



2022 ANNUAL REPORT TO SALEM CITY COUNCIL

Salem Parks and Recreation Advisory Board

Est. June 1952

General Board Information

Meetings: Second Thursday of each month at 5:30 p.m.

Members: Dylan McDowell – Chair,
Keith Norris – Vice Chair,
Alan Alexander, Woody Dukes, David Fridenmaker,
Rick Hartwig, Alan Holland, Joan Lloyd, Debbie Miller

City Staff: Robert Chandler, Mark Becktel, Rob Romanek, Jennifer Kellar,
Becky George, Milan Davis, Nancy Harrington

CITY OF *Salem*
AT YOUR SERVICE
Parks and Recreation

SALEM PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD

Our Duties

- Recommend and advise the City Council, Planning Commission and other bodies, groups or officials on all matters referred to it.
- Act in the role of community catalyst in the formation and achievement of a comprehensive community-wide parks and recreation system and program to serve the horticultural, environmental, historical, cultural, and leisure needs of all City residents.
- Make and issue reports to City Council regarding its studies, research, examination, and other activities.
- Issue decisions on appeals to tree removal permits for city-owned trees and makes recommendations on nominations for Heritage Tree designations under Salem Revised Code Chapter 86, titled "Trees on City Owned Property."

Our Mission

SPRAB advocates for the acquisition, planning, development, preservation, protection, and enhancement of Salem's parks, including their natural resources, trees, and recreational opportunities for current and future generations through input from the community and advice to City Council.

Our Vision

Our vision is for our community to have ample and robust parks that contribute to urban tree canopy, open spaces, and recreation opportunities for all people to gather, celebrate, contemplate, and engage in activities that promote health, wellbeing, community, and the environment.



The following SPRAB Annual Report reflects the importance of parks and natural resources through the City's Strategic Plan mission, vision, values, and goals that were developed in 2017 and updated in 2021. The six established result areas are the framework for this report, which also highlights City Council's strategic priority areas as applicable.



SAFE COMMUNITY

Relates to City Council Priority Area 1 (Addressing Homelessness)

SPRAB recommends a proactive approach to provide safe walking and recreation areas for all people as they enjoy the outdoors. This is accomplished through regular consistent vegetation and grounds maintenance. Parks provide increased opportunities for volunteer engagement and local stewardship while presenting a visually clean, safe, and active environment. Safe and accessible routes to parks (while outside the purview of SPRAB) are a critical component for a safe community.

SPRAB recommends City Council provide funding of the following:

- Increased park maintenance staff and equipment to levels sufficient for maintaining new and existing park properties and amenities.
- Continue cleanup and restoration of Cascades Gateway Park, Wallace Marine Park, and other park properties where camping has occurred.
- Maintain Marion County agreements for corrections crews who assist in parks and right-of-way maintenance.
- Continue coordination of volunteer programs such as Minto-Brown Island Park and Bush's Pasture Park patrols, and establishment of local park stewards.
- Provide additional park rangers and police coverage at parks where higher incidences of threat are likely and where enforcement of park rules and regulations is beneficial.
- Provide additional security lighting that allows police and residents a clear view into park areas.



WELCOMING AND LIVABLE COMMUNITY

Relates to City Council Priority Area 3 (Increasing Equitable Delivery of City Services) and 4 (Building Great Neighborhoods)

Close-to-home and fully accessible parks and recreation facilities are vital to a welcoming and livable community. Salem's neighborhood, community, and urban parks, as well as our trails and natural areas, allow for diverse outdoor and recreational opportunities. Maintaining and improving existing parks and expanding Salem's parks and recreation activities through additional programs, new park acquisitions and development, upgrades to existing parks, and new trail connections will ensure Salem continues to provide outdoor recreational opportunities across the City and for all Salem residents.

SPRAB endorsed and recommended the following opportunities and actions:

- Approval of the Bailey Ridge Park Master Plan.
- Oregon Parks and Recreation Department grant's application to provide funding for the first development phase of Brown Road Park.
- Salem Park Improvement Fund's program awards.

SPRAB reviewed and tracked progress on the following projects:

- Phase One master plan improvements to Woodmansee Park including reconstructed tennis courts, new multi-use field, picnic shelter, and hard surface pathway.
- Phase Two master plan improvements to Bill Riegel Park including construction of a new playground with equipment appropriate for school-aged children, picnic shelter, hard surface pathway, and irrigation system upgrades.

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WELCOMING AND LIVABLE COMMUNITY

- Community-informed design of a new skate park facility at Geer Park.
- Annexation of 2-acre Fisher Road park addition.
- Rehabilitation of multiple multi-sport courts.
- Rehabilitation of basketball courts, including new striping, basketball posts, and backboards.
- Upgrade and/or replacement of parks amenities, including parks entrance signage, drinking fountains, benches, picnic tables, kiosks, shelters, and playground equipment.
- Upgrade and/or replacement of Wallace Marine Park Softball Complex individual field playing surfaces and a new playground near the Wallace Marine Park soccer fields.
- New playground equipment at Rees Park.

SPRAB recommends support and/or funding for the following actions and programs:

- The identification of new funding sources for Salem's parks and recreation programs, including ideas for a local option tax levy or development of a special district.
- The enhancement of Salem's parks through development of additional recreational program opportunities, park acquisitions, and upgrades to existing and new parks.
- Continuation of fee waivers for low-income families to provide positive, healthy activities for children and families through recreation programs.
- Continued collaborative relationships with neighborhood associations through the Salem Park Improvement Fund and Salem Parks Foundation partnerships.
- Grant program applications for park improvements and development funding assistance through Oregon Parks and Recreation Department and National Park Service.
- Continued collaboration with Salem Art Association, Friends of Trees, Mission Street Parks Conservancy, Lord & Schryver Conservancy, Deepwood Museum & Gardens, Salem's Riverfront Carousel, and Gilbert House Children's Museum.
- The summer parks program, sport camps, Owl Prowls, Junior Ranger programs, and outdoor survival programs.



RECOMMENDED

Letter of support for Community Infrastructure Bond Measure

In April 2022, SPRAB advised the City Council Infrastructure Bond Engagement Steering Committee to:

- » Ensure all residents have access to quality parks and recreation opportunities.
- » Prioritize investments that align with recent Park Master Plans.
- » Replace aging equipment and equipment that has been removed but not yet replaced.
- » Prioritize safe routes to parks.



STRONG AND DIVERSE ECONOMY

Relates to City Council Priority Area 3 (Increasing Equitable Delivery of City Services)

Beautiful and diverse parks, along with ample recreational opportunities, contribute to a thriving economy. SPRAB recognizes and fully supports the outstanding recreational events and event facilities within Salem that provide strong economic support to the City. SPRAB recognizes that a strong park system is an economic driver for the community and the region.

SPRAB has endorsed and recommended the following opportunities and actions:

- Management and event coordination of the Gerry Frank | Salem Rotary Amphitheater that provides a venue for future events and continues to promote Salem.
- The Ironman triathlon event held in July that drew 2,200 participants and an estimated \$11 million impact for our community.

The Board wishes to recognize the many events that have contributed to a strong and diverse economy in Salem, including such recreational activities and regional festivals as:

- Capital Jam, First Friday, Movies in the Park, World Beat Festival, River Rock Salem and Fish Fest concerts
- Softball/kickball leagues and tournaments run by City of Salem recreation staff as well as facility sport rentals for baseball and softball tournaments

SPRAB recommends funding for the following programs:

- National and regional softball and soccer tournaments
- STRIDE and 5K/10K events
- Promotion of regional marathons, half-marathons, and multi-sport events
- Amphitheater management, promotion and event coordination



SAFE, RELIABLE, AND EFFICIENT INFRASTRUCTURE

Relates to City Council Priority Area 4 (Building Great Neighborhoods)

SPRAB supports infrastructure improvements as noted in the Salem Comprehensive Parks System Master Plan and Salem Transportation System Plan to connect parks with trails and family-friendly bike and pedestrian routes throughout the City.

SPRAB recognizes the importance of park infrastructure to the health and wellbeing of the entire Salem community. Multi-use paths, safe connections between parks, schools, and neighborhoods, and support facilities such as restrooms and drinking water fountains are key elements to a healthy park system.

SPRAB has endorsed or supported the following actions and programs:

- Extension of Pringle Creek Trail, linking downtown to Riverfront Park.
- Projects funded by the 2022 Community Infrastructure Bond, including but not limited to new and upgraded restroom facilities, paths and trails, and park parking lots.

SPRAB recommends continued funding and support for the following actions and programs:

- Safer Pedestrian Crossings Program for safer pedestrian access to parks.
- Sidewalk development and repairs.
- Investment in bike and shared-use path networks.
- Bike share locations in City parks.
- Update of the Salem Transportation System Plan goals, policies, projects, and priorities to align with the newly-adopted Salem Area Comprehensive Plan, Climate-Friendly and Equitable Communities Rulemaking, Oregon Statewide Transportation Strategy, and Oregon Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan in the areas of walking, bicycling, and transit use.



NATURAL ENVIRONMENT STEWARDSHIP

Relates to City Council Priority Area 5 (Taking Action on Climate Change)

Parks, green spaces, natural areas, and the urban tree canopy are priorities for community health, individual health, and economic vitality. These resources are also important components of the City of Salem Climate Action Plan and Salem's overall approach to climate resilience and ensuring an equitable transition to a climate-smart future.

SPRAB advocates for opportunities to provide connections to nature, conservation of important plant and wildlife habitat, and overall sustainability for the next generation of Salem residents. SPRAB recognizes the importance of healthy natural areas and tree canopies for improved water quality, urban heat island reduction, carbon sequestration, restorative passive recreation, and urban respite opportunities.

SPRAB has supported or recommended the following actions and programs:

- Increased funding for the Urban Forestry Division to manage and maintain over 300,000 right-of-way trees. Increased staffing to provide certified arborists for GIS asset management, customer service, and tree planning and preservation. Additional arborists to provide high quality care of existing tree canopy and increased tree planting efforts that will support future goals laid out by the Climate Action Plan and the Community Forestry Strategic Plan.
- Implementation of the Salem Climate Action Plan.
- City acceptance of a 14-acre wooded property donation located at the intersection of Pringle Road SE and Hillrose Street SE, now referred to as the Braden Lane natural area.
- Establishment of a native plant buffer along the path running through the Minto Island Conservation Area to balance habitat conservation objectives with increased use afforded by the opening of the Peter Courtney Minto Island Bicycle and Pedestrian Bridge.
- Proposed amendments to Administrative Rule 109-600-001 (Minto Island Conservation Area Restrictions for Events) to test proposed revisions to restrictions on large events.
- Formation of the Eagle Watch volunteer program to observe and monitor a bald eagle nest in Minto-Brown Island Park.
- Continued protection of the eagles' nest in Minto-Brown Island Park through signage, buffer area, public education, and outreach.

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NATURAL ENVIRONMENT STEWARDSHIP

- Updates to Salem Revised Code Chapter 808 (Preservation of Trees and Vegetation) to define most trees over 30 inches in diameter at breast height (30" dbh) as Significant Trees protected under city code.
- Proposed updates to Salem Revised Code Chapter 86 (Trees on City Owned Property) to address issues that have arisen since the code was last amended in 2015.
- Salem Tree Report summarizing Public Works tree projects for 2021.
- Implementation of a survey of property owners to assist in identifying tree planting opportunities and barriers on private property.
- Public Works Strategic Operations Plan for addressing beaver activity within the City of Salem.
- Development of an integrated pest management policy for City operations, providing requirements and guidelines for implementing the most environmentally sound approaches for controlling pests while reducing or eliminating the volume and toxicity of chemical pest control treatments.
- Participation in implementing the Community Forestry Strategic Plan goals.
- Partnership with Willamette Riverkeeper to control invasive aquatic weeds in the Willamette Slough.
- Natural resource strategies in the Salem Climate Action Plan as they relate to parks and the Salem urban tree canopy.
- Salem urban tree canopy assessments and the canopy goal of 28% by 2030.
- Readiness and response plans to prepare for the arrival of emerald ash borer beetles in Salem.
- Applications for grant funding for restoration of natural areas.
- Salem Library explorer backpack kits for nature exploration in parks.
- Mayor's Monarch Pledge and pollinator habitat creation in parks.
- Development of a management plan for Minto-Brown Island Park.
- Opportunity acquisitions of additional City-owned and managed natural areas.
- Expanded tree planting efforts through contracts with Friends of Trees and Treecology.
- Opportunities for natural area and trail enhancements for passive recreation.

SPRAB recommends continued funding and support for the following actions and programs:

- Protection of established trees, preservation of Oregon white oaks, and continued commitment to tree plantings in low canopy areas of the city.
- Protection and enhancement of sensitive natural resources in parks through ongoing maintenance, restoration, and public education.
- Partnership with local environmental groups for community tree planting events, planting and establishment of pollinator habitat demonstration gardens, and weed pulls.
- Public education through door hangers, interpretive signage, bird walks, owl prowls, and outreach through tree and native vegetation planting events.
- Continuation of Minto-Brown Island Park Turtle Habitat Restoration project with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife and Western Oregon University.
- Continuation and expansion of the Eagle Watch volunteer program, potentially including monitoring of other eagle nests within Salem city limits.



GOOD GOVERNANCE

Relates to City Council Priority Area 5 (Taking Action on Climate Change)

The Board acknowledges and appreciates City Council's proactive approach to preserving parks, open spaces, natural areas, and trees as well as recognizing the need for additional recreation programming and park maintenance. These efforts will provide a more sustainable and economically stable community.

SPRAB has endorsed and recommended the following actions:

- Two important City-wide plans were finalized in 2022, including the Salem Climate Action Plan and Our Salem, an update to the Salem Area Comprehensive Plan. Both plans recognize the importance of parks for a livable city and for addressing climate change. Both plans also include new goals and strategies that promote complete streets and neighborhoods, thereby reducing the need to drive and enhancing other travel options, such as biking or walking to local destinations.
- The identification of new funding sources for Salem's parks and recreation programs, including ideas for a local option tax levy or development of a special district.
- Improvements to Parks & Recreation web pages as part of the implementation of new City website software to provide equitable access for the public to find information on park features, recreation programming, reservable facilities, volunteering in parks, contact information, and a link to the SPRAB web page.
- Government-to-government coordination with the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde Community of Oregon, the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians of Oregon, and the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs per communication memorandums of understanding.

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GOOD GOVERNANCE

SPRAB is proud to serve in an advisory manner to City Council, the Public Works Director, and others on parks-related matters and recommends that it continue to do so in the following capacities:

- Provide advice and counsel in matters referred by City Council and the Public Works Director such as the recent request for policy recommendations on park usage and permitting.
- Participate in ad-hoc advisory groups, such as the Salem Climate Action Plan Task Force and Library Strategic Planning Steering Committee.
- Continue to participate in individual park master plan efforts while seeking new and innovative ways to assist City staff with community engagement.
- Continue SPRAB's role hearing Salem Revised Code Chapter 86-related appeals or referrals on City-owned trees.
- Conduct annual board retreats or online surveys to identify priorities and emerging issues for the Board's annual work plan.



Letter to City Council regarding increased roles

In July 2022, SPRAB recommended and advised City Council on the need for increased communication and engagement between the two bodies. SPRAB recommendations included the following:

- » Create an annual agenda item for a representative of SPRAB to present to City Council.
- » Invite a representative of SPRAB to City Council Work Sessions related to parks, trees, or other issues within our portfolio.
- » Invite a member of City Council to serve as a liaison to SPRAB.
- » Direct SPRAB to review specific issues and present recommendations, when appropriate.
- » Involve SPRAB with implementation of the City of Salem Climate Action Plan.

