

CHAPTER 4

Needs Assessment

Introduction:

The Needs Assessment is one of the most important elements of the Park, Recreation and Open Space Plan. Establishing priorities for the acquisition, development and maintenance of park and recreation facilities within Fircrest culminates the planning process. Capturing the community-driven hopes and desires establishes a road map for providing quality parklands, facilities, open spaces, trails and recreation programs. The current update, presented herein, reflects the needs and



prioritizes the critical park and facilities upgrades and identifies improvements, expansions and programs that can best fulfill these needs and priorities and set the foundation for the next 6-20 years.

Community Needs Assessment

The 2013 determination of need for parks, facilities and programs is based on the community input and vision for the park system. Development of the statement of need is dependent on local values, availability of land, financial resources, desired service levels plus local, state and national standards. The needs assessment represents a combination of the results of community input, the National Park and Recreation Association (NRPA) guideline of classification and levels of service (LOS) expressed in acres and facilities per 1,000 people. The assessment provides insight into regional and national trends that may influence how the City will need to respond to meet the current and future population

demands.

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS AND PROJECTIONS

This chapter discusses the needs within the Fircrest city limits. The current population of Fircrest (6,696) is used for this plan. The Puget Sound Regional Council, planning under the Growth Management Act (GMA), projects a Fircrest geographic Forecast Analysis Zone (FAZ) population for 2020 of 6,786 and a 2030 population of 6,915. Fircrest has a land area of 1.58 square miles. Population density expressed in persons per square mile is 4,114.6 compared to 101.2 statewide.

The male and female distribution is approximately 50% and the population is 78.9% Caucasian, which is similar to the state percent of 77.3%. The age ranges are generally consistent with statewide percentages with 5.8% under age 18 (6.5% statewide) and 23.3% 65 years and over (23.5% statewide). Education levels are higher than state averages. This is represented by high school graduates or higher at 93.1%, which is above the state average (89.8%), and those with Bachelor's degree or higher at 37.9% versus 31.4% statewide. In 2010 there were 2,847 housing units with homeownership at 68.3%. The mean travel time to work for workers age 16+ between 2007 and 2011 was 23 minutes as compared to 25 minutes statewide.

Table 4.1
Population Forecast

	2013	2020	2030
City of Fircrest	6,696	6,786	6,915

FACILITY DEMAND AND NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The park system planning process establishes the priorities for the acquisition, development, enhancement and maintenance of park and recreation facilities in Fircrest with professional analysis and community feedback. Assessing the demand and need includes inventory review to determine the existing need (citizen input on wants/needs) and calculations of future demands. Stating and development of a community “need” is dependent on local values, financial resources and the desired level of service (LOS). Analysis represents a combination of input from the Ad Hoc Committee and Fircrest Community Workshops, and takes into account state and national standards and trends, all of which are related to the current and future population as a statistical standard to meet the demand.

RECREATION AND CONSERVATION OFFICE (RCO) STATEWIDE LEVEL-OF-SERVICE RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) serves the State in the planning and provision of funding support for local and state agencies. In 2008 a statewide preliminary LOS *tool* was presented as a proposal, not a mandate, in the RCO Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) document entitled: “Defining and Measuring Success: The Roles of State Government in Outdoor Recreation”. The RCO reflected the traditional and current guidelines used on a local and national basis in the National Recreation and Park Association population allocation and park geographic LOS services area indicators of Population Standards and Service Area Guidelines. The RCO/SCORP identified guidelines include:

1. **Baseline Criteria:** Population Allocations (Table 4.2): Per capita participation indicators.
2. **Enhanced Criteria:** Park Geographic LOS (Table 4.3): GIS-based travel distance/population density indicators.
3. **In-Depth Criteria:** Functions related indicators. Quantity, Quality and Distribution Access Criteria

POPULATION ALLOCATIONS/Baseline Criteria:

The ratio of parkland or recreation facilities is based on a comparison with the existing population base. This numerical level of service standards was originally advocated by the National Recreation and Park Association and is a traditional methodology. The LOS method is used nationally and throughout Washington State on a statewide basis by the RCO and throughout cities, counties and special districts. The National Recreation and Park Association population ratio guidelines establish an overall parkland/open space guideline of 10 acres per 1,000 population (National Recreation and Park Association 1983, 1996). Additionally it provides guidelines for park types (e.g. neighborhood, community) as well as recreation facilities (e.g. playgrounds, sports fields, etc.). The existing ratio is the existing amount of parkland divided by the existing population within the City of Fircrest. It is expressed in terms of acres per 1,000 population. The recommended standard is the desired amount of parkland expressed in terms of acres per 1,000 population. (Population Forecast Table 4.1)

Table 4.2 NRPA Guideline Standards for Population

Park Type	Guideline
Mini Park (Pocket Park)	0.25-0.5 acres/1,000
Neighborhood Park	1-2 acres/1,000
Community Park	5-8 acres /1,000
Regional	5-10 acres/1,000
Natural Open Space	Variable
Recreation Facilities	
Baseball/Softball Fields	1 field/5,000
Playgrounds	1 playground/3,000
Soccer Fields	1 field/10,000
Tennis Courts	1 court/2,000
Trails (miles)	0.5 miles/1,000

PARK GEOGRAPHIC LEVEL-OF-SERVICE/RCO Enhanced Criteria:

Distributing parks throughout the City creates a more balanced system of parks and facilities city-wide. The geographic distribution method of planning and identification of “service areas” relies on GIS mapping of existing parks and the associated distance and time of travel. The use of the service area identification provides analysis of gaps in the parkland system. The National Recreation and Park Association also recommends service areas for park type, and both location and percent of population served will be used in the analysis of the needs for the City of Fircrest.

Table 4.3. RCO Enhanced Criteria

Service Area Range	Neighborhood Park	Community Park	Regional Park	Natural Open Space
Recommended	½-mile	1-mile	15-miles	city-wide
Acceptable	½ -mile	2-miles	20-miles	city-wide
Minimum	1-mile	3-miles	25-miles	city-wide

TRENDS FOR LOCAL RECREATION PLANNING:

The National Recreation and Park Association in 2004 developed a list of trends that were identified as having the greatest impact on local agencies planning for recreation facilities. It was identified that national trends, which include the perception of the environment, socio-economics, technology and urban development, will affect the need for the use of park and recreation facilities. National Recreation and Park Association trends that are pertinent to the City of Fircrest’s planning for developing and maintaining park, facilities and open space are as follows:

- Preventative recreation, that is, recreation as an antidote for social problems.
- Family recreation centers that offer a variety of services for each family member.
- A greater need for walking and biking on trails, sidewalks, within parks and along streets and utility corridors.
- Increased demand for Tiny-Tot and Pre-School programs and activities.
- Pressure to increase park capacity and infrastructure of existing parks and concern for adequate maintenance.

CITY PARKS AND OPEN SPACE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The needs and recommendations are grouped into sections:

- 1. PARKLAND AND OPEN SPACE**
 - 1-A: Pocket Parks and Neighborhood Parks**
 - 1-B: Community Parks and Natural Open Space**
 - 1-C: Special Use Areas and Trails**
- 2. RECREATION FACILITIES**
 - **Sports Fields**
 - **Swimming Pool**
 - **Playgrounds**
 - **Tennis Courts**
 - **Other specialized facilities**
- 3. RECREATION PROGRAMS AND SERVICES**
 - **Aquatics**
 - **Community Events**
 - **General Recreation**

1. PARKLAND AND OPEN SPACE

On the following pages, specific needs are described for each type of parkland. As indicated, the community need is dependent on local values, financial resources and desired level of service. It is sometimes difficult to classify a park and open space when the following questions are contemplated:

- What defines a park or open space area?
- Are or should school grounds be considered?
- Should private golf courses, commercial landscapes or private recreation resources be considered?

To focus and resolve this issue, the needs assessment will consider only public lands used and primarily available for public recreation and open space used by the community as a whole within the City of Fircrest.

The following are also elements used for consideration in the process of determining need:

- Level of Service Standards, Existing Level Of Service and desired Planned Level Of Service
- Needs by participation projections
- Existing geographical deficiencies of parkland
- State and national current trends

Existing and Proposed Level-Of-Service (ELOS) & (PLOS)

In the City of Fircrest there are currently 27.1 acres of parkland. If Fircrest grows as planned at an estimated 1.3% per year, the 2020 PLOS would require the addition of one-half acre, and by 2030, one additional acre would be needed.

Classifications of Parkland Standards

The following assessment of demand and need is divided into three categories: Pocket Parks and Neighborhood Parks, Community Parks and Natural Open Space areas, and Special Use areas and Trails. A guideline for providing parks and recreation opportunities for the citizens of Fircrest uses the standards as general requirements. The NRPA standards define general indications of the area served by a given type of park. Definitions of each park type are defined as well as the need for specific types of parkland. The following table provides the defined parkland inventory and the existing need by classification:

Table 4.4: Summary of Existing Level of Service and Future Need*

Park Classification	Existing Acres/Miles	Fircrest Existing LOS	Future (2030) Deficiency/Need
Pocket Park	0.2	0.03 acres/1,000	0
Neighborhood Park	1.4	0.21 acres/1,000	+1.0 acres
Community Park	17.8	2.66 acres/1,000	+0.5 acres
Natural Open Space	6.5	0.97 acres/1,000	0
Special Use Area	1.2	0.18 acres/1,000	0
Trails	0.204 miles	0.03 miles/1,000	3.46 miles
TOTAL	27.1 acres	4.05 acres/1,000	4.14 acres/1,000

*Demand/Need and Recommendations narrative in Sections 1-A, B & C

**1994 Adopted Park Plan: Standards Worksheet, page 34/Class III-A Average Standard/1,000 population

- 1-A Pocket Parks and Neighborhood Parks**
- 1-B Community Parks and Natural Open Space**
- 1-C Special Use Areas and Trails**

1-A Pocket Parks

Currently **Alice Peers Park** is the only pocket park or mini park, with 0.20 acres total acres. Alice Peers pocket park serves the community as a welcoming entrance on Regents Boulevard. The small, but well maintained, site is landscaped and provides a beautification gateway to the community. The park contains the City of Fircrest flag pole with the rose garden. A community message board is located at the site to provide citizen information on recreation and city-wide events. Alice Peers Park is the community gathering point for the annual Tree Lighting Ceremony.

Pocket Park Service Area: The traditional recommendation for a pocket park or mini park is ¼-mile radius.

Comments and Trends Regarding Pocket Parks:

Community Workshop comments:

- The community reader board at the site is an important information resource for residents. This helps citizens know what events and activities are happening in the community.
- Keep a traditional tree lighting event, but replace the existing tree as it is damaged and in poor health.
- Alice Peers serves as a signature gateway to the City of Fircrest.

Trends:

- Small mini parks or pocket parks have become popular, especially in cases where they serve a specific subdivision. They are relatively inexpensive to build and provide a service for residents nearby who are blocked by barriers to easy access to other park sites.
- On a per acre basis, pocket parks and/or mini parks are expensive to maintain and can generally provide limited service for citizens.

Input from Ad Hoc Committee

- Alice Peers Park serves as a great “Front Door” to our community.
- Alice Peers Park provides a traditional location for community gatherings with the annual Tree Lighting Ceremony, which is an important focus for the citizens.
- The Alice Peers pocket park is a community focus with the American Flag, information reader board and point of welcome for citizens and visitors.

1A Neighborhood Parks

The Fircrest Park system provides one neighborhood park, the **Gene Goodwin Tot Lot**, which is centrally located within the city. The Tot Lot contains children’s play area with pre-school play opportunities, playground equipment, large sand area with concrete surround, restrooms, lawn and picnic area. The park also has three tennis courts with fencing separation between the children playground area and the active courts. The recent purchase of additional acres on the north and west side of the park increased the park site by 30% for a total park acreage of 1.4 acres. The expansion will provide the opportunity to plan for additional recreation elements and features to enhance the park.

Neighborhood Park Service Area: Neighborhood parks serve a ½-mile distance and are located, if possible, within an uninterrupted easy access. The Gene Goodwin Tot Lot, with the additional ½-acre of newly acquired property on the northwest corner, increases the level-of-service for the community. Geographically the northern and southeastern areas of the City are not as well served with neighborhood park benefits. The development of one additional acre of neighborhood park benefit would serve the increased population by 2030.

Comments and Trends Regarding Neighborhood Parks:

Community Workshop comments:

- Parking is of major concern with regard to the Gene Goodwin Tot Lot and new park acreage addition.
- Age segregated areas of the park are important as the current Tot Lot for pre-school ages is a very important park feature for many citizens and visitors to the park.

Trends:

- Today citizens want to get outside, be active and play with their children and grandchildren in a park that is within close proximity, is safe and can be accessed with pedestrian usage.
- The neighborhood park located near residents provides the ideal opportunity for play, fitness and exercise opportunities, and provides a social opportunity for those who live in close proximity to the park.
- Playgrounds have a service area recommended at the same levels as neighborhood parks; therefore playgrounds are recommended at neighborhood park sites.

Input from Ad Hoc Committee

- Citizens and visitors identify Fircrest as a community that takes pride in children's play and play areas.
- The Gene Goodwin Tot Lot is a park that reflects the community image of their support for childhood play.

Demand/Need and Recommendations for Pocket Parks and Neighborhood Parks:

Fircrest has one **Pocket Park** (0.2 acres) that represents an existing level of service of 0.03 acres per 1,000 population. The NRPA recommends 0.25 per 1,000 population. Applying the existing demand standard (0.03 PLOS) to the projected 2030 population (6,915) demonstrates that the City will meet the existing acreage standard for pocket parks (0.207 PLOS).

National Recreation and Parks Association recommends 1-2 acres per 1,000 population for a standard for **Neighborhood Parks**. If the PLOS is applied to the current population there is a need for an additional .94 acres, or a total of 2.3 acres, of neighborhood parks. Fircrest has one neighborhood park, the Gene Goodwin Tot Lot, which is 1.4 acres. In the future one additional acre will be needed (total of 2.42 acres). With the expansion of the Gene Goodwin Tot Lot, the need for additional neighborhood parks in the central area will be met. Geographically, National Recreation and Parks Association recommends a ½ –mile travel distance and this is met throughout the City. As a consideration for the citizens in the northern area of the City, an additional neighborhood park would provide geographic value. In the future, discussions of a partnership with school owned properties may lead to the provision of additional play areas. In the southern area of the City, citizens have use of a playground at the Fircrest Greens neighborhood park located at the former 44th Street Park site and the playground at The Commons at Fircrest neighborhood.

Table 4.5

Pocket Parks and Neighborhood Parks

Recommended Level-Of-Service (PLOS)

Pocket Parks		
Alice Peers	Existing Inventory	0.20 acres
	Existing ratio ELOS	0.03 acres/1000
Recommended PLOS		0.03 acres/1000
Neighborhood Parks		
Gene Goodwin Tot Lot	Existing Inventory	1.40 acres
	Existing ratio ELOS	0.21 acres/1000
Recommended PLOS		0.35 acres/1000
(future need +1.0 acre)		

1-B Community Parks

There are two community parks in Fircrest, with a total of 17.80 acres. The community parks are Fircrest Park (7.80 acres) and Whittier Park (10.0 acres). The community parks in Fircrest provide fairly even coverage throughout the community. These parks serve a broad range of recreational activities and community events.

Fircrest Park, located near the center of the city, is the location of the Community Center and a seasonal swimming pool and wading pool. The park provides an open grassy area and a wide range of recreational activities with sports fields for soccer and ball games and open space for many annual community events that include the annual Easter Egg Hunt, Picnic and Movie in the Park, and Fircrest Fun Days. The Ron Russo Pavilion group picnic shelter is scheduled for citizen use and the picnic facilities provide opportunities for picnicking in the park. The outdoor basketball sport court

is a popular site for pick-up games. The park maintenance center is also located onsite. The park is well maintained, surrounded by neighborhood residential uses, with limited parking on-site.

Whittier Park, located in the south central area of the city, is bordered on the north and east by single-family housing. The park is adjacent to the Whittier Elementary School at the south west corner of the site. The City of Tacoma Storm Water Detention Basin is located on the southern border of the park. The site is home to many recreational and sports activities that range from soccer to Little League Baseball/softball where field lighting is available. Three outdoor tennis courts are heavily used by the community and provide an active facility for senior citizen teams. The park has a group picnic shelter, restrooms, and Bocce courts. Whittier Park received matching grant funds from the Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO/formally the IAC) for the development of eight acres of the existing 10-acre park with State Bond funding for a total project cost of \$203,820.00 in 1972 (Project #72-069). Funding provided site preparation, utilities, restroom, irrigation, landscaping and one baseball field, one softball field, two combined football/soccer fields, three tennis courts, basketball court and tot lot. The RCO grant agreement for the state funding states that the property and facilities shall be open for the use of all segments of the public without restriction because of residence of the user. In 1999 the City received a Youth Athletic Fund (YAF) grant for Whittier Park (RCO #99-1179) for improvements on the baseball field, drainage improvements, and bleachers to support the use of the site for soccer, baseball and other youth team activities. The total project cost was \$11,136 with a 50% local match by the City of Fircrest.

Community Park Service Area: The service area of a community park is generally a 1-3 mile radius. In Fircrest the two community parks appear to serve the citizens fairly well. Fircrest Park is located north of center of the city and Whittier Park is located three blocks to the south. To maintain the recommended level-of-service for community parks into the future, an additional ½-acre area would need to be developed by 2030.

Comments and Trends Regarding Community Parks:

Community Workshop comments:

- Site development plans for both Fircrest and Whittier Park were reviewed with noted suggestions and additions shown on the individual site improvement designs.
- Overall, the community enjoys and benefits from the activities and use of the community parks in the City.
- The Community Center is the “Heart of Fircrest”.
- Residents with children are heavily involved in youth sports and activities at both community parks.
- The tennis courts at each park have a long history of use and support active use on all six courts.
- The community preferred Whittier Park as the priority location for synthetic surfacing of ball fields with Fircrest Park’s fields to be completed later.
- The number one priority needs to be to address the Community Center and swimming pool at Fircrest Park.
- The citizens stated that Fircrest needs to acquire additional acreage around Fircrest Park if the land becomes available.

Trends:

- As land becomes scarce, housing becomes denser and neighborhood parks become smaller; many communities rely on the City’s community parks to serve multiple functions. These include organized active recreation (e.g., ball fields, soccer, and swimming) as well as

spectator events (e.g., concerts, community family events) and passive recreational opportunities.

- Kansas State University research shows children living within a half-mile of a park or playground were five times more likely to be of a healthy weight, rather than overweight, as compared to children who didn't have a park with a play area nearby.

Input from Ad Hoc Committee

- Residents of all ages were increasingly involved in the entire spectrum of activities within the park system.

1-B Natural Areas Open Space

The 6.50 acre Thelma Gilmur Park is the only Natural Open Space Park in the City of Fircrest. The site is undeveloped with a designated wetland surrounded by single-family housing except for the church located on the northwest corner of the park boundary. The park is easily accessible by adjoining streets to the north and east. Trails bisect the forested hillside on the eastern edge of the site and the native plant-dominated upland area abutting the centrally located wetland. Wetlands plant life consists of reed grass, cattails and native willow.

Natural Open Space Park Service Area: Natural areas with open space do not have a defined service area as they are dependent upon the function they serve. These parks can preserve wildlife habitat, be part of a trail system, provide a separation between neighborhoods or provide a place for quiet and solitude.

Comments and Trends Regarding Natural Open Space Parks:

Community Workshop comments:

- Volunteers would be willing to clear and maintain trails within the park.
- Potential funding for work on Thelma Gilmur Park may be obtained through a partnership grant from REI.
- Citizens showed interest in restoring and maintaining the natural shoreline on the west bank of the pond as stated in 1994 Park Plan.

Trends:

- Communities are increasingly interested in policies and practices that promote long term sustainability and protection of natural resources and open spaces.
- Education about the value and functions of natural open space is increasing across many age groups.
- Government resources through various grants have become available for the protection and preservation of urban habitat areas to support conservation of natural resources.

Input from Ad Hoc Committee

- There is a need for trail connections with sensitivity to the shoreline edge of the Thelma Gilmur wetlands.
- The annual Halloween event is a favored activity along the existing trail at the park.

Demand/Need and Recommendations Community Parks and Natural Open Space:

The National Recreation and Parks Association recommends 5-8 acres per 1,000 population and 1-3 miles distance from residents. All residents of Fircrest live within one-mile of both Community Parks, which is the high end of the recommended standard. Currently Fircrest has 17.80 acres of

Community Parks. When divided by the City's current population, this provides an ELOS of 2.65 acres per 1,000, which is below the National Recreation and Parks Association standard of 5.0 acres per 1,000. If the City were to retain the ELOS of 2.66 acres per 1,000 and multiply the PLOS by the projected 2013 population (6,915), there would be a need for 18.39 acres total or an additional 0.59 acres of Community Park land. Citizens discussed the need for additional parkland, particularly at Fircrest Park. Therefore, if additional land becomes available abutting the park, it is recommended that the City acquire this land to help address increased demand for Community Parks acreage.

National Recreation and Parks Association does not have a recommended standard for Natural Open Space; however protection of natural resources to provide management of the natural/cultural environment is of primary importance with recreational use considered to be secondary.

Table 4.6
Community Parks and Natural Open Space
Recommended Level-Of-Service (PLOS)

Community Parks		
Fircrest Park (7.8 acres)		
Whittier Park (10.0 acres)		
	Existing Inventory	17.80 acres
	Existing ratio ELOS	2.66 acres/1000
Recommended PLOS	(future need + 0.5-acre)	2.66 acres/1000
Natural Open Space		
Thelma Gilmur Park	Existing Inventory	6.5 acres
	Existing ratio ELOS	0.97 acres/1000
Recommended PLOS		0.97 acres/1000

1-C Special Use Areas

Special Use Areas Service Area: Currently there is one special use area, Masko Park, consisting of 1.2 acres in the City of Fircrest. The park is the location of the Seabrook Rhododendron Garden, the Veterans Memorial Garden, and natural trails throughout the site. The service area for a special use site varies widely depending on the function it serves. Additionally, the level of maintenance is dependent on the site's function.

Comments and Trends Regarding Special Use Areas:

Community Workshop comments:

- The Seabrook Rhododendron Garden was and should be retained as a special species hybrid plant garden with consultation from local hybridizers.
- Consideration was given to the creation of additional specialized facilities such as a skate park and dog park but the consensus was that they are of low priority as existing options for both are within short distance of most citizens.

Trends:

- Within communities, recreation facilities that are located independently fall under the special use category.
- Specialty and community gardens, as well as memorial sites, are unique and provide a citizen connection to beautification and city history.

- The creation of a designated dog park is being addressed throughout communities. Issue-specific task forces are established by cities to centralize the process. Considerations for establishing a new site would include recommended laws and policies (e.g. scoop & leash), the identification of environmental health concerns (e.g. toxocara larvae concerns), wildlife and habitat impacts, and planning for land use conflicts and operation and management solutions (e.g. volunteer stewardship program, self-policing, and Adopt-A-Park program).

Input from Ad Hoc Committee

- In the past the Rhododendron Garden functioned as a place for citizens to view a variety of species.
- Upgrade of the garden could provide opportunities for interest that also result in a beneficial health and fitness activity.
- The establishment of a dog park, either separate from, or integrated into one of the existing community parks, was not endorsed.

1-C Trails

Trails, pathways and connections serve to provide links, routes and connections for walking and bicycling, and they add opportunities for regional connections to existing trails in neighboring communities. In the current 2014 budget, \$14,700 for path and trail construction is to be funded from the Designated Fund Balance for Paths and Trails.

Comments and Trends Regarding Trails:

Community Workshop comments:

- The placement of an exercise station in connection with the natural trail would be a good addition to Whittier Park.
- At Thelma Gilmur Park some of the planned improvements could be funded through a grant from REI.
- Citizen volunteers are more than willing to help keep the trails cleaned.
- Fircrest is a “walking” city. Make trails available for all homeowners and users.

Trends:

- Trails and open space connections provide links and routes for walking and bicycling and enjoyment through scenic corridors.
- A combination of urban design, land use patterns, and transportation systems that promote walking and bicycling will create active, healthier, and more livable communities.
- Regular physical activity is such a crucial part of good health; our goal is to help people understand that even modest activity such as walking or gardening is a step in the right direction.

Input from Ad Hoc Committee

- At Whittier Park, lighting the trail and making it a little more public with improvements would be beneficial to the trail value.
- The trail at Thelma Gilmur Park is a natural trail and needs to have maintenance.
- Extension of the trail around the wetland at Thelma Gilmur Park should be explored.

Demand/Need and Recommendations Special Use Areas and Trails:

Masko Park was identified as a site that potentially could serve as a natural area with natural improvements as a passive recreational **Special Use Area**.

Trails continue to be a priority for the citizens as well as the City. Securing grant funds to match local funding could help address the demand for additional trails. A variety of trails could be funded, including natural trails, multi-use trails, bicycle trails or shared use with vehicles trails. Natural and soft-surface trails are less expensive to develop than shared use on public roads trails, which must use defined highway development standards. Natural trails are identified in the Master Plan for Whittier and Thelma Gilmur Parks and can be developed and maintained through community partnerships or citizen stewardship groups that have a dedicated interest in the trails that provide opportunities for exercise and recreation. In 1994 the adopted Park Comprehensive Plan identified the Class II-A City average standards for trails were 0.5 miles/1,000 population. Retaining this standard for the current plan results in a current need of 3.35 miles of trails and a future need of 3.46 miles of trails in 2030.



Table 4.7

Special Use Areas and Trails

Recommended Level-Of-Service (PLOS)

Special Use Areas		Area/Length
Masko Park		
	Existing Inventory	1.2 acres
	Existing ratio ELOS	0.18 acres/1000
Recommended PLOS		0.18 acres/1000
Trails		
Whittier Park Nature Trail		0.11 of a mile
Thelma Gilmur Nature Trail		0.09 of a mile
	Existing Inventory	+/- ¼ mile
	Existing ratio ELOS	0.03 miles/1,000
Recommended PLOS	(future 3.46 miles)	0.5 miles/1,000

2 RECREATION FACILITIES

The specific needs for specific types of facilities are discussed and provided with the current and future demand standards and related trends for these facilities. The facilities are:

- 2.A Sports Fields**
- 2.B Swimming Pool**
- 2.C Recreation Center**
- 2.D Playgrounds**
- 2.E Tennis Courts**
- 2.F Other specialized facilities**

Establishing the need for recreation facilities is determined from participation levels, identified trends, public input received at the community workshop and input from staff and the Comprehensive Plan Ad Hoc Committee.

2.A Sports Fields

Fircrest has one softball field, two Little League Baseball fields, one tee ball field, two full size soccer fields and six modified soccer fields. There are no dedicated fields to one sport; all soccer and baseball fields overlay one another. Sports fields with competitive play generally require a higher level of maintenance, especially during the playing season. Since the existing fields are located in the parks, the City is responsible for the maintenance and operation of the fields.

Comments and Trends Regarding Sports Fields:

Community Workshop comments:

- As noted in the Community Park narrative, the first preference for synthetic fields would be at Whittier Park with completion of fields at Fircrest Park coming later.
- The cost analysis of the operation and maintenance needs to be known to help with making a decision on whether or not to install synthetic surfacing.
- Working with community organizations and non-profit groups can be an opportunity to decrease the cost of local service for the City Parks and Recreation Department's annual budget.

Trends:

- Over the past fifteen years, soccer play has continued to increase significantly.
- Nearly 70% of children (ages 6-17) in the U.S. are playing team sports and three out of four teenagers are now playing at least one team sport.
- "Team sports bring us together as young children, teaching us to socialize, solve problems, resolve disputes, experience the benefits of hard work, and understand different personalities and gain self-confidence and direction."

Input from Ad Hoc Committee

- There are a number of interests, which include soccer, baseball/softball and even lacrosse when discussing recreation activities at Whittier Park.
- Youth sports are very active in the City of Fircrest with many citizens providing volunteer hours to the recreational game needs.
- Synthetic fields will provide a much needed benefit to the turf conditions at Whittier Park but maintenance cost analysis will be critical in the final decision-making process for purchase and installation.

Demand/Need and Recommendations for Sports Fields:

The National Recreation and Parks Association standard recommends a ratio of one regulation field per 10,000 population. National Recreation and Parks Association also recommends a service area of 1-2-miles for soccer fields. The popularity of the game determines the number of units that will be needed for play. Youth soccer can generally be provided for on smaller youth fields located on parkland such as Fircrest Park, where most of the youth play is currently scheduled. The existing inventory provides a demand standard of 1 field per 837 population and a future need by 2030 of one additional field. The ball field demand standard applicable to this plan requires a team to have sufficient field space to play games and practices each week. The field lighting at Whittier provides for extended play times. The future demand can be sustained into the future with the placement of all-weather synthetic turf at Whittier Park. These renovations with improved subsurface drainage would provide for consistent and increased play on the fields. To address operation and maintenance costs of all-weather fields, a revenue generation cost analysis would provide the data to assure that funding is in place rather than add to an already heavy parks maintenance schedule and

operational burden. Partnerships could be broadened or formed with non-profit organizations and community groups to address maintenance costs for improved fields into the future.

2.B Swimming Pool

The City of Fircrest's swimming pool is a seasonal all-city facility. The service area for a swimming pool is 15-minutes to 30-minutes of travel time, which reaches nearly every resident in the City of Fircrest. The pool is a 25-yard, 5 lane facility with a 1,400 square foot dive tank and an additional children's wading pool area.

Comments and Trends Regarding Swimming Pool:

Community Workshop comments:

- The future of the community swim pool along with the Community Center is a first priority for needs and improvements on a community-wide basis.
- The "life cycle" of the pool makes it of critical importance for emphasis in current and future planning.
- There are short term needs for the pool that include rehabilitation of the pool liner and filtration system.
- Residents are overwhelmingly supportive of the swimming pool as it is a key facility for all citizens.
- Some stated that they enjoyed the dive boards but a water slide would also work.

Trends:

- Nationally, swimming continues to be a very popular recreation activity.
- To provide and enhance revenue, many communities are looking to adapt pool facilities with a variety of play amenities to off-set the annual cost of operation.
- In 2008, the Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) listed swimming as popular at the state level when looking at seasonal averages.

Input from Ad Hoc Committee

- There are many improvements that will become necessary within the near future, one of which includes a new pool liner.
- The wading pool area could potentially be a good location for a splash pad.

Demand /Need and Recommendations for Swimming Pool:

The National Recreation and Parks Association standard is 1 pool per 20,000 population. The 25-yard, 5 lane pool equals 4,584 square feet of water space. The existing ratio is 685 square feet per 1,000 population. In the future, retaining or replacing the pool with a 25-yard, 5-lane seasonal swimming pool provides 685 square feet per 1,000 population, thus meeting and exceeding NRPA standards.

The Fircrest pool is important and vital to the community. Repairs and maintenance to retain the facility as an asset rather than a liability will include upkeep of the pool mechanics and support facilities and addressing the life of the existing pool liner (cost shown under Fircrest Park - Community Center Short Term Improvements).

2.C Community Center

The Roy H. Murphy Community Center located in Fircrest Park serves a focal point for recreation and community programs. The existing facility is 13,974 square feet. The site is the location of the Parks and Recreation administrative offices. The community center has a gymnasium, meeting

rooms and a full size kitchen for public use, and it provides the restroom and locker room amenities for the Fircrest Community swimming pool, which is adjacent to the northern end of the Community Center. The facility provides for year around programming, which includes aquatics, community events, youth and teen sports and programs, and adult recreation activities and classes.

Comments and Trends Regarding Community Center:

Community Workshop comments:

- The Community Center has a long history of use by children throughout the city.
- Families have historically enjoyed the value of the center as a safe place that provides the opportunity to come together as a focal point for youth.
- The future of the Community Center was expressed as the most important priority concern for the Ad Hoc Committee and the citizens in the community.
- There is a current need to refurbish all meeting rooms in the Center as well as to update the restroom fixtures.
- The basketball court outside of the Community Center needs to be upgraded.
- Recreation programming emphasis at the Community Center should be mid-teen and pre-teen ages.

Trends:

- The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommends that community programs provide a range of developmentally appropriate community sports and recreation programs that are attractive to all young people.
- Of children and adolescents aged 6-19, 15%, about 9-million, are considered overweight.
- One of the most important steps to improve one's health is being active. Suggestions for youth to improve bone-strength are activities such as hopping, skipping, jumping rope, running and sports such as gymnastics, basketball, volleyball and tennis.

Input from Ad Hoc Committee

- The Community Center provides multiple uses that include gym activities, meeting rooms, classes and the pancake breakfast.
- The future of the Community Center is of primary concern in all community discussions.
- The Community Center is the place where kids go to hang-out!
- The Community Center and the benefits of the programs are what Fircrest is about-it is a safe place and is the "Heart of the City"!

Demand/Need and Recommendations for Community Center:

The existing Fircrest Community Center provides for the annual recreation programs and events. The community understands the importance of the center and stressed the need to look to the future for replacement or expansion of the existing facility as being of highest importance. The service area for recreation facilities such as gymnasiums is a 1-mile to 2-mile radius. National Recreation and Parks Association does not have a level-of-service specific to recreation centers, but does list a combination of indoor elements (gym/racquetball/volleyball) at 2.35 sf/1,000 population. Using this standard, the current need is for 15,736 sf. of indoor recreation space which is approximately 2,000 additional sf. If the facility remains as a combination seasonal swimming pool and indoor recreation center, the 25-yard 5 lane pool will meet the demand need of 541 square feet of water area per/1,000 in 2014.

The community stated that the first priority of the Park, Recreation & Open Space Plan is to address the future of the Community Center.

▪ **Recommendations**

- Address the future of the Community Center by working with the citizens and Councilmembers through a successful planning process in the completion of a Needs Assessment & Feasibility Study (Community Center Feasibility Study): the study must define the following elements:
 1. Vision & Goals
 2. Needs & Space Program Assessment
 3. Site Assessment
 4. Concept Site & Floor Plans
 5. Capital Project Budget
 6. Operations & Maintenance Budget
 7. Business Plan
 8. Funding Strategy
 9. Action Plan
- Address and determine the current and future need of providing a Community Center and work to achieve the recommendations of the Feasibility Study.
- Determine the Cost/Benefit of renovating the current Community Center, renovate & expand the current Community Center, or demolish the current Community Center and build a new Community Center.

2.D Playgrounds

The City of Fircrest currently has playground equipment located at Fircrest and Whittier Parks. Under the National Playground Safety Inspection Guidelines through National Recreation and Parks Association, children's play areas need to be designed with areas for toddlers up to five years old, a site for 6-12 years old and a play area for those 12 and above.

Comments and Trends Regarding Playgrounds:

- The service area for children's playgrounds is the same as that of a neighborhood park, or ½-mile radius.
- The City of Fircrest has two playgrounds, one at Fircrest Park and the second located at the Gene Goodman Tot Lot.
- Safety surfacing must be maintained at an appropriate depth and the site needs to meet the requirements of the Americans with Disability Act (ADA) for access.
- Maintenance staff must be trained and certified under the NRPA National Playground Safety-Training Program for completion of annual inspections.

Community Workshop comments:

- Future designs for Whittier Park support the input regarding the creation of a Play Plaza with pre-school and school age themed play opportunities.
- Parents noted that some children play at the Whittier School playground but visibility for the area from the park grounds is blocked, which is of concern for most parents.
- Citizens indicated that the Gene Goodwin Tot Lot provides a wonderful playground for preschoolers and toddlers.
- In park designs, individuals supported the swings for preschoolers at the Tot Lot.

- The playground at Fircrest Park provides play opportunities for school age children.

Trends:

- The Outdoor Industry Association (outdoor product providers) continues to advocate for communities in which all kids have places to play within walking distance from their homes.
- Obesity now affects 17% of all children and adolescents in the United States-triple the rate from just one generation ago. "1 of 3 children is obese or overweight before their 5th birthday."
- The author of *The Genius of Play*, Sally Jenkinson, concurs (page 18) that "Success in social play, skill in the use of good interventions, good interactions and flexibility all develop social competence and prepare the child not only for integration into school but also for life itself"
- The U.S. Access Board has issued a Final Rule (36 CER Part 1191) regulating the accessibility of playgrounds, which is one of the critical issues of playground design.

Input from Ad Hoc Committee

- The Gene Goodwin Tot Lot is a vital focal point play area for young children.
- The entire community supports the play area and amenities provided to the citizens for young children.
- There is a need for playground equipment at Whittier Park, which would be beneficial to parents as other siblings play team sports.
- Improving play opportunities at Fircrest Park is important.

Demand /Need and Recommendations for Playgrounds:

Fircrest currently has a demand standard of 0.30 per 1,000 population (1/3,348 population), which is just below the Recreation and Conservation (RCO) recommended standard of 0.33 per 1,000 population for playgrounds. With a PLOS of 0.33 applied to the 2030 population, this reflects a need to add three playgrounds within the City. Whittier Park has been identified as a park for the addition of another children's playground with equipment and a play area which will meet the future demand.

2.E Tennis Courts

The City of Fircrest has a long history of community use of the public tennis courts located in the community. Play is active and steady use continues on all the courts. Fircrest has six tennis courts. Three courts are located adjacent to the Gene Goodwin Tot Lot just south of Fircrest Park. Three additional tennis courts are located at Whittier Park. Tennis courts require minimal maintenance compared to other recreation facilities.

Comments and Trends Regarding Tennis Courts:

Community Workshop comments:

- There is a need for tennis court renovations on all six courts, which includes the placement of a new base, paving or sport court coating.
- Drainage improvements as well as maintenance of the nets and the wind screen are needed. Fencing improvements were also discussed.
- The community supports the retention of the tennis courts for community play.

Trends:

- From 2000-2008 participation changes indicate that tennis has grown by 43% compared to traditional sports (e.g. soccer, baseball, football, and softball) with a total player increase of 9.6% and a frequency of players increase of 8.6%.
- NRPA and the US Tennis Association (USTA) provide resource information and data on current partnerships for planning, designing and community facilitation of plans for creating outdoor tennis courts and paddle sports courts.

Input from Ad Hoc Committee

- The tennis courts at Whittier Park and adjacent to Fircrest Park are well used and enjoyed by the community at large.
- When looking at options for additions to Whittier Park, the initial discussions focused on creating an indoor tennis facility, but following the first Community Workshop with citizen input the committee suggested they should be left as open courts.

Demand /Need and Recommendations Tennis Courts:

Over the past ten years, interest in tennis has remained steady, however, in some areas there has been an increased interest in all paddle sports. Based on studies and the National Recreation and Parks Association demand standards, the ratio of tennis courts per population is on average about 1 court per 2,000 population. The current ratio in Fircrest is 1 court per 1,000 population. It is recommended the City maintain this ratio, which meets the current demand and the future population demand for tennis courts.

2.F Other Specialized Facilities

Group Picnic Areas: Currently Fircrest provides two sites where picnic shelters can accommodate large groups of people for gatherings and events. The Fircrest Pavilion has picnic tables and nearby amenities that include the playground, horseshoe pits, tennis courts and ball fields. The Whittier Shelter provides shelter with picnic tables, tennis courts, horseshoe pits, a bocce ball court, nature trail, ball fields and restroom. Group picnic shelters provide the community with an added benefit for group activities. There is not a recommended standard for group picnic shelters, but they have proven to be a high demand amenity in Community Parks with the benefit of providing revenue to off-set operating costs.

Basketball Court Outdoor Pad: Fircrest has one outdoor basketball court used year around at Fircrest Park, and one court at Whittier Park that is not heavily used due to poor site conditions. Basketball courts or the placement of an outdoor pad are of value for residents which are located within a radius of need for neighborhood parks (within ½-mile) or community parks (1-mile). Over the past twenty years the popularity of basketball has remained somewhat constant nationally. When the need for upgrades or improvements to Neighborhood Parks or Community Parks is identified, it would be beneficial to improve the quality of existing courts while adding a full or half-court basketball pad.



Table 4.8

Recreation Facilities Summary

Recommended Level-Of-Service (PLOS)

Sports Fields		
	NRPA Standard	1/1,000
	Existing Inventory	5 fields
	Existing ratio ELOS	1.0 field/1,000
Recommended PLOS	(future + 1-field)	2.00 fields/1,000
Swimming Pool		
	NRPA Standard	1/20,000
	Existing Inventory	1 swimming pool
	Existing ratio ELOS	539 s.f./1,000
Recommended PLOS	(retain existing LOS)	541 s.f./1,000
Community Center		
	NRPA Standard	2.35 s.f./1,000
	Existing Inventory	1 Community Center 13,974 s.f.
	Existing ratio ELOS	2.10 s.f./1,000
Recommended PLOS	(future + 2,000 s.f.)	2.35 s.f./1,000 15,736 s.f.
Playgrounds		
	RCO/SCORP	0.33/1,000
	Existing Inventory	2 playgrounds
	Existing ratio ELOS	0.30/1000
Recommended PLOS	(future + 3-sites)	0.33/1,000
Tennis Courts		
	NRPA Standard	1 /2,000
	Existing Inventory	6 courts
	Existing ratio ELOS	1 court/1,000
Recommended PLOS	(retain existing LOS)	1 court/1,000

3. RECREATION PROGRAMS AND EVENTS

- **Aquatics**
- **Community Events**
- **General Recreation**

Aquatics

From Memorial Day Weekend throughout the summer until Labor Day, the City of Fircrest Swimming Pool provides a full range of aquatics programs. There are traditional swim lessons with four morning sessions as well as two evening sessions. Lessons are offered for resident and non-resident fees with two weeks of half hour sessions. Open swims are offered weekdays as well as weekends and scheduled times throughout the days. The Family swim is offered on Tuesdays and Thursdays for three sessions between 5:30pm and 8:30pm.



Comments and Trends Aquatics:

Community Workshop comments:

- The swimming pool and the recreation center need to be the number one planning priority identified in this planning document.
- There are short term items that need to be addressed such as the rehabilitation of the pool liner and the filtration system.

Trends:

- Citizens continue to enjoy a summer pool and wading pool opportunities, which provide fun and healthy recreation activities.
- Swimming on a national scale continues to be a very popular recreation activity.
- When pool renovations are needed, many communities look to the addition of play amenities that enhance revenue and may off-set annual operation costs.

Input from Ad Hoc Committee

- The Fircrest swimming pool is an important community asset
- Addressing repairs and maintenance is important.

Community Events

Programming for community events has a substantial value to the citizens of Fircrest. The Parks and Recreation Department is involved in a variety of unique opportunities for community gatherings. Events range from dances to garage sales. Traditional events include the annual Fircrest Fun Days, the community Tree Lighting Ceremony, Derby Days and Car Show. The community events are well attended by both citizens and visitors to Fircrest.

Comments and Trends Community Events:

Community Workshop comments:

- The value of community events for socialization and their creation of a sense of “community” are recognized.
- The events are generally heavily attended and at times impact adjacent residents, but on a general basis those in attendance who live near the parks enjoy the added value of community gathering.

Trends:

- Communities that focus on the value of community, cultural and historic events provide the community and the visitor with activities that broaden opportunities for socialization and a glimpse of the historic culture of their area.
- Visitors to local communities provide an economic benefit to the local businesses within the community.

Input from Ad Hoc Committee

- The entire community enjoys the annual city-wide events sponsored by the Parks and Recreation Department, from the summer movie nights to the 4th of July activities.
- These events provide the opportunity to see neighbors and meet new citizens in Fircrest.

General Recreation

Many of the recreational programs are offered for all ages at the Roy H. Murphy Community Center. The recreation facility is linked to the seasonal community swimming pool with the shared locker room facilities. The meeting rooms and gym provide the space for classes, fitness programs and sports activities. The Department office is located in the recreation center. Programs, events, seasonal camps and classes are presented through the seasonal recreation brochure and on the parks and recreation web-site.

Comments and Trends General Recreation:

Community Workshop comments:

- The Recreation Center is a central location for the community to be involved in activities.
- The youth from the community gather at the Recreation Center for socialization and recreation.

Trends:

- John L. Crompton points out that it is important to develop outcome-oriented performance measures and to provide “evidence-based” justification for budget requests that assist citizens and elected officials to support continued funding.
- Recreation programs are important in the delivery of benefits that address important community issues and meet fundamental human needs.

Input from Ad Hoc Committee

- The program and activities provided through the Parks and Recreation Department play a key role for the community at large. .
- The city-wide events hosted by the Department or in partnership are very well attended and of added value to community livability of Fircrest.
- Most Committee members have a close tie with the programs and the Department as family members are involved with activities and programs offered through the Department.

Demand/Need and Recommendations for Recreation Programs and Events:

The demand standard for Community Centers and Swimming Pools is identified and summarized in Table 4.8. Recommendations to address the future of the Community Center can be achieved by working with the citizens, staff and elected in the successful completion of a Need and Feasibility Study for the realization of a center that meets current and future needs.

Recreational programming demand continues to substantiate the support and interest of the citizens of Fircrest. The wide variety of community offerings is reflected in the broad attendance. Recreation program demands are currently met with the available facility space at the Community Center, pool and park facilities. As stated in the Community Workshops and through the Ad Hoc Committee, the highest priority of the citizens of Fircrest is the need to address long-term facility needs of the Community Center to retain and expand year-round recreation services into the future.

