields and parking lots.*
- *Any development that would require excessive changes to the current park design should be curbed. Usage of the existing design should be a top priority. A sport such as disc golf can work with the existing design and flood plain concerns.*
- *Keep it simple and beautiful. Don't try to put everything, especially athletic spaces in the design.*
- *Recreational development like skate parks will destroy animal habitat which is disappearing in South Salem.*
- *It should complement the school facilities not duplicate them (running track and sports field, basketball courts already exist).*

The ability of Battle Creek Park to **be a good neighbor to those living near the park** is important to nearby residents. Concerns mentioned included the perception that the park will attract homeless to the area; trash and vandalism in the park; fear of constant noise or activities that draw large crowds and would disturb the neighborhood; and traffic (both auto and foot traffic) inundating the neighborhood.

- *Because my place is right on the park boundary, I'm concerned about noise, crowds, garbage and possible homeless camping in the park.*
- *I am concerned with community events creating congestion and noise as I live near neighborhood access points. I am also concerned with attracting homeless camps and increased crime in the area.*
- *My concern is about what kind of barrier will separate the park from my property in the buffer area. I want to maintain my greenspace view, without being blocked by a stone wall or ugly wire fence, but still maintain my privacy from the park.*
- *Too much traffic in the neighborhoods, speeding (more than there already is), people "hanging out" there after hours doing illegal things, attracting more people who may look into houses and cars, break ins.*
- *The border between the new park and Battlecreek Commons should have a secure barrier. Battlecreek Commons is a private community with elderly folks. I have concerns with people cutting across private property to access the park, as well as potential transient camps.*

Additional uses in the park may bring an **increase in traffic and parking** to the area, concerning for nearby residents. Locating parking in strategic locations and adding pedestrian connectivity may help address concerns.

- *Adding sports fields would add a ton of traffic to the neighborhoods which needs to be avoided.*

- *I am concerned that additional parking will be created in an area that will negatively impact adjacent homes and condos.*
- *There are currently no parking areas. [Concerned about] Having people walking through our development to get to the park. Would like to see a small bridge at the SE corner over the creek so the park can be circumnavigated when walking.*
- *I live on Doral, the only access to the big section of park. This street is TOTALLY INCOMPATIBLE w/ park traffic (and parking)!*
- *I think it will be very important to add parking to the north end (accessible from Waln Drive), which can be shared in some way with the elementary school during big events.*

Specific suggestions were provided regarding **who to involve in the master planning process**, with a focus on those who could provide additional insight into how the park functions now and how to design specialized park elements, such as disc golf and a skatepark.

- *Please look to Pac-West Disc Golf Club or Willamette Valley Chain Gang Disc Golf Club if you plan to design and install a disc golf course.*
- *Engage the Neighborhood Association as a focus point for inviting neighbors to share ideas and information about parks and all other neighborhood matters.*
- *Salem needs a new skatepark. One concern I have is that if that happens, the park won't be designed by other skateboarders. This can lead to poor park design and sometimes it can become relatively useless and not fun for skaters and new people trying skating. An ideal company to do the park would be Dreamland Skateparks.*
- *I'd like the elementary school to be taken into consideration especially while school is in session.*

Benefits of a Public Park at Battle Creek Park

Approximately 370 respondents identified benefits of having a public park at the Battle Creek Park site. The benefits focused primarily on general quality of life and health benefits of living near an active park. Some comments also related to benefits of having specific uses at Battle Creek Park. A handful of people mentioned that they do not believe there are benefits from creating a Battle Creek Park Master Plan. The key benefit themes, and representative statements, are below.

Enhancing Battle Creek Park, while maintaining the natural areas, is seen as beneficial for wildlife and flood mitigation.

- *[A benefit is] Having a beautiful, natural and safe place to walk, jog and gather with family and friends.*
- *A public park with availability of green space and passive recreation seems like an excellent use for an area that is basically a flood plain/water retention basin. Hopefully, any development will be consistent with this lovely area's natural character.*
- *Protecting wildlife is important and keeping the area a more natural recreation site would be nice.*

Increasing the use of the park, and “eyes on the park,” has the potential benefit of reducing crime, inappropriate behavior, and use of the park by the homeless as a camp.

- *Added use by the public would limit the potential for a homeless camp.*
- *More people involved with the park would reduce homeless issues.*

- *A safe and beautiful place for families to gather and children to have fun and be active. Less crime and mischief from the community.*

Having a public park at Battle Creek Park will increase **opportunities for people**, especially children, in South Salem **to explore the outdoors and be active.**

- *Healthier, more active families due to proximity of safe, functional park.*
- *Great area to enjoy the outdoors and get the kids outside.*
- *Outdoor recreation and exercise for families that live nearby. Natural areas available to children who encounter native flora and fauna infrequently.*
- *Opportunity for a little bit of nature to be integrated into the urban landscape.*

Paths and trails from the neighborhoods to the school through the park will help **increase connectivity and walkability** in the neighborhood.

- *Access to recreation & nature activities for the neighborhood; reduces need to travel outside neighborhood for park activities & enjoyment.*
- *Increased access to natural areas and physical activity for nearby residents, especially important for quick trips after work/school. Providing a place for neighbors and other park goers to gather. Consider boardwalks for sections of trail in the flood area.*
- *Having more established (preferably unpaved) trails with some benches here and there would be a nice improvement and increase use from the local community.*

A park with various activities will provide opportunities to **build community** in the neighborhood around open, natural space.

- *A tremendous asset to our neighborhood. A space where both young and old can enjoy nature, exercise, and enjoy a true sense of community.*
- *Bringing community and family together for fun.*

Tied in with concerns about the existing skate park in downtown is the opportunity to add a **safe skate park in South Salem.**

- *The skate community needs a safer place where they can go to just skate and be in community and have fun.*
- *I think a nice well-made skatepark is exactly what this city needs. Downtown Salem is horrible place for kids to feel safe enough to try and skate or ride down there.*

Supporters of locating a disc golf course in South Salem mentioned many benefits, including the **community support and economic boost that comes with disc golf.**

- *Disc golf course would come along with a great community that would help upkeep the park*
- *Having additional recreational areas, especially additional disc golf courses, can bring in more revenue and accessibility to a lesser utilized area of Salem.*

The **growing needs of South Salem can be met** by opportunities at Battle Creek Park for other urban park uses, such as a dog park or ball fields.

- *Need more amenities, such as dog parks, splash pads, picnic shelters, so it will relieve some of the strain on other sites.*

- *South Salem is growing and needs to have more parks, outdoor recreation space and baseball/softball fields.*

Questions and Comments

Thirty-seven questions were submitted as part of the survey. Topics related to:

- Timeline/construction time/cost of project
 - *When will a decision be made?*
 - *How much money will it cost?*
 - *How much is the yearly maintenance?*
 - *How many additional staff will City of Salem hire to maintain any additional structures?*
- Master planning process and opportunities for public input
 - *Has the master plan been completed?*
 - *How did we get to the decision to have a master plan at all without public input?*
 - *Is the city actually listening to the concerns of the residents that border this area?*
 - *Is the city taking into consideration how its use will affect our property values and quality of life/security?*
 - *Is corporate sponsorship likely to determine park planning?*
 - *Any possible chance to do this same plan at a site in West Salem?*
- Site programming
 - *Why does the city invest only in ball fields?*
 - *Will you make mountain bike trails?*
 - *Why change Battle Creek Park if it's not broken?*
 - *Is a skatepark a viable option?*
 - *Why isn't football and lacrosse listed in the survey?*
 - *If you were to put in a disc golf course would you/ could you have an 18-hole layout like we do at Cascade and NOT like Woodmansee park?*
- Flood mitigation
 - *Why is this area being proposed for additional development?*
 - *It's a flood mitigation zone that serves to protect the surrounding community. Changes to it, will only negatively impact its capacity to protect the community.*
 - *Mitigate flooding PERIOD.*
 - *What will be done to mitigate the flooding in the southeastern corner?*
- Site design
 - *What is the nature of the barrier proposed around the south and west ends of the park (near Doral and Battlecreek Commons)?*
 - *Is fencing proposed?*
 - *Will parking at the school be expanded, or will an additional lot be created?*
 - *Confirmation this does not affect the Waln Creek natural area located between the two sides of The Fairway apartment homes.*
 - *How soon will the City plan to replace the former bridge across the eastern portion of Battle Creek within the park?*
- Crime/disruption to homes
 - *Will the city keep transient homeless from camping, leaving hazardous garbage and destroying the wildlife habitat?*
 - *How do you plan to preserve the wetlands and avoid traffic problems and noise pollution, as well as crime issues?*