



State of Eugene's Parks

2016 Update



A recent survey of over 7,000 Eugene residents found that half are enjoying parks on a daily or weekly basis, and two thirds are visiting at least monthly. This adds up to **more than 9 million adult visits each year**. It is our role as the City of Eugene Parks and Open Space Division to care for these highly-used parks and work collaboratively with the community to steward their development into the future.

This report is an update of the 2014 State of Eugene's Parks Report. It provides a closer look at the present condition of parks, the challenges affecting their condition and how we are working to address those challenges, and **our action plan for improvements**.



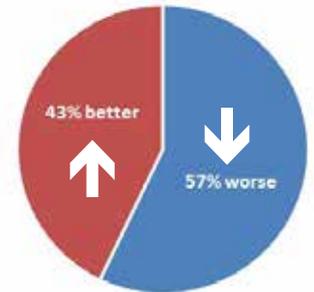
Park Condition Ratings

One of the ways in which we track the health of developed parks is having a staff team from diverse work areas come together every two years to assess and grade various categories in 10 to 15 parks, with a goal of assessing each developed park at least once every five years.

Sample findings that contribute to a lower grade include:

- ◆ Aging playground equipment that, although safe, was not in compliance with national standards and/or was missing components to make it functional
- ◆ Closed restrooms
- ◆ Reoccurring illegal dumping of trash and debris that overwhelm staffing levels
- ◆ Graffiti found on park features
- ◆ Playground not yet converted from sand to woodchips to comply with safety and accessibility standards
- ◆ Paved surfaces are aging and cracked, creating trip hazards
- ◆ Turf areas in distressed conditions, brown or completely bare
- ◆ Landscape beds are weedy and overgrown with invasive species
- ◆ Nonfunctioning wading pools onsite

Park Condition Grade Changes—2009 to 2016



Challenges Impacting Eugene's Parks

- ◆ Annual costs to operate and maintain parks have risen over the past 10 years, and general fund revenues have not kept pace. **Compared to 10 years ago, there are fewer full time staff maintaining parks, while total park acreage has more than doubled.**
- ◆ Bond funding guided the purchase of 980 additional acres for natural areas and future developed parks **without the corresponding funding needed to stabilize these lands.** Funding was redirected from other necessary services to provide a minimum level of stabilization through activities such as securing property with fencing, creating access points, removing some fuel loads and invasive species, and mitigating illegal dumping.
- ◆ Reductions in park staff mean that **aging park assets are not getting the attention they need and are wearing out sooner.** There is a growing backlog of maintenance needs and amenities that need replacement.
- ◆ **Illegal camping continues to rise and set new records.** Staff are spending an increasing amount of time trying to keep parks safe and clean, and less time on other operational needs.



- ◆ In addition to camping, **illicit activities, such as theft, vandalism, drug use and sales, graffiti and dumping garbage, are taking a toll on parks.** In the first nine months of 2016, over 7,450 bags of garbage and 3,500 needles were removed from camp sites, and there were over 4,000 Eugene Police Department incidences in parks.
- ◆ 17 parks sites across Eugene are poised to serve Eugene’s growing population and underserved areas but there is currently **no funding to maintain these sites if developed.**

Removed From Parks This Year:*
 **7,450** bags of garbage and
 **3,500** needles
 *Jan.-Sept., 2016

Meeting The Challenges

- ◆ We continue to **adapt maintenance services** to the evolving needs of park users and park infrastructure. For example, although reducing irrigation in parks was a cost savings measure following budget reductions, trees were suffering and dry soils were causing irrigation system failures. Brown turf also made it less inviting for users. Staff continues to focus maintenance activities on the highest use areas in each park and evaluate the effects on areas where maintenance has been reduced. In the summer of 2016, the watering schedule was increased to preserve these assets.
- ◆ Our **expanding use of mobile technology and geographic information systems** allows us to more efficiently manage parks assets and provide better customer service. For example, Urban Forestry staff can now use their iPhones in the field to monitor and update detailed geographic information about tree planting dates and locations, pruning schedules and health conditions.
- ◆ Our **Eugene Outdoors volunteers play an important role** in helping care for Eugene’s parks and building a closer relationship between us and the community we serve. In FY16, individuals, adoption groups and service organizations contributed 15,500 volunteer hours valued at over \$365,000.
- ◆ **Partnerships and grants help boost our resources.** Between January 1, 2015 and October 31, 2016 three grants totaling \$259,910. This funding went toward fuels reduction, invasive species removal and the introduction of native plants in natural areas.



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- ◆ Over the summers of 2015 and 2016, Park Ambassadors and Eugene Police bike patrol officers **worked full time addressing illicit activities** in the Riverfront Park System and providing community outreach. This work provided a model for how safety concerns could be addressed across the park system year round.



Eugene's Parks and Natural Areas

- 4,698** Total Acres
- 3,801** Acres of Natural Areas
- 67** Developed Parks
- 52** Playgrounds
- 47** Miles of Trails
- 17** Future Developed Park Sites

Our Plan of Action

- ◆ We will be working to **solve our \$2.3 million operations and maintenance funding gap in order to sustain a healthy and vibrant park system** which would mean opening closed restrooms, increasing custodial service levels, restoring ongoing and preventative maintenance services on amenities, and fully stabilizing undeveloped park sites by creating controlled access points, managing invasive species, addressing fire hazards, and mitigating illegal dumping.
- ◆ Solving the operations gap will allow us to **focus on the growing need for a year-round security presence in Eugene's parks** which will be comprised of park ambassadors, a dedicated police officer and seasonal bike patrol officers.
- ◆ Solving the maintenance and operations gap will put us in a position to be able to **develop five neighborhood parks and one community park in underserved areas** over the next five years.
- ◆ Through extensive work to get community input and a thorough analysis of the system's strengths, challenges, and opportunities, the **Parks and Recreation System Plan is creating a vision and implementation plan that will pave the way forward for future park improvements.** It is anticipated that the plan will be ready for City Council adoption by spring 2017.
- ◆ We will **build on the successful Parks and Recreation System Plan engagement efforts** by getting out and meeting the people we serve in person and boosting social media efforts in order to foster better communication and collaboration.



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