



## Chapter Seven: Parks and Recreation

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### **Purpose and Intent**

The Parks and Recreation Element show the community's objectives, needs, and priorities for parks and recreation planning in the City of Airway Heights. In all communities, recreation provides an important personal and social outlet. Parks and recreation facilities are common areas enjoyed by people living within the City, as well as by visitors. They provide places for exercise, sporting events, playgrounds, relaxation, and community gatherings. Parks and recreation areas also enhance the aesthetic quality of the City and the overall quality of life for its residents. They serve as important community centers and are among the most enjoyed places within the community.

As with other facilities and services the City of Airway Heights provides, parks and recreation should be planned to meet the changing demands of growth. As the population in the City limits and the West Plains area of Spokane County increases, so too does the demand upon existing facilities and services. As such, parks and recreational opportunities must be expanded in order to meet these growing needs. Adequate land must be dedicated to these purposes and capital funds should be available for future development. This Chapter makes provisions to prepare for future needs so residents and visitors will continue to enjoy a high level of parks and recreational opportunities in the future.

A study to determine community needs was completed in 2000 with a follow-up study completed in 2002. The specific outcome of these studies received the unanimous support of the City council in 2003. It is the intent of the plan to enhance and strengthen the City's park system in a plan of action.

### **Parks and Recreation Issues and Goals**

Maintaining and developing high quality parks, recreation facilities and open spaces as the City grows will help preserve local quality of life. In recognizing the value of its parks and recreation system, the goals of the City are based on the premise of providing parks, for active recreational activities, suited to meet the needs of compact development patterns. It is the compact development within the City that ensures open space preservation and the proximity to parks for all residents. Emphasis will be placed on the maintenance and enhancement of existing park and recreation facilities.

The City of Airway Heights has established a series of goals supporting overall parks and recreation improvement to help address issues facing the City.

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These goals are consistent with community needs, desires, and goals of the Growth Management Act (GMA), specifically Goal 9; “encourage the retention of open space and development of recreational opportunities, conserve fish and wildlife habitat, increase access to resource lands and water, and develop parks” [RCW 36.70A.020(2)].

**Table 7.1**  
*Issues and Goals of Parks and Recreation*

<b>Overriding Community Goal for Parks and Recreation:</b> Develop and maintain an attractive, safe, and functional parks and recreation system which is available to all people within the community and that meets the needs and demands of the community.	
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Goal</b>
The City recognizes the increasing demand for quality recreational facilities and programs that create opportunities for living, learning, and leading full, productive, healthy lives.	Promote a regional community recreational complex, with sport fields and room for future expansion for other recreational pursuits.
The City recognizes the importance of establishing areas that create opportunities to live and interact with families, work groups, and neighbors.	Improve the overall community image by creating areas that enhance the sense of civic pride within the City.
The City recognizes it should seek creative ways to address the need and demand for recreational opportunities of its citizens.	Creatively optimize recreational opportunities for the City’s residents.
The City understands that parks, recreation, and open spaces are an investment in the future well-being of individuals and groups as well as the continued vitality of the community.	Ensure park and recreation facilities within the community are of a safe and healthy nature.
The City recognizes it has a diverse population of old and young people.	Promote both active and passive recreational opportunities for the community.
The City recognizes the community as ever-changing and expanding.	Promote parklands and recreational opportunities that enhance livability and meet the needs of the City’s residents.
The City recognizes the need for better access and opportunities to the park and recreation facilities it provides.	Promote a network of trails and pathways throughout the community to maximize access to the City’s parks and recreation system.
The City recognizes that trees enhance the aesthetic value of the community.	Maintain status as a Tree City USA.

## Community Vision on Parks and Recreation

The City of Airway Heights is a community dedicated to maintaining and enhancing existing park spaces and recreational programs while providing opportunities for park and recreational experiences to meet the needs and demands of an ever-expanding population.

The City has given high priority and consideration for future needs by addressing implementation policies and programs in the Capital Facilities Plan, which prioritizes identified needs, addresses the tactics necessary, the timing, and the cost to address those needs.

Existing park and recreation facility improvements and the development of new facilities and opportunities for local residents is important to the City. Table 7.2 illustrates the policies and implementation programs as they relate to parks and recreation goals.

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**Table 7.2**  
Goals, Policies and Implementing Programs

Goal	Policy	Implementing Program
Promote a Regional Community Recreational Complex, with sport fields and room for future expansion for other recreational pursuits.	Actively and aggressively pursue avenues of funding.  Pursue partnerships with other government agencies.  Pursue partnerships with private and non-profit organizations.	Apply for grants.
		Apply for loans.
		Use park impact fees.
Improve the overall community image by creating areas that enhance the sense of civic pride within the City.	Encourage the establishment of community civic groups dedicated to improving the community's appearance.	Partner with Spokane County.
		Partner with West Plains communities such as Fairchild Air Force Base, Medical Lake, and Cheney.
Creatively optimize recreational opportunities for the City's residents.	Coordinate with Spokane County and surrounding communities that enhance partnerships to maximize recreational opportunities. Coordinate with the Cheney School District to maximize recreational opportunities of school facilities.	Identify potential partners.
		Identify and encourage areas appropriate for civic, town/neighborhood squares, and other public open spaces.
		Promote the formation of a regional parks and recreation planning committee.
Ensure park and recreation facilities within the community are of a safe and healthy nature.	Designate and locate park facilities in a manner ensuring compatibility with surrounding uses, especially as new development occurs.	Participate in Cheney School District capital facilities planning processes.
		Promote partnerships with private and non-profit enterprises offering recreational opportunities to the community.
Provide for dedication and development for park lands.	Provide landscaping, serving to buffer neighborhood land uses and also provide shade and aesthetic amenity for park users.	Conduct a need assessment for park facilities on a routine and regular basis (every 3 years).
		Establish park standards for new subdivision development. Establish landscaping standards for public open spaces and rights-of-way. Establish development regulations for all new developments.

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Goal	Policy	Implementing Program
	Ensure park visibility is maintained from street and other public access areas.	Establish park design standards ensuring optimum visibility and accessibility into parks and public spaces.
Promote both active and passive recreational opportunities for the community.	Promote active areas, such as playgrounds and play courts, in City parks.	Construct a new basketball court. Construct a new tennis court.
	Provide passive activity areas, such as benches and trails, in City parks and throughout the community.	Install a gazebo at Shorty Combs Park. Install a gazebo at Sunset Park.
	Maintain a balance of active and passive recreational opportunities throughout the community.	Develop a regional recreation complex.
Promote parklands and recreational opportunities that enhance livability and meet the needs of the City's residents.	Conserve and enhance those areas of scenic value within the community.	Establish standards to protect and enhance scenic areas and open spaces of the community.
		Provide a network of open spaces within the community ensuring a high quality of life and a pleasant living environment for its residents.
Promote a network of trails and pathways throughout the community to maximize access to the City's parks and recreation system.	Provide pedestrians easy and safe access to all park facilities of the City.	Establish U.S. Highway 2 corridor pathway linkages.
	Visually and physically link all park facilities whenever possible to assure greater accessibility and continuity.	Work to establish a pathway program.
Maintain status as a Tree City USA.	Encourage the planting of new trees throughout the community's public places.	Work to establish and maintain an urban forestry program consistent with the National Arbor Day Foundation.

## Parks and Recreation Inventory

### *Parks and Recreation Organizational Composition*

The Airway Heights Parks Board consists of three volunteers appointed by the mayor and confirmed by City council. Park board members provide input and recommendations for the City's Parks and Recreation Programs.

An understanding of the existing system's facilities and capabilities will help determine the extent of improvements necessary to meet future demand.

The City of Airway Heights parks system currently includes four parks encompassing approximately 22 acres. The City also operates a community center and has a partnership with Sunset Elementary School (part of the Cheney School District) allowing additional recreational opportunities. The City also enjoys recreational opportunities from the Spokane County Off-Road Recreational Vehicles (ORV) facility and Spokane International Raceway Park.

### *Park Overview*

The following is a list and description of the parks and recreational opportunities within the City of Airway Heights.

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Sunset Park. Approximately 8.5 acres, this City owned park is located in a residential neighborhood in the northwest area of the City. It serves both young and old, providing a baseball/softball field, skate park, volleyball and basketball court. There are also picnic facilities, including covered picnic shelters. The parks were upgraded in 1993 and 2002 with new playground equipment.

Paved parking, jogging/walking trails, ADA accessible restroom facilities as well. Maintenance storage facilities.

Shorty Combs Park. Just over 2.5 acres in size, this facility offers a basketball court, tee-ball field, two soccer fields, a playground, an open playfield, and three barbecue areas. It is located in the southern area of the City.

## New parks

The City recently received donation of two separate parks of 2.5 acres and 8.56 acres.

Sunset Elementary. Located adjacent to Sunset Park and owned by the Cheney School District, its outdoor facilities encompass approximately 7.5 acres.

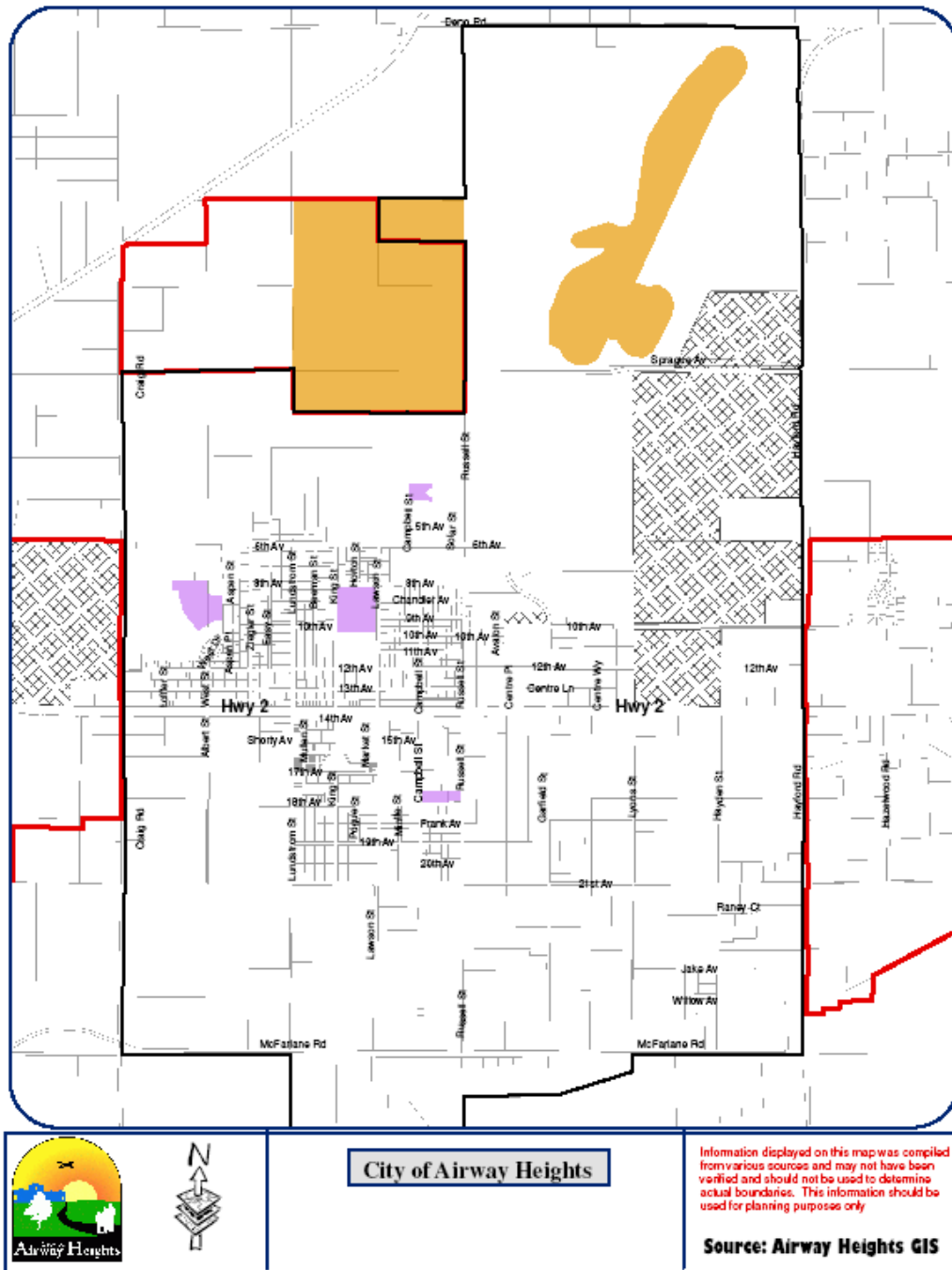
It provides opportunities such as a playground facility, play courts, and an open playfield with baseball backstops. The indoor gymnasium is also utilized for many activities including basketball and meeting space for large groups.

Airway Heights Community Center. Located at 13<sup>th</sup> and Lundstrom Streets, this City operated facility is utilized for public meetings and other programs, and encompasses 4,644 square feet. There is also an outdoor play area for daycare use, as well as an additional 1/3 acre of outdoor green space. The community center facilitates numerous community and City programs such as an Early Childhood Assistance and Education Program, Women, Infants and Children Program, Spokane Neighborhood Alliance Program, Alcoholics Anonymous, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, AARP Tax Aide Program, and a senior citizen program. The community center also shares facilities with City offices, such as the municipal court, City council chambers and the planning commission.

Spokane Raceway Park. This is a privately owned facility offering a drag strip, oval stockcar racetrack and a paved 1.25 mile Lemans-style racetrack.

Spokane County Off-Road Vehicle Park. Located adjacent to the City limits, northeast of Sunset Park, this facility offers recreational opportunities for motorcycles and small three and four-wheel recreational vehicles.

Figure 7.1  
Park Facility Map



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## Public Involvement

When this plan was originally compiled, the City of Airway Heights conducted a survey, which was distributed in the City's bi-monthly newsletter. The City's Comprehensive Plan Visioning Focus Group also participated ensuring the plan's consistency with the community visions, goals and objectives of the comprehensive plan. Public workshops involving the park board, planning commission, City council and citizens were also conducted.

This survey assisted in determining the community's existing needs and future demands for parks and recreational opportunities. In addition, the visioning focus group, park board, and planning commission workshops helped frame the policies to support the City's public investments and day-to-day activities in meeting those future needs. The City will periodically survey the community regarding their satisfaction with the parks.

## Park Classification and Design

Park facilities can generally be classed into various categories, such as neighborhood parks, community parks and regional parks, each designed to meet the needs of a different type of user group. This section of the Chapter describes each type of park and certain design considerations that influence the placement and design of these parks.

Table 7.3 provides definitions for each classification of park and the rate of demand for each based on service area population. The definitions and demand figures are derived from National Recreational Parks Association (NRPA) guidelines.

**Table 7.3**  
*Park Classification and Definition*

<b>Classification</b>	<b>Defined</b>	<b>Rate</b>
<b>Neighborhood</b>	Neighborhood parks serve residential areas within walking distance (approximately 1/2 mile) to the park site. Access is primarily pedestrian-oriented and park sites should be located so users do not have to cross major arterial streets to get there. While children are the primary users of neighborhood parks, facilities should also provide activities for all age groups. Desirable size of a neighborhood park is 3 to 5 acres.	1 acre/ 1,000 population
<b>Community</b>	Community parks serve a group of neighborhoods within a 1 to 2 mile radius of the park site. Access is by vehicle and pedestrian-oriented means. Users of community parks are more diverse than those of neighborhood parks and should provide adequate facilities to satisfy these interests. Desirable size of a community park is 10 - 20 acres.	5 acres/ 1,000 population
<b>Regional</b>	Regional parks serve the overall community and its surrounding areas. Access is typically by vehicle, but pedestrian-oriented access is encouraged. Regional parks typically offer specialized recreational opportunities, but facilities should be provided for all ages and interests. Desirable size of a regional park is 30 or more acres.	5 acres/ 1,000 population

## Park and Recreation Demand

The City has chosen to plan for a level of service (LOS) standard of 10 acres per 1,000 non-institutional populations. In the analysis of future demand, population numbers reflect only the residential population of Airway Heights and do not include the institutional population of the Washington State Department of Corrections facility. However, it is important to note that visitors to the correctional facility do have an impact on the City's park and recreation infrastructure.

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The analysis shows the City is not currently meeting its LOS standard of 10 acres per 1,000 populations. In addition to the 25 acres needed presently, the City will seek an additional 18 acres in the next 20 years to meet the future demand at its adopted LOS standard. The City is committed to the acquisition and development of additional parkland. Tracts of land exist within the City that are suitable for such development and through the future planning processes of the City, such parcels will be identified for future acquisition by the City. In addition, the City recognizes that other public entities own land, such as Sunset Elementary School, which contains a large playground that serves the surrounding residential neighborhood. The City will continue to work with regional entities that own land in the City to ensure quality and expanded recreational opportunities.

Park accessibility issues were also analyzed. The findings are intended to serve as a guide for future site locations and facilities, within the constraints of physical boundaries (such as U.S. Highway 2) as barriers to site accessibility. The City has recognized the necessity of addressing the issue of a lack of parkland in comparison to the population on the south side of U.S. Highway 2; however, it also recognizes this is primarily an industrial area of the City. In conjunction with the amount of park land, the City will seek to design and provide greater accessibility and safe crossing conditions to link residents with all recreational resources available within the City.

People who live here, who live in the surrounding areas, who work here and who visit the City of Airway Heights drive the demand for parks and recreation opportunities in the community. Surrounding land use also heavily influences demand for parks and recreational facilities. There is a community desire to enhance existing facilities; provide new facilities, activities, and events; and provide more linkages, including sidewalks and trails, within the overall community.

## **Monitoring and Evaluation**

Monitoring and evaluation are essential steps within the planning process. Such steps ensure the goals and programs are implemented and not unintentionally changed, and whether the implemented strategy should be continued, modified or extinguished. Therefore, the parks and recreation element must remain flexible to accommodate changes and preferences within the community and take advantage of special opportunities as they arise. The City has a Parks and Recreation Master Plan which is subject to regular review and update.

Services and programs are provided through the City's parks and recreation department. As the City expands, it is expected that the park land, facilities and services will also be enhanced. Finally, the City continues to engage in intergovernmental coordination with Spokane County to provide a regional approach to meeting the park and recreation demand for City residents and visitors. The Spokane County ORV Park is located adjacent to the City limits and, while not contained in the City park inventory, provides for recreational opportunities.