



February 18, 2022

To: Lisa Anderson-Ogilvie, AICP Deputy Community Development Director

**The Question Before Salem City Council: How to Best and Most Equitably Assign the new Salem D Street Community Park?**

Northeast Neighbors (NEN), suggests a cooperative and shared assignment for the D Street Park involving both NESCA and NEN Neighborhood Associations. In support of this proposal, NEN offers the following for the Council's consideration:

- Both adjoining neighborhood associations, NEN and NESCA, have a long-term interest in the D Street Community Park space and include reference to it in their Neighborhood Plans. For NEN, this park land was mentioned as a goal in their plans, on file with the city, beginning in 2015.
- The amount of land in parks and publicly available recreation space currently is very different in NESCA and in NEN. Based on data from the city, it is now calculated that residents of NESCA have access to over eight times more parks per capita than residents of NEN. Please see attachment.
- Population density is an important factor in assessing need for park space. The residents of NEN live in a more densely populated area. Room is needed to walk, sit outdoors, play, exercise family dogs, breathe open air.
- NEN leaders have repeatedly requested joint meetings with NESCA to explore how the two could work together to plan for mutual benefit of all residents in both neighborhoods. NEN welcomes collaboration with other neighborhood associations.
- As detailed in the accompanying letter from Ken Simila, NEN Vice Chair, NEN has steadily lost park and recreational space over time. Please see his attached email.
- It is understood that the City of Salem is the administrator of parks which belong to the citizens of Salem. The city gathers a variety of diverse input from the public and uses their expertise to make the best decisions in planning for parks. Neighborhood Associations are just one of the many stakeholders involved in park planning.
- If 24<sup>th</sup> Street were to be adopted as the most logical boundary between NEN and NESCA, the D Street Community Park would be a shared venture. For the city staff administering the park, it is anticipated that the additional work would be only to send emails to both neighborhoods to announce planning proposals, invitations to Zoom, or in-person planning meetings.
- NEN leadership strongly urges Salem City Council to make this decision in the best interests of the entire community. We understand that the Council is not bound by the staff recommendation.

We thank the members of Salem City Council for your thoughtful consideration of our proposal.

Respectfully,

Northeast Neighbors (NEN)

Attachment: Loss of park and recreational space in NEN from Vice Chair Ken Simila & NEN and NESCA data on parks per capita



# NEN

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## **NEN is Losing Recreation and Park Space**

Northeast Salem is underserved with available parks. Despite goals in the 2013 Parks Master Plan, NEN has been losing recreational park space. Currently, the remaining parks are Englewood Park and McRae Park.

### **Some Neighborhood Associations have a larger portion of recreational park space.**

<b>NEN park acreage 9.23 acres</b> 2020 NEN population: 9,854* NEN park acres per person: .00093668 acres McRae 2.27 acres Englewood 6.96 acres  *From City of Salem IT	<b>NESCA park acreage 49.48 acres</b> 2020 NESCA population: 6,339* NESCA park acres per person: .00780565 acres Geer 44.38 acres Harry and Grace Thorp .99 acre Hoover 4.11 acres  *From City of Salem IT
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The 2013 Comprehensive Park System Master Plan Update (Parks Master Plan) calls for the development of three additional neighborhood parks in NEN.

**NEN residents today have five fewer open space recreational areas today,** than previously.

From 1950 to 1990 NEN lost access to the following recreational space resources:

1. Between 12th & 13th Streets NE, Center and Marion Streets NE -the "Old" Washington Elementary School NEN lost a park with playground equipment that had swings, a jungle gym, a merry-go-round, chinning bars, a softball field, a grove of mature fir trees and several picnic tables. A Safeway store is now on this site.
2. Near Olinger Swimming Pool on 1300 A St. NE, school district park site with picnic tables, playground equipment including spring-mounted riding toy, swings, a jungle gym, chinning bars, and a small meadow. It was replaced by a building that housed Straub Environmental Center. The playground equipment was removed and never replaced.
3. Another park on the SE corner of the Oregon State Fairgrounds south parking lot, south of Sunnyview Ave was lost. Developers provided dedicated pedestrian paths from adjacent NEN residential areas 21st Street NE and the 23rd & 24th Street NE. This site-developed neighborhood park with a city-owned restroom building was constructed behind the residence at 1999 Garfield St NE next to the 21<sup>st</sup> St. b) a softball ballfield with chain-link backstop, triple swing, tetherball pole, iron-pipe jungle gym, merry-go-round, two picnic tables, and three levels of iron chinning poles. The restroom was closed, the property it was on was sold to an adjacent neighbor, and the playground equipment was removed. It is now only

a fair parking lot for the 11 days of the state fair. NOTE: This park predated the later addition of City Softball fields in the center of the Fair's horse racetrack NORTH of Sunnyview Ave NE.

4. Barrick Field had a small area dedicated to playing equipment which was removed when the sewers were repaired. It was used to park equipment and the neighbors were promised that the play equipment would be replaced. Nothing happened.
5. Another recreational site was lost at Walker Park north of State Street at the corner of 25<sup>th</sup> St. NE and Walker St. NE. This site had a softball field, picnic tables, shade trees, and off-street parking. It is to this day still shown as "Walker Park" on Google Maps, 2022 edition at the web link of:  
<https://www.google.com/maps/place/2525+Walker+St+NE,+Salem,+OR+97301/@44.9352063,-123.010989,603m/data=!3m2!1e3!4b1!4m5!3m4!1s0x54bfff23a66c62b5:0xa396d99c878b677f!8m2!3d44.9352063!4d-123.0088003>

#### **Neighborhood Plans are not being consulted in decisions.**

According to goal 17 PARK AND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES DEVELOPMENT of the NEN/SESNA Neighborhood Plan, there is a goal to *Increase the number, acreage, and types of parks and recreational facilities in NEN and (SESNA) to meet the needs of neighborhood residents.*

Because of this deficit, NEN board members are wondering why the city staff is making a recommendation to place this park in the expanded boundary of NESCA. This park is on the border of both NEN and NESCA neighborhood associations. The area is in both NEN/SESNA's and NESCA/Lansing's Neighborhood Plans.

#### **NEN cares about open and recreational space; NEN loves our parks.**

- Thanks to the city, Salem Health, and the Salem Parks Foundation, in 2021, **NEN raised over \$16,000** in grants and cash donations for our Neighborhood Parks, McRae and Englewood.
- This year, McRae's **basketball court** was resurfaced, playground equipment was added, and a bench will be installed in the future.
- NEN has approximately 9 **volunteer service** events in Englewood Park each year with over 250 to 350 volunteer hours per year.
- For five years, NEN has removed invasive species and planted a 5000 square foot **pollinator garden** in Englewood Park. We initiated this with the advice of Kasia Quillinan to reduce park maintenance. In time, our native plantings will require minimal maintenance.
- NEN has vigorously worked to try to keep Englewood Park safe after the 2019 killing in Englewood and the 2020 shooting of a young person in Englewood Park in 2020. Our **Neighborhood Watch** has been effective in preventing some potential conflicts. Our partnership with Parks and the Salem Police Dept. has been positive as we deal with threats to neighborhood safety.
- NEN established the **Englewood Forest Festival**, a well-loved community event that generates goodwill is a catalyst for collaborations that benefit many and generates approximately \$10,000 of income for our creative community each year.
- NEN added a **playground** in Englewood Park and watered trees and plants in both parks.

The loss of the Oregon State Hospital property, as well as many recreation spaces in NEN has been a source of grief for the NEN neighborhood. Our intention is to ensure that in the future, the residents in both the NEN and NESCA neighborhoods will be informed and can participate giving input and learning about developments in the D St. Community Park.

There is no written policy within the City of Salem or the current 2013 Parks Master Plan that would ensure that NEN would receive notifications or the ability to participate if the Park is within NESCA. Despite excellent outreach efforts from the city, NEN and some residents were not notified during the Geer Park Master Plan.

**NEN has attempted to work with NESCA in crafting a solution.**

Although our Neighborhood Association is open to discussion, NESCA voted not to talk with NEN.

**NEN welcomes collaboration with other neighborhood associations.**

NEN collaborates with Grant, SESNA, Lansing, Northgate and mentored NESCA on their first SPIF grant, collaborated with NESCA on our Emergency Preparedness Workshop, and invited NESCA and Lansing to our Neighborhood Cleanup to learn how they might launch a similar project.

**NEN offers a novel approach assigning a park within 2 neighborhood associations**

The benefit is that both neighborhoods are more likely to be informed as both care deeply about the D St. Community Park.

NEN's current eastern boundary is **predominantly east of 24<sup>th</sup> Street NE** (for 10 of 18 city blocks). This is from Market St. north to the State Fairgrounds, and from Center Street south to State Street. Conversely, NESCA's current western boundary is **predominantly east of Park Avenue NE**. (13 of 20 city blocks). The largest part of NESCA (south of "D" Street NE) is east of Park Avenue NE.

**The park will not be cut in half to make two parks out of one.** The new park will simply be ONE community park, regardless of any mid-property boundary between Neighborhood Associations. This is a mechanism for developing a park that mutually borders on two neighborhoods, both of which could be involved in what the park becomes.

City planners will not have to create extra administrative costs to plan and staff this ONE new park, "D" Street Community Park. The greater community will benefit from greater involvement in our public parks.