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Westside Community Park: A Vision for Public Space

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June 8th, 2016
The Westside Community Park Concept Plan is made up of two documents. *Westside Community Park: A Vision for Public Space* summarizes the plan’s most important themes, ideas and findings into a final recommended program for Westside Community Park. It looks to the future, showing what Westside Community Park could be with continued community support and sound public decision making. The *Technical Report* outlines the research and public engagement methods that led to the final vision and program. It reflects on the process, while also providing specific recommendations for the future planning, design and management of this park, and other public space in Hood River.
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Thank you!
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
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1.1 PURPOSE STATEMENT

Westside Community Park presents an opportunity for public space unlike any existing in Hood River County today. Lying at the doorstep of one of Hood River’s fastest growing areas, this 20-acre site is positioned to be the collective front yard for many new and existing residents, and provide an engaging destination for all of Hood River County.

*Westside Community Park: A Vision for Public Space* tells the story of what Westside Community Park could be - and is meant to be a tool for making it become a reality.

In January 2016, the Hood River Valley Residents Committee (HRVRC) and Hood River Valley Parks and Recreation District (HRVPRD) partnered with Agora Planning to conduct a site analysis of the proposed site, and to facilitate a community visioning process – the results of which are contained in this document.

The plan combines this vision with the important physical and regulatory conditions of the site to provide programmatic recommendations for the future design, development, and management of Westside Community Park.
1. CREATE A **LEGACY** FOR THE FUTURE

The time is now to plan for the future of Hood River. In the face of continuing growth and development, it is crucial to preserve public space for both new and existing residents of Hood River, and create places that are loved and cherished for generations to come.
2. **Be INCLUSIVE of All**

The increasing diversity of Hood River should be celebrated through its public spaces. The unique and complementary members of the Hood River community hold a diverse mix of needs and desires. It is time to make a renewed commitment to serving everyone.
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT WAS AT THE CORE OF THIS PLANNING PROCESS. THROUGH A SERIES OF PUBLIC EVENTS, SURVEYS, FOCUS GROUPS AND CREATIVE PLACEMAKING ACTIVITIES, THE HOOD RIVER COMMUNITY PAINTED A PICTURE OF THEIR MOST IMPORTANT VALUES AND DESIRES FOR THIS PARK.

1.3 THEMES

- 800+ SURVEY RESPONSES
- 25+ EXPERT INTERVIEWS
- 24 VISIONING ACTIVITIES
- 6 FOCUS GROUPS
- 100 OPEN HOUSE ATTENDEES
- 60 DESIGN WORKSHOP ATTENDEES
COMMUNITY VISION

FOUR MAJOR THEMES EMERGED AS CENTRAL TO THE HOOD RIVER COMMUNITY’S VISION FOR WESTSIDE COMMUNITY PARK. THESE THEMES REPRESENT THE KEY ROLES THIS PARK CAN PLAY IN THE LIVES OF HOOD RIVER RESIDENTS, AND THEY GUIDE THE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THIS PUBLIC SPACE:

PLAY
No community is complete without access to facilities and resources that encourage exercise and active living. However, it has proved challenging to find space for organized sports and multi-use parks given that nearly 90% of Hood River County is preserved as forest or exclusive farm use. Westside Community Park can provide a space for these important community assets without infringing on protected land.

GATHER
Parks are places for friends, families and communities to gather for any number of purposes, these gathering spaces have proven to be at the heart of community health. The Hood River community emphasized the need for such a place, and Westside Community Park will provide a focal gathering point for the growing communities of Hood River County.

PRESERVE
The Hood River community is proudly dedicated to environmental stewardship and the preservation of natural areas. Therefore, it is crucial that the beauty and utility of nature be preserved, enhanced and made accessible within close proximity of our living spaces. Westside Community Park provides an important opportunity to preserve vital green space and parkland both for new and existing residents of Hood River.

THRIVE
Hood River must account for the growing and changing needs of the County, as access to parks and open space is essential to the mental and social health of any community. Community members emphasized their desire for relaxing and meditative areas, as well as innovative and stimulating park features. If Hood River is truly going to thrive, it is important that Westside Community Park be crafted by the unique needs of the community, both now and in the future.
A PARK IN CONTEXT
2.1 INTRODUCTION
2.2 WHY HERE?
2.3 WHAT KIND OF PARK WILL IT BE?
2.4 A COMMUNITY PARK FOR WHOM?
Hood River County lies at the heart of the Columbia River Gorge and encompasses large portions of both the fertile Hood River Valley and Mt. Hood recreational areas. It has a rich history dating back long before European-American settlement found its way to Oregon, and it has always been strongly tied to the region’s fruitful waterways and soils.

Today’s Hood River residents stand to benefit from the lessons found in Hood River’s deep historic roots, and Westside Community Park is uniquely positioned to be a bridge between the past, present and future generations of the region.
In recent decades, the County has experienced substantial population growth, bringing new points of tension to the Valley. Rising residential and commercial development encroaches on long time agricultural land, and the County’s public infrastructure is thinning. These growing pains are some of the driving forces behind the development of Westside Community Park.

With approximately 4,500 people projected to move to the City of Hood River in the next twenty years - many of whom are expected to live in the west side of Hood River’s urban area - there has been an identified need to provide more parks and open space to an already park deficient area. As one of the last remaining parcels capable of accommodating a park of this size, the time is now to preserve this land for the future generations of the County and District.
A community park is defined by the wide range of communities and contexts that it exists within. Typically larger in size and easily accessible by several neighborhoods, a community park is unique to the place and people it serves.

For years, the Hood River Valley Parks and Recreation District has been tasked with finding space for more organized sports facilities and outdoor gathering places, and the site for Westside Community Park is large enough to accommodate both.

The existing Westside Community Trail brings many walkers and bikers to the site every day, and the spectacular views of both Mt. Hood and Mt. Adams further establish the park as a worthy destination. The presence of a small wetland and the site’s close proximity to Westside Elementary School encourage a park that respects the beauty of nature, while also allowing it to serve an educational purpose. Westside Community Park stands to be a unique place, though ultimately it is the people that use the space that will define it most.
It is a priority, statewide, to preserve the health of an increasing pre-boomer and baby boomer population, to provide innovative outdoor recreation opportunities for increasingly dynamic youth, and to better serve Hispanic and Latino populations who are historically underrepresented, and thus significantly less likely to utilize parks and other outdoor recreation facilities. These groups make up the fastest growing members of the Hood River community, and Westside Community Park provides an important opportunity to celebrate the increasing diversity of the County.

These different groups of people, along with the wider public of Hood River, all have unique and diverse needs in their parks and public spaces. Westside Community Park should be a place that makes a renewed commitment to serving everyone.

30% of households are families with children
30% of Hood River residents are Hispanic or Latino
21% of Hood River’s population are aged 60 and over
3.1 INTRODUCTION
3.2 SURVEY
3.3 OPEN HOUSE
3.4 KEY USER GROUPS
3.5 DESIGN WORKSHOP
FROM JANUARY-JUNE 2016, HUNDREDS OF HOOD RIVER RESIDENTS WORKED TOGETHER TO FORMULATE IDEAS FOR THE FUTURE OF WESTSIDE COMMUNITY PARK. THE FOLLOWING SECTIONS DOCUMENT MAJOR TAKEAWAYS AND THEMES IDENTIFIED BY THE PEOPLE OF HOOD RIVER.

This vision was created by the community. For a place like Westside Community Park, that includes any Hood River Valley resident or visitor that may use the space. However, four groups were identified as especially important contributors to this process: those within the Latino, youth, and aged 65 and over communities, as well as neighbors located within ¼ mile of the proposed park site. Latinos, youth, and those over 65 years of age are the identified interest groups within the 2013-17 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), and are also reflected in the HRVPRD Parks & Recreation Master Plan (2012-2022), as in need of special consideration for parks planning in the Hood River Valley. Furthermore, direct neighbors stand to be the most affected by any new development at Westside Community Park, and their concerns are also integral to this planning process. Their unique feedback, together with the many voices of the wider public, were a major factor in shaping the vision of this public space.
Westside Community Park: A Vision for Public Space
The Westside Community Park Survey was taken by nearly 700 members of the Hood River community. It measured preferences for specific park features, got at the community’s underlying values regarding parks, and collected demographic information about who was engaging in the planning process. It also started a conversation, and helped shape the discussion of Westside Community Park throughout the process.

Do you want to see a park developed at the Fairview Drive location?

**YES 96%**

**Concerns**
1. Traffic
2. Lighted fields
3. Too expensive

**Why?**
1. Good Location
2. Sports Fields
3. More Parks
4. Community Gathering
5. Kid’s Space

**Top Ranking Features**
1. Seating Area
2. Open Space
3. Walking Trails
4. Picnic Tables
5. Multi-Use Field

**Top Reasons To Visit Parks**
1. Spend time with family/friends
2. Enjoy nature
3. Exercise
4. Team sports
5. Relax
6. Events
7. Individual sports
8. Walk dog
9. Play with kids

**Would you like the park to be more sports oriented or more natural?**
34%
11%
55%
Hace falta en Hood River parques con canchas, senderos o pistas para correr (Hood River lacks parks with courts, jogging paths or trails).

- Latino survey respondent

Parks retain green space in a rapidly changing community. Green space increases economic value of communities, increases physical health of community members and preserves open land. Plus, the community is in dire need for more playing fields (soccer, lacrosse, ultimate frisbee). These organized sports, especially for adults, are getting pushed further and further outside Hood River.

- 42 year-old male

As the population of Hood River grows we need to expand our parks and open spaces. Once development occurs on that land it will be too late.

- 55 year-old male

Survey Respondents

Total = 687

Race/Ethnicity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Total %</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>66%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Other Races</td>
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Age Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Groups</th>
<th>Total %</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8-24</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-44</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-64</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65-89</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

66% have children at home

Top Choices for Key Constituencies*

**Latino**

- BBQ Grills
- Playground
- Kiosko (Pavilion)

**Youth**

- Playground
- BBQ Grills
- Natural Area

**Over 65**

- Natural Area
- Community Gathering Space
- Tree Covered Area

Spending time with family/friends, enjoying nature, and relaxing were the top priorities of all three target groups.
On March 5, 2016, more than 100 people gathered at Westside Elementary School for a community-wide open house event. Scheduled early in the planning process, the event helped establish a relationship between the planning team and the community, and it enabled a daylong discussion around project background, goals and site parameters. Participants were encouraged to visit the proposed site to provide a spatial, sensory connection to the park, and many engaged in a park design activity to inspire creative thinking about the space itself. This event generated innovative ideas about attendees’ ideal mix of features on the site, and also allowed them to voice their initial concerns about the park. These activities helped lay the groundwork for potential site plans, and ideas about function for the future Westside Community Park.

**WHAT WAS SAID**

- Interest in preserving and enhancing the wetland on the property
- Potential for the wetland to serve as a hands-on educational outlet
- Many Hood River residents want more fields for organized sports such as soccer and lacrosse
- Neighbors on Rocky Road are particularly concerned about drainage and access issues on the site
- Concern for the intersection of Fairview and Belmont, centered around both traffic and safety
- Particular concerns over nature of development, given unsuccessful build-out of Barrett Park into a space for organized sports
- Awareness of rapid growth facing Hood River, and the need to plan for future generations
- Appreciation for opportunity to weigh in on the planning process, and strong desire to continue to be engaged
- The location is important due to a lack of community gathering space on the west side of Hood River
I live within a mile of the site. There is no other nice park in the area. It is within walking/biking distance to several neighborhoods and the school.

- 63 year-old female

My only concern is traffic congestion and how it will be handled on this small residential street. Also, how it will impact the intersection at Belmont and Fairview.

- 42 year-old female
Through this activity, the community was invited to take design into their own hands. It was meant to inspire participants to think creatively about the boundaries of the space and the experience of a potential park user. Participants approached the exercise with a varying degree of detail and individual perspectives, leading to a wide variety of park designs. People had to negotiate and work together to find optimal uses for the park, and it grounded discussions in the potential trade-offs people would make when deciding what features to include in the space. The various designs provided a comprehensive idea of community needs and preferences for Westside Community Park, and were a concrete reflection of community values and needs. The site designs were then digitized to better draw out common themes. The team then coded active uses, passive uses, and parking into different colors, and created a layered heat map of all 24 site designs.
Hood River community members want a mixed use space.

There is a natural division of more passive uses in the north (like open space, tree covered areas, and seating areas), and active uses in the south (like sports fields, larger gathering spaces, and playgrounds).

People have many creative ideas for public space, including labyrinths, adult playgrounds, performance space, slack lines, food forests, treehouses, Kioskos and even lizard parks!

“I want to see this area protected as open space, rather than become a housing development. I would like to see this done in an environmentally sustainable manner that maintains, or if necessary, restores, some natural areas on the site. I understand that playing fields are a need in our community, and I’d like to see natural areas incorporated, too.”

-39 year old female
COMMUNITY OUTREACH

3.4 KEY USER GROUPS
Hood River Valley High School students expressed enormous creative energy towards the proposed Westside Park. The most prominent theme to arise from engagement with this group was a strong desire to take ownership over the space, and leave a unique mark upon it. These findings are concurrent with the Oregon Statewide Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), which recommends “innovative park designs” to foster the connection between youth and nature.

"I’m open to any new and creative features."  
- 16 year-old female

"It’s undeveloped land that could help bring the community together."  
- 18 year-old male

Youth feel park features and facilities are fragmented around Hood River; there is no central place to engage in a variety of activities.

A high value placed on gathering space, with grills, fire pits, and something that would facilitate "chilling" and "hanging out".

Strong enthusiasm towards volunteering to design, build, and/or construct features, or establish some sort of collaborative community project.

Interest in unique features, such as food carts, slack lines, water features, amphitheaters, etc.

Preference for a balance of sports facilities and natural areas, including enhanced wetland.

The “Council Rings” sculptures double as seating and fire pits on a first come first serve basis at the Promontory Point park in Chicago, IL.
3.4 KEY USER GROUPS
A clear vision emerged for a multi-generational space from the opinions of residents aged 65 and over, and several professional caregivers. Safety, accessibility, and navigational tools were identified as critical, and would need to be considered through every step of the design process to ensure inclusion of this group. Furthermore, they emphasized features that facilitated light exercise and aesthetic beauty. This feedback is echoed in SCORP, which identifies trails, walking, and areas for light exercise as priorities for this group.

**AGE 65+**

Communities are more livable with green spaces and parks. This is a value ethic that all progressive cities embrace.

- 65 year-old male

**WHAT WAS SAID**

High priority placed on accessibility and safety (signage, paved paths, and oft-placed seating areas) to minimize the risk of accident or injury

Interest in "active aging" concepts, such as an adult playground, or light exercise equipment installations

Desire for a covered pavilion or dedicated natural space for light exercise or meditation

Strong support for wetland enhancement, water features, and other aesthetic features

**WALKING TRAILS**

Recent research suggests that walking loops and trails can increase park use by people 65 and older. Studies show that America’s parks are not designed with people over 65 in mind. National park observations suggest that walking tracks can turn this around. Other key park features used by people 65 and older include outdoor exercise and fitness areas.
3.4 Key User Groups
The Latino community was one of the more involved groups throughout the entire engagement process. Spanish translated materials and interpretation services were offered at all events and for online and paper surveys, and the help of Next Door, Inc., an organization providing resources for Latino residents, was vital in convening this community. What emerged from this process was a vision for a park for the entire family, vibrant with social activity and encounter between generations. Latino representatives spoke often about how their community feels the absence of a prominent, central gathering space, or kiosko.

Necesitamos mas lugares para salir y divertirse con la familia. Papas, ninos y abuelitos (We need more places to go out and have fun with family: parents, kids and grandparents).

- 45 year-old female

**WHAT IS A KIOSKO?**

A kiosko is a pavilion form of community gathering space that is central to many cities and towns throughout Mexico and other Latin American countries. This Kiosko is located in Mesilla, NM and is used as a bandstand for community events. This pavilion is 20 feet in diameter.
3.4 Key User Groups
The residents who live closest to the proposed site are integral to the planning process. They will make up one of the most consistent user groups, and be the most directly affected by development choices made for the space. Given that the Westside neighborhood stands to absorb much of the projected population growth in the county, this group plays the critical role of representing future residents who are not yet there to speak for themselves. To ensure that their voices were heard, neighbors were engaged through a short survey tailored to those living within one-quarter mile of the site, two focus groups, and an afternoon of house visits. Opening up communication lines between the individual resident and the agency planning process was an important outcome of this engagement, and must continue to play a large role in next steps for the park.

**WHAT WAS SAID**

Traffic, lighting, access and noise are the primary concerns amongst neighborhood residents.

The natural beauty of the Hood River landscape is highly valued within this group.

Many neighbors have growing families that would use a new park in a variety of ways.

Neighbors are in favor of a walkable park space, but some are skeptical of this space fulfilling the community’s needs for sports fields.

Neighbors expressed sincere gratitude for involvement in the planning process, and strong desire to continue to be involved.

**WHAT KIND OF LIGHTING SHOULD GO HERE?**

These class IV shielded lights at Flagstaff, Arizona’s Thorpe Park ensure that the fields are lit and the scenic night sky and nearby neighbors are not. If lighted fields are installed at Westside, this is a good example to follow.

"Communities need parks. I live in the Rocky Road area and understand that there may be additional noise and possibly light pollution, but I’m willing to deal with some of that for the good of the community."

- 57 year-old male
On April 16, 2016, Hood River residents gathered for a Community Design Workshop at Westside Elementary School. This culminating public event provided an opportunity to elaborate on the major themes established earlier in the process. Through it all, a number of significant values emerged: a space to play; a place to gather; a place to exercise and compete, and above all, a place for the entire community.

With this in mind, Agora Planning asked the more than 65 community members in attendance to step back from specific uses for this proposed park space, and ask themselves: What role do you want this park to play in your lives, and the lives of your friends, family, and fellow community members?

To get at this question, attendees were asked to participate in an art-based creative placemaking activity, followed by a “day in the park” picnic on the site. Those in attendance played sports with each other, ate food with friends, and enjoyed a walk through community-built temporary park features, including a boardwalk over the wetland area.

Westside Community Park became more than just an idea - it became a place people wanted to be.
What was pleasantly surprising about both of the outreach events was the palpable joy, unity and optimism that permeated the meetings where the idea of a large scale park was being discussed. Imagine the joy and unity the actual park will bring to our community!

- Westside neighborhood resident, May 11 Letter to the Editor, Hood River News
The placemaking activity intended to inspire participants to think creatively about park space through art-making, collaboration and an exchange of ideas. The activity involved the use of everyday craft materials to represent public space and inspire a discourse that can inform design and planning efforts. The close to 70 attendees of the workshop were invited to create abstract models representing their fondest park memories, followed by a group discussion around their ideal park space. This marked a decided turning point in the public involvement process for Westside Community Park; the community stepped outside the parameters of specific features and uses to funnel their memories and values into a vision for meaningful public space. While the discussion from this activity undoubtedly shaped the design recommendations for the park, it was most valuable in bringing people together to understand each others’ shared values in a community space.
...INTO A CHERISHED SPACE
A PARK IN CONCEPT
4.1 INTRODUCTION
4.2 DIVISION OF SPACE
4.3 PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS
4.4 A WALK IN THE PARK
Community preferences and interests paint a clear picture for this public space: Westside Community Park should include an integration of uses, serve a large variety of people, and respect the natural features of the land.

The purpose of this community vision is to capture and arrange the dreams, desires, and concerns of the Hood River community, while combining them with current site conditions and the future context of Hood River.

The concept plan’s form is kept abstract to reflect the unfinished status of the park, with the hope that community members and future park designers will continue to shape the future of this public space.
An extension of the home...

A place to congregate, compete, and connect...
How will people get to this park?

How are the needs and desires of neighbors different than those from around the county?

How will your experience be shaped based on how you enter the park?

These are some of the questions that helped build this initial design concept for Westside Community Park.

Natural features like the slope of the site and the wetland create an instinctive division of space. This was identified by both experts and residents throughout the engagement process, and it naturally leads to a park that serves two distinct functions.

The northern half lends itself to more passive and smaller-scale uses. This space may serve as an extended front yard for nearby residents, while also providing a quiet, reflective space for people throughout Hood River.

Meanwhile, the southern half serves to be more of a destination for those seeking organized sports and community gathering. Both spaces, while different, are meant to be permeable and connected so as to not feel exclusionary, and Westside Community Park is large enough to accommodate both.
COMMUNITY VISION

4.3 PROGRAM RECOMMENDATION

THRIVE
PRESERVE
GATHER
PLAY
Moving beyond the initial division of space, it is important to consider what distinct roles the space will serve, and how they will relate and function together. The four major themes that emerged through the planning process represent these primary roles and functions, and together they summarize the programmatic recommendations for this park. The areas are organized based on large primary features that were repeatedly expressed throughout outreach. Internal movement and circulation is further represented to relate how people would transfer between spaces and uses. Secondary features in each area are those that were brought up in outreach and best reinforce the area’s overall function. Finally, supporting features (things like roads and restrooms) are placed in areas that would most benefit from those amenities.

**PLAY**

No community is complete without access to facilities and resources that encourage exercise and active living. However, it has proved challenging to find space for organized sports and multi-use parks given that nearly 90% of Hood River County is preserved as forest or exclusive farm use. Westside Community Park can provide a space for these important community assets without infringing on protected land.

**GATHER**

Parks are places for friends, families and communities to gather for any number of purposes, and throughout the world, these gathering spaces have proven to be at the heart of community health. The Hood River community emphasized the need for such a place, and Westside Community Park will provide a focal gathering point for the growing communities of Hood River County.

**PRESERVE**

The Hood River community is proudly dedicated to environmental stewardship and the preservation of natural areas. Therefore, it is crucial that the beauty and utility of nature be preserved, enhanced and made accessible within close proximity of our living spaces. Westside Community Park provides an important opportunity to preserve vital green space and parkland both for new and existing residents of Hood River.

**THRIVE**

Hood River must account for the growing and changing needs of the County, as access to parks and open space is essential to the mental and social health of any community. Community members emphasized their desire for relaxing and meditative areas, as well as innovative and stimulating park features. If Hood River is truly going to thrive, it is important that Westside Community Park be crafted by the unique needs of the community, both now and in the future.
The PLAY zone is dedicated to maintaining the healthy active lifestyles of Hood River residents, centered on a shared love for organized sports. Active recreation is one of the core, lifelong values of the Hood River community, which elicits needs from both school age and adult teams year-round. The Parks District Master Plan identified the need for more sports fields, which has been echoed by the community through all phases and methods of this engagement process. While these constituents did not make a large appearance at Agora Planning’s major community engagement events (presumably because the events occurred on weekends, when organized sports games are scheduled elsewhere throughout the county), their voices clearly emerged through the survey results and comments. Field space did make its way into the Community Design Workshop, as participants created abstract representations of their favorite sports and integrated them with other uses, such as a natural park area and community gathering space. Participants described the importance of integrating these features in order to provide room for families to use the space together.
Hood River lacks enough soccer pitches for the amount of use each pitch gets. One or two well maintained pitches close to town would get a lot of use.

- 28 year-old male

The need for ball fields is evident, having other features that can be enjoyed by all in conjunction with them will be great for the west side of town.

- 65 year-old male

It’s a splendid, wide-open area that can provide both open space for those that love nature (relatively) untouched, and more intensive development for organized sports lovers.

- 71 year-old female
COMMUNITY VISION

4.3 PROGRAM RECOMMENDATION

PLAY
The PLAY area is designed to facilitate organized group activities, and arranged in a manner to support all ages and interests in one dense space. The primary feature is a space for multi-use sports fields. This is supported by secondary features including sports courts, a playground, gathering areas, and walking trails around the multi-use fields.

The existing environmental conditions of this area, in addition to its proximity to the most logical access point, make it the ideal space for provision of sports fields and courts. In addition, it will most benefit from the possible shared parking and sports facilities already provided at Westside Elementary. This will serve as the primary access point and parking area, which will simplify transporting sports equipment and other bulky items from car to field. Also included are water fountains and flush toilets as necessities to support the space.
The GATHER zone is primarily dedicated to providing space for the diverse communities of Hood River to come together. Residents of all ages and backgrounds expressed that spending time with family and friends is one of the top reasons they visit parks. In particular, playgrounds, BBQ grills, and community gathering spaces were identified as high priority park uses for both the youth and Latino populations. The kiosko concept, a covered pavilion traditional to Mexican parks for important social events, was mentioned frequently through survey response data and targeted outreach engagement to the Latino community. Kioskos were discussed at length by Latino participants at the Community Design Workshop, and it captured the attention of all other attendees. Participants saw this feature not only as a way to provide an attractive community gathering space for collective needs, but to honor an integral- and growing- community in Hood River, much the way that Children’s Park on Eugene St. includes a nod to the legacy of Japanese culture in this region.

From a practical standpoint, covered areas are important to ensure year-round use. Finally, community members emphasized that covered gathering spaces should be located close to parking spaces for convenience, and nearby a playground and sports fields to integrate uses and keep families close.
We are so excited this park may be developed. It would be a wonderful way for our whole family to get exercise, have a place to be outdoors, and gather for recreation and sporting events.

- 32 year-old female

Parks offer the community a place that encourages healthy community interaction.

- 31 year-old male

[There should be] a plaza with a kiosko for the family to spend the afternoon with friends.

- male, age unspecified
COMMUNITY VISION

4.3 PROGRAM RECOMMENDATION

GATHER
The GATHER zone is intended to serve the community as a place for all, to host events and activities. The primary feature is the kiosko with secondary circulation and gathering spaces around it. Arranged around this more formal gathering area are trails, a playground, BBQ areas, and other picnic features.

The kiosko was placed near the internal road with some parking nearby to allow users to transport equipment and goods used for larger parties and events. The area was chosen because of its proximity to the sports-oriented zone, and its distance from existing residences. The space can take advantage of evening lighting, were it to be installed for the adjoining sports fields. Here, users can play music, congregate, and enjoy family activities.
The PRESERVE zone is primarily dedicated to maintaining the environmental integrity of the area. Preservation of green space, particularly in the face of encroaching development, was a strong desire directly expressed by community members. Furthermore, during the Community Design Workshop multiple participants visually and verbally emphasized natural elements in their fondest park memories and group designs. This indicates that when asked to assign abstract memories and values to the features that draw them to public park space, the characteristics that make up PRESERVE achieve that the best.

The wetland on the site, including its buffer, is nationally protected space. By viewing the existing environmental conditions as an asset (as many community members do) the PRESERVE zone provides an opportunity to uphold the high value placed on the scenic beauty that draws Hood River County residents to live there, and ensures that this space will continue to be protected as the city grows around it. This sentiment was communicated strongly through survey responses, focus groups and comments collected at community events. In particular, neighbors and community members aged 65+ placed a high value on enhancing the natural, aesthetic qualities of the site.

Enhancing the wetland is generally supported by community members, and can be organized and funded through partnerships with local educational institutions and organizations. An enhanced wetland will provide educational and therapeutic opportunities for users, and a natural habitat to foster wildlife. Furthermore, if implemented along with green infrastructure facilities, Westside Community Park will have a natural ecosystem to manage stormwater runoff from adjoining paved features within the park.
I prefer leaving the site as is but realize that the park may be an amenity that can improve the health of children and adults (and dogs), can be a place for community activities and if adequate natural area is restored, can increase people’s connections to the natural world.

- 63 year-old female

I want to see this area protected as open space, rather than become a housing development. I would like to see this done in an environmentally sustainable manner that maintains, or if necessary, restores, some natural areas on the site. I understand that playing fields are a need in our community, and I’d like to see natural areas incorporated, too. In particular, children in the surrounding neighborhoods would benefit from an unstructured, natural area to explore and play, since there is already a playground across the street at Westside Elementary.

- 39 year old female
COMMUNITY VISION

4.3 PROGRAM RECOMMENDATION

PRESERVE
The PRESERVE zone is primarily intended for passive activities surrounding the site’s wetland and within the buffer. This nationally protected area, located within a topographical depression on the site, provides a natural focal point for Westside Community Park. The secondary uses include trails and seating within the buffer zone, and an educational boardwalk over the wetland area. Children from the neighboring Westside Elementary School will make up a large user group for this area because the wetland can function as a hands-on educational tool. Adjoining neighbors, and the aged 65+ community will also make up large user groups. With spectacular backdrops of either Mt. Hood or Mt. Adams, this area will be ideal for wildlife viewing, photography, and other artistic activities. This zone will be accessible mostly via non-motorized trails.
The northernmost area known as THRIVE is meant to be a flexible asset to the community. This space is designated for future residents in mind, to build upon as needs arise and values define the best use of an extended “front yard” for a community growing up around its borders. It stands to meet the needs identified by several key interest groups, while dedicating space that will foster social health, creativity and interaction across groups.

Residents aged 65+ identified several park features, including a walking labyrinth, community gardens, and adult exercise areas that will suit this space. Attention to providing these features is critical, as research increasingly points to the physical and mental benefits of park use on the aging community. Unfortunately, studies have also shown that park planning is woefully deficient in its attention to this group’s needs. Next, the youth of Hood River made it clear that they want to leave their unique mark on a space. This flex space can include more non-traditional features such as a slack line or disc golf course, or it could provide space to be managed by the youth leaders in the area. Generally, this can be a place for the youth of Hood River to call their own, as research shows it is increasingly important to cater to this group and increase their use of public park space.

Finally, a central outcome of the Community Design Workshop was the concept of “natural play”, or play structures built out of natural materials instead of manufactured materials. The Hood River community is aware of the value of natural play, and this is reflected elsewhere. The concept and design of nature play areas are increasing in popularity due to a growing body of research showing that they are better at spurring environmental stewardship, imagination, agility, creativity, and risk assessment than traditional playgrounds. Natural play space also tends to better reflect the area’s history and develop place-identity in users.
It’s a good local area underserved by parks so far. We need more areas where kids can free-range instead of playing a bunch of games with rules and lines. Instead they should have a place to share the wonders of wetlands, skies, nature, birds, and such. Perfect place in an otherwise un-wildscape.

- 50 year-old male

As the city grows we will need places where youth can play and learn constructive activity.

- 60 year-old female

Hood River City/County is more livable with greater access to outdoor recreation/play on a static basis. Given the presumed growth of the area, new parks are vital.

- 55 year-old male
COMMUNITY VISION

4.3 PROGRAM RECOMMENDATION

THRIVE
The THRIVE zone has the least specificity in regards to uses, although several ideas were put forth by the community that can work in this space. The primary established use is a nature play facility and an area to be adapted as the community around the park begins to shape the space. Phased features can include a community garden, walking labyrinth, dog park, a space for gathering, adult exercise equipment, or a short disc golf course.

This space was chosen due to its close proximity to the existing neighborhood. Its uses will appeal to a broad range of neighbors, while serving the dual function of distancing noise and light from more active uses farther away from these homes.

The existing connection to Westside Community Trail and Rocky Road will provide easy access to this space for pedestrians and cyclists, and a paved trail leading into it will provide stable access for those arriving by car from the southern end of the park. A space is dedicated for the possible phase-in of additional parking spaces, were the need to arise over time.
Brandon, 17

Brandon grew up at Westside Park. His dad was a lacrosse coach during Brandon's earlier grade school days, and summer weekends would consist of day-long family outings to the park, armed with coolers and sun hats. Since then, Brandon has stopped playing lacrosse (although his Dad plays on the same fields every Wednesday night with his adult league). But Brandon still finds himself spending a lot of time at Westside, because many of his friends, like him, live along Rocky Road or within the other new housing developments in the area. They usually chill out by the BBQ pits, playing hacky sack and thinking about food, or by the mural in the community garden that a team of Hood River Valley High School students built as part of a senior environmental education project. He is still a member of the Facebook group “We need food carts at Westside Community Park!” although the city already started planning to provide a few carts in the south parking lot during games over the weekends.

Lupita, 32

Lupita travels to Westside Community Park by car from Odell, mostly on summer evenings and weekends. Although it is a 20-minute drive from home, she makes the trip because her family loves the space for a variety of reasons. Her teenage boys immediately break off to the soccer fields with their cousins, looking to recruit other players for a pickup game, but they always come back when they’re hungry. The young ones will spend hours climbing all over the wooden logs in the natural play space, transforming it into a different setting within their imaginations each time; she can set up shop under one of the covered pavilions nearby with a picnic and the rest of the family. If they’ve got a big event, she will reserve the central kiosko which is a nod to her Mexican heritage. This time, the whole extended family will be invited, and the party will often absorb other park passersby in its merriment.

Charles, 71

Charles bought his home on Fairview Drive in 2001, before Hood River was nationally famous for its craft brewing, tech, and windsurfing scenes. Back then, he spent his summers gazing at the starlit sky from his front porch, with hardly a sight or sound nearby. Nowadays, he takes a walk around dusk from his home, along Westside Community Trail and into the north end of Westside Community Park, where he settles onto a bench facing south and looks out over the restored wetland area to watch Mount Hood’s snowcapped peak light up with the colors of sunset. The space that encompasses the northern half of the site is undoubtedly his favorite space, which provides opportunities to relax in seated areas, tend the garden, or walk through the wetland on a thin boardwalk. He also appreciates that he can reach this area from his home through a flat, paved trail that winds through the various park features and allows him to safely navigate through (and eavesdrop on the comings and goings of other park users). He had to get used to the occasional night lights on the sports fields, but the preserved beauty of the north end reminds him why he chose to live here. What’s more, because of this park he gets to see his grandchildren more than ever; they often visit for sports games or social activities, and can’t resist knocking on his door for a snack.
MOVING FORWARD
5.1 INTRODUCTION
5.2 COMMUNITY RECOMMENDATIONS
In order to make this vision become a reality, it is important that the community remains engaged and works together with the Parks District and future park planners and designers. The five actions below are recommendations for how the community can best stay involved, and help bring this vision for public space to life.
1. BUILD SUPPORT

Before the park can become a reality the community needs to come together to inform decision-makers how important this space is to residents.

SPEAK UP:

Tell your neighbors and friends about this project and share how they can get involved. Utilize social and traditional media to get folks interested in the development of Westside Community Park.

STAY INFORMED & GET ORGANIZED:

Attend public meetings and stay up-to-date on park developments. Create a citizen advocacy group to keep folks in the know and disseminate information and opportunities to impact the park.
2. **REFINE THE DESIGN**

The next step of development will be to acquire the property and hire a design team to create specific site plans. This will be a chance to directly comment on how the future space will look and operate.

**BE HEARD:**

Try to attend design workshops and public meetings so your wishes are heard loud and clear.

**GET CREATIVE:**

This is an opportunity to make your mark by proposing neat ideas for community involvement and expression through art or landscaping. Remember, this space is yours.
3. MAINTAIN ENTHUSIASM

As the development process moves along with finalized designs and construction, the community still has a large role to play.

BUILD CAPACITY:

This is a great time for more creativity relating to ensuring a lively place for all. Activation and use of the park will be greatly enhanced if there are programs in place that purposefully get folks to the site. Examples could be teachers working on-site educational activities into course plans, senior living facilities programming events and healthy living programs, establishing art fairs, etc.

OPENING DAY AND INTERIM USE:

Supporters could help develop an opening day ceremony once the park is built. Having a large event for the whole community is a fantastic way to introduce folks to the site. You don’t have to wait for opening day though. Before construction begins the site could be used for pop-up projects and events that allow people to become aware of the development and start integrating it into their lives.
4. CARE FOR THE PARK

Just as Hood River changes, so too will Westside Community Park. The space is dynamic and will continually be shaped by the community. Maintaining a positive atmosphere and representative place will require continued involvement by community members.

BE GENEROUS:

Giving your time, financial support, or other resources to improve or maintain the park will keep you engaged and will preserve an inviting and personal space. Sharing skills through volunteer classes and/or activities is a great way to contribute and stay active.

COME OUT:

Perhaps the most important thing you can do is come out. This whole process is only worthwhile if people use the park. We are active social creatures, so come, enjoy the park features, the wildlife, and perhaps most importantly, each other.
5. SHAPE YOUR CITY

Westside Community Park has the potential to create some very positive change in the community. There are, however, always new parks, new decisions, and new ideas that present themselves. Agora Planning hopes that after working to build this space you will have the tools, networks, and inspiration to stay involved, stay active, and stay innovative in crafting the future of Hood River. Just as this park can be yours, the city is yours and you have the power to mold it.
Build for the future!
- Hood River Resident

THANK YOU!