

Parks and Open Space Report

Portland Parks Commission



CITY OF PORTLAND, MAINE GIFT CATALOG



June 2018-May 2019

I. Overview

The Portland Parks Commission (PC)¹ is required to submit an annual report to the city council regarding the state of the city's parks and public grounds and make specific recommendations therein about suggested goals and improvements for the parks and public grounds per City Code (Sec. 18-10(d)(4)). The primary audience for the report is Portland's City Council. It is the hope of the PC that anyone interested in, or is an advocate for, the enhancement and stewardship of our parks and open spaces also enjoy and make use of this report. Reports are completed annually and build on the previous reports.

Parks Commissioners

Zack Anchors, Friends of Eastern Promenade 2017-2020

Colette Bouchard, Public-at-large 2017-2020

Marie Gray, Friends of Deering Oaks, 2018-2021

Ana Lagunez, Public-at-large 2018-2021

Craig Lapine, Public-at-large 2015-2021

Cynthia Loebenstein, Friends of Evergreen Cemetery (Chair 2019-present) 2015-2021

Meri Lowry, Land Bank Representative 2010-2019

Michael Mertaugh, Public-at-large (V. Chair 2019-present) 2014-2020

Nathan Robbins, Public-at-large (V. Chair 2018-2019) 2015-2021

Amy Segal, Public-at-large 2017-2020

Dory Waxman, Public-at-large (Chair 2017-2019) 2015-2021

Caitie Whelan, Public-at-Large 2019-2022

Brian Batson, City Council Representative 2018-present

City Staff Department of Parks, Recreation, and Facilities (DPRF)

Sally DeLuca, Director

Ethan Hipple, Deputy Director

Allison Carroll, Senior Administrative Officer

Subcommittees

Annual Report & Inventory, Finance, Park Initiatives, Community Outreach

II. Accomplishments & Improvement Projects

Accomplishments

Presented below are lists of accomplishments achieved or in progress for Portland parks during the reporting year:

- Implemented new staffing structure for Parks Division: Park Director, Parks Operations Coordinator, and Parks Project Manager
- Finalization and opening of new natural playground at Rowe School
- "Walk in the Park" tours and lecture series continued for third year. Bike rides, lectures, bus tours and walking tours led by Parks staff and Rangers.
- Planted 170 street trees and park trees.

¹ <https://portlandmaine.gov/345/Parks-Commission>

- Replaced 40 antiquated downtown street flower planters.
- Collaborated with Health and Human Services Department to implement the third season of the Portland Opportunity Crew, which puts willing panhandlers to work in parks and open spaces in exchange for daily pay, meals, and access to city housing and job assistance programs.
- Pond Aeration system installed in Deering Oaks Pond. The intent of the aeration is to encourage the growth of beneficial bacteria that result in lower algae levels without the introduction of chemicals.
- Noyes Street Fire Memorial garden and benches placed in Longfellow Park
- Baxter Trail signage complete, production and installation scheduled for Fall 2019.
- Staff serving on MLK Memorial Committee for new MLK memorial on Bayside Trail.
- Western Prom Master Plan in progress.
- Pianos in the Squares program ran for the second year in a row. 4 pianos placed in Bramhall Sq., Longfellow Sq., Congress Sq., and Monument Sq. for the month of July.
- Significant progress made on Land and Water Conservation Fund conversion process. Met with National Park Service and State Park staff to evaluate conversion site and move the process forward. Completing the conversion process will make the city eligible for up to \$500K in federal outdoor recreation grants annually.
- Grand Trunk Cemetery Sign Installation Ceremony with Girl Scouts, volunteers and neighborhood residents.
- Parks Instagram Scavenger hunt active for the second year.
- Shinagawa Sister City bench and cherry tree planting on Eastern Prom.
- Interim Park design for Portland Landing in progress.
- Baxter Woods leash policy changes in progress, to be taken up by Council Committee in 2020.
- Maine Conservation Corps spent 240 hours doing trail maintenance in Evergreen Woods

2019 & 2020 Capital Improvement Projects & Updates²

CIP 10-year list of park projects that were contemplated for completion in 2019:

- Memorial Field Artificial Turf Replacement - \$722,000, complete
- Dougherty Field-Athletic Field at West School Site, Parking - \$350,000, pending final site plan
- Payson A Replace Lights - \$250,000, complete
- Portland Landing Design Development (Amethyst Lot) - \$250,000, interim park design in progress
- Riverton Playground - \$250,000 –School and Portland Parks Conservancy raising additional funds for additional elements not included in original budget, construction June 2020.
- Fort Gorges Preservation Plan Structural Improvements - \$209,000, waiting on 50% match from friends of Ft Gorges in order to proceed on Preservation Plan
- Lyman Moore Athletic Facility Improvements - \$925,000, complete
- Island Playground Improvements - \$125,000, complete

² <https://www.portlandmaine.gov/479/Capital-Improvement-Plan>

- Fitzpatrick Stadium Scoreboard - \$58,000, complete
- Western Prom Master Plan - \$40,000 in progress
- Tennis and Basketball court resurfacing at Lyman Moore and Eastern Prom \$50,000
- Riverton Softball Site Work - Drainage and Erosion Issues - \$65,000, incomplete
- Evergreen Columbarium: Phase II and III - \$52,000, incomplete
- Payson Park Community Garden - Expansion - \$14,500, incomplete

CIP 10-year list of park projects that contemplated for completion in 2020:

- Riverton Softball Site Work - Drainage and Erosion Issues - \$65,000, construction to start Spring 2020.
- Fitzpatrick Scoreboard and Road Drainage - \$102,000, In progress Public Works will be completing the project. (initially contemplated for completion in 2019)
- Dougherty Skate Park Expansion - \$340,000, seeking additional CIP funds to complete the expansion project (initially contemplated for completion in 2019)
- Dougherty Field Irrigation - \$70,000
- Evergreen Cemetery Driveway Drainage - \$260,000
- Forest City Cemetery Road Reconstruction - \$100,000
- Wilde Chapel Masonry - \$75,000
- Lincoln Park Fence Restoration, Congress St section - \$640,000
- Dougherty Field Playground - \$137,000, CDBG funded
- Dougherty Field Basketball Reconstruction - \$75,000
- East End Waterfront Access Project - \$250,000, partially grant funded
- Bramhall Square Reconstruction - \$250,000
- Court Resurfacing: Payson Park, West End Pocket Parks (Tyng Tate, Pleasant, Reiche, Taylor) - \$50,000
- Riverton Basketball Reconstruction - \$75,000
- ADA Walkway repaving at Deering Oaks, Dougherty Field, Payson Park - \$250,000
- Cleeves Monument Plaza and Walkways - \$80,000
- Payson Park Bollard Replacement - \$50,000
- Picnic Pavilions - \$100,000
- Eastern Prom Embankment Slide - \$50,000
- Lyseth Playground - \$250,000
- Back Cove Trail Reconstruction \$75,000
- Sensory Trail \$50,000

III. New Developments

Baxter Trail – Baxter Trail is a 3.25-mile-long east-west trail which begins on Back Cove/Baxter Boulevard and terminates at Evergreen Cemetery connecting points of interest celebrating the lives of James Phinney Baxter, Percival Baxter, their relatives and their contribution to the City of Portland Parks System. The Parks Initiatives sub-committee of the Parks Commission, City of Portland staff and

volunteers have created a series of seven interpretive signs along with numerous wayfinding markers which delineate the trail.

Gift Catalog – Over the past several years, the PC and its Finance Subcommittee supported work through the DPRF to revisit, revive, and substantially update the “Love Portland” Catalog for public gifts to Portland’s parks³.

Friends of the Western Promenade & Master Plan – The FoWP was formed in April 2018. The DPRF and FoWP are partnering together to develop a Master Plan for the park⁴. Funding for the plan development was secured in part through a Maine Historic Preservation Commission grant as well as through additional money raised through FoWP. A community survey, public meetings, and final presentation to City Council are included in the development process. There are several historic uses of the park that are being revisited along with the current uses and major developments in the area of the park, most notably from the Maine Medical Center expansion currently underway. Maine Medical Center has dedicated funding towards improvements in the Western Promenade as part of the expansion project.

Boyd Street Community Garden – In March, Councilor Belinda Ray presented a packet of her proposal to formalize the boundaries for Boyd Street Gardens. This space is designated as a park in the the Parks Ordinance (Chapter 18), but the boundaries are not specified. The Commission expressed interest in reviewing the material before voting to recommend to the City Council on any related changes to the ordinance.

Dogs in the Parks – The PC held two public meetings on a proposed change for dog use in Baxter Woods.⁵ Current use of the park is for off-leash dogs at all time throughout the year. The proposed change includes a period of time in the Spring and Summer when dogs would be required to be leashed at all times, and the remaining part of the year when dogs would be allowed off-leash under voice command during designated hours. Many public comments were made during the public meetings, and additional comments were received via email to the DPRF and PC. An advisory vote was made in favor of the proposed change for Baxter Woods by the PC, with an amendment that expanded off-leash hours to the initial proposal along with considerations that are included in the minutes, in July 2019.

Several topics on dog use were included in the discussions. Some were specific to Baxter Woods while others were system-wide. The PC noted further discussion was still needed on these topics, and it may be pertinent for them to take up at a later date.

Green Space Gathering – The 8th Annual Green Space Gathering was held May 2nd at the Rowe Elementary School. The focus this year was on homelessness in our parks and the challenges that come with accommodating all users. The event was titled, “Together We Are Parks”, and included tabling by

³ The City website for the Gift Catalog was launched in July 2019. <https://portlandmaine.gov/2345/Love-Portland-Gift-Catalog>

⁴ <https://www.friendsofwesternprom.org/> | <http://www.portlandmaine.gov/2448/Western-Promenade-Master-Plan>

⁵ Proposed Baxter Woods Ordinance Change Documents - [Baxter Deed](#), [Baxter Woods Off Leash Memo July 2019](#), [Baxter Woods Public Comment](#), [Forest and Wildlife Habitat Management Plan 05182018](#)

various friends and community partner groups, and a panel discussion with members of government, non-government, and private local, state, and regional organizations representing parks, homeless, housing, and public safety experts.

A resource guide was developed for friend and community partners organizations and was available at the Green Space Gathering. Further resources are being discussed for development in addition to trainings for interested groups and individuals working in and serving our parks and open spaces⁶. The Friends of Congress Square Park offered public safety response training opportunities in June, *Recognizing & Responding to Opioid Overdoses* and *Deescalating Stressful Situations Confidently & Ordinance Review*. Partner organizations for the trainings included the India Street Public Health Center, Portland Needle Exchange Program, and Portland Community Policing.

IV. Updates on Previous Recommendations

Organizational

Producing the Annual Report for City Council – In 2017-2018 the Parks Commission preliminarily discussed the idea of moving to an alternating reporting structure, with a biennial report in complete form produced in even years and a pro forma abbreviated report produced in the odd years. The ordinance language gives broad discretion to the PC about the format of the report. At its presentation to the City Council of the parks Annual Report in 2018, the PC sought the Council’s guidance on the preferred timing, scope, and focus of the annual report. The City Council responded that a 40-page report even on a bi-annual basis is too long. Aspects that were most useful were those concerned with the city budget.

In 2019 the PC took up this previous discussion. After research and discussion by its Parks Report & Parks Inventory Subcommittee, the PC agreed that a short form Pro Forma report on odd numbered years and a more complete full report on even numbered years would satisfy the ordinance. In “off years” the PC will focus on revisiting thoughts and recommendations on open issues to continue to move those forward and prepare any documentation of those efforts to the council. In both cases, annual reports are to focus on budgetary impacts and recommendations relating to the city’s parks and open spaces.

Some specific recommendations were discussed for reducing the length of the full report. Several sections of the report were also noted to migrate to the City website:

- Brief History of the Parks Commission
- Heritage of Portland Parks and Open Space
- Mission and Organization of Department of Parks, Recreation, and Facilities
- Recreation Opportunities Available at Parks
- General reference materials list (i.e. park places, photo gallery, open space vision and implementation plan, bold vision, park master plans, list of friends and community partners)

⁶ The PC plans to present the discussion, findings, and suggested goals and improvements to parks in the form of a memo or letter to City Council.

- Background for the Parks and Open Space Report including basis for the report and uses. This has been informed largely by PC ordinance, PC discussions, and formalized in the guidance document for the Parks Report on behalf of the PC.

Inventory, Land and Use Protections

Ordinance Revisions – Further discussion was concerned with making amendments to the existing ordinance to reflect the updated process for the parks report. The PC initially discussed revising the reporting cycle to move to a longer interval between reports, and/or providing more prescriptive language in the ordinance on scope of those reports. No changes seemed advisable with respect to the language of the Ordinance relating to Parks Reports. Instead, the PC decided a written internal policy was sufficient to meet the ordinance task and provide future commissioners with guidance on how to fulfill it.⁷

Park Inventory – Further research into the previous inventory determined it is still accurate. The most current Park Inventory is included at the end of the report.

Advocacy

Impact Fees – The PC had discussed for several years and made recommendations that the City of Portland adopt impact fees to use for park needs. In November 2018, the impact fee ordinance was adopted, effective December 19, 2018, and applies to all new residential and non-residential developments.⁸ The impact fee schedule provides specific allocations from impact fee revenues for improvements to parks and recreation, as well as for improvements for transportation and wastewater treatment.

Staff from the Planning Department made a presentation to the PC on the development, adoption, uses, and projected revenue from impact fees. In the period 2018-2028, projected revenue through impact fees for parks and open spaces is anticipated to be approximately \$4 million, distributed roughly evenly to parks and recreational facilities with a small portion to single-track trails⁹.

Commissioners expressed gratitude for the much-needed funding source and noted the timeliness of this measure in the context of recent development in the city and the resulting increase in use of the city's parks and recreational facilities.

Portland Parks Conservancy – This year the Portland Parks Conservancy hired its first Executive Director, Nan Cumming. Ms. Cumming made a presentation to the PC on the Parks Conservancy's planned work areas, based on input to date on the park system's needs. Their focus will be on funding projects for new infrastructure improvements and those that support programming.¹⁰

⁷ *Policy and Guidance for Completing Annual Report* – This guidance has now been drafted and is available by request to the PC. This annual report policy can serve as a standalone guidance document for park commissioners when producing the annual report. It summarizes the PC findings and outlines the scope and process for drafting the full and abbreviated annual reports.

⁸ <https://portlandmaine.gov/2409/Impact-Fees>

⁹ 2018 *Impact Fee Study*

¹⁰ <https://www.portlandmaine.gov/2128/Parks-Conservancy>

Overall Funding Picture – Over the past several years the PC has advocated for additional funding sources for parks and open spaces system-wide. During the 2018-2019 reporting period there were important developments in three new funding sources. The creation of impact fees, the Portland Parks Conservancy, and the updated Gift Catalog and website all represent significant progress towards achieving more sustainable funding and should be celebrated as major successes.

Despite these significant accomplishments, the PC expressed its concern that these new sources of funding will cover new improvements to the system, but do not cover maintenance. Deferred maintenance is already an issue affecting the park system every day. Staff and community partners are unable to keep up with the needs of the current system. Preparing the system for growth by adding amenities and spaces remains important. However, further action is needed to identify a sustainable mechanism and strategy to raise the standard of care for parks and open spaces. To that end, the Gift Catalog can directly help improve existing park infrastructure, in part by replacing degraded features with newer ones. Additionally, if capital improvements and funding from impact fees and the Conservancy could be directed towards equipment that could be used by City staff and partners to improve and maintain existing or new parks, this may also have the added benefit of addressing deferred maintenance.

Concurrent City Planning and Efforts

Review of Planning Documents for Mutual Goals with Parks and Open Spaces – The PC conducted a preliminary review of the city’s new Comprehensive Plan, and possible new or improved parks and open spaces were identified. The PC plans to follow up on this initiative in its future work.

Parks Inventory for the 2019 City of Portland, Maine Parks Commission Report

Park Inventory

The following sources were used in drafting the below inventory of Parks of Portland, Maine:

1. Section 2-44, City Code for City of Portland, Maine, revised 7/10/14 (the “Land Bank Ordinance”)
2. Section 18-11, City Code for City of Portland, Maine, revised 5/28/14 (the “Parks Ordinance”)

N.B. School playgrounds and athletic fields are not included in the park inventory even though the City of Portland does maintain and fund ongoing maintenance and replacement.

PARKS IN THE CITY OF PORTLAND, MAINE

Dedicated Parks Listed in both the Parks Ordinance and the Land Bank Ordinance:

Back Cove Park and Trail
Barrows Park/Baxters Sundial
Baxter Pines
Baxter Woods
Bayside Park, also known as Stone Street Playground
Bell Buoy Park
Belmeade Park
Capisic Pond Park
Clark Street Park
Congress Square Park
Deering Oaks Park
Dougherty Field
Eastern Promenade Park, East End Beach, Fort Allen Park
Fessenden Park
Fort Gorges
Fort Sumner Park
Fox Field/Kennedy Park
Harbor View Park and Tate-Tyng Park
Heseltine Park
Lincoln Park
Lobsterman Park
Longfellow Square
Monument Square
Munjoy South Playground
Payson Park
Peppermint Park
Pleasant Street Park

Post Office Park
Riverside Golf Course
Riverton Trolley Park (incorrectly listed as Riverton Park in the Ordinances)
Stroudwater Parks (there are 2 listed in the Ordinances)
Taylor Street Park
Tommy's Park
Western Promenade Park

Dedicated Parks Listed in the Parks Ordinance and Not the Land Bank Ordinance:

Andrews Square – N.B. This Park consists of a flagpole only
Bayside Trail
Bedford Park
Boothby Square
Boyd Street Gardens
Bramhall Square
Caldwell Square
Clark Street Playground
Tate-Tyng Playground (not in alphabetical order because of association with Harborview Park)
Longfellow Park
Marada Adams Playground N.B. This Park is located at the corner of Beckett and O'Brion Streets and is not the Adams School Playground
Martin's Point Park
Nason's Corner Park
Pedro Field
Pleasant Street Playground
Quaker Park South Street Playground
Trinity Park
Winslow Park

The Parks Commission notes that University Park is listed in the Land Bank Ordinance and not in the Parks Ordinance. University Park is therefore included on the Land Bank Registry as a Land Bank property that is not a park.