



Introduction

This Parks and Recreation element serves to summarize the community’s objectives, needs and priorities for recreation planning, coordinating these objectives with other planning considerations. In all communities, recreation serves an important function for residents and visitors alike, providing places for exercise, sports, children’s play, relaxation and community gatherings. Parks and recreation areas also enhance the aesthetic quality of the city, adding value to surrounding neighborhoods and commercial areas.

As with other facilities and services that the City provides, parks and recreation planning must take place to advance community goals and address population growth. Adequate land must be set aside for these purposes, and capital funds must be secured to develop and maintain the facilities. In addition to more detailed parks planning, this element helps ensure the future of recreational facilities in Airway Heights, improving the quality of life for the community as a whole.

Department Organization

Parks and recreational facility needs in Airway Heights are overseen by a five-member, mayor-appointed Parks Advisory Board. Board activities are also influenced by two six-member panels in the form of a Senior Advisory Commission and a Youth Advisory Commission.

Board oversight and direction is carried out by a staff-level Parks, Recreation & Community Services Director, a Parks, Recreation & Community Services Deputy Director, a group of supervisors for the Fitness, Aquatics, Guest Services, Parks and Facilities and the Recreation divisions of the department, with Coordinators supplementing in the Parks and Aquatics Divisions and Technicians supplementing in the Facilities and Parks divisions. All divisions are also supported by part time employees. Key objectives listed for Airway Heights’ parks include:

- Strengthen community image and “sense of place”;
- Support economic development;
- Improve resident safety and security;
- Promote health and wellness;
- Foster social, intellectual, physical and emotional development;
- Increase cultural unity;

- Protect environmental resources;
- Provide recreational experiences;
- Facilitate community problem solving.

Inventory

Airway Heights’ parks system currently includes a total of five parks plus a newly-opened recreation complex, encompassing 33.11 acres, and a citywide trail network. The City also has approximately 50 acres of undeveloped property at the recreation complex site that is planned for eventual recreational use. The following inventory provides the basis for a system-wide assessment of necessary features and their locations, allowing comparison of facilities with adopted level of service standards. Non-City features are also listed, providing additional context regarding features generally available to residents. Finally, City-led recreation programs are listed, providing a general sense of offerings.

City Recreation Facilities

Sunset Park

This City-owned, 9.6-acre park is located just north of Sunset Elementary School near the center of town. Sunset Park includes:

- One baseball/softball field (Martella Field) serving adult and junior leagues, as well as youth t-ball;
- One unlit basketball court;
- Three covered picnic areas with tables and barbecue pits, available for rental and utilized for family picnics and social gatherings;
- A variety of picnic tables and benches throughout the park;
- A skate park;
- One sand volleyball court;
- Walking trails, generally surrounding the park circumference;
- Two playground areas;
- A splash pad;
- Bathroom facilities, open during the summer months;
- Maintenance storage facilities.

Many of the park’s features may be reserved at nominal cost for special group events. The park is ADA-accessible.

Shorty Combs Park

This two-acre park, located at Campbell Street and 18th Avenue, is the only such facility located south of US-2 in Airway Heights. Shorty Combs Park includes:

- One unlit basketball court;
- A small playground area;
- One youth soccer field;
- One t-ball field;

- Bathroom facilities, open during the summer months;
- Maintenance storage facilities.

Cleveland Park

Cleveland Park is just over two acres in size and is located in the Sunset Crossing subdivision just north of 6th Avenue along Campbell Avenue. Park elements include:

- Playgrounds for pre-kindergarten and grade school age children;
- Park benches;
- A paved pathway that bisects the park;
- Large, grassy open play areas.

Traditions Park

Traditions Park is approximately one acre in size, located in the Traditions subdivision just north of 6th Avenue at 4th and Lawson Street. Park elements include:

- One playground facility;
- A paved pathway and surrounding sidewalk;
- A large, grassy play area.

Landreth Park

This 8.5-acre facility, located in the northwest corner of the city at 10th Avenue and Aspen Street, was originally set aside for stormwater retention purposes as part of an agreement with a private developer. The park currently includes substantial open grassy areas suitable for casual play, surrounded by a 0.3-mile paved loop pathway.

Airway Heights Recreation Complex

Responding to increased demand for recreational facilities, Airway Heights voters approved funding for construction of a 45,000 square foot facility fronting Deno Road just west of Hayford Road near the Northern Quest Casino. Opened in May 2019, the recreation center includes a gymnasium, a banquet room with kitchen facilities, a child watch area, an open community living room area and a natatorium featuring an indoor lap pool, recreation pool, hot tub and sauna. A second floor includes a fitness center with one side dedicated to free weights, one side dedicated to cardio and plate loaded equipment and a studio space for group exercise classes. The recreation center occupies approximately ten acres of a 70-acre parcel acquired by the City in 2010. The development of the Recreation Center also kicked off phase one of the outdoor field space encompassing approximately ten acres, elements include:

- One (1) unlit basketball court;
- One (1) covered picnic shelter;
- One (1) soccer/football field;
- One (1) softball/baseball field;
- Bathroom facilities, open during summer months.

The remaining 50 acres of the parcel is planned for future development of additional recreational facilities in multiple phases. The complex is expected to become one of Airway Heights’ most transformative features, improving recreational offerings for many years to come.

Trail Network (Citywide)

Airway Heights is currently working to improve its non-motorized (active) trail network, allowing residents to safely navigate the entire city on-foot or by bicycle. Components of this system already in place include:

- Dedicated bike lanes and sidewalks along both sides of Hayford Road between US-2 and Northern Quest Drive;
- Dedicated bike lanes and sidewalks along both sides of Sprague Avenue between Hayford Road and Industry Drive;
- A shared-use trail along the north edge of US-2, roughly fronting the Walmart center, and west as far as Garfield Road;
- Segments of shared-use trail along the south edge of US-2 near the Hayford intersection and fronting the Village Center Cinemas.

The City’s 2017 US-2 Corridor plan identifies and promotes the completion of a contiguous pedestrian and bike shared-use path along the southern side of the corridor, with similar and complementary elements to the north. In addition, interest has been expressed by the City and the Kalispel Tribe to develop a multi-modal trail network on the Tribe’s property that may be incorporated with the City’s trail network.

See this plan’s Transportation Element for maps of the above features, and for improvements recommended by the City’s 2017 Transportation Circulation Plan.

Undeveloped City Park Properties

Airway Heights Recreation Complex (Future Phases)

The recently-opened recreation complex sits on a 70-acre parcel, of which approximately 50 acres is currently still undeveloped. Construction of the recreation center and development of approximately ten acres of outdoor fields comprised Phase 1 of a multi-phase master plan for the parcel that is intended to be implemented over time, with development driven by community need and funding opportunities.

City Recreation Programs

The City of Airway Heights offers a wide range of programs for residents, generally grouped by age category including youth, teen, adult and senior life offerings. For youth, the City leads seasonal sports programming, “adventure” programs held at the community center, and “drop-in” programs designed for all-day and after-school participation. For teens, the City offers late night activities at the community center and gymnasium, and periodic field trips. Adult programs include group sports, fitness activities such as a running club, and various instructional classes. Senior life offerings include a lunch program, a movie club and numerous trips to nearby attractions.

Other Recreation Facilities

Sunset Elementary School

Sunset Elementary School is located just south of Sunset Park and covers approximately two acres. This facility is part of the Cheney School District, but within the boundaries of Airway Heights City Limits. The school facilities include:

- A small playground facility;
- An asphalt play area;
- An unlit basketball court;
- Field space for soccer/flag football;
- Two indoor gymnasiums.

Spokane County Off-Road Vehicle (ORV) Park

Located north of Sprague Avenue at Russell Street, the Spokane County Off-Road Vehicle (ORV) Park contains 183 acres of courses and tracks for go-karts (karts), motocross, and other ORV activities. The facility is operated and managed by a private operator, with regular events organized by various clubs and organizations. In addition to courses for motorcycle racing, the ORV park is home to a paved circuit and a small 1/4-mile dirt oval track dedicated to kart racing.

Spokane Raceway Park

Located just west of the Northern Quest Casino along Sprague Avenue, Spokane Raceway Park is a County-owned facility hosting a wide range of motorsport activities. The raceway includes a quarter-mile drag strip, a 2.3-mile road course, and a half-mile oval track. In addition to periodic National Hot Rod Association (NHRA) events, the facility is used for driving schools and for marquee-specific events. Day-to-day operations are managed under private contract.

Fairchild Air Force Base (FAFB)

Recreational facilities and programs associated with FAFB are not included in this element.

Demand & Needs Assessment

A highly simplified parks demand assessment was completed for this plan update by comparing population counts to Level of Service (LOS) standards for the City, currently established at ten acres per 1,000 persons. Facility needs are being re-evaluated in the next comprehensive plan update.

Per Capita Requirements

In this and in prior plans, the City has established a level of service standard of ten acres per 1,000 people. The future demand for additional park facilities necessary to maintain this level of service standard is presented in Table 6.1. Unless otherwise noted, population numbers used do not include Airway Heights Corrections Center inmates.

Analysis of Table 6.1 shows that the City is not currently meeting its LOS goal of ten acres per 1,000 people. In order to achieve this LOS goal, additional park facilities must be developed. An additional 50 acres of undeveloped land is planned for future recreation use, which would bring the City’s park facilities to 83.11 acres. Even once these currently undeveloped lands are included, however, population forecasts indicate that by the year 2028, the demand for parks will still exceed the supply. Over time, the City should plan to acquire additional lands for recreational purposes. By the year 2038, an additional 6.79 acres of park land (beyond the 83.11 acres already owned by the City) will be required to meet level of service standards.

Table 6.1 – Forecast of Future Park Demand

Year	Resident Population*	Demand (acres)	Surplus/Deficit (acres)
2017	6,813	68.13	-35.02
2018	7,074	70.74	-37.64
2019	7,336	73.36	-40.25
2020	7,597	75.97	-45.47
2021	7,858	78.58	-45.47
2022	8,120	81.20	-48.09
2023	8,381	83.81	-50.70
2024	8,642	86.42	-53.31
2025	8,904	89.04	-55.93
2026	9,165	91.65	-58.54
2027	9,427	94.27	-61.16
2028	9,688	96.88	-63.77
2029	9,949	99.49	-66.38
2030	10,211	102.11	-69.00

Year	Resident Population*	Demand (acres)	Surplus/Deficit (acres)
2031	10,472	104.72	-71.61
2032	10,733	107.33	-74.22
2033	10,995	109.95	-76.84
2034	11,256	112.56	-79.45
2035	11,517	115.17	-82.06
2036	11,779	117.79	-84.68
2037	12,040	120.40	-87.29
2038	12,301	123.01	-89.90

**Because incarcerated persons do not have an impact on recreational facilities, resident population was calculated by subtracting current at-capacity population of Airway Heights Corrections Center (2,258) from the City's 20-year population projections.*

Source: Washington State Office of Financial Management (OFM), 2017; Spokane County resolution 16-0553, August 3, 2016 (population projections/allocations).

Accessibility Requirements

The City's 2015 Parks and Recreation Master Plan identifies areas of the community that are not currently being served by specific parks and recreation facilities. The findings of this analysis were intended to serve as a guide for future site locations and facilities. Physical boundaries, such as highways, were identified as hazards or barriers to site accessibility. See the 2015 Parks and Recreation Master Plan for maps of the existing recreation facilities and their service areas.

Guidelines laid out by the National Recreation & Park Association recommend a service area of a half-mile radius for neighborhood parks (parks five to ten acres in size), and a quarter-mile radius for mini parks (those less than five acres). Sunset Park and Aspen Grove Park serve the majority of the residential community, though the south side remains on the edge of the service limits and Highway 2 limits access. As development continues to occur the City will place a high priority on acquiring land for park development that will provide service to most of the residences in the eastern annexation area north of the Walmart shopping complex. On the south side of Highway 2, most residential units are served by Shorty Combs Park, the sole recreational facility south of the highway. Still, with Shorty Combs classified as a mini park, there are no neighborhood parks on the south side. While a number of striped crossings are provided across US 2, the highway is still recognized as a barrier for pedestrian activity between the north and south sides of the city. As development occurs, the City should pursue the acquisition of land for a neighborhood-scale facility to serve residences on the south side of the highway, as well as the design of additional safe highway crossings to link the City to all available resources.

Improvement Strategies

The demand and needs assessment demonstrate a need for additional parks and recreation facilities within the City – both in terms of access and in terms of per capita requirements. Regarding access, US-2, which divides the City in half, inhibits pedestrian travel between the north and south sides of the City.

The divided nature of the City creates a need for additional facilities to improve access to recreational opportunities.

The City’s 2017 US 2 Corridor plan identifies and promotes the completion of a contiguous pedestrian and bike shared-use path along the southern side of the corridor, with similar and complementary elements to the north. The City should support the implementation of these elements, as they will improve access across the highway.

In order to provide an adequate level of service to the existing City population, additional park facilities must be developed over the twenty-year planning period. While 50 acres are currently planned for development as a part of the future phases of the recreation complex, it will be necessary for the City to develop 89.9 additional acres of parkland by the year 2038 in order to reach the desired service level of ten acres per 1,000 people. Consequently, the City will still need to acquire 39.9 acres of land for parks and development over the twenty-year planning period. The City should closely follow future residential development patterns to determine the most appropriate locations for acquisition.

Note: The following goals and policies are referenced here from the City’s comprehensive goal and policy framework, selected as those most closely related to Parks & Recreation considerations. For this reason, the goals and policies that follow may “skip” numeric sequence. See Appendix A for the complete Airway Heights comprehensive plan goal and policy set.

Parks & Recreation Goals

G.01 Grow and sustain a balanced, resilient economy for Airway Heights, providing jobs, community prosperity and fiscal health.

Discussion: In seeking long-term prosperity, Airway Heights understands the need to build economic diversity - capitalizing on existing assets such as Fairchild AFB and tribal casinos as well as developing a strong business base within and proximate to City limits. This plan supports strategies that build and sustain a diverse, balanced economic base, retain existing quality of life assets, and help keep Airway Heights prosperous.

G.02 Maintain and improve the provision of high-quality, affordable and efficient community services in Airway Heights.

Discussion: Municipalities provide infrastructure and services that would be impossible for individuals to provide. While pooled resources make essential services achievable, they also require strong levels of coordination and management to assure accountability and efficiency. Some actions have clear and immediate effects on resources. Other actions may be more difficult to associate with fiscal impact, but over time, may profoundly affect the costs of services. This goal anchors the need for Airway Heights to consider the long-term cost implications of choices including land use, transportation investments, and provision of service infrastructure - maintaining efficiency and accountability for the community it serves.

G.03 Maintain and improve Airway Heights’ small-town scale, unique civic identity and aesthetic beauty.

Discussion: Residents of Airway Heights often cite the community’s “small-town charm,” its modest size, and its open space west plains setting as attractive features. Due to this, many of the goals, policies and programs contained in this plan help retain the City’s overall scale while providing for growth; support the development of cultural features and activities; and direct land use decisions encouraging infill and thoughtful expansion.

G.06 Maintain and improve Airway Heights’ transportation network, on pace and in concert with needs including traffic flow, land use character and community value.

Discussion: All cities require functional, resilient transportation networks providing for the flow of people and materials. But it’s also understood that the design of streets and roadways is equally critical, providing infrastructure that fosters the character and types of land uses the community desires. This goal supports transportation designs that address both functional and qualitative needs, providing an interconnected network that improves the efficiency, function and perceived value of Airway Heights.

G.07 Plan for and establish types and quantities of land uses in Airway Heights that support community needs, promote service efficiency and fiscal sustainability.

Discussion: Cities exercise considerable influence over land use, in turn influencing the type and character of development, patterns of growth, and the short and long-term financial impact of growth on the local economy. Consequently, this plan supports the allocation of land use types and areas sufficient to balance and achieve the full range of community objectives.

G.09 Maintain and improve Airway Heights’ parks and recreational opportunities, sustaining an attractive, safe and functional system for all, with every home located within the service area of a park.

Discussion: Airway Heights’ residents value existing parks and recreational services, and wish to retain the same or higher levels of service as the community grows. This goal directs the City to consider parks and recreational needs in all related plans and actions, including land use decisions, regulatory requirements and budgeting.

G.10 Sustain and expand Airway Heights’ arts, cultural and civic environment.

Discussion: Residents of Airway Heights value and support local arts, cultural and social organizations, events and facilities. This goal and supporting policies direct the City to help sustain and expand community arts programming, historic and cultural resources - benefitting the civic health, quality of life, and economic vitality of Airway Heights.

Parks & Recreation Policies

P.01 Support land use patterns that:

- Maintain or enhance community levels of service;
- Foster the long-term fiscal health of the community;
- Maintain and enhance resident quality of life;
- Promote compatible, well-designed development;
- Implement goals and policies of the comprehensive plan, related master plan and/or facility plans.
- Are compatible with FAFB and airport overlay areas.

P.02 Apply or revise zoning designations with careful consideration of factors including:

- Future land use mapping;
- Compatibility with surrounding land uses;
- Restrictions in FAFB and airport overlay areas;
- Infrastructure and service plans;
- Existing and future traffic patterns;
- Goals and policies of the comprehensive plan, related master plan and/or facility plans.

P.03 Maintain concurrency between the comprehensive plan Land Use Element and available funding, ensuring efficient and timely levels of service (LOS) provision.

P.05 Encourage development patterns that provide suitably-scaled, daily needs services within ¼ mile of residential areas, allowing a measure of independence for those who cannot or choose not to drive.

P.12 With Spokane County and service providers, coordinate development patterns in Airway Heights' Urban Growth Area (UGA), helping prevent adverse consequences for future incorporation.

P.20 Develop and enhance a transportation system in Airway Heights that:

- Facilitates the safe, efficient movement of people, goods and services;
- Supports non-motorized and recreational needs;
- Supports land use objectives;
- Promotes livable neighborhoods;
- Improves safe pedestrian and bike routes to schools.

P.21 Improve year-round access, safety, utility, convenience and service levels for alternative modes of transportation, including:

- Walking;
- Bicycling;
- Public transit services;
- Rideshare/carpooling.

P.22 Maintain and improve the continuity of sidewalks, trails, and bicycle paths in Airway Heights.

P.23 Work to improve street and trail connectivity in all areas of Airway Heights, improving walkability, public health and safety, and transportation efficiency.

P.27 Maintain infrastructure and personnel at levels that provide Airway Heights residents with services that are high-quality, effective, and affordable.

P.29 Support and cooperate with other agencies and providers of public services to maintain identified Levels of Service (LOS).

P.30 Plan new development to ensure provision of public services at current Levels of Service (LOS) or the LOS identified in City-adopted master plans.

P.36 Guide annexation decisions guided by and considering:

- Master plans for water, sewer, transportation, parks, and emergency services;
- Provision of necessary rights-of-way and easements;
- Studies that evaluate environmental and public service factors;
- Timing that supports orderly development and/or coordinated extension of public services;
- Comprehensive plan goals and policies.

P.44 Promote landscaping guidelines that:

- Protect wildlife habitats by maintaining existing trees and vegetative cover;
- Re-vegetate disturbed areas;
- Beautify streets, roadways and surface parking lots;
- Help treat and address stormwater issues.

