OVERVIEW
The goal of the Parks System Master Planning process is to address the changing recreational needs of the community’s diverse population to ensure that the city’s facilities reflect current and future recreational trends. During the early stages of the project, the focus of public outreach efforts has been to identify overall community parks, recreation, and open space needs and priorities and to assess potential needed improvements to existing park facilities.

The community plays a vital role in the planning process by sharing personal priorities for parks, recreation facilities, and open spaces and weighing in on the decisions the City will be making. The following list is a summary of the public outreach to date:

- Open Meetings of the Parks Advisory Board
- Online surveys, questionnaires, and comment forms
- Regular updates in the City newsletter and Website
- Notices in the City’s utility bill
- Information and opportunities to comment at local festivals and community group meetings
- A community open house
- In-person interviews with community group representatives
- A focus group discussion with Latino community members
- Comments via phone, e-mail, or in writing to City of Independence staff

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**Master Plan Priorities**

*From Surveys*

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WHAT WE’VE HEARD SO FAR
Through these outreach efforts, excited community members are helping to determine the future of our parks and recreation facilities. There have been subtle differences in opinions of what the community needs most, but some common themes and priorities have emerged:

- **Support** walking, running and bicycling on trails and pathways.
- **Long-term funding** is crucial for upkeep and maintenance of parks. Local partnerships will be essential in these efforts.
- **Utilize the Willamette River** for accessible recreation with a focus on safety and sustaining the environmental importance of the river.
- **More sports fields** – especially soccer fields - are needed. The possibility of a sports complex designed for hosting larger, regional events should be considered.
- **Develop year-round facilities**, i.e., covered sports courts and gathering areas, indoor swim facilities, etc.
- Encourage or require **neighborhood parks** in new residential developments.
- **Collaborate** with Monmouth, Western Oregon University, and others to create a pedestrian/bicycle path connecting the local region. Continue to collaborate with these same organizations, the Central School District and others to cost-effectively serve people of all ages in Independence and Monmouth.
- **Create more connections to and between parks**, along with signs or maps to increase the knowledge of parks and local events and festivals and to increase regional interest and participation.

RECOMMENDED PARKS AND OPEN SPACE VISION
What we have heard so far confirms and supports the draft project goals developed early in the project:

- Realize the incredible potential of the Willamette Riverfront by enhancing existing facilities and creating new ones along the river.
- Determine how best to improve existing neighborhood parks to meet the needs of local residents.
- Create recreational opportunities for visitors that can enhance the city’s economic vitality.
- Chart the path for development of new parks in future growth areas and new developments.
- Protect natural areas and open spaces to enhance the livability of Independence.
- Partner with community groups to continue to help maintain and enhance park and recreation facilities and programs.
- Establish a set of funding mechanisms that will help pay for the development and maintenance of park and recreation facilities in a cost-effective, financially feasible manner.

Additional goals related to **creating facilities and spaces for family and community gatherings**, **improving trails and connections**, and **expanding and improving soccer and other sports fields** will be integrated in an updated set of goals. The overall vision for the community’s future Park, Open Space and Recreation system continues to be to address the changing recreational needs of our larger, more diverse population, ensure that the city’s facilities reflect current and future recreational trends, and promote community livability and life-long physical health for Independence residents.

NEXT STEPS
The information gathered during the initial public outreach and visioning process will be used to develop and refine Master Plan alternatives during the fall and winter of 2014/2015. During that time, the City will conduct additional meetings with the Park Advisory Commission, distribute draft work products and conduct another community open house and other activities to solicit comments on those alternatives.

To get more involved in the project, please email Shawn Irvin at irvine.shawn@ci.independence.or.us.