



City of Salem

CITY OF SALEM AND SALEM URA FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING AGENDA

April 20th, 2026 4:00 PM

Hybrid: ZOOM/Parkway Building, 440 Church St. SE, 4th Floor, RM PA4-307*

View Via YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCQLj9RKZNHu4wfYcs_TC0TA

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PARTICIPANTS

Board Members

Councilor Deanna Gwyn, Chair
Councilor Paul Tigan
Mayor Julie Hoy
Councilor Vanessa Nordyke
Alternate-Councilor Shane Matthews

Staff

Krishna Namburi, City Manager
Courtney Knox Busch, Assistant City Manager/Director for Strategy and Engagement
Dan Atchison, Deputy City Manager and City Attorney
Josh Eggleston, Chief Financial Officer
Kali Leinenbach, Budget Manager
Jeremy Morgan, Financial Reporting Manager
Kelli Blechschmidt, Management Analyst II
Shengnan Thomas, Management Analyst I
Gretchen Bennett, Community Services Director
Rob Romanek, Parks Planning Manager
Jennifer Kellar, Parks Ops Manager
Allen Dannen, P.E., City Engineer
Tammi Starrs, PW Program Manager
James Wharton-Hess, Senior Fiscal Analyst

Guests

Tammy Lohr-Schweitzer, Baker Tilly
Maria Stroth, Baker Tilly

AGENDA

1. Welcome and call to order
2. Approval of Minutes
 - a. March 16, 2026 ([Package page 3](#))
3. Public Comment - Appearance of persons wishing to address the Committee on any matter other than those which appear on this Agenda
4. Action Items
 - a. None
5. Management Update/Information Items
 - a. Parks Operations Performance Audit Update ([Package page 5](#))
 - b. Homelessness Key Performance Indicators Update ([Package page 55](#))
 - c. Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) ([Package page 57](#))
[Link to CIP Book](#)
6. Continued Business
 - a. None
7. New Business
 - a. None
8. Adjourn

During Civic Center seismic improvements, the in-person portion of the hybrid meeting will take place in the Parkway building located at 440 Church Street SE. When entering from Bellevue St SE, take the first left and continue straight into the parking lot. You will enter the building and follow signage to the elevator and select the 5th floor. Staff will come to greet you and bring you to the meeting room which is located on the 4th floor.

Next Scheduled Meeting: May 18th, 2026

This meeting is being conducted in-person with the options to participate remotely. Interested persons may view the meeting online on [YouTube](#). To sign up to testify or to submit public comment, contact the Finance Department via email at finance@cityofsalem.net or telephone at 503-588-6040 the day of the meeting by 1PM.

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CITY OF SALEM AND SALEM URA FINANCE COMMITTEE

Minutes

DATE: Monday, March 16, 2026

PLACE: ZOOM / Library Anderson Room A

CHAIRPERSON: Deanna Gwyn

STAFF LIAISON: Josh Eggleston, CFO 503-588-6130 JEggleston@cityofsalem.net

Members Present:

Councilor Deanna Gwyn, Chair
Councilor Vanessa Nordyke – virtual
Councilor Paul Tigan
Alternate-Councilor Shane Matthews

Members Absent:

Mayor Julie Hoy

Staff Present:

Krishna Namburi, City Manager (joined at 4:11pm)
Dan Atchison, Deputy City Manager and City Attorney
Josh Eggleston, Chief Financial Officer
David Gerboth, Fire Chief – virtual (joined at 4:08pm)
Gretchen Bennett, Community Services Director – virtual
Kali Leinenbach, Budget Manager
Jeremy Morgan, Financial Reporting Manager
James Wharton-Hess, Sr. Fiscal Analyst (joined at 4:12pm)
Shengnan Thomas, Management Analyst I

Guest Present:

Councilor Linda Nishioka as a member of the public (joined at 4:30pm)

1. CALL TO ORDER: 4:05 PM / Quorum

2. APPROVAL OF COMMITTEE MINUTES

a. February 17, 2026

Motion to approve the February 17, 2026 meeting minutes was moved by Member Tigan, seconded by Alternate Member Matthews, and carried by the following vote:

Aye: Chair Gwyn

Nay: Nordyke (did not review the minutes)

Abstentions: None

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

- a. None

4. ACTION ITEMS

- a. None

5. MANAGEMENT UPDATE / INFORMATION ITEMS

a. Quarterly Investment Update

Josh Eggleston, Chief Financial Officer provided update on the FY 2026 2nd quarter investment.

Questions and comments: Chair Gwyn; Member Tigan, Nordyke and Alternate Member Matthews

Answers and explanations: Josh Eggleston, Chief Financial Officer; Jeremy Morgan, Financial Reporting Manager

b. Enterprise Leadership Performance Audit Update

Krishna Namburi, City Manager provided update on Enterprise Leadership Performance Audit

Questions and comments: Members Tigan and Alternate Member Matthews

Answers and explanations: Krishna Namburi, City Manager

c. Request For Proposals (RFP) for Financial Auditing Services Update

Josh Eggleston, Chief Financial Officer and Jeremy Morgan, Financial Reporting Manager walked through financial auditor RFP process with the Committee

Questions and comments: Chair Gwyn; Members Tigan and Nordyke

Answers and explanations: Josh Eggleston, Chief Financial Officer

6. CONTINUED BUSINESS

- a. None

7. NEW BUSINESS

- a. None

8. ADJOURNMENT: 4:59 PM

The next meeting is scheduled for April 20, 2026 at 4:00 PM.

City of Salem

2025-2026 PARKS OPERATIONS PERFORMANCE AUDIT

April 15, 2026

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I. Executive Summary

A. Background, Scope, and Methodology

The City of Salem (the City) engaged Baker Tilly to conduct a performance audit to examine the effectiveness of Parks Operations (the Department) within the City’s Parks and Recreation Division (Parks or the Division). Key areas of focus include staffing and service delivery, use of volunteer and supplemental labor, the City’s growth and development framework for parks, and performance measurement. The scope of this audit does not include the City’s Recreation Services.

Baker Tilly performed this engagement between November 2025 and March 2026. To complete the engagement, we conducted interviews, document and data analysis, peer benchmarking, and industry best practice research. Based on the information gained during these activities, we formulated recommendations to help support the Department with improvements relevant to the audit objectives.

B. Summary of Findings and Recommendations

Our findings and recommendations are summarized below, grouped into four areas: (1) Staffing and Service Delivery, (2) Volunteer and Supplemental Labor, (3) Growth and Development, and (4) Performance Management. Findings and recommendations are detailed in further depth in [Section III](#).

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS		
Staffing and Service Delivery		
1.	Finding	The Department maintains foundational maintenance standards; however, most maintenance activities do not have defined schedules and are not tailored to park type, usage, or asset condition. This can result in more reactive maintenance and increases risks of uneven service quality across the park system.
	Recommendation	<p>A. The Department should revise and formalize maintenance standards to include clear, scheduled tasks tailored to park type, usage, and asset condition that are aligned with staff capacity. Asset management data, performance metrics, staff and community input, and equity should be considered when revising maintenance standards.</p> <p>B. Once maintenance standards are updated, the Department should ensure supervisors have the tools, training, and processes needed to effectively apply the revised maintenance standards when allocating resources and monitoring maintenance outcomes.</p>
2.	Finding	The Department has begun implementing CityWorks to be its asset management system. Not having the system fully implemented limits the Department’s ability to maintain accurate asset inventories, assess conditions, and plan maintenance and replacements effectively.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation The Department should fully implement CityWorks as their asset management system that includes a complete asset inventory, condition assessments, and lifecycle cost data to support data-driven maintenance planning, risk-based prioritization, and long-term budgeting.

Volunteer and Supplemental Labor

3. Finding The Department supplemental labor resources decreased between 2022 and 2025 due to various factors affecting recruitment and retention, including stricter background checks, participation fees, and limited seasonal worker compensation. These challenges have limited the Department’s supplemental workforce capacity, reducing the resources available to support park maintenance activities.

Recommendation The Department should strengthen supplemental labor by conducting outreach with volunteers to identify recruitment and retention challenges, reviewing and potentially revising the volunteer background check process to balance safety with accessibility, continuing efforts to eliminate fees for community service workers, and collaborating with HR to improve seasonal worker recruitment, compensation, and retention strategies.

4. Finding The Department has a valuable volunteer program supported by a dedicated coordinator and engaged community members who contribute to important projects. However, the program is often driven by volunteer interests and initiatives rather than Department priorities, and key data on volunteer distribution, retention, and satisfaction is not tracked to inform strategic management and equitable deployment.

Recommendation The Department should implement a strategic volunteer management approach that includes developing a comprehensive volunteer management plan, expanding targeted outreach, and enhancing data collection and analysis to guide recruitment, deployment, and program evaluation.

Growth and Development

5. Finding The City’s parks growth framework would benefit from enhancements to better reflect current community needs and operational realities. Key gaps include an outdated comprehensive plan and prioritization tools that do not fully consider maintenance costs or parks-specific equity. These issues limit the Department’s ability to make equitable, sustainable, and strategic investment decisions.

Recommendation The Department should modernize its growth and development framework by continuing efforts to update the City’s Comprehensive Park System Master Plan, enhancing capital improvement project prioritization tools to include maintenance costs and park-specific equity considerations, and establishing processes for using total cost of ownership evaluations when considering parkland acquisitions and service expansions.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Performance Management

6.	Finding	The Department currently tracks output-focused metrics such as park acreage and volunteer hours but lacks outcome-oriented performance measures that assess service quality, workload, user satisfaction, and equity. This limits the Department's ability to make data-driven decisions, align staffing with operational demands, and demonstrate accountability and community impact.
	Recommendation	The Department should develop outcome and workload key performance indicators (KPIs) to better assess service effectiveness and operational demands.

II. Introduction

A. Background

The Department manages a broad service area of more than 2,300 acres of parkland and open space across about 90 parks, including neighborhood parks, community parks, natural areas, trails, splash pads, playgrounds, sports fields, and other facilities. In fiscal year 2026 (FY26), the Department had an annual budget of \$9,783,880, which supports daily maintenance, facility repairs, equipment, and staffing to tend to the City's diverse park infrastructure. Their scope spans activities from routine groundskeeping and irrigation to tree care, building and facility maintenance, and park planning and development. To deliver its services, the Department maintains a workforce of 46 full-time equivalents (FTEs)¹, supplemented by seasonal employees, volunteers, and other supplemental labor.

In May 2025, voters approved Measure 24-514, a five-year local option levy authorizing a property tax of \$0.98 per \$1,000 of assessed value to maintain funding for key community services, including Parks. Among other City services, levy funds were projected to support management and maintenance of the City's 90 parks, including facilities, playgrounds, splash fountains, sports fields, trails, and more. While the levy provides critical funding for the Department, its temporary nature creates ongoing uncertainty for long-term planning, staffing, and service expansion.

B. Scope and Methodology

This performance audit is intended to evaluate Parks' efficiency, effectiveness, and service delivery in relation to community expectations. Our audit objectives were to:

- **Assess service and staffing levels:** Determine whether the Department's staffing and service levels are adequate to meet community needs and how they compare with peer and industry practices.
- **Review the use of volunteers and supplemental labor:** Assess how the Department leverages volunteers and other supplemental labor to support core functions.
- **Review the City's growth and development framework:** Evaluate the City's policies and decision-making frameworks for new parks and facilities to balance community demand, equity, long-term maintenance capacity, and financial sustainability.
- **Evaluate performance measures:** Review the relevance, accuracy, and usefulness of performance indicators to demonstrate community impact.

¹ [ADOPTED BUDGET BOOK 1.pdf](#)

This audit took place between November 2025 and March 2026 and was carried out across the following four phases:

PROJECT PHASES	
Project Phase	Description
1. Startup and Management	<p>Phase one consisted of collaborative project planning with City and Parks management, including determining who would be interviewed, what documents would be reviewed, what peers would be used in our analysis, when and how results would be shared, and how to report on project status.</p> <p>We conducted a kickoff meeting with the City to confirm expectations and discuss overall project scope, logistics, deliverables, timing, and progress reporting requirements. We conducted project management for the duration of the engagement. These activities included providing regular status updates to City management and developing draft deliverables for discussion.</p>
2. Fact-Finding	<p>The second phase focused on execution of planned activities, including document review, interviews, and peer benchmarking. We obtained the most current information and insights available from City personnel.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Documentation Review: We gathered relevant documentation for review, including organization charts, job descriptions, financial information, policies and procedures, programming information, volunteer and other supplemental labor data, community outreach plans, and relevant performance measures. ● Interviews: We conducted interviews and focus groups with members of City leadership and staff, including Parks staff and City management. ● Peer Benchmarking: We conducted peer analysis and interviewed parks leadership at comparable cities. We collaborated with City and Parks management to select comparable peers based on factors such as budget, number of staff, and service area. Peer benchmarking activities included data and document collection as well as interviews conducted with each peer. Full peer benchmarking results are included in Appendix A. The following cities and districts participated in this analysis: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Bend Park and Recreation District (Bend) ○ City of Corvallis Parks & Recreation Department (Corvallis) ○ City of Eugene Parks and Open Space Division (Eugene) ○ City of Gresham Parks, Recreation & Youth Services (Gresham) ○ Willamalane Park and Recreation District (Willamalane) ● Industry Best Practices: We conducted research into industry best practices for related topics such as maintenance standards, community engagement practices, volunteer management, and performance metrics.
3. Analysis	<p>Based on the information gained during our fact-finding phase, we conducted and consolidated research on relevant industry standards and best practices. Based on this research, we identified potential areas for improvement and developed practical recommendations.</p>
4. Reporting	<p>We communicated the results of our analysis with findings and recommendations presented first in a draft report. The draft report was reviewed with City and Parks management to confirm the practicality and relevance of recommendations before finalizing.</p>

C. Statement of Compliance with GAGAS

We conducted this performance audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards (GAGAS). GAGAS requires that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

D. Commendations

We would like to extend our gratitude to City staff for their active engagement and participation during this performance audit and note the areas of strength and existing good practices that can be leveraged for continued improvement within the Department, including:

- **Passionate and committed staff:** Staff across the Department expressed dedication and care for the parks they maintain and the community they serve. Despite reported challenges with workload, many employees adapt to challenging conditions to keep parks safe, clean, and welcoming. Their commitment is a vital asset to the Division and the City.
- **Proactive equipment upgrades to enhance efficiency:** Staff reported the Department replaced old tree trimmers, mowers, and excavators with newer, more efficient models in recent years, which has helped improve maintenance effectiveness and make better use of limited resources. This practical approach reflects the Department's commitment to enhancing operational efficiency despite staffing and budget constraints.
- **Dedicated volunteer program and coordination efforts:** The Department demonstrates a strong commitment to engaging the community through its volunteer program. The presence of a dedicated volunteer coordinator and the variety of volunteer initiatives across the City's parks show that the Department values community involvement. This provides a solid foundation for future enhancements and greater community partnership in this area.

III. Findings and Recommendations

A. Staffing and Service Delivery

MAINTENANCE STANDARDS

1. Finding	The Department maintains foundational maintenance standards; however, most maintenance activities do not have defined schedules and are not tailored to park type, usage, or asset condition. This can result in more reactive maintenance and increases risks of uneven service quality across the park system.
Recommendation	<p>A. The Department should revise and formalize maintenance standards to include clear, scheduled tasks tailored to park type, usage, and asset condition that are aligned with staff capacity. Asset management data, performance metrics, staff and community input, and equity should be considered when revising maintenance standards.</p> <p>B. Once maintenance standards are updated, the Department should ensure supervisors have the tools, training, and processes needed to effectively apply the revised maintenance standards when allocating resources and monitoring maintenance outcomes.</p>

Finding

Maintenance standards are fundamental to ensuring park safety, usability, aesthetics, environmental stewardship, and cost-effective management of public assets. Leading industry guidelines, such as those from the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) and the Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA), emphasize the importance of well-defined, asset-specific, and usage-based maintenance standards. For example, CAPRA Standard 7.4² requires agencies to establish specific maintenance standards and inspection schedules tailored to park classification levels—ranging from heavily used, highly developed areas to lightly used, natural spaces—and to regularly review and update these standards to reflect community preferences and operational realities.

The Department has established maintenance standards outlining required activities for its various park assets. The standards are broken down by asset type (e.g., athletic facilities, benches/tables, bike racks, drinking fountains, irrigation systems, lights, playgrounds, restrooms, and signs) and include established standards and frequencies. For instance, restroom sinks, toilets, and hand dryers in park restrooms are expected to be maintained on an as-needed basis to ensure they are clean and functional. To achieve these maintenance standards, the Department staff are assigned regular routes, with specific required tasks like restroom cleaning, playground inspections, trash collection, and landscaping. While this provides a solid foundation for maintenance activities, many tasks within the documented standards are described primarily as “as needed” rather than being consistently

² National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA). *2027 CAPRA National Accreditation Standards*. Revised August 2025. Accessed February 20, 2026. https://www.nrpa.org/contentassets/4ecbd8c4801e494f82c38169b0aedc20/2027-capra-national-accreditation-standards_10.9.25.pdf

paired with clearly defined baseline service intervals, such as daily or weekly frequencies, with additional service provided as activities and conditions warrant. Without clear, consistently documented time frames for when routine maintenance should occur, there is a risk that expectations for service levels are interpreted differently across staff and locations. Additionally, in contrast to industry best practices and some peers, the City's documented maintenance standards are less formalized and often applied uniformly across diverse park types without consideration of asset condition or usage. Management reported that usage is considered when assigning work in real time (e.g., scheduling mowing or addressing field conditions in advance of a soccer event). While this reflects an appropriate operational practice, these adjustments are not consistently reflected in formal, documented maintenance standards. As a result, expectations for service levels remain partially informal and dependent on staff judgment. The absence of clearly defined, documented standards limits the Park's ability to consistently communicate expectations, ensure alignment across crews, and provide a structured basis for planning, prioritization, and accountability. It also reduces transparency, making it more difficult to justify service levels, evaluate performance, and ensure equitable and consistent maintenance across the park system.

Staff also reported that this approach contributes to community perceptions that parks in some neighborhoods receive less maintenance attention, raising equity concerns. In interviews, staff consistently expressed that current maintenance frequencies fall short of community expectations and do not adequately ensure park safety and cleanliness. The existing standards were described as "fluid" rather than concrete or enforceable, creating ambiguity around priorities and making it challenging for staff to allocate time and resources effectively and limiting the ability of supervisors to provide effective oversight and monitoring of maintenance activities.

Staffing constraints reportedly make it difficult for the Department to follow set maintenance schedules, contributing to a more reactive and "as needed" approach. However, while comparisons across agencies are not exact, the City maintains approximately 61 acres per maintenance FTE, which is below the peer average of 89 acres per maintenance FTE. For purposes of this analysis, total acres includes both actively maintained parkland and natural areas, consistent with how the City and peer agencies report acreage. This approach provides a consistent basis for comparison, though the composition of parkland (e.g., developed parks versus natural areas) and the operational demands associated with maintaining those spaces, such as usage levels, event support, asset complexity, and external factors, may vary across agencies and influence workload. Maintenance staff FTEs included in this analysis include positions directly responsible for the day-to-day upkeep of park assets, along with supervisory and project coordination roles that provide direct oversight and coordination of maintenance activities. This includes routine cleaning, landscaping, inspections, repairs, and ongoing monitoring of asset conditions. In the City, this includes maintenance managers, supervisors, maintenance staff, project coordinators, a natural infrastructure specialist, and tree trimmers. Positions with primarily administrative, planning, programming, or seasonal roles, such as administration, the Director, Manager II, Park Rangers, seasonal workers, Senior Planners, and Volunteer Coordinators, were excluded to focus on staff actively engaged in maintenance service delivery. Comparable maintenance-related staffing categories were identified and aligned across peer agencies to the extent possible to ensure a consistent basis for comparison. Total division FTE counts were not used as the primary comparator due to differences in how peers structure administrative, programming, and other non-maintenance functions.

While this analysis provides a standardized comparison across peer agencies, it does not capture all nuances in how responsibilities are structured or how staff time is allocated across functions. For example, certain roles may support both park maintenance and other areas, such as public right-of-way, and comparable allocations across peer agencies were not consistently available. Additionally, the absence of clearly defined maintenance standards and workload metrics limits the ability to precisely assess staffing alignment with service expectations. As a result, this analysis provides an indicator of relative workload and informs the overall assessment of staffing levels, and should be considered alongside service expectations, maintenance standards, and operational context when evaluating staffing alignment.

Three of the peer cities, Bend, Corvallis, and Gresham, maintain a higher acreage per FTE. While differences in park types, service expectations, maintenance standards, and operational models may all contribute to variation in acreage ratios across peers, this suggests challenges with meeting set maintenance schedules may also relate to how resources are allocated and managed.

PEER BENCHMARKING MATRIX							
Topic	Salem	Peer Average	Bend	Corvallis	Eugene	Gresham	Willamalane
Total Parks Acreage	2,335	2,833	3,629	1,707	6,000	1,200	1,630
Parks Maintenance FTE Count*	38	24.08	31	17.5	Not available**	13	34.83
Acres Maintained per Parks Maintenance FTE	61	89	117	98	N/A	92	47

**Maintenance FTE reflects maintenance-related roles aligned across peer agencies for comparability. It excludes administrative workers, leaders who manage multiple functions beyond maintenance, and volunteer and seasonal positions. The goal of this count is to increase comparability between the City and peers across maintenance functions. Differences in how agencies structure roles, allocate responsibilities (e.g., public right-of-way work), and deliver services may influence workload and limit direct comparisons. As such, this metric should be interpreted alongside maintenance standards, service expectations, and operational context when assessing staffing levels.*

***Eugene has 97 FTEs in the Parks and Open Space division, but we were not able to categorize staff further, so meaningful comparisons with Salem were not possible.*

The lack of clearly defined and consistently applied maintenance standards hinders the City’s ability to allocate resources proactively. By establishing clear, realistic, and enforceable maintenance standards, the Department can create a stronger operational framework that would enable staff to prioritize tasks strategically and adhere to structured schedules. It would also allow supervisors to effectively oversee and distribute resources.

Recommendation

To improve maintenance service delivery within existing staffing levels, the Department should undertake a comprehensive revision and formalization of its maintenance standards. This effort should focus on developing clear, specific, and enforceable protocols that reflect the unique needs of

different park types, asset conditions, and usage levels, while aligning with the Department's actual workforce capacity. Key steps to achieve this include the following:

1. **Develop clear and tailored maintenance standards:** The Department should establish maintenance standards that specify measurable tasks, frequencies, and acceptable condition levels for each asset type and park classification (see [Appendix B](#)). For example, the Department should define how often lawns are to be mowed, playgrounds inspected, restrooms cleaned, and trash collected, with frequencies adjusted based on factors such as park size, usage intensity, seasonality, and asset criticality.

Parks are typically categorized into three tiers based on level of usage and demand:

- **High-use parks:** Destination parks, athletic complexes, and parks with significant programmed activity or visitor traffic
- **Moderate-use parks:** Neighborhood parks with a mix of active and passive recreation amenities and moderate visitor volumes
- **Low-use parks:** Passive parks, natural areas, or open space locations with limited amenities and lower visitation levels

Establishing defined maintenance standards tied to park usage can help shift operations away from a largely as-needed approach toward more consistent, scheduled maintenance intervals. For example, high-use parks may require weekly mowing during the growing season, while moderate-use parks may be maintained on a 10 to 14 day mowing cycle. Implementing clearly defined maintenance standards can support more proactive asset management, reduce long-term asset deterioration, and improve overall park conditions and user satisfaction.

2. **Incorporate staffing capacity into standards:** The Department should align maintenance frequencies and scopes with the actual availability of staff hours. This requires evaluating workforce capacity to realistically determine how often tasks can be performed without overextending staff. For instance, if current staffing only allows for mowing every two weeks instead of weekly, the standards should reflect this to set achievable expectations. The Department should also regularly review staffing levels and workload data to update standards as capacity changes, ensuring ongoing practicality and sustainability.
3. **Integrate asset management and performance metrics:** The Department should use data from existing asset management systems like CityWorks along with workload KPIs to monitor maintenance activities and staff capacity (see also [Performance Management](#)). Monitoring metrics like acres maintained per staff FTE, percentage of work orders completed on time, and average response times to maintenance requests can provide objective insight into operational efficiency and highlight areas where staffing adjustments or revisions to maintenance standards may need consideration. For instance, if data shows that certain park zones consistently have delayed mowing schedules or a high volume of overdue work orders, the Department can investigate whether staffing levels or maintenance frequencies in those areas need adjustment. Establishing dashboards or regular reporting routines will help management make informed, evidence-based decisions.
4. **Engage staff and community in the process:** The Department should establish formal processes to gather input from staff and community members when developing and reviewing maintenance standards. Staff insights are critical for understanding operational realities and identifying practical priorities, while community feedback helps ensure that maintenance efforts align with public expectations and address equity concerns. This engagement can be facilitated through surveys, focus groups, advisory committees, or public meetings, fostering transparency and trust.

5. **Address equity in maintenance service delivery:** To respond to community concerns about uneven maintenance across neighborhoods, the Department should use data and community feedback to identify parks and neighborhoods that have historically received less maintenance attention. The Department should prioritize equitable allocation of maintenance resources and adjust standards and schedules accordingly to ensure all parks receive fair and consistent care, helping to build community trust and improve perceptions of park equity. Additionally, the Department should clearly communicate its defined maintenance standards and the rationale for different maintenance levels based on park type and usage to the public. Transparent communication can help manage community expectations, clarify why certain parks may receive different types or frequencies of maintenance, and reduce perceptions of inequity.
6. **Strengthen supervisory oversight and monitoring:** The Department should ensure supervisors have the tools, training, and processes needed to effectively apply the revised maintenance standards when monitoring staff performance and maintenance outcomes. This may include, for instance, providing supervisors with standardized checklists, inspection forms, or digital systems aligned with the maintenance standards to facilitate consistent and objective oversight. Regular training should be conducted to help supervisors interpret the standards accurately, conduct evaluations, and provide constructive feedback to staff. Enhancing supervisory capacity in this way will promote accountability, help identify service gaps early, and support more effective resource allocation and distribution.

By systematically applying these strategies, the Department can better align maintenance standards with staffing realities, optimize resource use, and maintain park quality and safety. This practical, data-driven approach supports transparent decision-making and positions the Department for continuous improvement as staffing and resources evolve.

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE	
Management Agreement	<p>Partially agree. A more formal framework for maintenance standards will improve consistency and evaluation of equity and service delivery. Implementation will need to be aligned with available staff capacity, funding availability and parks usage to ensure standards are realistic and sustainable over time.</p> <p>To support effective implementation of these recommendations, it is important to provide additional context regarding current staffing and service delivery. Our fully dedicated maintenance is lower than what was described in the report. Specifically, we have 20 Parks Maintenance Officers who perform maintenance as well as event support work, along with 7 Project Coordinators who contribute to maintenance tasks but also focus on weekend events and facility use support; fabrication and installation; fleet repair, replacement and purchase; small equipment inventory, repair and purchase; playground inspections, repairs and replacements; and irrigation management and repairs.</p> <p>Additionally, maintenance staff numbers in the report include our six urban forestry team members, who dedicate about 80% of their time to the public right-of-way urban forest rather than parks tree maintenance; however, the acreage of this public right-of-way is not reflected in the acreage cared for in the chart. This an important consideration when evaluating workload and service levels.</p> <p>Additional clarity on the peer benchmarking methodology, particularly how Salem's park and recreation staffing levels, roles, responsibilities, and service levels are being defined across agencies, would support our ability to meaningfully interpret or apply the findings operationally.</p>

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE	
Owner	Parks and Recreation Manager
Target Completion Date	Phase 1 by Winter 2026 and Phase 2 by Spring 2027
Action Plan	<p>Phase 1 will consist of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Creating formal standards document addressing minimum standard levels considering maintenance tasks, frequency of task accomplishment, parks usage, parks classification, and staff capacity. ● Developing standardized checklist or digital systems aligned with maintenance standards. ● Engage staff in development of maintenance standards to reflect operational realities. <p>Phase 2 will consist of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Creating performance metrics aligned with formalized maintenance standards for programming opportunities and refine based on real outcomes.

ASSET MANAGEMENT

2. Finding	The Department has begun implementing CityWorks to be its asset management system. Not having the system fully implemented limits the Department’s ability to maintain accurate asset inventories, assess conditions, and plan maintenance and replacements effectively.
Recommendation	The Department should fully implement CityWorks as their asset management system that includes a complete asset inventory, condition assessments, and lifecycle cost data to support data-driven maintenance planning, risk-based prioritization, and long-term budgeting.

Finding

Effective asset management systems provide detailed records of asset condition, maintenance history, and lifecycle costs, enabling risk-based prioritization, optimized resource allocation, and long-term capital planning. They also incorporate the “cost of not doing” maintenance, recognizing that deferring upkeep accelerates deterioration and leads to higher future repair costs.

The Department does not yet comprehensively track its park infrastructure assets. While CityWorks has been introduced to record maintenance work orders and some asset data, its implementation remains incomplete, leaving many assets and maintenance activities untracked. This gap limits the Department’s ability to maintain an accurate inventory, assess asset conditions, and effectively plan maintenance and replacements. Staff and management confirmed that CityWorks shows promise but is still being phased in, resulting in predominantly reactive maintenance decisions based on visual inspections or community complaints rather than data-driven assessments.

Peer agencies illustrate a range of asset management maturity. Some, like Bend and Willamalane, have fully implemented systems such as Maintenance Connections and Cartograph that support comprehensive work order tracking, condition assessments, and inspections. Others, including

Corvallis, Eugene, and Gresham, are developing or exploring asset management plans and integrating GIS and inventory data, with some also considering CityWorks adoption. The City’s current partial implementation of CityWorks aligns with peers still building robust systems, underscoring the importance of advancing toward a comprehensive asset inventory and data-driven maintenance planning to improve operational accountability and long-term financial stewardship.

Peer Approaches to Asset Management

Peer	Asset Management System Use
Salem	Early stages of implementing CityWorks
Bend	Maintenance Connection fully implemented for work orders and asset tracking
Corvallis	Multiple systems, primarily Productive Parks; exploring adoption of a new asset management system
Eugene	Asset management plan in development; uses GIS and inventory data
Gresham	Using Lucidity; developing asset management program; exploring CityWorks adoption
Willamalane	Cartograph system actively used for maintenance tracking and inspections

The lack of a comprehensive asset management system creates challenges for the Department. Without accurate and timely data, the Department often reacts to problems as they arise instead of preventing them. This can lead to accelerated asset deterioration, increased emergency repairs, and inefficient use of limited resources. Addressing these challenges by advancing a robust asset management program is critical for the Department to improve decision-making, optimize maintenance investments, and ensure the sustainability and quality of the City’s park infrastructure.

Recommendation

To address current limitations and align with best practices, the Department should accelerate the full implementation and integration of CityWorks or an equivalent asset management system. This includes developing a complete and accurate inventory of all park assets, and capturing detailed condition assessments, maintenance histories, and lifecycle cost data. The Department should also continue investing in staff training and process improvements to ensure consistent use of the system for scheduling, tracking, and documenting maintenance activities. Integrating asset management data with capital improvement planning will support long-term budgeting and help prevent costly deferred maintenance.

By establishing a robust, data-driven asset management program, the Department can enhance accountability, optimize maintenance investments, and safeguard park quality and safety for the community over time.

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE	
Management Agreement	Agree. We will strengthen prioritization of asset management system integration.

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE	
Owner	Parks Field Supervisors, Parks Planning Manager
Target Completion Date	Fall 2027
Action Plan	Continued utilization and improvements of CityWorks asset management system for parks assets, capturing condition assessments, maintenance histories, and lifecycle cost data would be beneficial to reach the desired outcome. The initial assessment phase of the Comprehensive Parks System Plan update will be used to accelerate development of a foundational parks asset inventory and initiate condition and performance grading of key park infrastructure. This inventory and condition assessment work is anticipated to occur over the next 12-18 months and will support more comprehensive asset tracking and integration into CityWorks and we are looking forward to efficiencies this will create for our processes and operations.

B. Volunteer and Supplemental Labor

SUPPLEMENTAL LABOR RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

3. Finding	The Department supplemental labor resources decreased between 2022 and 2025 due to various factors affecting recruitment and retention, including stricter background checks, participation fees, and limited seasonal worker compensation. These challenges have limited the Department’s supplemental workforce capacity, reducing the resources available to support park maintenance activities.
Recommendation	The Department should strengthen supplemental labor by conducting outreach with volunteers to identify recruitment and retention challenges, reviewing and potentially revising the volunteer background check process to balance safety with accessibility, continuing efforts to eliminate fees for community service workers, and collaborating with HR to improve seasonal worker recruitment, compensation, and retention strategies.

Finding

An effective supplemental labor program is vital for parks departments to augment limited staffing and maintain park quality. Such a program should strategically recruit, onboard, and retain supplemental labor resources, such as volunteers, community service workers, and seasonal employees, by minimizing barriers to participation, offering competitive and clear career pathways, and balancing safety and accountability with accessibility. Policies and practices should be informed by data and aligned with best practices to sustain a reliable and motivated supplemental workforce.

The Department depends on supplemental labor resources, including volunteers, court-ordered community service workers, and seasonal employees. However, the availability of these labor sources has declined in recent years. Volunteer hours, measured in FTE, declined from 28.9 in FY22 to 25.9 in FY25, a difference of three FTEs. Staff reported this is due to challenges with retaining long-term volunteers. In particular, staff reported recent changes to the City’s background check process for volunteers discouraged some volunteers from participating because the process is more

comprehensive than it used to be and requires annual reauthorization. Three peer cities (Bend, Corvallis, and Gresham) limit background checks to volunteers working with youth or sensitive populations, balancing safety with ease of participation.

Community service worker hours also fell from 10.5 FTEs to 4.4 FTEs during the same period, a difference of 6.1 FTEs. This was largely due to the implementation of a \$40 fee to cover training and equipment costs, which led to a reduction in referrals to the program. Eugene has a similar program, and they do not charge a fee to participants. Parks staff are actively pursuing removal of the fee to restore this critical workforce.

VOLUNTEER AND COMMUNITY SERVICE HOURS CONVERTED TO FTE*					
	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY25	Difference in FTEs from FY22 to FY25
Volunteer FTE	28.9	29.6	27.6	25.9	3
Community Service FTE	10.5	8.1	7.7	4.4	6.1

* FTE 2080 hours = 1 FTE

Seasonal labor capacity also declined between 2022 and 2025, reflecting challenges in recruitment over recent years despite an increase in the number of recruitment cycles performed. As detailed in the table below, there was a notable decrease in both the average number of applicants and average number of hires per recruitment cycle between 2022 and 2025.

SEASONAL LABOR RECRUITMENT AND HIRES				
	2022	2023	2024	2025
Number of recruitment cycles	2	1 (with one recruitment discontinued)	3	4
Number of applicants	170	32	84	103
Number hired	46	8	10	15
Average applicants per recruitment cycle	85	32	28	25.8
Average hires per recruitment cycle	23	8	3.3	3.8

For each of the recruitments in this time period, we reviewed data on the number of applicants making it to each of the various stages of the recruitment process, and did not identify any notable trends, making it difficult to determine the cause of these declines. However, staff reported recruitment challenges are likely influenced by low compensation compared to alternative employment options in the community. Additionally, seasonal employees do not have opportunities for pay increases beyond annual cost-of-living adjustments, given that there are no steps in the City's

classification system for seasonal workers.³ While it is not necessarily common to have a multi-step classification structure for seasonal employment, this simplified pay structure provides limited wage progression within the seasonal workforce. Staff reported that pay has contributed to difficulties in retaining seasonal workers, with some choosing not to return because they can earn higher wages in other jobs.

One peer offers a multi-step classification structure for seasonal workers aligned with full-time staff as part of its recruitment and retention strategy. Additionally, peers highlighted several other recruitment strategies to support improved seasonal labor recruitment cycles, including implementing continuous open recruitment cycles, digital hiring platforms with immediate application processing, and targeted outreach through schools and community organizations to help maintain a steady pipeline of qualified seasonal workers and more quickly adapt to fluctuating market conditions.

The cumulative effect of the challenges noted throughout this finding is a reduced supplemental labor pool that constrains the Department's ability to maintain parks effectively. Limited supplemental labor can delay routine tasks such as landscaping, trash removal, and facility and increase risks related to inadequate park quality, service delivery, and community satisfaction.

Recommendation

To strengthen its supplemental labor program and better support park maintenance, the Department should take the following actions:

1. **Engage with volunteers:** The Department should conduct outreach to current and prospective volunteers to gather feedback on their experiences, motivations, and challenges. This input should be used to identify barriers to volunteer recruitment and retention, and to develop strategies to improve volunteer engagement and satisfaction.
2. **Evaluate the volunteer background check process:** The Department should work with HR to review the City's volunteer background check procedures to assess whether revisions are possible that maintain safety and accountability while reducing unnecessary barriers to participation. This may include exploring alternatives, similar to those used by peer cities, where comprehensive background checks focus primarily on sensitive roles, such as those who work with youth or sensitive populations.
3. **Remove barriers to community service worker participation:** The Department should continue to prioritize eliminating the \$40 fee imposed on community service workers, which has led to a significant drop in court referrals.
4. **Enhance seasonal worker recruitment and retention:** The Department should collaborate with HR to evaluate the pay and compensation structure for seasonal workers, including exploring options such as multi-step classification systems or wage progression opportunities. In collaboration with HR, the Department should also consider adopting recruitment strategies used by peer agencies, such as implementing continuous open recruitment cycles and targeting outreach to schools and community organizations to build a steady pipeline of qualified candidates.

³ Seasonal workers who have an assignment that requires a CDL receive a \$3.00 per hour differential.

These strategies will support the Department in rebuilding and sustaining a reliable supplemental workforce, which will help alleviate staffing constraints and improve the quality and consistency of park maintenance services across the City.

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE	
Management Agreement	Agree. We are supportive of supplemental labor recommendations for continuing our on-going efforts for removal of the community service worker participation fee, evaluation of barriers surrounding the volunteer background check process, and the existing classification pay structure for parks seasonal maintenance staff.
Owner	Parks and Recreation Manager
Target Completion Date	Phase 1 by July 2026 and Phase 2 by Spring 2027
Action Plan	<p>Phase 1 will consist of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Recommend removal of community service worker participation fee of \$40 as part of master fee schedule update, effective July 1, 2026. ● Continuing evaluation process with City Risk Management for evaluation and removal of barriers surrounding the volunteer background check process. <p>Phase 2 will consist of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Collaborate with HR to review options aligned with existing pay structure for parks seasonal maintenance staff or creation of multi-step or progressive step remedies impacting staffing retention levels. ● Report tracking surrounding volunteer retention, hours by task or project using Volgistics system.

STRATEGIC VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT

4. Finding	The Department has a valuable volunteer program supported by a dedicated coordinator and engaged community members who contribute to important projects. However, the program is often driven by volunteer interests and initiatives rather than Department priorities, and key data on volunteer distribution, retention, and satisfaction is not tracked to inform strategic management and equitable deployment.
Recommendation	The Department should implement a strategic volunteer management approach that includes developing a comprehensive volunteer management plan, expanding targeted outreach, and enhancing data collection and analysis to guide recruitment, deployment, and program evaluation.

Finding

An effective volunteer management program is strategic and proactive, aligning volunteer activities with departmental priorities and operational needs. This includes using data to guide recruitment, deployment, and evaluation of volunteer efforts to maximize impact and ensure equitable distribution across communities. Programs that rely on systematic planning and data-driven decision-making are

better positioned to support core functions, optimize staff workloads, and address community needs comprehensively.

The Department benefits from a dedicated volunteer coordinator who plays an important role in organizing volunteer efforts and fostering community engagement. Volunteers contribute to projects like landscaping renovations, trail maintenance, tree planting, and gardening, which help enhance the quality and appearance of the City's parks. This model aligns with peer cities, three of which have at least one part-time or full-time volunteer coordinator overseeing similar activities. Common volunteer activities across peer cities include park beautification, trail and natural resource management, tree care, event support, community education, and cleanup efforts, indicating that the City's volunteer program engages in activities consistent with peer practices.

While staff consistently acknowledged the valuable contributions volunteers make in supporting maintenance activities, the current volunteer program operates in a somewhat ad hoc manner, driven more by volunteer interests and requests than by a systematic alignment with the Department's operational priorities. As a result, volunteer efforts are not always focused on areas where they could most effectively reduce maintenance workloads or address critical park needs. For instance, with a more strategic approach, the Department could prioritize volunteer projects in parks with the greatest maintenance backlogs or in neighborhoods with limited staff presence to maximize the impact of volunteer contributions on operational efficiency and community benefit. Additionally, staff noted uneven volunteer participation, with lower engagement in underserved neighborhoods such as North and Northeast Salem. This uneven distribution risks perpetuating inequities in park improvements and community benefits.

Furthermore, while the Department tracks volunteer hours and FTE contributions annually, there is limited monitoring and analysis of other important aspects of volunteer engagement. Data on the geographic and demographic distribution of volunteers, volunteer retention and turnover, the specific contributions of volunteer activities in supporting maintenance objectives (e.g., hours spent on landscaping, trail upkeep, or facility improvements), and volunteer satisfaction are not systematically collected or evaluated. This lack of comprehensive data limits the Department's ability to fully understand volunteer contributions, identify gaps, and ensure equitable and effective deployment of volunteer resources.

Recommendation

The Department should adopt a strategic volunteer management model that proactively aligns volunteer activities with Department priorities and operational needs. This includes identifying high-impact projects where volunteer support can most effectively supplement staff efforts. It also includes targeted recruitment efforts that prioritize outreach to underserved communities, such as North and Northeast Salem, to promote equitable volunteer engagement citywide.

Develop a Comprehensive Volunteer Management Plan

The Department should develop and implement a detailed volunteer management plan that clearly defines priority projects, establishes clear goals, and includes targeted recruitment and retention strategies. For instance, the plan could include seasonal outreach campaigns to recruit volunteers for specific initiatives like spring trail restoration and include strategies for partnering with community organizations to increase participation in historically underserved neighborhoods. The results of the

volunteer survey mentioned previously can be leveraged when developing this plan (see [Supplemental Labor Recruitment and Retention](#)).

Examples of volunteer management plan goals include:

- Increasing volunteer participation in priority projects by a specific percentage within a set time frame (e.g., increase volunteer hours dedicated to trail maintenance by 20% during the spring season)
- Expanding volunteer engagement in underserved neighborhoods to achieve more equitable distribution of volunteer efforts across all city areas
- Completing a defined number of park improvement projects annually with volunteer assistance

Expand Targeted Outreach and Community-Based Recruitment Strategies

To increase volunteer participation in underserved neighborhoods, the Department should supplement partnerships with more proactive, community-based recruitment strategies. This may include collaborating with trusted local institutions such as schools, neighborhood associations, faith-based organizations, and community centers to co-host volunteer events within these neighborhoods, rather than relying solely on citywide recruitment. The Department could also identify and engage community ambassadors or volunteer leaders who can help promote opportunities through existing local networks. Additional strategies may include offering culturally relevant programming, providing multilingual outreach materials, and aligning volunteer opportunities with community-identified priorities to increase relevance and participation. Reducing barriers to participation, such as by hosting events at accessible locations, offering flexible scheduling, or providing necessary tools and supplies, can further support more inclusive and equitable volunteer engagement.

Implement Data-Driven Volunteer Coordination

The Department should also enhance its data efforts to comprehensively track volunteer participation, including hours contributed, types of activities, geographic and demographic distribution, retention rates, and volunteer satisfaction. This data should be regularly analyzed to identify participation gaps, evaluate program effectiveness, and inform continuous improvements. Transparent reporting of these metrics will support accountability and help ensure volunteers are deployed equitably and strategically to meet operational needs.

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE	
Management Agreement	Agree. We are already currently seeking volunteers to address operational priorities in a proactive manner and agree that improved coordination and tracking will help continue its current efforts to align park maintenance project needs with volunteer interest.
Owner	Parks and Recreation Manager; Parks Volunteer Coordinator
Target Completion Date	Spring 2027
Action Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of a Volunteer Management plan for a focused approach toward community engagement efforts defined to maximize volunteer levels and retention.

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate and develop focused approach to expand volunteer rates within underserved areas. • Expand current data tracking and reporting to incorporate geographic and demographic distribution using Volgistics system. • Expand volunteer metrics to include volunteer satisfaction toward evaluation of program effectiveness.

C. Growth and Development

PLANNING AND DECISION MAKING

5. Finding	The City's parks growth framework would benefit from enhancements to better reflect current community needs and operational realities. Key gaps include an outdated comprehensive plan and prioritization tools that do not fully consider maintenance costs or parks-specific equity. These issues limit the Department's ability to make equitable, sustainable, and strategic investment decisions.
Recommendation	The Department should modernize its growth and development framework by continuing efforts to update the City's Comprehensive Park System Master Plan, enhancing capital improvement project prioritization tools to include maintenance costs and park-specific equity considerations, and establishing processes for using total cost of ownership evaluations when considering parkland acquisitions and service expansions.

Finding

An effective parks growth and development framework is essential for planning and managing a park system that meets community needs, promotes fairness, and can be sustained over time. To achieve this, several key elements must work together. First, master plans should be regularly updated to reflect current population trends, growth areas, and community priorities, especially in neighborhoods that have been historically underserved. Second, capital planning must be integrated with operational planning by considering the full costs of new projects, including maintenance, staffing, and long-term upkeep, so that investments are financially sustainable. Third, equity tools tailored specifically for parks help guide resources to communities with the greatest need, supporting inclusive and fair access to park services. Finally, transparent decision-making processes that use data and clear criteria allow the City to evaluate park projects consistently and fairly. Together, these elements create a strong foundation for strategic parks growth that balances community expectations, fiscal responsibility, and operational capacity.

The City's current approach to parks growth and development provided a foundation but needs modernization to better meet the changing community needs, ensure fair access, and maintain financial and operational sustainability. Key gaps in planning documents and decision-making tools limit the City's ability to guide park system expansion in a way that is both equitable and sustainable over the long term.

Comprehensive Plan

The City's Comprehensive Park System Master Plan has not been updated since 2013, which limits its relevance to current community demographics, growth patterns, and community needs. Without regular updates, the plan may not adequately reflect the changing demands of the community, particularly in rapidly growing or historically underserved areas such as Northeast Salem. This gap can contribute to perceptions of insufficient park services and inequitable access in certain neighborhoods, underscoring the need for a more current and responsive planning framework.

Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) Prioritization Tool

During interviews, staff highlighted a gap in the City's current CIP prioritization tool related to the consideration of ongoing operational and maintenance demands, particularly for parks projects. While the tool effectively evaluates capital needs, it does not fully capture the long-term maintenance burden that new or upgraded park facilities will impose.

In response, City leadership reported that they are actively addressing the maintenance burden gap by developing a new criterion to be added to the CIP prioritization tool. This additional scoring element will be integrated into the CIP prioritization tool in next year's CIP process, with finalization expected in the coming months. This proactive step to explicitly account for ongoing maintenance and operational costs reflects a broader recognition among municipalities of the importance of balancing capital investments with the long-term operational demands that new or upgraded park facilities impose. This enhancement will improve the City's ability to prioritize projects that are not only critical from a capital perspective but also sustainable within existing and projected operational budgets.

Equity Tool

The current equity tool, which is used with the CIP prioritization tool, is based on Census data and provides a solid foundation for assessing social and geographic equity. However, staff noted that the existing equity tool is not specifically tailored to the unique characteristics and service requirements of the park system. We heard similar feedback among peer cities, which reported that while equity considerations are often addressed within comprehensive or CIP planning documents, they frequently lack the specificity needed to effectively guide investments in park systems. These gaps limit the City's ability to prioritize projects that balance capital investments with sustainable operations and equitable service delivery. Incorporating parks-specific equity metrics such as access to recreational amenities, availability of inclusive facilities, and identification of underserved neighborhoods would better align project prioritization with equitable service delivery goals. Additionally, integrating community engagement insights and service gap analyses would ensure that capital investments address the diverse recreational needs of the City's residents.

While the City has established foundational tools and plans to guide the parks growth and development framework, key gaps remain that limit the City's ability to fully realize an equitable and sustainable park system. Addressing these gaps through modernization of planning documents, refinement of prioritization tools, and establishment of formal standards will be critical to meeting community needs and ensuring long-term operational viability.

Total Cost of Ownership

The decision-making framework for acquiring new parkland or expanding services does not consistently incorporate Total Cost of Ownership analyses, including maintenance, staffing, and

lifecycle costs. This is considered a best practice by the Government Finance Officers Association⁴, as lifecycle costs will impact future annual operating budgets. We heard from peers that most of their frameworks do not fully incorporate Total Cost of Ownership considerations either. Still, without formal policies requiring comprehensive cost-benefit evaluations, the City risks committing to park expansions or donations that exceed its ongoing operational and financial capacity. This can lead to overextension of resources, reduced service levels, and challenges in sustaining the park system long term. This issue aligns closely with challenges identified in [Maintenance Standards finding](#).

Recommendation

To strengthen the City's parks growth and development framework and address current challenges, the City should prioritize the following actions. These steps will help create a more responsive, equitable, and financially sound approach to managing park system expansion and operations.

- **Continue efforts to update the City's Comprehensive Park System Master Plan:** The City should continue ongoing efforts to update its parks master plan to reflect the latest population trends and community priorities. This process should actively involve residents from all neighborhoods, particularly those historically underserved, to ensure the plan guides investments that resonate with community needs. Incorporating data-driven tools such as GIS mapping alongside community input will help identify gaps in park access and amenities. To keep the plan relevant over time, the City should establish a routine schedule for reviewing and refreshing the plan so it can adapt to demographic changes and emerging recreational trends.
- **Enhance CIP prioritization and equity tools:** The City should finalize and implement the planned enhancements to the CIP prioritization tool to incorporate criteria that explicitly account for ongoing operational and maintenance costs associated with new or upgraded facilities. The Department should also update existing equity assessment tools used in CIP processes to better capture the unique factors that influence equitable access to parks, such as proximity to amenities, facility inclusivity, and community-specific needs. Collaborating with equity experts and community organizations will help refine these tools and help make them sensitive to the lived experiences of diverse populations. Integrating these tools into funding decisions and project prioritization will help the City more effectively address disparities and improve park experiences for all residents.
- **Implement Total Cost of Ownership evaluations:** The Department should establish formal policies requiring comprehensive Total Cost of Ownership evaluations, including maintenance, staffing, and lifecycle costs, for all parkland acquisitions and service expansions. Such evaluations typically include detailed assessments of routine and preventative maintenance expenses over an asset's lifecycle; costs of additional personnel required for operations, security, programming, and upkeep; lifecycle costs, including long-term replacement, repair, and refurbishment expenses; ongoing expenses such as water, electricity, and supplies; and contingency costs for unexpected expenses such as those related to environmental factors, safety compliance, or regulatory changes. Such a process will help prevent overextension of resources and support sustainable, long-term operational viability.

⁴ "Capital Planning and Asset Management: Multi-Year Capital Planning." Board approval date September 23, 2022. Accessed February 20, 2026. <https://www.gfoa.org/materials/multi-year-capital-planning>

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

Management Agreement	<p>General agreement. In alignment with the 2022 Salem Area Comprehensive Plan, City staff are moving forward with a major update to the Comprehensive Parks System Master Plan—a project that is currently being initiated and slated for completion over the next two to three years. Parks and Recreation staff support modernizing the City’s parks planning and decision-making framework and will incorporate improved tools and processes to better account for operational sustainability and equitable access as part of this work.</p> <p>The Parks and Recreation Division supports the use of Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) evaluations as a critical decision-support tool to highlight long-term operational sustainability. As this approach is considered, implementation will benefit from further discussion and a policy-level direction from City Council.</p> <p>Additionally, the Division will evaluate the practical and sustainable way of maintaining technically complex, long-term fiscal projections, especially with the current resource constraints of administrative staff. This will also include ensuring that TCO is used to inform decisions without unintentionally limiting investments in underserved areas, potentially compromising the City’s broader goals for public health, equity, and climate resiliency.</p>
Owner	Parks Planning Manager
Target Completion Date	2029
Action Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Initiate and complete an update to the City’s Comprehensive Parks System Master Plan to align with the 2022 Comprehensive Plan and reflect current population trends, growth patterns, and community priorities. ● Coordinate with City leadership and partner departments to finalize and implement enhancements to the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) prioritization tool to better account for ongoing operational and maintenance costs associated with park projects. Through the system plan update project, Parks and Recreation will also explore incorporating evaluation “gates” at multiple stages of project development—such as planning, design, and implementation—to better account for operational and maintenance implications as projects become more defined, rather than relying solely on CIP-level estimates when project details may still be limited. ● Work with City staff and community partners to refine equity evaluation tools used in capital planning so they better reflect park-specific factors such as access to recreational amenities, inclusive facilities, environmental justice consideration, and service gaps in historically underserved neighborhoods. ● Explore, in collaboration with the community, City Council, and City leadership, the development of a financially constrained park system plan or similar principles as part of the current City project to update the Comprehensive Parks System Plan. This process would help align long-term park system investments, service expansion, and parkland acquisition decisions with the City’s anticipated financial capacity and operational resources. ● Integrate these improved planning and evaluation tools into future park system planning, capital investment decisions, and long-term system management.

D. Performance Management

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

6. Finding	The Department currently tracks output-focused metrics such as park acreage and volunteer hours but lacks outcome-oriented performance measures that assess service quality, workload, user satisfaction, and equity. This limits the Department's ability to make data-driven decisions, align staffing with operational demands, and demonstrate accountability and community impact.
Recommendation	The Department should develop outcome and workload KPIs to better assess service effectiveness and operational demands.

Finding

Effective performance measurement in parks departments involves establishing KPIs that are closely aligned with the City's vision and strategic goals. Such KPIs should include both outcome-focused metrics that measure service quality, user satisfaction, accessibility, equity, and long-term community benefits as well as workload and capacity indicators that quantify staff productivity, workload distribution, and operational demands. Embedding these KPIs within strategic planning frameworks helps guide decision-making, set clear performance expectations, and foster continuous improvement. Additionally, benchmarking against peer agencies and industry standards supports identifying gaps, validating progress, and promoting transparency and accountability to stakeholders.

The Department currently tracks a range of performance measures, including acres of parkland, number of playground equipment pieces, number of street trees in medians and rights-of-way, total number of parks, volunteer program hours and FTE equivalents, supplemental labor program hours and FTE equivalents, and miles of walkways and trails in parks and open spaces. While these metrics provide useful quantitative data on the scale and scope of park assets and volunteer involvement, they primarily represent outputs rather than outcomes. Focusing predominantly on outputs limits the Department's ability to assess the quality, accessibility, and community impact of its services. For example, measures such as acres of parkland or number of facilities do not capture how well these assets meet community needs, their condition, or user satisfaction. Similarly, volunteer hours indicate engagement levels but do not directly measure the effectiveness or equity of volunteer contributions (see section on [Strategic Volunteer Management](#)).

Most peer agencies recognize the importance of outcome-focused KPIs and community feedback, and many are also in the early stages of developing formalized systems. Some peers have made more progress by integrating community satisfaction surveys, maintenance effectiveness metrics, and visitor feedback mechanisms within their strategic planning frameworks. These emerging practices enable peers to understand service quality, equity, and community impact.

The Department also does not yet have formal KPIs to quantify staff productivity, workload distribution, or operational capacity. Examples of such KPIs could include the number of maintenance tasks completed per employee, average response time to service requests, and percentage of preventive versus reactive maintenance performed. The CityWorks asset management system is in the process of being introduced and shows potential for tracking work orders and maintenance activities; however, its implementation is still underway (see also [Asset Management](#)) and has not yet been fully developed to support comprehensive workload measurement. Currently, workload data is

largely anecdotal and based on staff observations. Similarly, most peers acknowledge the value of workload-focused KPIs, but many are still developing these measures. Some agencies have advanced further, tracking staff productivity rates, average response times to maintenance requests, and volume of work completed per staff member. These metrics help peers identify staffing gaps, optimize resource allocation, and improve operational efficiency. Developing formal KPIs can help the Department gain clearer insights into staff workload and productivity, supporting more informed decisions that promote balanced workloads and enhance the overall effectiveness of park maintenance services.

Recommendation

To enhance its performance measurement framework, the Department should develop and implement outcome-based and workload-focused KPIs. These measures will provide clearer insights into service quality, operational efficiency, equity, and resource utilization, enabling more data-driven decision-making and continuous improvement.

Outcome-Based KPIs

The Department should establish outcome measures that reflect the quality and impact of park services. Examples include:

- **Visitor satisfaction score:** Measures average satisfaction from visitor surveys to gauge overall user experience and identify areas for improvement.
- **Visitor satisfaction with park amenities:** Percentage of residents reporting that park amenities meet their recreational needs.
- **Asset utilization rate:** Percentage of available time that a park asset (e.g., field, court, shelter, or facility) is actively used. This can be tracked based on reserved hours versus total available hours, or staff or volunteers conduct periodic counts through observation at consistent times and days to estimate average usage of amenities that cannot be reserved, such as playgrounds, trails, and open spaces.
- **Park accessibility rate:** Tracks the percentage of parks within a defined walking distance of residents, helping assess equitable access to green spaces.
- **Maintenance effectiveness rate:** Assesses the percentage of maintenance tasks completed on schedule and the condition ratings of park assets, reflecting the quality and timeliness of upkeep.
- **Equity and accessibility metrics:** Such as the percentage of park users from underserved communities and ADA compliance rates to ensure equitable access and inclusivity.
- **Volunteer engagement metrics:** Including total volunteer hours contributed and volunteer retention rates to better understand and support volunteer involvement (see related findings on [Strategic Volunteer Management](#)).

Workload and Operational Efficiency KPIs

To better understand and manage operational demands, the Department should adopt workload-focused KPIs such as:

- **Work order completion rate:** Percentage of maintenance tasks completed within scheduled time frames, indicating responsiveness and efficiency.
- **Average time to complete work orders:** Tracks how long maintenance requests take to resolve, helping identify bottlenecks.

- **Acres maintained per maintenance staff FTE:** Measures workload distribution and staffing adequacy.
- **Equipment downtime:** Total hours equipment is unavailable, impacting maintenance capacity.
- **Lawn mowing frequency:** Frequency of routine maintenance activities, reflecting adherence to maintenance standards.

Implementation and Integration

The KPI template provided in [Appendix C](#) offers detailed examples, measurement methods, target benchmarks, and suggested responsible parties. This resource can guide the selection and adaptation of KPIs aligned with Parks priorities and data capabilities.

To support effective KPI tracking and analysis, continuing the phased implementation of the CityWorks asset management system is essential. CityWorks will enable more accurate recording of maintenance activities, workload data, and asset conditions, forming a foundation for data-driven performance management.

Additionally, the Department should continue to solicit regular community feedback to systematically capture user satisfaction and equity-related data, complementing operational metrics. Where feasible, these efforts can continue to be integrated into other community surveys that already exist in the City.

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE	
Management Agreement	We generally agree that strengthening the performance measurement framework through outcome-based and workload-focused KPIs could improve understanding of service quality and operational performance. As we consider implementation, it will be important to align these efforts with available administrative capacity needed to develop sound methodologies and support ongoing data collection. The Department looks forward to exploring KPIs with City Council and the community through the second phase of the Comprehensive Parks System Master Plan update, ensuring that any measures adopted are both meaningful and sustainable.
Owner	Parks and Recreation Manager, Parks Planning Manager
Target Completion Date	2029
Action Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate KPI opportunities through system planning: During Phase 2 of the Comprehensive Parks System Master Plan update, work with City Council and the community to identify potential outcome-based and operational KPIs aligned with City goals and community priorities. • Assess feasibility and resource needs: Evaluate the administrative capacity, data requirements, technology systems, and potential funding sources needed to develop and maintain reliable KPI tracking. • Leverage asset management and GIS systems: Continue implementation of the CityWorks asset management system to improve tracking of maintenance activities, work orders, asset conditions, and asset performance, while also leveraging the City's significant investments in GIS to support spatial analysis of park access, asset distribution, and service equity that could inform future operational and outcome-based KPIs.

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

- Adopt a phased, data governance–informed implementation approach: If appropriate KPIs are identified, develop a phased strategy that begins with a small number of feasible measures while establishing clear data governance practices, standards, and responsibilities. Over time, expand the program as data systems mature, data quality improves, and the Department builds the capacity needed to support more consistent, data-driven decision-making.

Appendix A: Peer Benchmarking Matrix

As part of this performance audit, Baker Tilly conducted peer analysis and interviewed Parks leadership at the following cities and districts: Bend Park and Recreation District (Bend), City of Corvallis Parks & Recreation Department (Corvallis), City of Eugene Parks and Open Space Division (Eugene), City of Gresham Parks, Recreation & Youth Services (Gresham), and Willamalane Park and Recreation District (Willamalane). Peer benchmarking activities included data and document collection, as well as interviews conducted with each peer. The following table provides an overview of key characteristics of each peer, and we included a summary of lessons learned and best practices drawn from our discussions, research, and benchmarking.

PEER BENCHMARKING MATRIX						
Topic	Salem	Bend	Corvallis	Eugene	Gresham	Willamalane
General Information						
Organization Type	City Department	District	City Department	City Division	City Department	District
Total Budget*	\$11,035,970	\$9,037,042	\$15,325,550	\$15,654,968	\$5,425,085	\$33,737,740
Population Served	180,406	106,926	61,993	178,786	111,507	61,182
Total FTE Count	56.01	288	42.68	97	17	188.81
Parks Maintenance FTE Count	38**	31	17.5	Not provided***	13	34.83
Total Parks Acreage	2,335	3,629	1,707	6,000	1,200	1,630
Parks Acreage Maintained per Parks Maintenance FTE	61	117	98	N/A	92	47
Parks Maintenance FTE per 10,000 Residents	2.55	2.90	2.82	N/A	1.17	5.69

PEER BENCHMARKING MATRIX						
Topic	Salem	Bend	Corvallis	Eugene	Gresham	Willamalane
Maintenance Standards and Level of Service						
Sources of Maintenance Standards	Historical practices, community input	Historical data, asset-specific care, industry standards, community input	Working on formal documentation and updated operations manual	Condition ratings, inventory, GIS data, documented standards, community strategic plan	Historical practices, NRPA industry standards, community needs, safety standards	CAPRA accreditation, NRPA best practices, community surveys
Receiving Community Input	Community reported issues, surveys	Community surveys every three to five years, ongoing communication	Online reporting system, master plan, biannual surveys, participant evaluations, advisory committee	Open reception, online reporting, QR codes	Not specified	Extensive annual and post-program surveys, QR codes at kiosks
How the Service Level Expectations are Communicated to Community	Master Plan, CIP	Website, magazine, outreach, social media, open board meetings	Master plan, community surveys, reporting systems, participant evaluations, advisory committee	Community reporting mechanisms with equity lens	Not specified	Comprehensive plan outlines activities and service levels
Volunteer Management						
Volunteer Coordinator Position	One dedicated volunteer coordinator	One part-time volunteer coordinator	Two part-time volunteer specialists in the department and two full-time park program coordinators, who work with volunteers	Three volunteer coordinators managing various programs	No dedicated coordinator; volunteer efforts managed through neighborhood associations	One dedicated volunteer coordinator

PEER BENCHMARKING MATRIX						
Topic	Salem	Bend	Corvallis	Eugene	Gresham	Willamalane
Sample Volunteer Activities	Special projects, beautifying local parks and natural areas, trail management, tree planting, gardening	Coaching, natural resource cleanups, park education, event support, adopt-a-park	Trail management, tree planting, gardening, event support	Tree care, specialty gardening, community gardens, stormwater cleanup, camp cleanup	Invasive species removal, park cleanup, beautification events	Beautifying local parks and natural areas, serving coffee, participating in special events
Do Volunteers Perform Staff Duties?	Volunteering supplements and supports minimal core staff functions	Volunteers perform supplemental tasks, but do not perform core functions	Volunteering supplements and may support core staff functions	Volunteer work supplements staff through specialty gardening and supports core functions through tree care and park maintenance	Volunteers perform supplemental tasks, but do not perform core functions	Volunteers perform supplemental and core functions to support staff
Approach to Background Checks	Required for all volunteers	Required primarily for youth programs; processed efficiently same day	Required only for youth programs; no general volunteer checks	No general volunteer checks mentioned; managed through HR	Required for youth-related groups; day-of checks for others	Not specifically detailed
Asset Management System Use						
Asset Management System Use	Early stages of implementing CityWorks	Maintenance Connection fully implemented for work orders and asset tracking	Multiple systems, primarily Productive Parks; exploring adoption of a new asset management system	Asset management plan in development; uses GIS and inventory data	Using Lucidity; developing asset management program; exploring CityWorks adoption	Cartograph system actively used for maintenance tracking and inspections

* Budget is based on FY25, or 50% of BN25-27

** This excludes administrative, Director, Manager II, Park Ranger, seasonal workers, Senior Planner, and Volunteer Coordinator positions.

*** Eugene has 97 FTEs in the Parks and Open Space division, but was not able to categorize staff further, so meaningful comparisons with the City are not possible.

Lessons Learned

Staffing and Service Delivery

- Peers demonstrate that well-defined, documented, and asset-specific maintenance standards, supported by data-informed frameworks and dedicated work order systems, are critical to delivering consistent and proactive maintenance. Ambiguous or fluid standards often lead to reactive maintenance approaches, increasing risks of asset deterioration and safety issues.
- Supervisory span of control significantly impacts oversight effectiveness; peers with spans of 10 to 15 direct reports generally manage better supervision, while larger spans create challenges. Use of lead workers, structured responsibility tools like RACI matrices, and clear hierarchical organization help mitigate supervisory capacity issues.
- The City maintains 61 acres per maintenance FTE, compared to a peer average of 89 acres per maintenance FTE. Three of the peer cities (Bend, Corvallis, and Gresham) maintain a higher acreage per FTE.
- Peers employ a variety of community feedback methods to inform service delivery, including regular surveys, online reporting systems, QR codes at park kiosks, and open reception channels, enabling timely and accessible input from diverse community members.
- Communication back to the community is maintained through multiple channels such as comprehensive plans, websites, social media, magazines, open board meetings, and direct outreach, helping set clear expectations and demonstrate responsiveness to community needs.

Recruitment and Retention

- Peers experience typical recruitment and retention challenges influenced by seasonal demand fluctuations and labor market conditions, with recovery trends toward pre-pandemic staffing levels.
- Effective strategies include leveraging the seasonal nature of work, enhancing job appeal through targeted messaging and classification changes, partnering with external recruitment agencies, maintaining ongoing open recruitment, and building strong relationships with educational institutions to support a steady pipeline of qualified candidates.

Volunteer and Supplemental Labor

- Most peers maintain dedicated volunteer coordinators or teams to strategically manage recruitment, training, scheduling, and retention, enabling alignment of volunteer efforts with departmental priorities and community needs.
- While volunteer background check practices vary, three peer cities (Bend, Corvallis, and Gresham) only require background checks primarily for youth-related or sensitive roles, balancing safety with minimizing barriers to participation.
- Peer seasonal labor programs intentionally include features that support recruitment and retention. Peers have different approaches to recruitment and retention. Some of those features include multi-step classification structures supporting career progression and retention, flexible scheduling aligned with peak demand, and recruitment through ongoing agency partnerships. The City's single-step classification and

limited wage progression contribute to recruitment and retention challenges, suggesting benefits in adopting tiered classifications and diversified recruitment strategies.

Growth and Development

- Most peers do not appear to fully integrate Total Cost of Ownership factors, including ongoing maintenance demands, into their CIP prioritization tools, limiting comprehensive evaluation of long-term financial sustainability. While considered a best practice by the Government Finance Officers Association⁵, as lifecycle costs will impact future annual operating budgets, it appears to be in the early stages of adoption for some cities.
- Equity considerations are frequently included in peer comprehensive or CIP plans but often remain broad and not specifically tailored to park systems, reflecting the ongoing challenge of balancing equity goals with operational and budgetary constraints.

Performance Management

- Peers are generally in early stages of developing formal performance measurement systems, with only a few integrating KPIs into strategic plans, highlighting the need to expand measures to better capture service quality, workload, equity, and community impact.

⁵ "Capital Planning and Asset Management: Multi-Year Capital Planning." Board approval date September 23, 2022. Accessed February 20, 2026. <https://www.gfoa.org/materials/multi-year-capital-planning>

Appendix B: Example Maintenance Standards Template

How to use this template

- Customize maintenance tasks, standards, and service frequencies to reflect the specific characteristics of park types, facilities, and community expectations. For example, the Department could develop standardized tables, similar to the example below, tailored to each park classification (e.g., neighborhood parks and community parks).
- Clearly define roles and responsibilities for each task to support accountability and consistent service delivery.
- Establish realistic and clearly defined service frequencies, including baseline intervals and additional service as needed, aligned with available resources and operational priorities.
- Regularly review maintenance activities and service levels to identify trends, adjust frequencies, and ensure standards are being met.
- Engage staff and key stakeholders in the development and refinement of standards to ensure they are practical, achievable, and aligned with community needs.

AREA TASK	STANDARD DESCRIPTION	ACCEPTABLE CONDITION/ LEVEL	PARK TYPE/ AREA	FREQUENCY	RESPONSIBLE STAFF DEPT.	NOTES
Lawn Mowing	Grass height maintained between 2-3 inches	No patches exceeding 10% of turf area; grass maintained within target height range	High-use parks, athletic fields, downtown parks	Weekly (April through October), with additional mowing as needed based on growth conditions	Maintenance Staff	Adjust frequency during periods of accelerated growth (e.g., spring and high rainfall)
			Community parks	Every 10-14 days (April through October), with additional mowing as needed	Maintenance Staff	
			Neighborhood parks, natural areas	Every 2-3 weeks (April through October), with additional mowing as needed	Maintenance Staff	

AREA TASK	STANDARD DESCRIPTION	ACCEPTABLE CONDITION/ LEVEL	PARK TYPE/ AREA	FREQUENCY	RESPONSIBLE STAFF DEPT.	NOTES
Trash Collection	Trash bins emptied and litter removed from park grounds	No visible litter; bins not overflowing	High-use parks, athletic complexes, downtown parks	Daily, with additional service as needed during peak use or events	Maintenance Staff	Increase frequency during events or high visitation periods
			Community parks	3-5 times per week (year-round), with additional service as needed	Maintenance Staff	
			Neighborhood parks, natural areas	1-2 times per week (year-round), with additional service as needed	Maintenance Staff	
Playground Inspection	Safety inspection of equipment and surfacing	No broken or hazardous components; surfacing intact and compliant	All park types	Monthly, with additional inspections as needed based on use or reported concerns	Maintenance Staff or Safety Staff	Immediate response required for identified safety hazards
			High-use playgrounds	Monthly formal inspection and weekly visual checks (April through October), with additional checks as needed	Maintenance Staff or Safety Staff	
Restroom Cleaning	Restrooms cleaned, sanitized, and restocked	No odors; fixtures clean and functional; supplies fully stocked	High-use parks, athletic complexes, downtown parks	Twice daily (year-round), with additional cleaning as needed during peak use	Maintenance Staff	Monitor and adjust frequency during peak visitation and events
			Community parks	Daily (year-round), with additional cleaning as needed	Maintenance Staff	

AREA TASK	STANDARD DESCRIPTION	ACCEPTABLE CONDITION/ LEVEL	PARK TYPE/ AREA	FREQUENCY	RESPONSIBLE STAFF DEPT.	NOTES
			Neighborhood parks	3-5 times per week (year-round), with additional cleaning as needed	Maintenance Staff	
Trail Maintenance	Trails cleared of debris and maintained for safe use	Trails free of obstructions; surfaces even and safe; no significant erosion or potholes	High-use and paved trails	Monthly (year-round), with inspections after major weather events and additional maintenance as needed	Maintenance Staff	Prioritize inspections following storms or heavy use periods
			Natural surface trails	Quarterly inspections (year-round), with additional maintenance as needed	Maintenance Staff	

Appendix C: Example Outcome-Focused KPI Framework Template

How to use these templates

- **Customize KPIs:** Modify or add KPIs based on the City’s priorities and available data.
- **Set realistic targets:** Establish targets that are ambitious yet achievable, possibly informed by peer benchmarks.
- **Assign responsibility:** Clearly designate staff or teams accountable for each KPI.
- **Track regularly:** Use the defined frequency to collect data and review progress.
- **Report transparently:** Share KPI results with stakeholders to demonstrate performance and areas for improvement.

OUTCOME BASED METRIC EXAMPLES

CATEGORY	KPI NAME	DESCRIPTION	MEASUREMENT METHOD/DATA SOURCE	TARGET/ BENCHMARK	FREQUENCY	RESPONSIBLE PARTY
Service Quality	Visitor Satisfaction Score	Average satisfaction rating from visitor surveys	Annual visitor surveys, feedback forms	≥ 85% satisfaction	Annually	Customer Service Manager
Operational Efficiency	Work Order Completion Rate	Percentage of maintenance work orders completed on time	Maintenance management system reports	≥ 85% completed within scheduled time	Monthly	Maintenance Supervisor
Volunteer Engagement	Volunteer Hours Contributed	Total hours contributed by volunteers to park activities	Volunteer sign-in sheets, activity logs	Increase by 15% annually	Annually	Volunteer Coordinator

CATEGORY	KPI NAME	DESCRIPTION	MEASUREMENT METHOD/DATA SOURCE	TARGET/ BENCHMARK	FREQUENCY	RESPONSIBLE PARTY
Volunteer Engagement	Volunteer Retention Rate	Percentage of volunteers returning year over year	Volunteer records, surveys	≥ 75% retention	Annually	Volunteer Coordinator
Equity & Accessibility	Access by Underserved Populations	Percentage of park users from underserved communities	Demographic surveys, visitor counts	Increase by 10% annually	Annually	Community Outreach Coordinator
Equity & Accessibility	ADA Compliance Rate	Percentage of facilities meeting ADA accessibility standards	ADA audit reports	100% compliance	Annually	Facilities Manager

WORKLOAD-SPECIFIC METRIC EXAMPLES

CATEGORY	KPI NAME	DESCRIPTION	MEASUREMENT METHOD/DATA SOURCE	TARGET/ BENCHMARK	FREQUENCY	RESPONSIBLE PARTY
Operational Efficiency	Work Order Completion Rate	Percentage of maintenance work orders completed on time	Maintenance management system reports	≥ 85% completed within scheduled time	Monthly	Maintenance Supervisor
Operational Efficiency	Average Time to Complete Work Orders	Average days/hours to complete maintenance requests	Work order tracking system	≤ 5 days average	Monthly	Maintenance Supervisor

CATEGORY	KPI NAME	DESCRIPTION	MEASUREMENT METHOD/DATA SOURCE	TARGET/ BENCHMARK	FREQUENCY	RESPONSIBLE PARTY
Operational Efficiency	Facility Inspection Pass Rate	Percentage of parks and facilities passing safety/quality inspections	Inspection reports	≥ 95% pass rate	Quarterly	Facilities Manager
Grounds Maintenance	Lawn Mowing Frequency	Number of times lawns are mowed per month	Maintenance schedules, logs	≥ 4 times per month	Monthly	Grounds Supervisor
Equipment Maintenance	Equipment Downtime	Total hours equipment is out of service	Maintenance logs, equipment tracking	≤ 10 hours per month	Monthly	Maintenance Supervisor



City of Salem

Parks Operations Performance Audit

April 20, 2026

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Objectives and Scope

- The purpose of this performance audit was to examine the effectiveness of Parks Operations within the City's Parks and Recreation Division. Key areas of focus included:
 - Staffing and service delivery
 - Use of volunteer and supplemental labor
 - The City's growth and development framework for parks
 - Performance measurement
- This performance audit was conducted between November 2025 and April 2026
- The scope of this performance audit did not include the City's Recreation Services

Methodology



Documentation Review: We reviewed relevant documentation, such as organization charts, policies and procedures, supplemental labor data, community outreach plans, and performance measures.



Interviews: We conducted interviews and focus groups with members of City leadership and staff, including Parks staff and City management.



Peer Benchmarking: We conducted peer benchmarking with comparable jurisdictions. Peers included: Bend Park and Recreation District, City of Corvallis, City of Eugene, City of Gresham, and Willamalane Park and Recreation District.



Industry Best Practices: We researched industry best practices for related topics such as maintenance standards, volunteer management, and performance metrics.



Commendations

- **Dedicated and passionate staff**

Employees showed strong commitment to maintaining parks and serving the community, often going above and beyond despite reported workload challenges.

- **Improved efficiency through equipment upgrades**

Recent investments in newer, more efficient equipment have enhanced maintenance operations and helped maximize limited resources.

- **Strong community engagement through volunteer programs**

A well-coordinated volunteer program, supported by dedicated staff, reflects the Department's commitment to community involvement and provides opportunities for future growth.



Service Delivery and Operations

What we found	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maintenance activities do not have clearly defined schedules and are not tailored to park type, usage, or asset condition• The City’s asset management system is not fully implemented
Why it matters	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Makes it difficult to consistently deliver expected service levels across parks• Increases risk of deferred maintenance and higher long-term costs• Limits ability to proactively plan maintenance and prioritize limited resources
Key recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Revise and formalize maintenance standards to include clear, scheduled tasks tailored to park type, usage, and asset condition• Ensure supervisors have the tools, training, and processes needed to effectively apply the revised maintenance standards when allocating resources and monitoring outcomes• Fully implement the asset management system to support data-driven maintenance planning, risk-based prioritization, and long-term budgeting



Volunteer and Supplemental Labor

What we found	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Supplemental labor resources decreased between 2022 and 2025 due to recruitment and retention challenges• Volunteer activities are often driven by volunteer interests rather than Department priorities• Limited data is tracked on volunteer distribution, retention, and satisfaction to support strategic and equitable volunteer deployment
Why it matters	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reduces resources available to support park maintenance activities• May result in delayed maintenance and reduced park conditions• Makes it difficult to sustain a reliable supplemental workforce to meet service needs
Key recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strengthen recruitment and retention strategies for seasonal and supplemental labor (in coordination with HR)• Reduce barriers to participation, including eliminating fees for community service workers and evaluating background check requirements• Engage volunteers to identify opportunities to improve recruitment and retention• Develop a strategic volunteer management approach, including targeted outreach and improved data tracking



Growth and Development

What we found	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There are opportunities to enhance the City’s parks growth framework to better reflect current community needs and operational realities• The City’s Comprehensive Park System Master Plan has not been updated since 2013• The City’s existing prioritization tools for capital improvement do not fully capture the long-term maintenance needs of new or upgraded park facilities or the unique factors that influence equitable access to parks• Decision-making frameworks for acquiring new parkland does not consistently incorporate Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) analysis
Why it matters	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Plans may not reflect changing community needs and growth patterns• Assets may be added or upgraded without the resources to maintain them• The ability to promote equitable access to parks and services across neighborhoods may be limited
Key recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continue efforts to update the City’s Comprehensive Park System Master Plan• Enhance CIP prioritization and equity tools to explicitly incorporate criteria that capture the ongoing operational and maintenance costs associated with new or upgraded facilities and better capture the unique factors that influence equitable access to parks• Implement TCO analysis



Performance Measures

What we found	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Parks Operations tracks output focused metrics (e.g., acreage, volunteer hours) but lacks outcome-oriented performance measures of service quality, workload, user satisfaction, and equity
Why it matters	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Limited ability to make data-driven decisions• Reduces ability to align staffing with operational demands• Limits visibility into service quality, community impact, and equity
Key recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop and implement outcome- and workload-focused key performance indicators to assess service effectiveness and operational demands



Questions?

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To: Finance Committee
From: Gretchen Bennett, Community Services Director
Date: April 20, 2026 meeting
Subject: Homelessness Key Performance Indicators

At the September 15, 2025 Finance Committee meeting, members received the “Salem Homelessness Key Performance Indicators 2024 Report.” Members requested staff consider the following possible changes:

- Spend: can we report on city expenditures? **Added**
- Accountability: can we capture data related to enforcement of code violations?
Added
- Fire Department: can we include data capturing work done in this department?
Added
- Longitudinal data: can we demonstrate a trend over time? **Will illustrate over time as data is collected and reported**

Staff evaluated these ideas and edited the proposed “Homelessness Key Performance Indicators” for committee review. Staff welcome feedback on the proposal.

Homelessness Key Performance Indicators

Category	Data Point	Who is providing the data	Frequency of Reporting
Services and Referrals	Hours spent with people experiencing unsheltered homelessness	SPD	Quarterly
Services and Referrals	Total number and percentage of call volume with people experiencing unsheltered homelessness	SFD	Quarterly
Services and Referrals	Number of referrals provided	SPD/SFD	Quarterly
Livability	Violations enforced: code, fires	SPD/SFD	Quarterly
Livability	Clean Team hours Worked by location category	CS	Quarterly
Livability	Volume of debris/waste removed by location category	PW/CS	Quarterly
Livability	Community Concern Assessment	CS	Quarterly
Spend	Cost to City for specialized teams	Finance	Quarterly
Housing	Occupancy rates by Property Name	SHA	Quarterly
Housing	Explanation of what causes a waiting list to Close?	SHA	Yearly
Housing	Explanation of How Long Is the Wait on SHA Waiting Lists?	SHA	Yearly
Housing	How many people are on waitlist for affordable housing?	SHA	Yearly
Housing	Voucher Lease Up by calendar year	SHA	Yearly



City of Salem
5-Year Capital Improvement Plan
FY 2027 through FY 2031

Previously
Funded
or
Carryover
Projects

Year 1
FY 2027

Year 2
FY 2028

Year 3
FY 2029

Year 4
FY 2030

Year 5
FY 2031



Recommended FY
2027
Budget



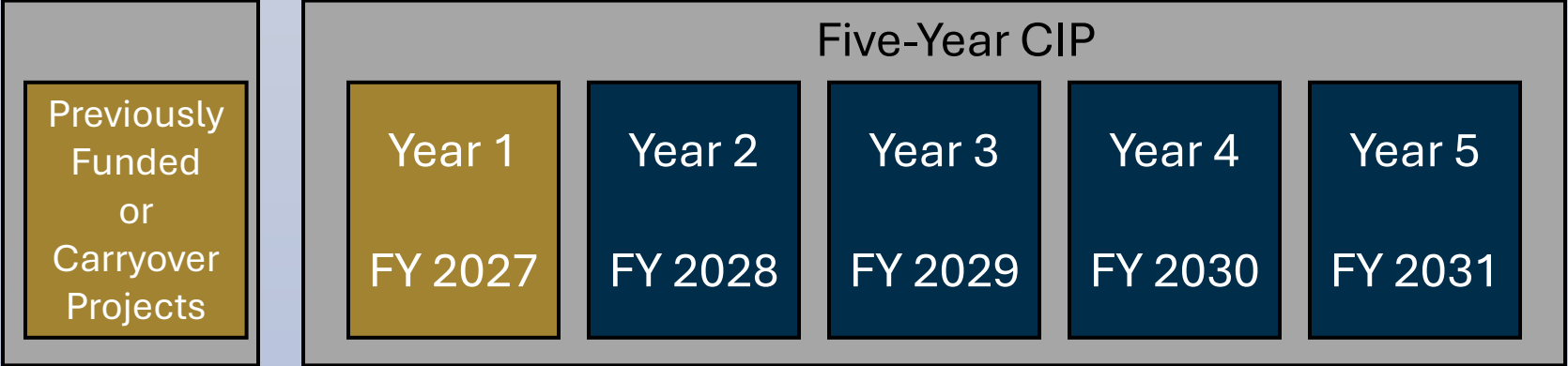
Adopted FY 2027
Budget

CIP Includes:

- Identified funding
- \$100K or more
- New funding

Budget Includes:

- Carryover projects and mid-year adoptions
- Reappropriations
- All projects (no \$100k limit)
- Administrative costs



CIP Includes:

- Identified funding
- \$100K or more
- New funding

Budget Includes:

- Carryover projects and mid-year adoptions
- Reappropriations
- All projects (no \$100k limit)
- Administrative costs

Project Number:	0001601	Score:	59.44
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Category:	Wastewater	Ward:	1
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Neighborhood:	Northeast Neighbors (NEN)
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Title:	Center Street NE at 17th Street NE Sewer Main Replacement
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Funding Source	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029	FY 2030	FY 2031	Total
Utility Rates	39,340	62,080	100,000	-	-	201,420

Current CIP Total:	<u>\$ 39,340</u>	<u>\$ 62,080</u>	<u>\$ 100,000</u>	<u>\$ -</u>	<u>\$ -</u>	<u>\$ 201,420</u>
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Amount Funded in Prior Years:	<u>-</u>
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Total Estimated Project Cost	<u>\$ 201,420</u>
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Design, permitting, right-of-way / easements, and construction for the replacement of approximately 200 linear feet of 6-inch and 8-inch deteriorated sewer main along 17th St NE crossing the intersection of Center St NE. The project will be constructed in conjunction with the 2028 Pavement Repair and Rehabilitation project in Transportation.

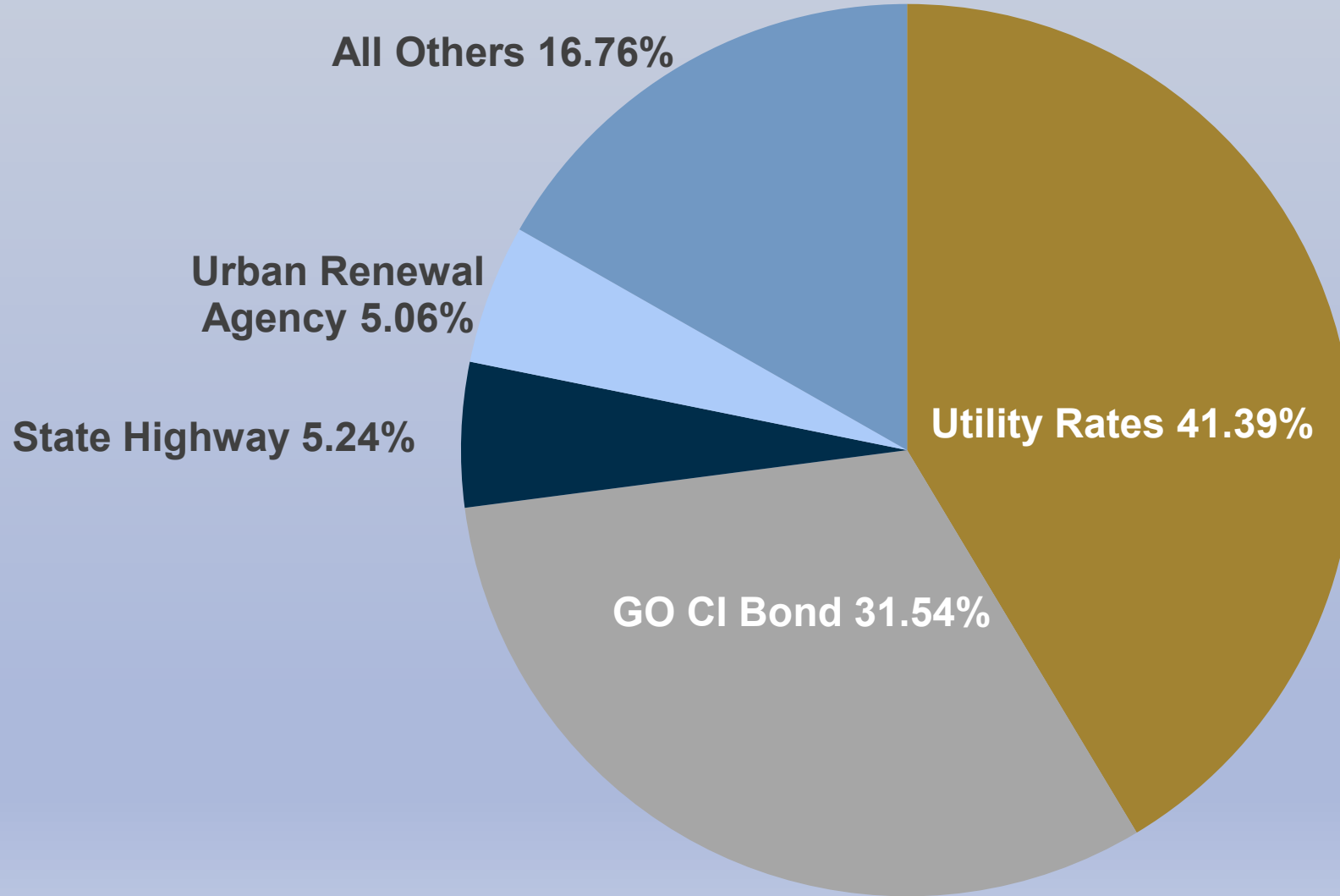
Anticipated Operating Impact: This project is being completed in conjunction with a Transportation project, reducing design and construction project costs. Operational costs are minimal.

Result Area Summary

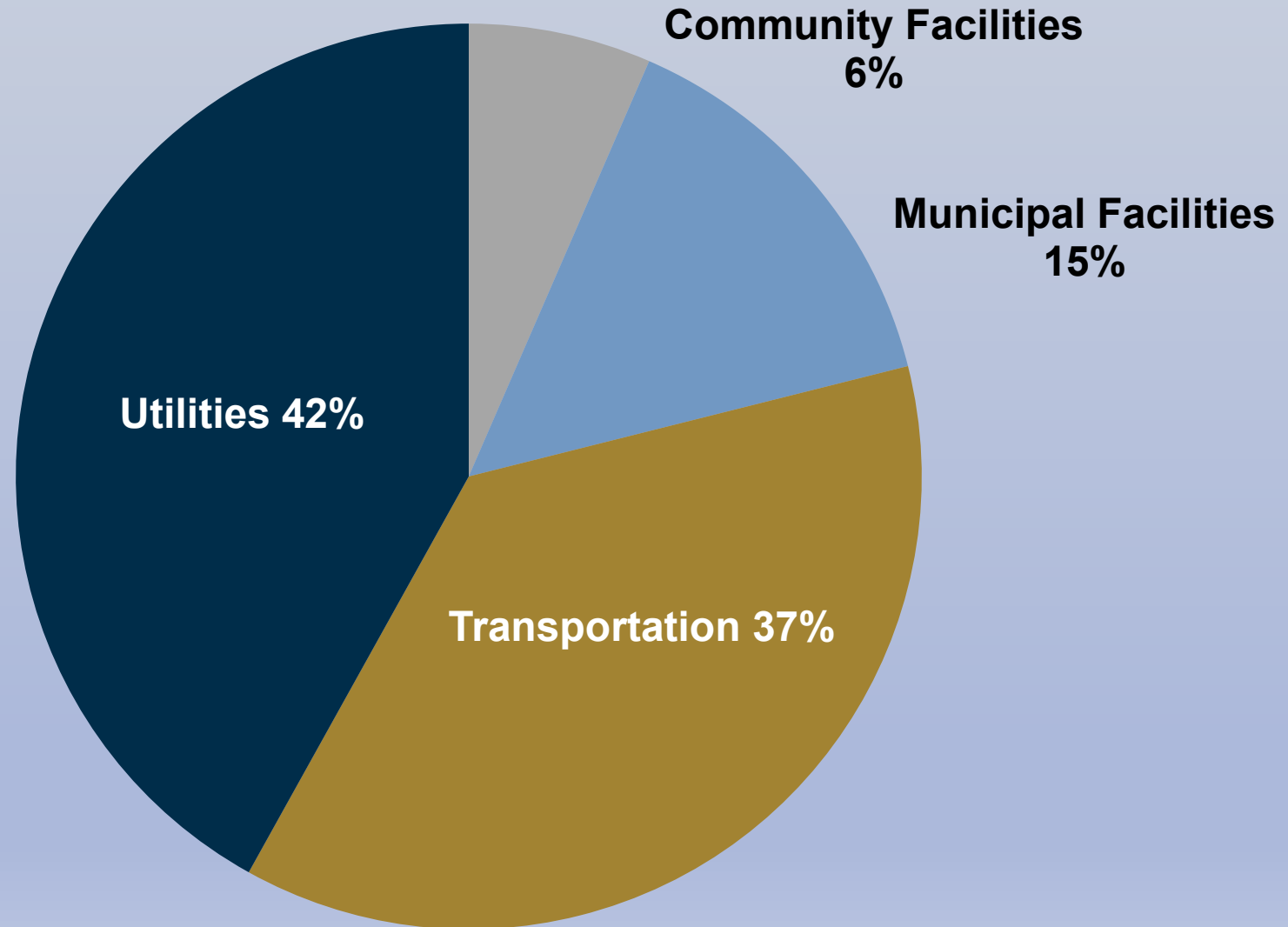


- Good Governance
- Safe and Healthy Community
- Welcoming and Livable Community
- Safe, Reliable, and Efficient Infrastructure
- Strong and Diverse Economy
- Natural Environment Stewardship

CIP Projects by Funding Source



CIP Projects by Group



Purpose

- Maintain a transparent CIP process;
- Establish a risk-based priority list;
- Match the priority list to limited resources in a thoughtful and responsible manner;
- Consult internal CIP Review Committee per Council Policy C-9; and
- Analyze and report on the City's organizational capacity to fund future maintenance of projects proposed to be added to the CIP.



Policy C-9 Revision C.1.vi

Analyze and report on the City's organizational capacity to fund future maintenance of new projects proposed to be added to the CIP.

Solution

- **Scoring**
 - Added new criteria for scoring operational/maintenance costs.
 - Criteria added to Parks, Transportation, and Utilities.
- **Operational Impact Description**
 - An operational impact description will be added to each new project in the CIP.
- **Obtaining Cost Impacts**
 - Cost impacts are being gathered.
 - Parks: Cost by acre and park classification.
 - Transportation: Cost by linear foot by type i.e. Pedestrian Crossings, Streetlights, Street Widening, etc.
 - Utilities: Pipe projects by linear foot; facility improvements are dependent on type of facility i.e. Pump Station, Reservoir, Willow Lake infrastructure etc.

Project Number:	0000914					Score:	49.58	
Category:	Parks					Ward:	7	
Neighborhood:	Morningside Neighborhood Association							
Title:	Bailey Ridge Park Development, Phase 1							
Funding Source	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029	FY 2030	Total		
SDC-Parks	400,000	100,000	-	-	-	500,000		
Utility Rates	200,000	-	-	-	-	200,000		
Current CIP Total:	\$ 600,000	\$ 100,000	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 700,000		
Amount Funded in Prior Years:							370,000	
Total Estimated Project Cost:							\$ 1,070,000	
Description:	Design and construction of new park improvements consistent with the City Council approval of the site-specific development plan. The planned improvements include a pathway connecting the park to Tayside St S and Illahe Ct S, along with the restoration of a section of Chamber's Swale. This restoration aims to address soil erosion, replace invasive plant species with native plant cover, and enhance habitat values along the waterway and its riparian corridor.							
Operational Impact:	Staff believes that the new pathway may increase the number of visitors to Bailey Ridge Park necessitating additional maintenance to the pathway, removal of debris due to the pathway having a full tree canopy.							

Highlights

5-Year CIP

- ➡ Projects Programmed – 166
- ➡ Total Funds Programmed – \$409.3 million
- ➡ Funding
 - ➡ Utility Rates – \$169.4 million
 - ➡ SDCs – \$18.4 million
 - ➡ State/Federal Grants – \$40.7 million
 - ➡ 2022 Bond – \$129.1 million
 - ➡ Urban Renewal Agency – \$20.7 million

Projects

- ➡ Franzen Reservoir Cover and Liner
 - ➡ \$34.7 million, fully funded
- ➡ Utility R&R Improvements
 - ➡ \$19.7 million programmed
- ➡ Fisher Road Park Development, PH 1
 - ➡ \$2.1 million Grant Awarded
- ➡ ODOT Grants Awarded – 5
 - ➡ \$18.8 million Awarded

Key Projects

Parks

- Bailey Ridge Park Development
- Brown Road Park Development
- Fisher Road Park, Phase 1
- Bush's Pasture Park Shelter Improvements and Restroom Facilities

Stormwater

- Fisher Road Stormwater Improvements
- Center Street NE Storm Drain Replacements
- 16th Street SE Culvert Replacement



Key Projects

Transportation

- Commercial Street Urban Upgrades - Wiltsey Road to Waln Drive
- Fisher Road NE Sidewalk Infill – Ward Drive to Cooley Drive
- 2027 Pavement R&R – Portland Road and Madrona Avenue
- Union Street Family Friendly Bikeway – Summer Street to 12th Street

Urban Renewal Agency

- Streetscape Improvements



Key Projects

Water

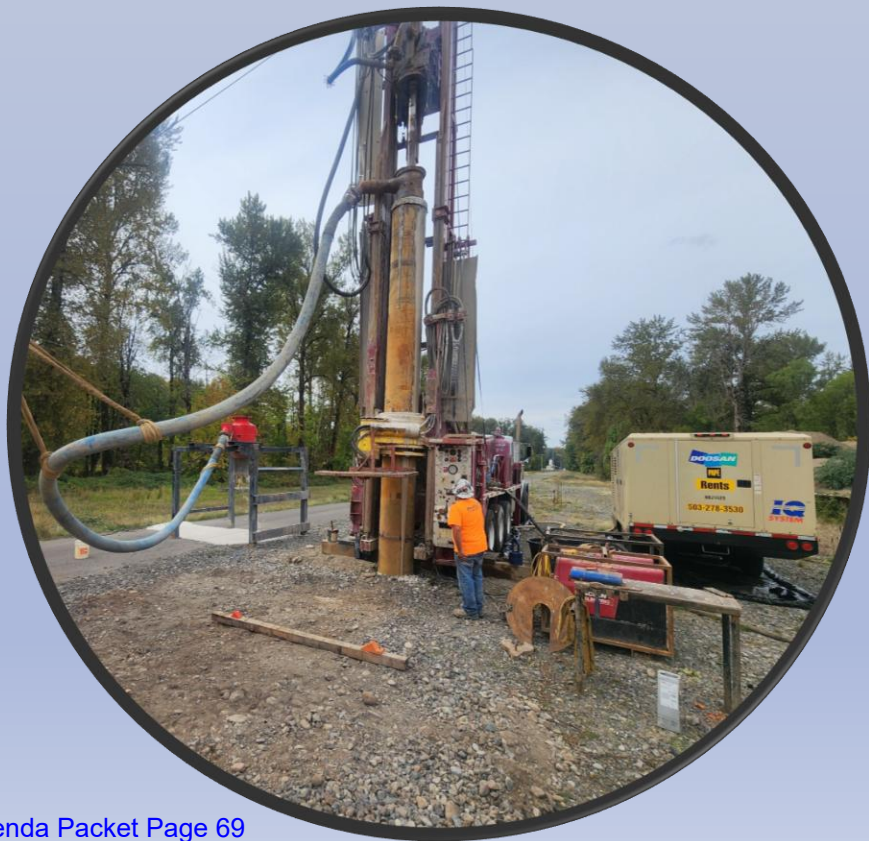
- Geren Island Flow Maintenance
- S-4 Davis Road Pump Station Capacity Improvements
- Portland Road NE Water Improvements
- Franzen Reservoir Cover and Liner Replacement
- Weissner Intertie Pump Station Improvements

Wastewater

- 12th Street Sanitary Sewer Improvements
- Joplin and Satter Sewer Pump Stations Assessments
- Ferry Street Pump Station Improvements

Willow Lake

- South Secondary Clarifiers
- Outfall Diffuser Repairs
- River Road Gate No. 14 Replacement



Allocation by Infrastructure

Category	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	Total
2022 Bond	\$ 39,049,78	\$ 26,705,00	\$ 28,685,00	\$ 22,865,00	\$ 11,795,00	\$ 129,099,780
Airport	4,236,00	473,38	1,762,50	2,900,00	1,000,00	\$ 10,371,880
Buildings	4,696,86	950,00	1,525,00	225,00	-	\$ 7,396,860
Information Technology	6,609,50	-	315,06	4,000,00	3,300,00	\$ 14,224,560
Parking Structures	150,00	1,705,58	-	-	-	\$ 1,855,580
Parks	4,685,21	2,829,00	2,670,00	2,670,00	2,320,00	\$ 15,174,210
Stormwater	6,373,29	3,431,47	4,010,00	1,709,89	2,275,31	\$ 17,799,960
Transportation	12,469,96	4,262,97	15,249,87	6,654,95	937,73	\$ 39,575,480
Wastewater	12,147,89	8,598,31	12,169,13	14,460,61	17,653,18	\$ 65,029,120
Water	19,761,68	19,382,90	17,400,00	18,311,01	13,920,00	\$ 88,775,590
Urban Renewal	4,000,00	4,000,00	4,000,00	4,000,00	4,000,00	\$ 20,000,000
Total	\$ 114,180,170	\$ 72,338,61	\$ 87,786,56	\$ 77,796,46	\$ 57,201,22	\$ 409,303,020

Questions / Discussion

