

Salem Geer Park Master Plan

Community Survey #1 Results (June 2020)

Key Take-Aways

- **Geer Park is loved for its location, the bike park and the walking trails.** The most popular uses of the Park today are to walk/run/jog on the trails and to bike or skateboard.
- **People prefer to keep and expand the trail system and natural areas.** The top three desired features are expanded trails, more shade trees/tree planting and natural areas/pollinator gardens. Many comments relate to the importance of having walking trails and a desire for a trail around the outside of the park. *“Provide a pathway along the perimeter of the entire park (both concrete for bikes/wheel chairs, and barkdust for joggers/walkers). People like to walk. Include walking paths to get to the park for more access from the communities that surround it so people can walk or ride their bike to the park and more walking trails within the park.”*
- **The majority of survey responses indicated a lack of excitement for more ballfields.** Active recreation uses, such as additional ballfields and soccer fields, basketball courts, and tennis courts did not gain as much support. *“Geer Park doesn’t need more sports fields - let’s bring other user types to the park with a dog park, skate park, and playground.”*
- **There is a strong desire to maintain a balance between natural areas and highly programmed sports fields in order to meet everyone’s needs.** There is also a lot of concerns about over-programming the park. *“I would love to see more open spaces within the park that can be used in a variety of ways, picnic tables and playgrounds for different aged children, as well as a covered area for hot or rainy days. Walking paths and bike paths are key to our community using and enjoying our parks. Native plantings and lots of tree canopy will also make this natural space enjoyable for us.”*
- **No one layout option resonated with the public.** No one layout option received a majority of support: support for each was about equal, including those who elected not to choose a layout. The key features that people used to describe the differences between the layout options included the separation of uses, opportunities for a diversity of uses, location of the skatepark and bike park, and parking.
- **People preferred park amenities that could be used by a variety of individuals, families and age ranges.** A dog park, expanded bike park and more walking trails were identified as priorities for change at Geer Park. Other park uses identified as desirable included a rugby field, community pool and playground. *“The city should create a multi-use park serving multiple users, not just those using the ball fields. I support picnic and playground areas, dog park, community garden, and skateboard park. I support more trees and keeping the large trees east of the bike park area.”*
- **Accessibility is important.** Connectivity to adjacent neighborhoods and the Geer Park trail system was noted as a preference. Parking considerations, in terms of the right amount of parking, was also mentioned. *“Instead of increasing parking I would like to advocate for more walking and biking paths to be installed to the surrounding neighborhoods.”*

Survey Demographics

- Approximately 370 people completed the survey on-line.
- Approximately one-third of those responding live within walking distance of Geer Park, approximately one-quarter of those responding live in NE Salem, and approximately one-third live in another part of Salem.
- People are familiar with the park. Approximately one-quarter of those responding use the park several times a week. Approximately half of those responding use it a few times a month to several times a year.

Survey Responses - Geer Park Today

Generally, people have positive feelings about Geer Park. The most often noted assets of the park include the bike trails and pump track. The central location, near I-5, was also noted as one of the best things about the park. Due to the size and existing uses (paved/unpaved trails, baseball fields and natural/open space areas), the park serves as a multi-purpose space for the community and meets the needs of a variety of users.

"I enjoy the proximity to my neighborhood, but also the natural feel of the area...lots of trees, the water that runs through the park. It feels more "in nature" than most city parks."

"The best thing about Geer Park is the bike track. Also how the SATA keeps good maintenance on them."

"Location! Reasonably centralized facility for most of Salem/Keizer."

"Nice half mile walking loop. It's clean and paved. I feel safe jogging in the park because it is wide open and there are generally lots of people walking and using the park."

The top activities that people participate in at Geer Park today are:

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Number of responses</u>
Walk/run/jog on the trails	184
Ride bikes/skateboard	138
Baseball games/practices/tournaments	50
Picnics and celebrations	39
Soccer games/practices	33
Playing/walking dogs	21
Rugby	18

Survey Responses - Geer Park in the Future

Potential Features

When provided with options for improving Geer Park, the feedback was varied. There are some features that respondents are overwhelmingly excited to see in the master plan update, many of those build off the existing uses today, including:

- Expanded trails
- More shade trees/tree plantings
- Natural areas/pollinator gardens

- Expanded bike park
- Open meadows/fields

“The bike park has been an amazing source of family friendly options. As a family we all ride and have met so many families doing the same thing. Biking in general seems to pull a better family element than a skate park. We feel expanding the bike park to accommodate a wider range of skill would be the best option.”

Other potential uses received approximately the same level of excitement, non-excitement, and indifference (people either didn’t answer the question, responded that they “don’t know” or were neutral):

- Playgrounds
- Community garden
- Picnic areas with tables
- Splash pad

On the list of potential future features, the active recreation options were received with less enthusiasm. Features that had significantly more “not excited” responses rather than “excited” responses included:

- Skate park
- Reservable group picnic shelter
- Additional baseball/softball field(s)
- Basketball court(s)
- Tennis court(s)
- Additional soccer field(s)

Ninety-five people wrote in other possible uses. The most frequently mentioned “other” uses include rugby field and a community pool.

The number of responses are provided in Appendix A.

When asked to identify a priority for Geer Park’s master plan (If you could change one thing, what would it be?), the top ten frequent themes included:

- Adding an off-leash dog park
- Preserve/enhance the natural areas in the park, including the open space, trees and foliage
- Expanded bike park
- Expanded/connected trail system
- Add a skate park
- Add a playground
- Add a rugby field
- Add turf ball fields, especially baseball fields
- Add a splash pad
- Add a community pool

Layout Options

Of the three layout options presented for feedback, there was not a strong preference for any one layout.

When comparing the three options against each other, there is a slight preference for Layout 2. It should be noted, however, that a little over 20% of the survey respondents chose not to identify a preference for a specific layout at all. When asked to identify their least preferred layout, two-thirds chose not to answer the question.

<u>Preferred Layout</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Layout 1	25%
Layout 2	28%
Layout 3	26%
No response	21%

When asked why a specific layout is the most preferred, the responses were often focused around three topics: separation between park uses; parking; and efficiency of space.

The positive attributes of Layout 1 include:

- The baseball and softball fields that do not overlap with soccer fields. *“Multiuse of the ball fields will degrade their desirability for tournaments. Layout 1 does not compromise.”*
- Visibility of skatepark and separation of the skatepark from the bike park. *“The skate park is visible from the main street. instead of being hidden away which can lead to more criminal activity.”*
- Least amount of parking. *“Least amount of parking space invading the green space”*

The positive attributes of Layout 2 include:

- Location of the skatepark adjacent to the bike park. *“I like that the skate park is next to the bike park. Many skateboarders use the pump track”*
- Diversity of uses. *“I think Layout 2 has a balance of park uses between sports fields and other park activities.”*
- Central location of parking to sparks facilities and other amenities. *“Parking available over a wider area- makes everything more accessible for those with mobility issues”*

The positive attributes of layout 3 include:

- Like uses with like uses/efficient use of space. *“It makes sense to put the ball fields together and the bike/skate parks together.”*
- Efficient use of space. *“More possibilities for activities other than sported related activities. I never go there as it appears to be nothing but sport related activities.”*
- Larger size of the skate park. *“I like that the skate park is bigger and close to the bike park.”*

The response data is included in Appendix A: Summary Tables.

Other comments

In addition to advocating for specific park uses, comments were received that focused on the park planning process. Below is a list of a few of key comments made by stakeholders.

- The safety of park users and adjacent neighbors is important.
- Concerns about the cost of doing a master plan now, when a current master plan exists.
- The planning process seems to jump ahead when asking about layout options. When/where was the outreach to determine what the community's needs are?
- Consider amenities for a variety of park users, including neighborhood families and seniors.
- Design the skate park by people who really know skate parks so that it has good functional flow with lower chances of collisions from bad lines.
- Consider impacts to the adjacent neighborhood. Adding all these sports activities will create a lot of noise, lots of crowds, drive out wildlife, and decrease neighborhood livability.
- Incorporate connectivity to the adjacent neighborhoods, including showing the existing sidewalk walking area on the park plans.
- Some people believe there is already too much parking at Geer Park and others believe that they cannot find parking spaces when needed.

Appendix A – Summary Tables

How excited are you for the following features?

	Very Excited (5)	Excited (4)	Neutral (3)	Not very excited (2)	Not excited (1)	Don't know/ blank
Expanded trails	170	62	56	27	34	20
More shade trees/tree planting	144	48	63	27	58	29
Natural areas/pollinator gardens	141	42	56	29	77	24
Expanded bike park	135	45	68	23	70	28
Off-leash dog park	131	35	43	27	102	31
Open meadows/fields	105	48	48	40	93	35
Playground(s)	88	51	79	42	77	32
Community garden	86	35	79	28	104	37
Picnic areas with tables	83	64	84	56	54	28
Splash pad	82	40	77	29	100	41
Skate park	73	41	62	36	123	34
Reservable group picnic shelter	60	38	70	44	109	48
Additional baseball/softball field(s)	56	8	30	33	200	42
Basketball court(s)	39	31	71	54	139	35
Tennis court(s)	38	34	55	41	163	38
Additional soccer field(s)	30	12	34	51	201	41

Results grouped by excited/not excited/no opinion	Excited (5 and 4)	Not excited (2 and 1)	No opinion (3, don't know, blank)
Expanded trails	232	61	76
More shade trees/tree planting	192	85	92
Natural areas/pollinator gardens	183	106	80
Expanded bike park	180	93	96
Off-leash dog park	166	129	74
Open meadows/fields	153	133	83
Playground(s)	139	119	111
Community garden	121	132	116
Picnic areas with tables	147	110	112
Splash pad	122	129	118
Skate park	114	159	96
Reservable group picnic shelter	98	153	118
Additional baseball/softball field(s)	64	233	72
Basketball court(s)	70	193	106
Tennis court(s)	72	204	93
Additional soccer field(s)	42	252	75

How well do you like the location of each layout?

Response	Layout 1		Layout 2		Layout 3	
	raw data	percent	raw data	percent	raw data	percent
Don't like at all	75	20%	68	18%	61	17%
Don't like	65	18%	55	15%	56	15%
Neither like nor dislike	91	25%	64	17%	79	21%
Like	46	12%	90	24%	94	25%
Like very much	55	15%	56	15%	42	11%
Did not answer	37	10%	36	10%	37	10%
<i>total</i>	369	100%	369	100%	369	100%

Preferences for layouts

Preferred	raw data	percent
Layout 1	93	25%
Layout 2	102	28%
Layout 3	97	26%
No response	77	21%

Least preferred	Layout 1 as most preferred	Layout 2 as most preferred	Layout 3 as most preferred
Layout 1	--	73	79
Layout 2	25	--	12
Layout 3	61	22	--
No response	283	274	278