Adopted via Resolution No. 26-808 | 4/21/2026

PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN 2026-2032

City of Medical Lake, WA



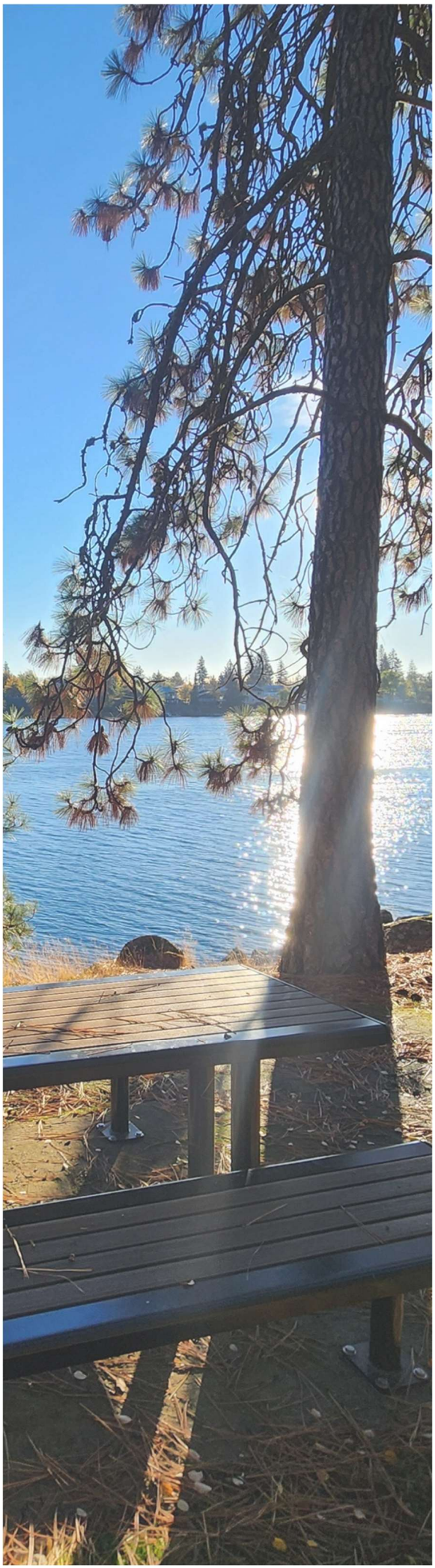


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Executive Summary

City of Medical Lake Parks and Recreation Master Plan (2026–2032)

The City of Medical Lake Parks and Recreation Master Plan provide a clear, community supported- roadmap for investing in parks, trails, and recreational opportunities over the next six years. The Plan reflects local needs, financial realities, and best practices in parks and recreation planning, while meeting the planning eligibility requirements of the Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO).

Purpose of the Plan

This Master Plan guides:

- Investment in parks, trails, and recreation facilities
- Maintenance and reinvestment in existing assets
- Access to state and federal grant funding
- Long-term decision making aligned with community values

Adoption of this Plan establishes six-year eligibility for RCO grant programs, including the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program (WWRP–Recreation), and Youth Athletic Facilities (YAF).

Community Vision

Enriching Lives, Enhancing Community.

Medical Lake envisions parks and recreation as essential infrastructure that supports physical health, mental well-being, environmental stewardship, and social connection for residents of all ages and abilities.

Key Findings

The planning process identified several defining characteristics of Medical Lake's parks and recreation system:

- **Trails are the backbone of recreation access**, connecting parks, neighborhoods, downtown, and the lake.
- **Most parks are neighborhood scale**, making walkability, safety, and access more important than sheer acreage.

- **Deferred maintenance is widespread**, particularly at Waterfront Park and along trail segments.
- **Demand for recreation is growing**, especially for youth sports, fitness, and community events.
- **Equitable access depends on non-motorized options**, including sidewalks, trails, and ADA improvements.
- **Limited land and funding require efficiency**, reinvestment, and strategic partnerships rather than large new acquisitions.

Community Input Highlights

Residents consistently emphasized:

- Paved trails and pathways as the top community priority
- Improving existing parks before building new ones
- Playgrounds, picnic areas, and passive recreation spaces
- Better connections between parks and neighborhoods
- Interest in a dog park and expanded recreation programming

This input directly shapes plan priorities and investment recommendations.

Planning Approach

Rather than relying solely on acreage standards, the City uses an access-based level of service, focusing on:

- Proximity and safe access to parks
- Facility condition and usability
- Trail connectivity and ADA accessibility

This approach reflects Medical Lake's size, land constraints, and strong trail system and aligns with RCO, NRPA, and Washington State planning guidance.

Six Year Capital Priorities

The Plan identifies a realistic, grant-ready Capital Improvement Program focused on reinvestment, safety, and access. Top priorities include:

1. Waterfront Park safety, accessibility, and amenity upgrades
2. Replacement of wildfire destroyed storage facilities
3. Medical Lake Trail and Fox Hollow Trail repairs and resurfacing
4. ADA access and parking improvements at Shepard Field

5. Systemwide playground reinvestment
6. Neighborhood Park amenity upgrades
7. Trail wayfinding and safety enhancements
8. Systemwide ADA access improvements
9. Development of a community dog park

Projects are phased over six years and dependent on a combination of local funds, grants, and partnerships.

Implementation and Accountability

The Plan is intended to be a **living document**:

- Progress will be reviewed annually in coordination with the City's budget process
- The Capital Improvement Program will be updated as funding opportunities arise
- The Parks and Recreation Advisory Board will support implementation and community engagement
- A full update will occur within six years to maintain RCO eligibility

Conclusion

This Parks and Recreation Master Plan positions Medical Lake to:

- Maintain and improve its existing park system
- Expand safe, equitable access to recreation
- Leverage state and federal funding effectively
- Continue building a healthy, connected community

Adoption of this Plan affirms the City's commitment to quality of life, fiscal responsibility, and long-term- stewardship of its parks and recreation assets.

Section I: Introduction and Community Context

Vision, Mission, and Planning Intent

Vision

Enriching Lives, Enhancing Community.

The City of Medical Lake envisions a community where parks, recreation programs, and open spaces contribute meaningfully to physical health, mental well-being, environmental stewardship, and social connection for residents of all ages and abilities.

Mission

The Parks and Recreation system exists to provide safe, accessible, and high-quality recreational opportunities that strengthen community identity, promote healthy lifestyles, protect natural resources, and enhance Medical Lake's small-town character.

Planning Intent

This Parks and Recreation Master Plan serves as the City's long-range policy document, guiding planning, investment, and decision-making for parks, recreation facilities, trails, programs, and open space over a six-year planning horizon. The Plan is intended to:

- Establish community-supported priorities for parks and recreation investments
- Guide future capital improvement and maintenance decisions
- Support eligibility for state and federal grant funding administered by the Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO)
- Align parks and recreation planning with Medical Lake's broader community goals

This Plan translates community values into actionable policies, measurable objectives, and prioritized investments, ensuring Medical Lake's parks and recreation system continues to meet current and future needs.

Role of the Plan and RCO Eligibility

This Master Plan is prepared in accordance with *RCO Manual 2: Planning and Policy Guidelines* (January 2024) and is intended to support eligibility for outdoor recreation grant programs, including but not limited to:

- Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)
- Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program – Recreation (WWRP)
- Youth Athletic Facilities (YAF)

The Plan establishes the foundation for future grant applications by clearly documenting community needs, system capacity, public priorities, and a prioritized capital improvement program. Adoption of this Plan by the City's governing body is required to activate grant eligibility for a six-year period.

Planning Area and Physical Setting

Regional Context

The City of Medical Lake is located in the West Plains region of Spokane County, west of the City of Spokane and near Cheney and Airway Heights. Its proximity to Fairchild Air Force Base contributes to a dynamic population with a mix of long-term residents and temporary households.



Physical Characteristics

The City of Medical Lake is defined by rolling topography, wetlands, and the presence of Medical Lake itself on the western edge of the city. Soils are largely basalt-based, and the average depth to the groundwater table is less than ten feet, influencing construction costs and park design considerations.

Growth and Land Constraints

Most parcels within city limits are already developed, limiting opportunities for large-scale park acquisition. Future growth may occur incrementally through redevelopment, annexation, or partnership opportunities rather than expansive greenfield development.

Planning Implications

- Emphasis on multi-use parks, trail connectivity, and facility upgrades
- Increased importance of wetland-sensitive design, boardwalks, and passive recreation
- Strategic use of partnerships and shared facilities to expand recreational access

Community Identity and History

Indigenous and Early History

Prior to European settlement, the area surrounding Medical Lake was inhabited by Spokane and other Salish peoples who maintained strong cultural and spiritual connections to the land and waters.

Healing Waters and Resort Era

In the late 19th century, Medical Lake gained prominence as a health destination following the discovery of its mineral-rich waters. The City was incorporated in 1890 and developed into a regional resort community featuring bathhouses, hotels, and health-related tourism.



Transition and Modern Identity

As the resort era declined, Medical Lake transitioned into a residential and agricultural community while retaining its historic ties to health, wellness, and natural beauty.

Planning Implications

Medical Lake's identity as a place of healing and wellness continues to inform the City's emphasis on:

- Health focused recreational programming
- Nature based recreation
- Community gathering spaces that support mental and social well-being

Population and Demographic Profile

Population Trends

After a period of significant growth in the early 2000's, Medical Lake's population growth has been slow over the last ten years due to restrictions on new housing developments. The Washington State Office of Financial Management (OFM) estimated that the population of Medical Lake in 2025 was 4,900.

Despite recent declines, the City anticipates increased growth due to new zoning regulations allowing more types of housing, rezoning of land within the City to provide for more opportunities for housing development, proximity to Spokane, and continued investment in community livability.

Age, Households, and Housing

The age of Medical Lake residents is well balanced. Just under half (48%) are between the ages of 25 and 54, while around a quarter (26%) are under the age of 25 and another quarter (26%) are over the age of 54. Two-thirds of households own their home, and the average household size is 2.3 people.

These characteristics suggest continued demand for neighborhood parks, family-oriented recreation, and accessible outdoor spaces.

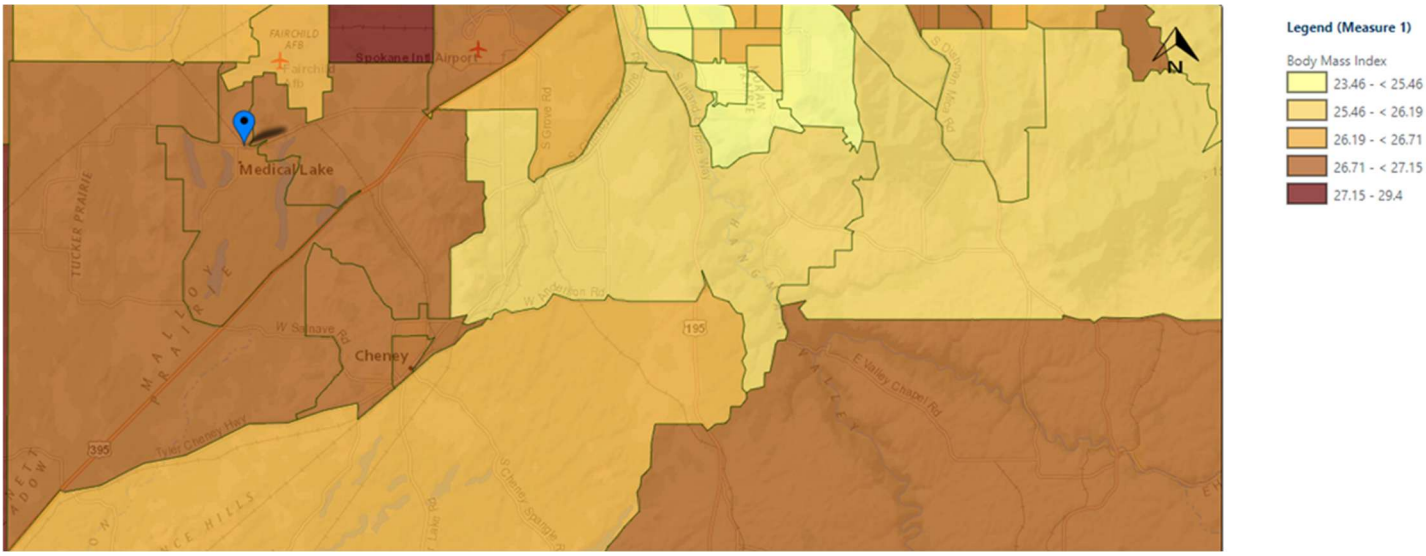
Equity, Health, and Community Well-Being

Equity and Inclusion

Medical Lake's population is less racially diverse than Washington State overall, reinforcing the importance of intentional outreach, inclusive programming, and equitable access to recreational opportunities for all residents.

Health Indicators

Medical Lake's average Body Mass Index (BMI) exceeds the county average, while overall mortality rates align with the state median. Historically limited recreational programming has contributed to reduced opportunities for physical activity. In recent years, the City has reinvested in parks and recreation programming, significantly expanding offerings for youth, adults, and seniors.



Planning Implications

- Expanded active recreation opportunities are critical to improving community health
- Parks and programs serve as frontline public health infrastructure
- Facility access, programming diversity, and affordability are central equity considerations

Community Need and Capacity Constraints

While Medical Lake is not classified as a low-income community, it faces capacity challenges in funding and maintaining a comprehensive parks and recreation system. Key factors include:

- Limited local revenue dedicated to parks and recreation
- Increasing maintenance demands on existing facilities
- Strong public demand for recreational opportunities across age groups
- The need to ensure equitable access regardless of income

State and federal grant funding plays a critical role in bridging these gaps and enabling Medical Lake to invest strategically in recreational infrastructure that supports quality of life and economic vitality.

Key Planning Foundations

Section I establishes the foundational context for the remainder of this Plan. Key takeaways that directly shape future sections include:

- A strong community connection between recreation, health, and identity
- Physical and land-use constraints influencing facility type and distribution
- Demographic and health indicators supporting increased investment in active recreation
- A clear rationale for prioritizing grant funding and strategic partnerships

Subsequent sections translate this context into inventory analysis, public input, demand and need assessment, and a prioritized capital improvement program, ensuring alignment with both community values and RCO planning requirements.

Section II: Mission, Goals, and Governance Framework

Purpose of Section II

This section establishes the policy foundation of the City of Medical Lake Parks and Recreation Master Plan. It translates the community's values, priorities, and aspirations into a clear set of goals and measurable objectives that guide decision-making, investments, and partnerships over the six-year planning horizon.

The goals and objectives outlined in this section satisfy Element 1: Goals and Objectives of the *RCO Manual 2: Planning and Policy Guidelines* and provide direct linkage to future demand analysis, capital improvement planning, and grant funding requests.

Mission and Vision

Mission

To empower the Medical Lake community through accessible, engaging, and sustainable parks and recreation opportunities that promote health, inclusivity, environmental stewardship, and lifelong enjoyment.

Vision

Enriching Lives, Connecting Community.

Medical Lake envisions a vibrant and connected community where parks and recreation enhance quality of life, strengthen social bonds, support personal well-being, and reflect the City's identity as a place of health, healing, and outdoor enjoyment.

Parks and Recreation Planning Goals and Objectives

The following goals express the City's long-term intent. Each goal is supported by objectives that are specific, measurable, or reportable, demonstrating how progress will be evaluated and when a goal has been achieved.

Goal 1: Promote Health, Wellness, and Active Living

Intent:
Strengthen community health by providing safe, accessible facilities and programs that encourage physical activity, mental well-being, and lifelong recreation.

Objectives:

1. Increase opportunities for active recreation, including trails, sports facilities, and fitness oriented programs, across all age groups.
2. Expand year-round parks and recreation programming for youth, adults, and seniors, focusing on physical activity and wellness.
3. Improve connectivity between neighborhoods, parks, and schools to support walking, biking, and non-motorized recreation.
4. Prioritize investments that address local health indicators, including elevated BMI trends, through infrastructure and programming.

Goal 2: Ensure Equitable and Inclusive Access to Parks and Recreation

Intent:
Remove barriers to access and ensure that all residents, regardless of age, ability, income, or background, can benefit from Medical Lake's parks and recreation system.

Objectives:

1. Improve physical accessibility of parks and facilities through ADA-compliant upgrades and inclusive design.
2. Provide affordable or no cost programming opportunities, including scholarships or reduced fee programs, when feasible.
3. Distribute parks and facilities to serve all neighborhoods, with attention to safe routes and proximity to residential areas.
4. Integrate inclusive and culturally responsive programming that reflects community needs and promotes broad participation.

Goal 3: Protect Natural Resources and Promote Environmental Stewardship

Intent:
Preserve Medical Lake's natural assets while providing sustainable recreation opportunities that respect environmental constraints.

Objectives:

1. Protect and enhance sensitive areas such as wetlands, shorelines, and natural landscapes through responsible park design and management.
2. Incorporate green infrastructure strategies that reduce stormwater runoff, improve water quality, and enhance habitat.
3. Increase tree canopy and natural landscaping in parks to improve environmental function and user comfort.
4. Balance recreational use with conservation by prioritizing low impact and nature based recreation where appropriate.

Goal 4: Strengthen Community Identity and Social Connection

Intent:
Use parks and recreation as gathering places that reinforce Medical Lake's identity, history, and strong sense of community.

Objectives:

1. Enhance parks as venues for community events, festivals, and informal social interaction.
2. Integrate public art, interpretive elements, or placemaking features that reflect Medical Lake's heritage as a place of healing and wellness.
3. Support programs and facilities that encourage multi-generational and family-oriented recreation.
4. Improve park amenities that foster comfort, safety, and social use, including seating, shade, and restrooms where appropriate.

Goal 5: Sustain a Resilient and Efficient Parks and Recreation System

Intent:
Ensure the long-term viability of the parks and recreation system through strategic planning, partnerships, and responsible investment.

Objectives:

1. Prioritize maintenance, renovation, and reinvestment in existing parks and facilities to extend their useful life.
2. Establish and strengthen partnerships with schools, neighboring jurisdictions, and community organizations to maximize resources.
3. Use grant funding strategically to supplement limited local resources and advance priority projects.
4. Align capital investments with realistic funding capacity, staffing levels, and long-term operational sustainability.

Guiding Principles

The following principles guide interpretation and implementation of the goals and objectives:

- **Health First:** Parks and recreation function as essential public health infrastructure.
- **Inclusivity:** Equitable access and participation are fundamental to community well-being.
- **Partnerships:** Collaboration strengthens service delivery and expands opportunity.
- **Service Excellence:** High quality facilities and programs create meaningful community experiences.
- **Continuous Improvement:** Ongoing evaluation ensures relevance, effectiveness, and accountability.
- **Sustainability:** Environmental, economic, and social sustainability are integrated into all planning decisions.

Governance and Advisory Framework

City Governance

Medical Lake operates under a Mayor-Council form of government, with legislative authority vested in the City Council and executive authority in the Mayor. Adoption of this Master Plan by the City Council establishes formal policy direction for parks and recreation planning and investment.

Parks and Recreation Advisory Board

The City established a Parks and Recreation Advisory Board to support implementation of this Plan. The Board's role includes:

- Advising City staff and elected officials on parks and recreation priorities
- Supporting public involvement and community outreach
- Assisting with evaluation of projects and policy recommendations

The Parks and Recreation Advisory Board strengthens transparency, community engagement, and alignment between community priorities and City decision making.

Relationship to Subsequent Plan Elements

The goals and objectives in this section:

- Guide inventory evaluation and identification of system strengths and deficiencies
- Inform the demand and need analysis
- Establish policy direction for the Capital Improvement Program
- Provide a clear framework for grant justification and RCO eligibility
- Inform the Comprehensive Plan

Together, they ensure that Medical Lake's Parks and Recreation Master Plan is actionable, fiscally responsible, and responsive to community needs.

Section III: Park Classification and Design Framework

Purpose of Park Classification

Park classifications provide a consistent framework for evaluating Medical Lake's existing park system, identifying service gaps, and guiding future investments. Standardized classifications clarify the intended role, scale, and service area of each park type and allow the City to align local planning decisions with nationally recognized best practices.

The classifications used in this Plan are adapted from the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) guidelines and tailored to reflect Medical Lake's size, character, land constraints, environmental conditions, and community needs. These classifications are used throughout the inventory, demand analysis, and Capital Improvement Program (CIP) to ensure coordinated and defensible planning decisions.

Medical Lake Planning Context

Medical Lake is a small city with:

- Limited undeveloped land within city limits
- Established residential neighborhoods
- Significant natural features, including the lake and wetlands
- A growing emphasis on wellness, active living, and multi-generational recreation

As a result, Medical Lake's parks system prioritizes:

- Neighborhood scale and multi-use parks
- Compact, high-quality park designs
- Trail connections and non-motorized access
- Strategic partnerships, particularly with schools and regional providers

Not all park classifications are expected to be equally represented. Instead, this framework helps the City determine which park types are most appropriate given available land, resources, and community demand.

Park Classification Types and Medical Lake Applications

Neighborhood Parks (Mini or Pocket Parks)

General Definition

Neighborhood parks serve limited or isolated recreational needs and are typically small, localized spaces designed for informal use. They may include seating, small play elements, landscaping, or scenic overlooks.

Typical Size: Less than 1 acre

Service Area: Approximately ¼ mile

Medical Lake Application

Neighborhood parks are particularly well suited to Medical Lake due to:

- Limited vacant land
- Opportunities for infill and redevelopment
- Need for neighborhood scale amenities within walking distance

In Medical Lake, neighborhood parks may function as:

- Pocket parks within existing neighborhoods
- Trailheads or rest nodes along the community pathway system
- Passive spaces near commercial or civic areas

Given Medical Lake's residential patterns, neighborhood parks are critical for ensuring equitable access to recreation without requiring vehicle travel.

Design Considerations for Medical Lake

- Emphasis on accessibility via sidewalks and trails
- Limited or no on-site parking
- Small scale playground equipment
- Passive recreation focus with seating, shade, and landscaping
- Low maintenance design appropriate for small park budgets

Community Parks

General Definition

Community parks serve as recreational and social hubs for the entire City. These parks provide a balance of active and passive recreation opportunities in a familiar local setting.

Typical Size: Less than 10 acres

Service Area: Community-wide

Medical Lake Application

Community parks are a primary park type for Medical Lake. They support:

- Youth, adult, and family recreation programs
- Informal sports and play
- Community gathering and social interaction

Design Considerations for Medical Lake

- Strong pedestrian and trail connectivity
- Informal athletic facilities (playgrounds, courts, open grass areas)
- Athletic fields (soccer, baseball, softball, football)
- Support amenities such as restrooms, lighting, and seating
- Compatibility with surrounding residential uses
- Small scale parking

School Grounds/Facilities

General Definition

School grounds/facilities combine educational and recreational uses through shared facilities that benefit both students and the broader community.

Typical Size: No Standard

Service Area: Community-wide

Medical Lake Application

School grounds/facilities are a strategic opportunity for Medical Lake given:

- Limited land availability for new park acquisition
- The efficiency of shared use agreements

- The ability to expand recreational access with minimal capital cost

School facilities may function as:

- Neighborhood parks outside school hours
- Youth athletic sites
- Community event and program spaces

Design Considerations for Medical Lake

- Formal joint-use agreements with the school district
- Clear expectations regarding access, maintenance, and scheduling
- Facilities designed to support both school and community needs

Regional Parks

General Definition

Regional parks serve multiple neighborhoods and support a wider range of recreational activities, including larger community gatherings and programmed events.

Typical Size: 10 acres or more

Service Area: West Plains

Medical Lake Application
Due to land constraints, regional parks in Medical Lake may:

- Emphasize multi-functional design
- Serve as signature community assets

Regional parks play a key role in:

- Hosting citywide events
- Preserving natural features
- Providing facilities not feasible in neighborhood or community parks

Design Considerations for Medical Lake

- Balancing active recreation with natural resource preservation
- Adequate access and parking without disrupting surrounding neighborhoods
- Flexible spaces that accommodate changing community needs

Sports Complexes

General Definition

Sports complexes consolidate multiple athletic fields or facilities at a single site to maximize efficiency, management, and programming.

Typical Size: Based on projected demand and facility mix

Service Area: Community-wide or regional

Medical Lake Application

Sports complexes represent a conditional park type for Medical Lake. Due to:

- High land and development costs
- Intensive maintenance requirements
- Limited local staffing and funding

Future sports complex development would likely require:

- Regional partnerships
- Grant funding
- Use of land outside traditional neighborhood settings

Design Considerations for Medical Lake

- Location adjacent to non-residential areas
- Buffering from residential neighborhoods
- Strong transportation and parking access
- Facilities scaled to realistic participation levels

Accessibility, Sustainability, and Operations Considerations

Across all park types, Medical Lake prioritizes:

- ADA-compliant design and inclusive access
- Safe routes via sidewalks, trails, and low speed streets
- Sustainable materials and practices to reduce long-term maintenance
- Operational efficiency, recognizing limited local resources

Park classification decisions consider not only recreational value, but also life-cycle costs, staffing capacity, and long-term sustainability.

Role of Park Classification in Future Planning

The park classifications established in this section:

- Provide the framework for the parks inventory and mapping
- Support the Level of Service and demand analysis
- Guide prioritization in the Capital Improvement Program
- Strengthen justification for state and federal grant funding

By tailoring national standards to local conditions, Medical Lake ensures its parks and recreation system is strategic, realistic, and community centered.

Section IV: Parks and Recreation Inventory

Purpose of the Inventory

The Parks and Recreation Inventory document the existing parks, trails, and recreational facilities within the City of Medical Lake. This inventory provides the factual foundation for evaluating system capacity, identifying deficiencies, and determining priorities for future investment.

Consistent with RCO Manual 2, this inventory focuses on:

- Location, size, and classification of parks and facilities
- Existing amenities and recreational functions
- General condition and accessibility considerations
- Operational constraints that influence system performance

The findings in this section are used directly in the Demand and Need Analysis and the Capital Improvement Program.

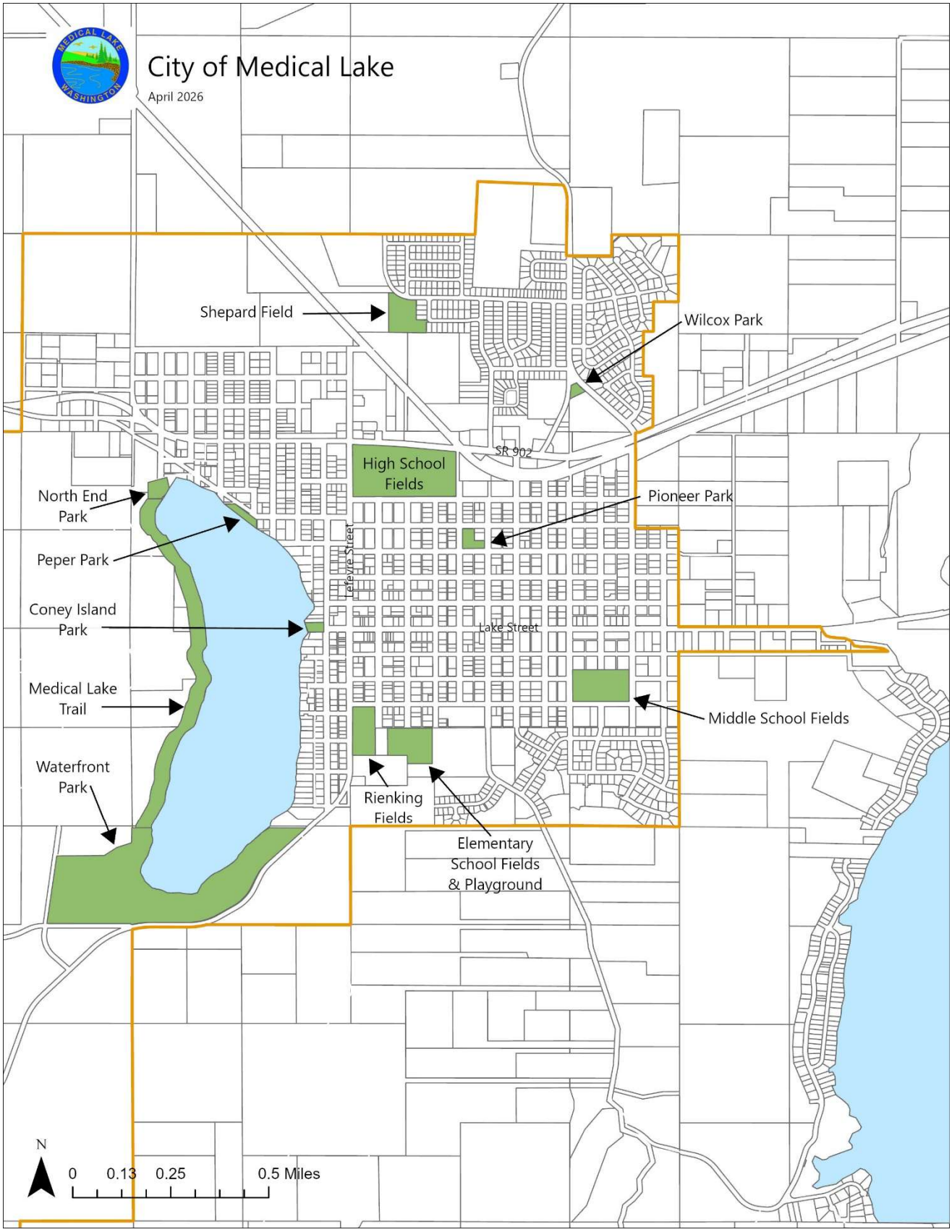
Overview of the Existing Park System

The City of Medical Lake currently manages seven parks and an interconnected trail and pathway system, totaling approximately 23.42 acres of parkland, in addition to multi-use trail mileage.

Park System Summary

- Total Parks: 7
- Total Parkland: Approximately 39.5 acres
- Primary Recreation Assets:
    - Waterfront access
    - Neighborhood parks
    - Athletic fields
    - A community-wide trail system

Medical Lake's parks vary widely in size and function, ranging from large community parks to small neighborhood and lake access sites.


City of Medical Lake
April 2026
Shepard Field
Wilcox Park
SR 902
High School Fields
North End Park
Pioneer Park
Peper Park
Lefevre Street
Coney Island Park
Lake Street
Medical Lake Trail
Middle School Fields
Waterfront Park
Rienking Fields
Elementary School Fields & Playground
N
0
0.13
0.25
0.5 Miles

Park Land Inventory Summary

Park Name	Park Classification	Developed Acres / Miles	Undeveloped Acres
Waterfront Park	Regional Park (Lake Access)	32 acres	~17 acres
Shepard Field	Community Park	3.5 acres	—
Pioneer Park	Neighborhood Park	1.2 acres	—
Northend Park	Community (Lake Access) Park	1 acre	—
Coney Island Park	Community (Lake Access) Park	0.5 acre	—
Wilcox Park	Neighborhood Park	0.52 acre	—
Peper Park	Neighborhood (Lake Access) Park	.55 acres	—
Trails & Pathways	Linear Recreation	19.5 miles	—

Individual Park Profiles

Each park is described below using a standardized profile to improve clarity and consistency.

Waterfront Park

Park Classification: Regional Park
Acreage: Approximately 32 acres total (15 developed, 17 undeveloped)
Primary Function: Community-wide recreation, waterfront access, tourism
Key Amenities:

- Two baseball/softball fields
- Picnic shelters
- Playground
- Sand volleyball court
- Trails and pathways
- Restrooms
- Free public beach access
- Public Parking

General Condition: Fair
Many amenities remain functional but are outdated due to the absence of a major capital improvement program for more than 30 years.

Accessibility Notes:

- Trail access is extensive but includes uneven pavement in some areas
- Some facilities present ADA challenges

Key Issues and Constraints:

- Trail damage caused by uplift from mature trees
- Aging dugouts and fencing at athletic fields
- Erosion and rockfall risk near Field #2
- Loss of maintenance storage buildings due to wildfire

Planning Implications:
Waterfront Park is both a flagship community asset and the City's most maintenance intensive facility, requiring phased reinvestment and safety improvements.

Shepard Field

Park Classification: Community Park
Acreage: 3.5 acres
Primary Function: Youth sports and athletic events
Key Amenities:

- Open athletic field
- CXT restroom facility
- Reclaimed water irrigation system
- Segment of the Fox Hollow Trail
- Parking Spaces

General Condition: Fair

Accessibility Notes:

- Residents have requested ADA access improvements from Tara Lee Avenue

Key Issues and Constraints:

- Limited parking (17 spaces)
- Trail surface cracking
- Growing demand from youth sports programs

Planning Implications:
Field capacity and parking constraints limit program expansion, signaling a need for targeted improvements or complementary facilities.

Pioneer Park

Park Classification: Neighborhood Park
Acreage: 1.2 acres
Primary Function: Neighborhood recreation and community gathering
Key Amenities:

- Picnic shelter
- Playground
- Community garden
- Restrooms
- Parking Spaces

General Condition: Fair

Accessibility Notes:

- Centrally located and walkable

Key Issues and Constraints:

- Ongoing vandalism
- Need for enhanced security measures

Planning Implications:
Pioneer Park serves as a critical neighborhood hub but requires reinvestment focused on safety and durability.

Northend Park

Park Classification: Community Park
Acreage: 1 acre
Primary Function: Lake access, walking, boating, fishing
Key Amenities:

- Trail access
- Informal shoreline use
- Parking Spaces

General Condition: Fair

Accessibility Notes:

- Trail protected with newly placed barriers

Key Issues and Constraints:

- Limited parking
- Lack of permanent restroom facilities
- Shoreline erosion

Planning Implications:
Northend Park functions as a trail node and lake access point, supporting modest upgrades rather than intensive development.

Coney Island Park

Park Classification: Community Park
Acreage: 0.5 acre
Primary Function: Fishing, boating, downtown connection to lake
Key Amenities:

- Benches and tables
- Public restroom
- Parking Spaces

General Condition: Fair

Accessibility Notes:

- Highly walkable from downtown

Key Issues and Constraints:

- Aging site furnishings
- Limited boating access

Planning Implications:
Enhancements here would strengthen downtown connectivity and tourism without significant land expansion.

Wilcox Park

Park Classification: Neighborhood Park
Acreage: 0.52 acre
Primary Function: Informal neighborhood recreation
Key Amenities:

- Playground
- Benches
- Open green space

General Condition: Good to Fair

Accessibility Notes:

- Easily accessed by surrounding neighborhoods

Key Issues and Constraints:

- Limited permanent site furnishings

Planning Implications:
Small-scale amenity upgrades could significantly improve user experience.

Peper Park

Park Classification: Neighborhood Park
Acreage: .55 acre
Primary Function: Passive recreation and lake viewing
Key Amenities:

- Movable benches
- Sewer pump house infrastructure

General Condition: Fair

Accessibility Notes:

- Accessible but minimally developed

Key Issues and Constraints:

- Shoreline erosion
- Limited amenities

Planning Implications:
Shoreline restoration and seating improvements present opportunities for environmental and recreational enhancement.

Trails and Non-Motorized Network

Medical Lake's trail system is one of the City's most valued recreational assets.

Medical Lake Trail

- Approximately 3 miles in length
- Encircles Medical Lake shoreline
- Connects four parks, downtown, and residential areas

Fox Hollow Trail

- Approximately 1 mile in length
- Connects north Medical Lake neighborhoods to the lake and Shepard Field

Sidewalks and Bike Facilities

- Extensive and expanding system
- Essential for connecting parks, schools, neighborhoods, and civic uses

General Condition: Variable; most segments are functional, with localized repair needs.

Inventory Findings and Planning Implications

The inventory reveals the following key themes:

- **Concentration of investment needs:** Waterfront Park represents the largest recreational opportunity and the greatest maintenance burden.
- **Neighborhood scale parks dominate the system:** Most parks are small, reinforcing the importance of walkability and equitable distribution.
- **Trails function as a unifying system:** Connectivity is a defining strength that supports active living and community health.
- **Deferred maintenance is widespread:** Many facilities remain functional but are approaching or exceeding their intended lifespan.
- **Capacity pressures are emerging:** Youth sports participation and trail use are increasing without corresponding infrastructure expansion.

Planning Implications

- Future investments should prioritize safety, accessibility, and reinvestment in existing assets.
- Trail maintenance and connectivity are critical to achieving health and mobility goals.
- Capital planning must balance aspirational projects with realistic operational capacity.
- This inventory directly shapes the Demand and Need Analysis and informs project prioritization in the Capital Improvement Program.

Section V: Pedestrian and Bicycle Access to Parks and Recreation

Purpose and Role in the Master Plan

Pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure is a critical component of Medical Lake's parks and recreation system. Sidewalks, trails, crossings, and on-street bicycle facilities provide the primary means of access to parks for many residents and are essential to achieving the City's goals for health, equity, safety, and environmental sustainability.

This section evaluates non-motorized access to parks, trails, and recreational facilities in Medical Lake. It builds directly on the Parks and Recreation Inventory (Section IV) to identify connectivity strengths, access gaps, safety concerns, and unmet needs that influence recreation participation and guide future investment priorities.

Existing Pedestrian and Bicycle Network in Medical Lake

Trails as the Core Recreation Spine

Medical Lake benefits from a strong trail system that functions as both a recreational amenity and a transportation corridor:

- **Medical Lake Trail**
  Approximately three miles in length, this multi-use trail loops around Medical Lake and connects Waterfront Park, Northend Park, Peper Park, and Coney Island Park. The trail provides shoreline access, scenic views, and direct connectivity between parks, downtown, and adjacent residential neighborhoods.
- **Fox Hollow Trail**
  This one-mile multi-use trail connects northern neighborhoods to the lake, Shepard Field, and the Medical Lake Trail system, serving both recreational users and residents accessing athletic facilities.

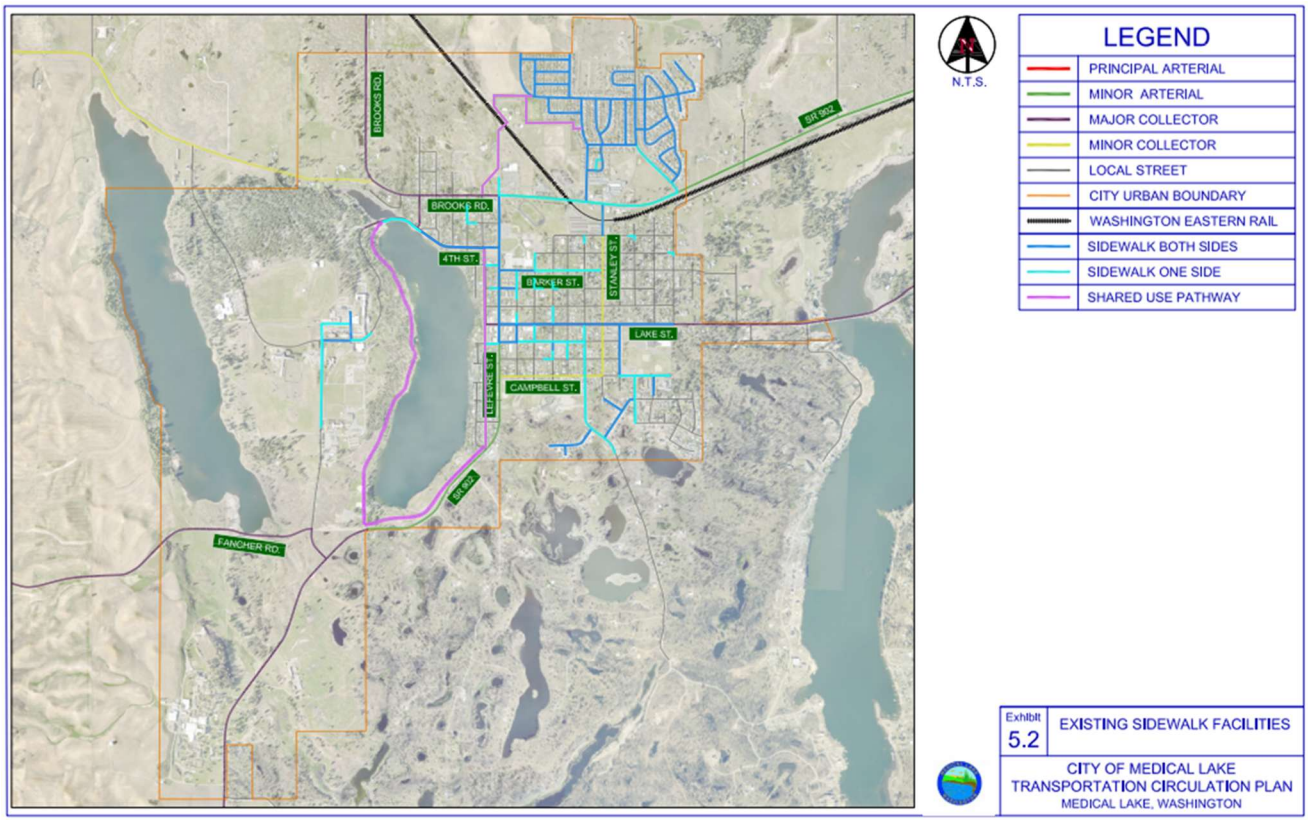
Together, these trails form the backbone of Medical Lake's non-motorized recreation system and are among the City's most heavily used public assets.

Sidewalks, Bike Lanes, and Local Streets

Medical Lake's sidewalk and bicycle facilities vary by neighborhood:

- Older residential areas often lack continuous sidewalks or safe crossings.
- Newer developments typically include sidewalks but may not connect seamlessly to nearby parks or trails.
- Most bicycle travel occurs on shared roadways with limited dedicated bicycle infrastructure.

These conditions affect how easily residents, particularly children, seniors, and individuals with disabilities, can reach parks without a vehicle.



Access to Parks and Recreation Facilities

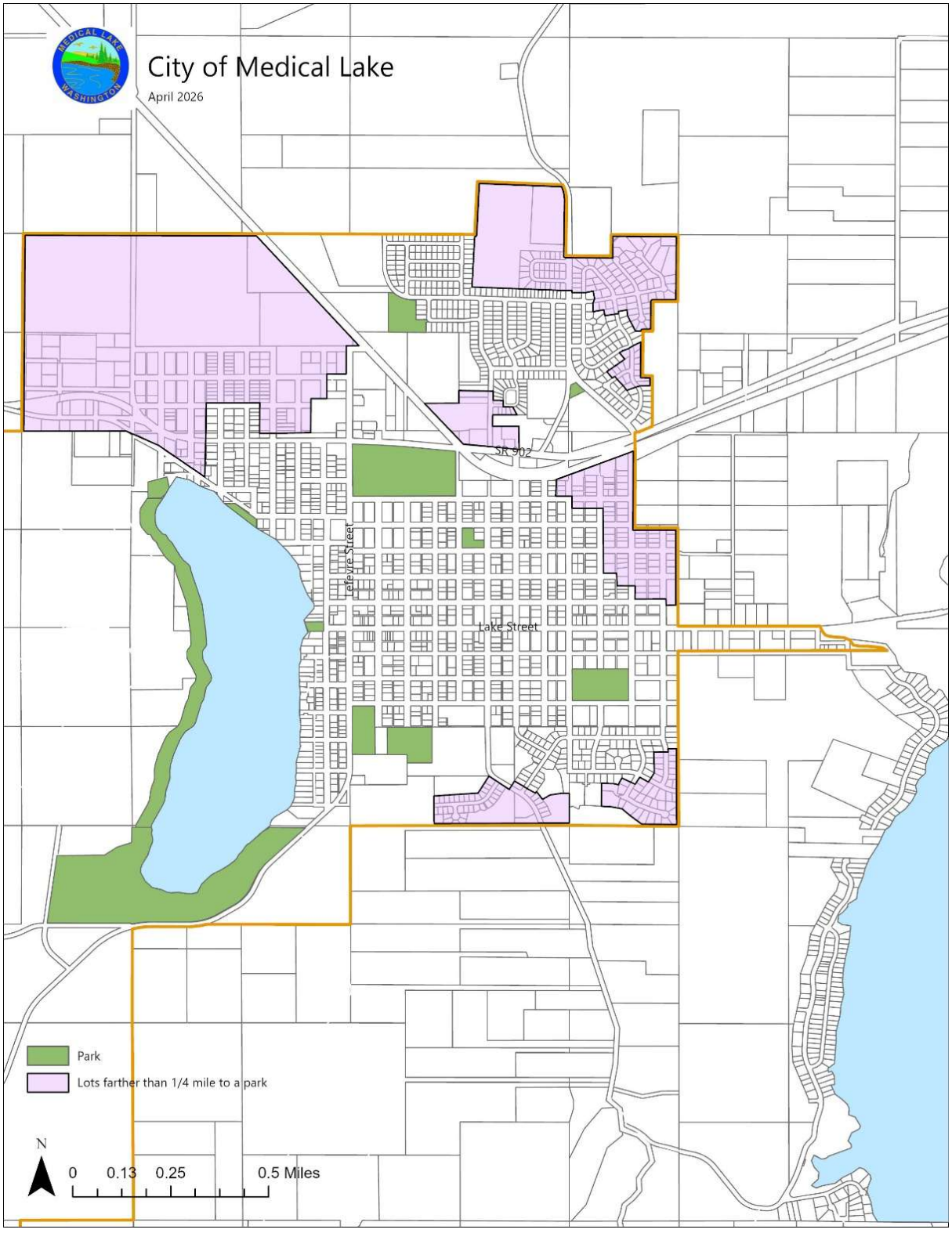
Walkability and Proximity

Most Medical Lake parks are neighborhood-scale facilities, making walkable access especially important. However:

- Some parks lack continuous sidewalk connections from surrounding neighborhoods.
- Roadway crossings near lake-access parks require improved visibility and safety measures.

- Trail access points are not consistently designed for ADA use.

As a result, the physical proximity of parks does not always translate into *functional access*.



Connections to Key Parks

- **Waterfront Park:**
  While regionally significant and well used, access routes rely heavily on the lake trail and select roadway connections. Uneven trail surfaces, erosion, and limited lighting affect safety and usability.
- **Shepard Field:**
  Youth sports participation continues to increase, but parking limitations and the absence of ADA-compliant access routes constrain non-motorized access for families and spectators.
- **Downtown Lake-Access Parks (Coney Island and Northend):**
  These parks are centrally located yet would benefit from enhanced pedestrian crossings, sidewalks, and waterfront connections to strengthen downtown to lake integration.

Safety and Accessibility Considerations

Safety as a Determinant of Use

Safety is consistently one of the most important factors influencing whether individuals choose to walk or bike to recreation destinations. In Medical Lake, key concerns include:

- Cracked and uplifted trail surfaces caused by tree roots and age
- Limited lighting in some areas adjacent to parks
- Inconsistent markings at crossings near trails and parks
- Shared roadway conditions that discourage bicycling for less experienced users

These conditions can disproportionately affect youth, older adults, and individuals with mobility challenges.

ADA Accessibility

While several parks and trails are accessible in principle, barriers remain:

- Slopes and surface conditions limit use for mobility devices
- Access points to trails are not consistently designed to ADA standards
- Requests for improved access, such as at Shepard Field, indicate unmet needs

Addressing accessibility barriers is essential to fulfilling the City's equity and inclusion goals.

Demand, Deficiencies, and Barriers

Demand for Non-Motorized Access

Community investment in expanded recreation programming, combined with increasing trail and park use, has heightened demand for safe and reliable pedestrian and bicycle connections. Residents increasingly expect to access parks:

- Without driving
- With children or strollers
- Using adaptive mobility devices
- As part of daily fitness routines

Key Deficiencies

Based on the inventory and observed conditions, the principal deficiencies include:

- Gaps in sidewalk connectivity to neighborhood parks
- Trail maintenance backlogs affecting safety
- Limited non-motorized access to athletic facilities
- Inconsistent crossings and wayfinding near lake-access areas
- Few bicycle facilities designed for all ages and abilities

Planning Implications and Priorities

Improving pedestrian and bicycle access is essential to maximizing the value of Medical Lake's existing parks and recreation assets. Key planning implications include:

- **Trails are both a strength and a liability:** Continued use without reinvestment will accelerate deterioration and safety risks.
- **Access improvements can expand capacity without acquiring land:** Better connections increase park usability without adding new facilities.
- **Equitable access depends on non-motorized options:** Neighborhood parks are only effective when residents can safely reach them.
- **Grant funding is a critical implementation tool:** Non-motorized improvements align strongly with LWCF and WWRP-Recreation funding priorities.

Relationship to Other Plan Elements

The findings in this section directly inform:

- The Demand and Need Analysis, by identifying where access limits participation
- The Capital Improvement Program, by prioritizing trail repairs, sidewalk gaps, ADA upgrades, and crossings
- Grant applications, by demonstrating clear links between community health, access, and recreation investments

Section VI: Community Needs, Priorities, and Implementation Program

Purpose of Section VI

This section translates the findings from prior chapters into an implementation focused action framework. It summarizes community identified issues, evaluates demand and need for parks and recreation services, documents public involvement, and establishes a six-year Capital Improvement Program (CIP) that guides future investment in Medical Lake's parks, trails, and recreation facilities.

This section fulfills RCO Manual 2 required elements related to public involvement, demand and need analysis, capital planning, and monitoring, ensuring continued eligibility for RCO grant programs.

Summary of Community Issues and Challenges

Based on system inventory, access analysis, health indicators, and public engagement, the City of Medical Lake faces the following core challenges:

- **Deferred maintenance** across multiple parks and trail segments
- **Safety and accessibility concerns**, including aging infrastructure and ADA gaps
- **Growing demand for recreation programming**, particularly youth sports, fitness, and special events
- **Limited land availability**, requiring efficient and multi-use facilities
- **High dependence on non-motorized access**, especially trails and sidewalks, to reach parks
- **Limited local funding**, necessitating strategic use of state and federal grants

These challenges directly shape the City's approach to prioritization and implementation.

Public Involvement Process (Element 3)

Community Outreach Summary

Medical Lake conducted a community needs assessment using multiple engagement methods, including:

- A community parks and recreation survey distributed both online and through in person outreach

- Targeted outreach to park users and program participants
- Workshops and meetings involving City staff, elected officials, and community stakeholders

The outreach effort provided residents with multiple opportunities to participate regardless of age, mobility, or technology access.

Key Community Priorities Identified

Community feedback consistently emphasized:

- **Paved trails and pathways** as the highest community priority
- **Playgrounds, picnic areas, and passive recreation spaces**
- **Expanded recreation programming**, including adult fitness, youth sports, and special events
- **Improved connectivity** between parks and neighborhoods
- **Interest in a dog park**
- **Upgrades to existing facilities** rather than expansion without maintenance

These priorities directly inform the demand analysis and capital program identified below.

Demand and Need Analysis (Element 4)

Approach

Demand and need were evaluated by integrating:

- The parks and recreation inventory (Section IV)
- Pedestrian and bicycle access evaluation (Section V)
- Community survey results
- Demographic and health data
- Observed capacity and condition constraints

Rather than relying solely on acreage based standards, Medical Lake emphasizes a functional, access based level of service appropriate to its size and land constraints.

Key Findings

- **Park access matters more than park acreage** in a small community with limited undeveloped land
- **Trails serve as the City's primary recreation backbone**, but deferred maintenance limits capacity and safety
- **Existing parks can meet many needs if reinvested in strategically**

- **Youth sports participation is increasing**, stressing field capacity, parking, and support amenities
- **Equitable access depends on pedestrian, bicycle, and ADA improvements**

These findings demonstrate that Medical Lake's recreation needs can largely be met through reinvestment, connectivity, and incremental expansion, rather than large-scaled acquisition.

Six--Year Capital Improvement Program (Element 5)

CIP Framework

The following six-year Capital Improvement Program (CIP) prioritizes projects that:

- Address safety, accessibility, and deferred maintenance
- Expand system capacity through efficiencies rather than land acquisition
- Align with RCO funding eligibility
- Reflect realistic staffing and operational capacity

Table 6.1 – Six-Year- Parks & Recreation Capital Improvement Program

Project	Description	Estimated Cost	Funding Strategy	Priority
Waterfront Park Safety & Amenity Upgrades	Field fencing, trail repairs, lighting, ADA improvements	$450,000	RCO, Local	High
Waterfront Park Maintenance Storage Replacement	Replacement of wildfire destroyed- facilities	$250,000	RCO, Local	High
Trail System Repair & Resurfacing	Medical Lake Trail & Fox Hollow Trail rehabilitation	$600,000	RCO, WSDOT, Local	High
Shepard Field ADA Access & Parking Expansion	Improved access and spectator capacity	$200,000	RCO, Local	High
Playground Reinvestment Program	Replacement of aging playground equipment systemwide	$350,000	RCO, Local	Medium
Neighborhood Park Amenity Upgrades	Benches, tables, shade, site furnishings	$150,000	Local, Grants	Medium
Dog Park Development	Community-requested facility at suitable City site	$175,000	RCO, Donations	Medium
Trail Wayfinding & Safety Enhancements	Signage, crossings, lighting	$125,000	RCO, Local	Medium
ADA Access Improvements (Systemwide)	Trail access points, restrooms, pathways	$300,000	RCO, Local	High

Cost estimates are planning level figures and will be refined during project development.

Long-Term Opportunities Beyond Six Years

Projects identified as long-term or requiring substantial funding include:

- Development of additional Waterfront Park recreation amenities
- Expansion of field capacity through partnerships
- Community gathering or indoor recreation facilities

These initiatives remain important but are dependent on funding availability and future community priorities.

Monitoring, Evaluation, and Plan Updates (Element 6)

This Parks and Recreation Master Plan is intended to be a living document.

Ongoing Implementation

- The Parks and Recreation Advisory Board will review progress at least annually
- The Capital Improvement Program will be updated as part of the City's budget process
- Project priorities may be adjusted based on funding opportunities, grant cycles, and community needs

Plan Updates

- Formal plan review is recommended every six years or as required for RCO eligibility
- Data from completed projects, usage patterns, and public input will inform updates

Monitoring ensures ongoing alignment between community goals, available resources, and implementation strategies.

Adoption

Formal adoption of this Master Plan by the Medical Lake City Council establishes:

- Policy direction for parks and recreation planning
- Eligibility for RCO grant programs
- Authorization to pursue implementation actions outlined in this section