



**MINUTES FOR PARK COMMISSION RETREAT**

**PROS Plan – Strategic Goals Review**

**December 10, 2025**

**Council Chamber, 1175 E Main – 6:00 PM**

Commissioners Present: Adams, Bachman (Chair), Gardiner, and Weiner

Staff Present: Director Houston, Deputy Director Dials, Division Manager – Senior Division Mettler, Executive Assistant Mero

Absent: Commissioner Landt

- I. **CALL TO ORDER** – Chair Bachman called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM
- II. **ROLL CALL** – Commissioners Gardiner, Weiner, Bachman (Chair), and Adams present
- III. **BUSINESS**
  1. **PROS Plan – Strategic Goals Review** – Director

**SUMMARY** – The objective of this Park Commission retreat is to review the draft strategic goals for the Parks, Recreation, Open space, & Senior services (PROS) plan. The draft strategic goals were developed based on the information gathered through the PROS planning process to ensure the Ashland Parks and Recreation Department (Department) meets the community’s recreational needs over the next six years. A summary of this information can be found on the City Website on the Parks and Recreation Page:

- [Presentations & Meeting Summaries | Ashland, OR](#)

The following key themes influenced the draft goals:

- The City’s adopted vision, values, and City Council’s priorities.
- The Department’s mission, vision, and values.
- The community’s input on how we are doing today and what they value for the future of our parklands and programs.
- Ashland has a robust parks, trails, and recreation programming system that leads our peers in Oregon and nationally.
- Funding and resources are forecasted to be constrained over the next 5 years.
- The Ashland Parks system is older and in need of major maintenance to ensure it can continue to be safe and meet the community’s recreational needs.

- The changing demographics and livability needs of the community.
- The need to stay engaged with the community as the plan is implemented.

The following draft strategic goals are designed to be broad, impacting all Parks and Recreation divisions and programs. As such, the accompanying objectives and actions will address multiple programs and divisions. The draft strategic goals are:

- Barrier-Free Parklands
- Parks Build a Strong Community
- Innovation for the Future
- Protect the Natural Environment

**POLICIES, PLANS & GOALS SUPPORTED** – The adopted Department Work Plan identifies the development of the PROS Plan.

**FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS** – This is an informational item. Future adoption of the PROS Plan will impact future budget development, based on the strategic direction it provides the Department.

**PROPOSED ACTIONS OR MOTION(S)** – This is an informational item. Staff is seeking input on the draft strategic goals.

**ATTACHMENTS** – Draft Parks, Recreation, Open space, & Senior services Plan strategic goals

**PREPARED BY:** Rocky Houston

Attachment:

## **Strategic Direction**

### **Overview**

The PROS plan strategic direction is supplied by the framework of the goals and objectives. The goals were developed by analyzing the department's mission, vision and values; the community values that came from the community engagement; and the forecasted resources and department capacity. Plan goals were also influenced by the Ashland Comprehensive Plan, and the Park Commission's adopted plans and policies. Each goal has several objectives identified to assist in assessing progress in meeting the goal and articulate core actionable items.

## **City of Ashland Vision Statements for Success**

- Ashland is a resilient, sustainable community that maintains the distinctive quality of place for which it is known
- We will continue to be a unique and caring city that stresses environmental conservation, fosters artistic expression, and is open to new ideas and innovation
- We will plan and direct our efforts to fulfill this Vision for the long term with a constant view toward being an open, welcoming community for all with a positive economic future

## **City of Ashland Values**

- **Community**
  - Community affordability, including available housing and childcare
  - Belonging through mutual respect and openness, inclusion, and equity
  - Quality of life that underpins the City's economic vibrancy
  - Environmental resilience, including addressing climate change and ecosystem conservation
  - Regional cooperation, including in support for public safety and homelessness
- **Organization**
  - Respect for the citizens we serve, for each other, and for the work we do
  - Excellence in governance and city services
  - Sustainability through creativity, affordability, and rightsized service delivery
  - Public safety, including emergency preparedness for climate change risk
  - Quality infrastructure and facilities through timely maintenance and community investment

## **City of Ashland Council Priorities**

The 2025–2027 Budget aims to address the City Council's budget priorities within current resources as outlined at the City Council retreat on March 1, 2025.

- **Livability**, including a focus on Community character and community amenities, reliable utility services, progressiveness in rate structures and support for attainable housing;

- **Risk Reduction**, including Wildfire risk reduction and CEAP (Climate Energy Action Plan) execution;
- **Economic Development**, including development of eco-tourism related accomplishments like trails, and ensuring City processes such as planning are supportive of attracting new business and supporting those already here;
- **Efficient and Effective Government**, including equity of access, customer focus, transparent and frequent communication, strong regional partnerships, use of technology, execution of maintaining City facilities and public infrastructure.

## **Department Mission, Vision and Values**

The PROS plan is informed by the department's mission, vision and values and the City of Ashland's vision, values and Council priorities.

### **Mission**

*The mission of the Ashland Parks and Recreation Department is to provide and promote recreational opportunities and to preserve and maintain public lands.*

### **Vision**

*We build community through people, parks and programs.*

### **Values**

- **Community**
  - We value the cultural, social, and ecological diversity of our community.
- **Education**
  - We believe that learning improves our quality of life.
- **Pride in Work**
  - We are inspired to do better and be better.
- **Stewardship**
  - We are grateful to be entrusted with public lands.

### **Goals**

The PROS plan identifies four goals supported by the community engagement and community values that came from that engagement. Each goal identifies objectives

to help implement the goal over the plan's life. Each objective will identify action items to complete to implement the objective and further the goal's implementation.

### **Goals Focused on Strategic Framework (i.e. programs and operations integrated into each goal)**

- **Barrier Free Parklands**  
Provide a diverse system of parklands and programs that are equitably distributed, accessible to all users, and guided by an engaged community.
- **Parks build a strong community**  
Provide an interconnected system of parklands and programs that offers a wide variety of year-round opportunities and experiences that support and enhance the city's livability and economic vitality.
- **Innovation for the Future**  
Preserve parklands for future generations by proactively funding, restoring, and maintaining an accessible and resilient system that provides an essential public service that contributes to the city's vitality.
- **Protect the Natural Environment**  
Protect and enhance the natural beauty of the city by maintaining and promoting a vibrant system of parks, natural areas, and trails that are sustainably design, preserve various types of habitat, and are resilient to fire and/or other climate changes.

### **Objective & Action Examples by Goal**

To assist in conceptualizing how we will integrate the strategic goals with objectives and actions to implement the goals, we have the following example objectives and actions for each goal.

Note: These objectives and actions are not the complete list of objectives and actions that will be in the draft PROS Plan.

- **Barrier Free Parklands**  
Objective: Ensure parklands and facilities are safe & accessible  
Action: Integrate capital projects that are linked to parkland and facility condition assessments.

Action: Develop an ADA transition plan.

Action: Assess parklands and facility conditions routinely to ensure that they are safe and accessible.

Objective: Support and advance diversity, equity, inclusion, and access (DEIA) to parklands and programs.

Action: Have scoring rubric for capital improvement plan with DEIA element.

Action: Implement signage and other information sources in Spanish and/or other languages as identified.

Objective: Reduce financial barriers to use of programs and parklands

Action: Implement a cost recovery policy.

Action: Develop a resident vs non-resident fee structure.

Action: Partner with organizations to develop scholarships or other fee reduction options for vulnerable populations.

Action: Develop or promote events that are free or low cost.

- **Parks build a strong community**

Objective: Promote and Develop a welcoming trail system

Action: Develop a broad range of connected trails

Action: Develop and promote trail programming to introduce trails to new users.

Action: Improve wayfinding to connect areas of the city to recreation destinations and trail systems.

Objective: Promote and market parks, programs, and events

Objective: Engage with the community and partners

Action: Complete a bi-annual survey for key metrics

Action: Partner with local businesses, non-profits, and/or community organizations to host events.

Objective: Develop and operate a park system consistent with community values

Action: Provide close to home parklands or trails

Action: Develop a new recreation center and pool complex

Action: Develop more easy natural surface trails

Action: Focus capital improvement plan on preventative maintenance and restoring existing parklands and facilities.

- **Innovation for the Future**

Objective: Collect data on operations & maintenance by location

Action: Implement Cartegraph task management software

Action: Implement financial coding that aligns with locations and programs to track expenses.

Objective: Develop a sustainable operations and maintenance program

Action: Develop a routine maintenance management plan

Action: Manage maintenance levels based on resources and to ensure parklands and facilities are safe.

Objective: Preserve current parklands and programs through stable and sustainable funding.

Action: Work with Ashland city Council on funding source(s) for park operations and maintenance, programs, and capital projects.

Action: Align the capital improvement plan to prioritize preventative maintenance and major maintenance projects.

Action: Enhance partnerships, adopt-a-Park, or other initiatives or volunteerism and/or partnerships to help address routine maintenance tasks

- **Protect the Natural Environment**

Objective: Create parklands that are climate resilient

Action: Manage parklands to reduce wildfire risk

Action: Plan and develop parklands reduce water, energy, or other resources

Objective: manage parklands and facilities sustainably

Action: Consider long-term operational costs in addition to construction cost on all capital repairs or enhancements

Action: Consider materials and transportation to reduce carbon footprint or renewable resources.

Objective: Prioritize natural areas scenic and habitat when providing outdoor recreation and natural areas.

Do the goals resonate with the Commissioners at a gestalt level?

- No, they do not resonate. Don't line up with the PROS Plan. This process isn't a retreat. Not inclusive. Doesn't like the set up. Super frustrating.

- The goals are missing the main elements that have been discussed for the last five to 10 years, such as the Daniel Meyer Pool (DMP) and adding rectangular sports fields. Confusing.
- How does the DMP fit into this plan? A: It could be an objective or an action according to this process. Want to focus on the big picture, not the minutia. Wanted to test out the broader goals. Agreed the setting is not conducive to open dialogue, but we're having dialogue.
- Process can't be fixed right now, but can be altered going forward.
- Third time doing this process, this is the least inclusive. Noted the DMP could be stuck pretty much anywhere in the goals. They are more like values. Should be more specific as a strategic plan.
- Trying to get Director's operational needs connected to Commission's policy charge. This high-level bit should be renamed. At some point the Director will be held accountable for what he has achieved.
- Currently no money for the pool. The goals as stated move away from specific achievements. Top three takeaways from the community survey are maintain what we have, build more trails, and build more sports fields.
- Survey results also indicated maintaining the pool but don't expand it.
- Houston: The plan could be altered, made more focused when the Commissioners prioritize the goals. Two things going on here. 1. The work plan aspect and 2. how to communicate our priorities to the community.
- Doesn't see how the goals are ten-year goals. Maybe 1 or 2 but not ten. More of a work list. The pool is a likely candidate for a ten-year plan. Concerned about the process. How did it develop. Did you involve your team with white board and brainstorming? That will inform the process.
- Houston: I came up with the initial list of goals. Met with my senior leadership team for input - feedback. Brought it to the Commission. Trying to feather the goals in with the City's priorities. The City is also going through a strategic plan process; the Parks plan will be integrated with the City's plan.
- Staff were given a couple of options. They chose the broader goals approach.
- What about the ADA transition plan? A: It is based on mandated standards for ADA compliance.
- Need a transition plan. How long would it take to implement said plan to be in full compliance? A: It will never happen because things change so rapidly.
- Exactly. Focus on the three things previously mentioned.
- Wrapping ourselves into pretzels trying to fit ourselves into the City's vision, priorities, etc. Sees the PC creating a plan/model. The proposal doesn't have any guts to it. Need to address the items the community prioritized in the PROS process.

- This PROS Plan is taking the long view. Took exception to pretzel statement. We are a department of the City. As such need to pay attention to the City's viewpoint, plans, visions, etc.
- Strategic goals are present in the City's list of goals. Disagree with taking a new pool off the list of goals.
- The Council has good strategic goals like Livability.
- Yes that's what comes out of a process developed together.
- Doesn't feel like the results of the PROS Plan community engagement are represented. Would like to show the community that we are following up on what was gleaned from the process.
- Houston is hearing that Commissioners want more engagement in the process. Suggested changing rooms to make it a more inclusive, collaborative process the next January 7 meeting. Bring back the goals and add in service level goals.
- Clarification that an inclusive process would involve taking a closer look at the PROS survey results, shouting out options, putting dots on white boards or note pads, then together picking goals because that is the Commissioner's job. Doesn't want Houston to create and bring another list.
- May need to add an extra retreat to get this right. Is that possible? A: Yes.
- There is no drop-dead date for this Plan.
- Most of us weren't involved in creating this presentation. Appreciates all the work that went into it, but sees a disconnect in this plan with the work done to gather the community feedback. How to move forward with the presented list is not clear.
- Need to set a different date, different time for the goal setting retreat. Four hours minimum, with panels, history of goals (last set only) to create a list of actionable items, objectives, and goals.
- Need to keep in mind that this is a ten-year plan. Would like to come out with five areas (not ten) to focus on strategically that will keep moving us forward for ten years. Different from a 2-year business/work plan.
- Public perception of what came out of the community engagement for the PROS plan is different from this process which is concerning.
- We will educate the public.
- Houston: the plan is bigger than the four goals presented. Weave things together to tell the tale. Lots of other elements to the PROS Plan. Will work with council.
- Chair Bachman will meet with Houston next Monday to start planning the next retreat.
- Service level goals can change like go to zero? A: Yes

- Ashland has more people over the age of 50 than the County? A: Yes
- Should compare apples to apples regarding acres of park land per resident A: We can make that adjustment. Benchmarks show where we are compared to cities of our size across the nation but that doesn't address if we're meeting our community's needs.
- Were the PROS Plan Survey respondents all community members? A: No
- For Houston's proposed strategic goals he wanted to have less than a handful that were not siloed out.
- How will tonight's discussion build into next month's discussion on service level goals? A: Service levels will change over time based on population change. For example, following a suggestion to add 20 acres to parklands to meet the community's request for additional sports fields.
- For sports fields we might want to increase service levels to meet community needs? A: Yes
- Croman Mills development introduced as a new population center. A range might be better than a set number.
- We might change the type of recreation programs we offer which could drive focus to different areas of town. When there is a lack of participation (youth sports for example) we have to look at why. Wrong programs? Lack of interest? Not enough youth?
- Long term financial future is unknown. Currently facing budget shortfalls for the next several years.
- We need to talk about which budget items are mandated what we can't touch.
- Many mandates are around facilities. Unfortunately, services and programs are the most discretionary.

#### IV. **UPCOMING MEETING DATES**

1. Park Commission PROS Plan – Service Level Goals Review January 7, Council Chamber 6:00 PM Will have to be rescheduled talk about when, where, how. Weekend. Cancel the 7? TBD
2. Ashland Senior Advisory Committee January 12, Senior Center 3:30 PM
3. Park Commission Business Meeting January 14, Council Chamber 6:00 PM
4. Recreation Division Advisory Committee January 15, the Grove 3:30 PM
5. Trails Advisory Committee January 21, the Grove 4:00 PM

V. **ADJOURNMENT** – Chair Bachman adjourned the meeting at 7:46 PM

Respectfully submitted by Nancy A. Mero, Executive Assistant

