OVERVIEW
The first Public Open House for the Parks Master Plan project was held on October 7, 2014. The meeting was conducted at Independence City Hall between 5 and 8 p.m. The objectives of the meetings were to:

- Orient people to the project, providing an overview of project scope of work, schedule and public engagement goals.
- Review project goals, objectives and priorities identified to date and ask people to identify their own priorities.
- Present the results of outreach efforts conducted to date, including intercept surveys, stakeholder interviews, focus groups and MindMixer results.
- Provide opportunities to comment on possible improvements to specific park and recreation facilities.
- Ask people to comment on possible names for proposed or new park or recreation facilities.
- Solicit feedback to help plan for wayfinding and interpretive facilities, asking people to tell us what stories about Independence are important to tell and where and how we can help tell those stories.

The open house featured “stations” oriented to the topics described above, including the following:

- **Project overview.** Review this handout for more information about the project schedule, public involvement activities schedule and draft Project Goals.
- **Park and recreation priorities.** Engage in a “dot exercise” to tell us which types of park and recreation activities or facilities are most important to you; participate in a similar activity to tell us which types of playing fields are most important.
- **Park facility improvements.** Look at the maps of parks in Independence and tell us which ones need to be improved and how.
- **Wayfinding and interpretive facilities.** Tell us what stories about Independence are important to share and where and how we can help tell those stories. Let us know how you travel to different parks in Independence.
- **Park naming.** Give us your ideas for names for parks that are in the planning or design stage.
- **Other ideas.** Let us know what you think of other ideas for improving parks in Independence or tell us what you think should be done.

The meeting was conducted as an open house and participants were able to drop in at any time. Light refreshments were provided by the City.
NOTIFICATION
A variety of activities were undertaken to notify people about the meeting and encourage them to attend, including the following:

- Announcements on the project website and via the City’s social media accounts.
- Flyer and newsletter article included in the City’s utility bill mailed to all Independence households.
- E-mails to interested parties list, partnering community groups, stakeholder interviewees.
- Meeting fliers located at City Hall, the Library, and other gathering places.
- Media releases to local media outlets.

RESULTS
Approximately 25 people attended the meeting. The majority of them participated in most of the exercises described below, providing a variety of comments about overall park system priorities, as well as specific needed improvements to individual facilities.

Summary Observations
Key open house results included the following.

- Participants were particularly supportive of more access to the river, with a focus on safety, and connections between parks and neighborhoods, as well as places to walk and bicycle.
- Various sports fields were also considered important, with soccer fields identified as most important. However, participants also indicated a desire for diverse opportunities for the entire community rather than focusing on a single sport.
- Each individual park had various comments for improvements. Typical comments were more water fountains and/or bathrooms, better trails and signage, better access to the river at Riverview park, as well as maintaining natural areas throughout the parks.
- Participants provided a variety of suggestions related to interpretive and wayfinding facilities.
- Among other ideas presented at the meeting, participants were most supportive of the idea of a Park and Recreation District jointly managed by the cities of Independence and Monmouth and the Central School District.

Park and Recreation Priorities
Participants were asked to use “dots” to identify the three most important types of parks and recreation activities in Independence. The highest ranked item was providing access to the Willamette River. The second most popular activity was and providing trails and pathways for
walking and bicycling and creation connections between facilities and other local destinations. Other ideas suggested by participants included creating standard pocket parks and greenbelts, protecting vegetation on river banks, maintaining natural areas, playground maintenance, providing safe places to swim in the river, and building a marina with restaurant and shops.

**Most Important Sports Fields or Facilities**

Participants were asked to use “dots” to identify the two most needed types of sports fields in Independence. The highest ranked item was soccer fields. Lawn games, like Bocci Ball or Croquet ranked second with about half as many votes as soccer. Other ideas suggested by participants included Grass fields for miscellaneous activities, volleyball, pickleball, rowing dock.

**Park Facility Improvements**

Participants viewed maps of each park in Independence and identified potential needed improvements. Following is a list of comments, organized by park facility.

**Dog Park:**
- Nice trails but area has many invasive plants.

**Pioneer Park:**
- Need for lights after dark to enhance safety.

**Riverview Park:**
- Consider relocation of parking to enhance view of river and protection of riparian vegetation. However, keep in mind access for users with disabilities.
- Maintain current amenities before adding new ones. If new amenities are added, select activities suitable for a broader age group, e.g., safe places to swim in river.
- Access point for river users (e.g., kayaks).
- Additional potential park amenities, including nature playground or other equipment, merry-go-round, water feature/splash park, balance beam and activities for older kids.
Un-named Park:
- Give alternative to reaching N/S than 7th St.
- Too narrow for a park, consider widening.
- Create a “nature playground” in this park.

Mt. Fir Park:
- Nice park! Let this be the focus.
- Nice addition by Master Gardeners.

Pfaff Park:
- Construct permanent restroom facility.
- Develop pickleball court.

Henry Hill Park:
- Needs a water fountain.
- Maintain high quality pool and consider movie night at the pool in summer.
- Community/family, recreation place-playground, BBQ, V-Ball, B-Ball, all in one place.

Wildfang Park:
- Support natural watershed enhancement project.
- Comments against and in support of Ash Creek Trail. Those against are concerned about stream health and preserving natural areas.

Independence Sports Park (North Riverview Park):
- More trails needed and better signage.
- Sport fields that will foster tournaments (baseball/softball, soccer, etc.).
- Day use picnic area near river and marina would be nice.

Willamette Riverfront Area:
- More trails and trail connections, including to or along Corvallis Road, the proposed Ash Creek Trail, the Willamette River trail, and the island.
- Kayak and other river activities, including floating docks for kayaks and rowing shells, signage and information about paddling on the Willamette, organized rowing events (e.g., regattas).
- Day use picnic area near river and marina would be nice.

**Wayfinding and Interpretive Facilities**

Participants were asked to comment on different ideas associated with interpretive and wayfinding facilities, including different aspects of the City’s history that should be featured in interpretive displays or facilities. Comments on this topic included the following:
- Hops and Agricultural Heritage – Hop pickers and growers, history of the railroads, Hispanic history, importance of river and wetlands.
- Historic Ferry Crossing – Independence bridge over the river, floods and connection to river, Oregon Territory times, Railroad history.
- Willamette Waterway Trail – expand of existing interpretive markers and signs.
- Native American History and Culture (Kalapuya).
- Add public art to trails.
- Park system maps for guests.
- Mileage markers on the river to inform users of time and distances to other sites.
Park Naming

Participants were asked to suggest names for two park/trail facilities: (1) the open playing field area north of Riverview Park; and (2) the entire Greenway trail area along the river. Comments and suggestions included the following:
- Current park names are confusing along the river, e.g., North Riverview Park and Riverview Park. Consider naming parks along the river as one name and then each unit a different name.
- Each park should have a name and sign, but not all parks need interpretive treatment.
- Change name of current “Willamette River Trail” to “Independence River Trail.”
- Name the currently unnamed park by Mt. Fir Park the “All-American City Park.”

Other Comments and Themes

Participants were asked to voice their support for a variety of ideas generated during previous public outreach activities. The following chart illustrates the level of support for each idea. Formation of a joint park and recreation district managed by the cities of Independence and Monmouth and the Central School District received the highest level of support, among these ideas.

Other ideas suggested during this exercise included the following:
- Build a path from Independence to Monmouth (Ash Creek Trail).
- More amenities at parks like electrical access for events and Wi-Fi.
- Expand what exists already. Promote festivals better, increase signage and community knowledge about parks (use the web).
• Neighborhood parks should be part of all new developments.
• Consider impact of park development, i.e., degradation of wildlife habitat and native vegetation, funding for stewardship and maintenance of areas.
• Look for opportunities to collaborate, e.g., WOU (Western Oregon University), City of Monmouth, regional natural resource organizations.