

**2021- 2023**  
**Parks Commission**  
**Annual Report**



**Mayor Dion and Honorable Councilors;**

I am pleased to present the Parks Commission Annual Report for 2021 through 2023 for your review.

Our city's parks are treasured public assets that provide essential safe spaces for physical activity and social connections. Other linked public spaces like trails and pedestrian-friendly streets create a stronger transportation system that connects neighborhoods to parks and schools, reduces traffic and parking congestion, and mitigates the effects of climate change.

While issues such as the pandemic, inflation, and a housing crisis have strained budgets and presented new challenges to the city over the last several years, they've also illuminated the necessity of robust parks, trails, and open spaces for our city's public and environmental health. The pandemic, in particular, shone a light on the fact that moving around outdoors is critical for individual and collective physical, mental, and social health and well-being.

The housing and encampment crisis is ongoing, and testing our ability to care for the most vulnerable in our community, many of whom are using parks and public spaces as a refuge. A significant side effect of this crisis is the toll this use is taking on parks and the staff that manage them. We must work to find better solutions for the housing crisis and also protect the integrity of these essential spaces.

Because parks and trails are so vital to our city's public and environmental health, it is important they receive the funding needed to serve the community well. The status quo is untenable given the new challenges confronting the Department. For example, there is an immediate need for personnel who are specifically trained for the social work and communication that has become a regular part of the job for Parks staff. When up to 50% of a Director's or Manager's time is spent directly on the issue of unhoused people in parks, we need a commensurate increase in funding for the Department to ensure all other essential work can also be completed.

The Parks Commission has thus established three objectives for advocacy and attention in 2024, and hopes to align these goals with 2024 Council priorities:

- 1. Obtain additional funding for the Parks Recreation and Facilities (PRF) Department, commensurate with increased work loads, new duties, and public valuation of parks trails and open spaces. Continue to invest in the PRF Department in order to meet public expectations for quality public resources and services.**
- 2. Focus park and trail investments— including staff time and resources— on equitably meeting the needs of underserved neighborhoods and populations and on areas of the city that have been historically under-resourced.**
- 3. Increase mobility and access to public spaces by envisioning streets and trails as linear parks, providing safety, a more balanced transportation system and a stronger economy.**

Respectfully submitted,

Jaime Parker, Chair, Portland Parks Commission

## **More Detail on the Commission's Objectives**

### **1. Obtain additional budget for the Parks Recreation and Facilities Department to increase staff headcount in order to address several growing, critical issues, and secure additional federal funding to help the City defray the cost of maintaining services:**

- The Forestry Division is in a severely diminished position with most urgent staffing needs.
  - “Forest City” has over 20,000 trees lining our public roadways and many more on public properties, with additional ARPA-funded investments planned in areas like Bayside
  - There are currently insufficient human resources to sustain proper tree maintenance / other tree work, impacting stormwater interception, reduced air pollution, urban heat island mitigation, and wildlife habitat
  - Additional Forestry staff can also be deployed to assist with snow removal efforts in the winter months
- Mitigate impact of homelessness crisis on city parks resources and staff
  - Parks staff is bearing the largest brunt of this ongoing issue, and the problem is longstanding with negative effects on staff mental health
  - The Parks staff work with this population is beyond the scope of their existing training, skills, and resources
  - The department need staff who can collaborate with social service agencies to help the parks staff with cleaning and maintaining encampments areas in public parks
- Consider hiring a grant writer to secure federal funding to close budget gaps and defray city expenses.
  - PRF staffing does not currently support a dedicated grant-writing position, closing off significant avenues for additional revenue generation
  - Federal government awards hundreds of billions of dollars in grants to state and local governments each year to help finance city services such as health care, education, social services, infrastructure, and public safety.
  - The application process is complex; requiring a dedicated staff member. Grant awards will reduce dependency on the city budget.
    - For example, a small city of around 13,000, [Steamboat Springs](#) has a grant writer program and applies for about 40 grants per year with a dedicated team, securing much needed funding

### **2. Focus on underserved neighborhoods and populations in park and trail investments other**

- Using outreach and inclusionary practices, invite more people from the community to join conversations about parks and civic investments in our open spaces and trails, in alignment with goals of Parks and Recreation
  - Engage with neighborhoods and communities without existing “Friends” groups, to ensure fair representation for these communities
  - Focus Greenspace Gathering (Parks Commission Annual Meeting) on hearing from constituents in underserved neighborhoods
  - CIP inclusion of pavilions/picnic areas and other amenities that appeal to a broad

range of park users

- Make continued progress towards equitable park and open space access
  - While the City has made great strides towards objectives for walkability to parks and open spaces, access is not universal.
  - CIP decisions must continue to prioritize closing these gaps as well as ensure equitable development of amenities valued by communities furthest from opportunity.
  - The Parks Commission will continue to advocate for these focus areas.

### **3. Increase mobility and access to public spaces**

- Connecting neighborhoods and the city: being within a 1/4 mile of a park is only useful if it is safe and pleasant to get there.
- Linear parks and green streets: parks need accessibility, and are greatly enhanced by being connected with safe, efficient routes and pathways.
  - Our City Code and Design Manual should support best practices in urban design that consider all users of streets and public ways
    - Shared Streets, Skinny Streets, and low-speed streets are examples of proven enhancements to the built environment.
    - Sidewalk and Trail plowing should be supported by equipment and staffing commensurate with winter operations on our streets.
  - Strengthen connections to transit, and pedestrian amenities at and on routes to transit stops, with a focus on previously underserved areas.
  - Trails can be highly cost effective ways to achieve greater mobility, and fall squarely within the purview of the PRF Department
    - Partner groups like Portland Trails and the Bicycle Coalition of Maine stand ready to work with the City to greatly increase and enhance non-auto transportation.

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## OVERVIEW

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

The Portland Park System includes over 67 parks and playgrounds, 7.5 miles of multi use trails, 10 community gardens, 2 stadiums, 16 cemeteries and dozens of athletic fields and courts, all spread across 1,000+ acres of land.

Explore the parks: <https://www.portlandmaine.gov/1898/Parks-Trails-and-Playgrounds>

The Parks Commission is composed of citizen volunteers approved by the City Council and supported by staff from the Parks Recreation and Facilities Department.

### **Current Parks Commissioners**

Jaime Parker, Chair, Portland Trails 2022-2025  
Beth Rabbitt, Vice Chair, Public-at-large 2022-2025  
John Clark, Public-at-large 2023-2026  
Alexis Lopez Del Vecchio, Public-at-large 2023-2026  
Ashley Burdick, Public-at-large 2023-2026  
William Elting, Public-at-large 2022-2025  
Donna Gartland, Public-at-large 2022-2025  
Kristen Fulmer, Public-at-large 2021-2024  
Robert Foster, Land Bank Representative 2021-2024  
Helen Coyne, Public-at-large 2021-2024  
Marie Gray, Friends of Deering Oaks 2021-2024  
Stephen Bentsen, Public-at-large 2021-2024

### **Previous Parks Commissioners**

Zack Anchors, Friends of Eastern Promenade 2017-2020  
Colette Bouchard, Public-at-Large 2017-2020  
Jon Kachmar, Land Bank Representative 2020-2023  
Cynthia Loebenstein, Friends of Evergreen Cemetery (Chair 2019-present) 2015-2021  
Ana Lagunez, Public-at-large 2018-2021  
Craig Lapine, Public-at-large 2015-2020  
Meri Lowry, Land Bank Representative 2010-2019  
Michael Mertaugh, Public-at-Large (V. Chair 2019-present) 2014-2020  
Nathan Robbins, Public-at-Large (V. Chair 2018-2019) 2015-2021

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.portlandmaine.gov/345/Parks-Commission>

Amy Segal, Public-at-Large 2017-2020  
Dory Waxman, Public-at-Large (Chair 2017-2019) 2015-2021  
Caitie Whelan, Public-at-Large (stepped down Oct 2020) 2019-2022  
Mayor Kate Snyder, City Council Representative, 2019-present  
Brian Batson, City Council Representative 2018-2019

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

Ethan Hipple, Director of Parks, Recreation and Facilities Department  
Alex Marshall, Parks Director  
Jennifer DeRice, Assistant Parks Director  
Jessica Teesdale, Executive Assistant  
Madeline Groeger, Administrative Associate

### **Parks Commission Subcommittees:**

- Annual Report & Inventory
- Finance
- Parks Initiatives
- Community Outreach

## **NEW DEVELOPMENTS**

Some of the more significant developments reported in Park Commission meetings over the time period:

- Futsal Court installation at Kennedy Park
- Dougherty Field Skatepark expansion
- Stroudwater Preserve Bridge and open space planning
- Preble Fields Stormwater and Field restoration project
- Western Prom Master Planning and implementation
- Dougherty Field playground and pathway planning
- Portland Parks Conservancy established
- Portland Youth Corps established
- Eastern Prom and Fish Point vegetation clearing and improvement projects
- Riverton Trolley Park Master Plan
- Baxter Pines Forest Management planning and implementation
- Playground planning and implementation at Lyseth, Dougherty, Talbot School
- Browntail Moth mitigation at Deering Oaks
- Baxter Woods Leash Law changes
- Public Toilet program expansion
- Riverton Preserve planning
- Deering Oaks ADA walkway planning and implementation
- Community Garden expansions and fencing
- Food Truck program at Eastern Prom
- Canopy Project and tree planting efforts in Bayside and city-wide
- Portland Harbor Commons planning

- Union Branch Trail planning
- Congress Square redesign
- North Deering Park acquisition and opening
- Encampment issues in City parks and trails
- VEranda Street Waterfront Park
- C3 Concert proposal at Payson Park
- Big Belly trash receptacles
- Payson Park Playground and pathway planning and implementation
- Maine Conservation Corps yearly partnership with Portland Trails in Presumpscot River Preserve

## PARK FINANCE

The operational expenditures of the various departments in the city are met by a combination of General Fund budget allocations and retained revenues from fees, grants, and other sources.

In most budget years, over two-thirds of the Parks, Recreation, and Facilities Department's operating expenditures are met by retained revenues from fees and user charges, with the General Fund budget making up the difference.

Several facilities managed by the Department—including the Riverside Golf Course, Merrill Auditorium, and Expo Center—cover most of their operating costs through retained revenues. Revenues have historically exceeded operational expenditures, for some of these facilities.

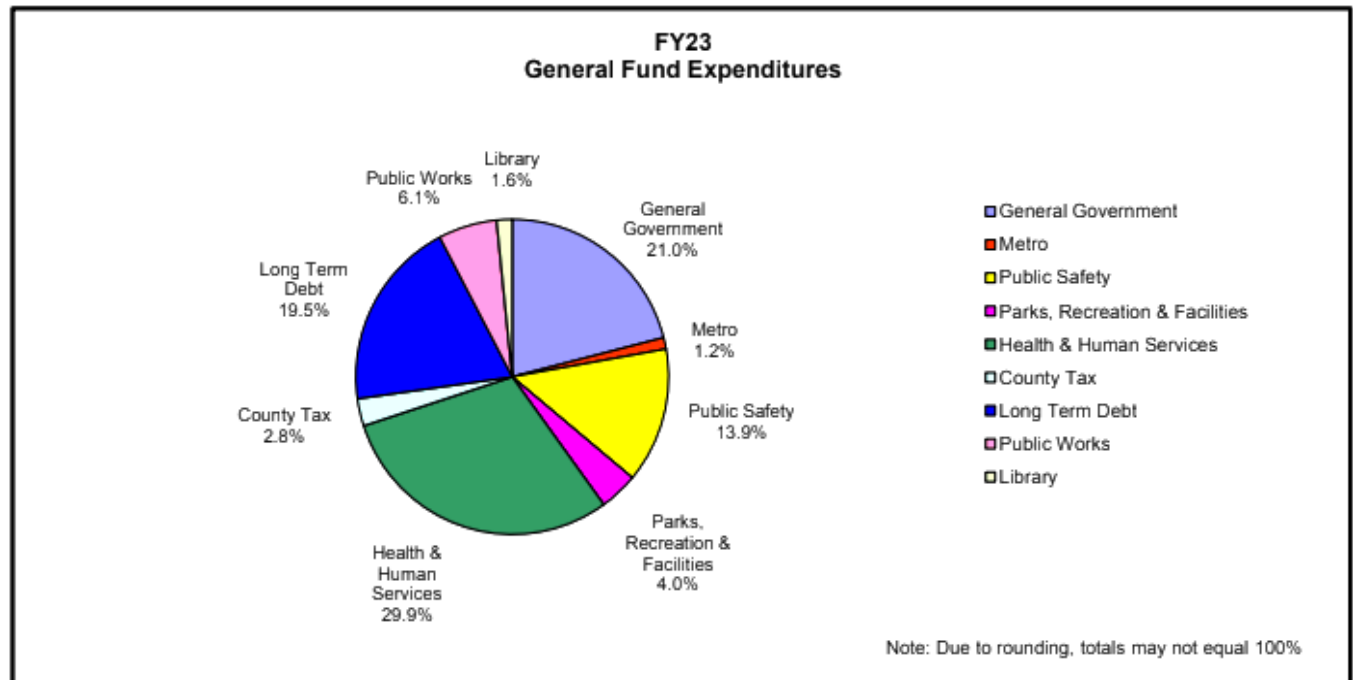


## City Budget Comparisons

It is a useful context to understand how budgeting for Parks fits into the larger City of Portland budget. At a macro level the total city budget for FY2023 is \$477 million (including Schools). The Parks Recreation and Facilities budget is \$11.4 million, with Parks plus Forestry at \$2 million, and Recreation at \$1.86 million. Other departments are shown below.

Department	\$ in millions
City plus Schools	477
PRFD	11.4
Parks	1.2
Forestry	.88
Recreation	1.86
Facilities and other	7.46
DPW	17
HHS	55
Fire	20.34
Police	16.7

**Based on these figures, Parks plus Forestry account for only .44% of the total City Budget. With the entire PRF Department accounting for 4%.**



# CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS

Each year the Parks, Recreation and Facilities Department is awarded funds through the CIP process based on recommendations from department heads, with input from citizens, Friends groups and the Parks Commission. Below are the CIP allocations for FY 2021 through 2024.

## FY 2021

Appropriation      New Bond Authorization

### Parks, Rec & Public Assembly

Lyseth Playground Replacement	275,000	275,000	
Portland Exposition Building Renovation Plan	165,000	165,000	
Deering Oaks ADA Walkway Paving	149,000	149,000	
Riverton Preserve ADA Trail	96,000	96,000	
Wilde Chapel Emergency Repairs	75,000		75,000
Riverton School Basketball Reconstruction	69,000	69,000	
Evergreen Cemetery Frontage Improvements	53,000	53,000	
Golf Course Improvements/ADA Updates	50,000	50,000	
Portland Public Aquatics - New Pool Engineering / Planning	50,000	50,000	
Dougherty Field Irrigation	46,000	46,000	
Box Boom Lighting Project	40,000	40,000	
Rubber Flooring Completion - Ice Arena	37,000	37,000	
Payson Park Tennis & Basketball Courts Sealing/Painting	29,000	29,000	
Longfellow Playground Climbing Net	27,000	27,000	

## FY 2022

**Facilities**

Facilities & Waterfront	212 Canco Roof Replacement	325,000	325,000
Facilities & Waterfront	Offices & Customer Service Areas A/C Installation	150,000	150,000
Fire Department	Riverton Station - Boiler Room Upgrades	150,000	150,000
Parks & Rec	Golf Course Upgrades - HVAC and Drainage	115,000	115,000
Parks & Rec	Evergreen Cemetery Columbaria Phase II	108,000	108,000
Public Schools	Masonry Repair at Deering High School	150,000	150,000
Public Schools	Technology & Fire Alarm System Upgrades - PIES	100,000	100,000
Public Schools	Install fire sprinkler system - PIES	130,000	130,000
Public Schools	Door Access Controls - King and Lincoln	115,000	115,000
Public Works	Federal Street Cemetery Wall Repair	35,000	35,000

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**Parks, Fields, Trails**

Parks & Rec	Skatepark Expansion	50,000	50,000
Parks & Rec	ADA Walkway Paving--Deering Oaks Court Resurfacing - Reiche and West End (Various), Lyman	118,000	118,000
Parks & Rec	Moore, Fox St, Talbot School	97,000	97,000
Planning & Urban Development	Congress Square Redesign - Construction Drawing Completion	50,000	50,000

**FY 2023**

**PARKS & RECREATION**

Parks, Fields, Trails	Congress Square Redesign	900,000	900,000		
Parks, Fields, Trails	Dougherty Skate Park Expansion	235,000	235,000		
Parks, Fields, Trails	Riverton Trolley Park Rehabilitation	125,000	125,000		
Parks, Fields, Trails	Longfellow Playground Design	50,000	50,000		
Parks, Fields, Trails	Portland Harbor Common	75,000	75,000		
Facilities	Bridge Over Dole Brook (Emergency Replacement)	255,000	255,000		
Facilities	Riverton Pool Filter Replacement	130,000	130,000		
Parks, Fields, Trails	Back Cove Trail Reconstruction	95,000	95,000		

**FACILITIES**

Facilities	Replace Deck 2 Pavement and Membrane	550,000	550,000		
Facilities	Sealants and Concreate Repairs Levels 2 and 3 290K one year and levels 4	290,000	290,000		
Facilities	Portland Ocean Terminal Structural Repair	375,000	75,000	300,000	(3)
Facilities	212 Roof Replacement (4 Phases)	270,000	270,000		
Facilities	Police Dispatch Renovation/Expansion	115,000	0	115,000	(2)
Facilities	90 Anderson St - Exterior Upgrades	100,000	100,000		
Facilities	Observatory - Painting and Other Maintenance	70,000	70,000		
Facilities	Replace Concrete Steps/Railings & Other	200,000	0	200,000	(2)
Marine	On going pile/pier work at OG and P.O.T	125,000	125,000		
Facilities	Ocean Ave - Roof Replacement	65,000	65,000		
Facilities	Bramhall - Boiler Room Upgrades	155,000	155,000		
Facilities	Additional Appropriations for Previously Approved Capital Projects	3,250,000	0.00	3,250,000	(5)

**FY 2024**

**PARKS & RECREATION**

Parks, Rec & Public Assembly	Deering Oaks ADA Sidewalks and Curbing - Tennis Court Rd (State to D	335,000	335,000		
Parks, Rec & Public Assembly	Preble Field Fitness Course	30,000	20,000	10,000	(3)
Parks, Rec & Public Assembly	Great Diamond Island Basketball Court Reconstruction	35,000	35,000		
Parks, Rec & Public Assembly	Clark Street, Tyng-Tate Playground Replacement and Reiche Design	150,000	150,000		
Parks, Rec & Public Assembly	Evergreen Cemetery Expansion Plan - Phase III	100,000	100,000		
Parks, Rec & Public Assembly	Riverton Tennis Conversion to Pickleball Courts	150,000		150,000	(3)
Parks, Rec & Public Assembly	Court Resurfacing: Various Tennis/Pickleball & Basketball Courts	50,000		50,000	(3)
Parks, Rec & Public Assembly	Dougherty Athletic Field - Additional Funding for Completion	145,000		145,000	(3)
Parks, Rec & Public Assembly	Lyseth Playground - Additional Funding for Completion	80,000	80,000		
Planning & Urban Developme	Congress Square Redesign	700,000	500,000	200,000	(3)

## MAJOR COMPLETED PARKS PROJECTS 2021 TO 2023

Year Completed	Project	City Funding	Partner Funding	Total Cost	Funding Source
2023	Payson Park Playground	\$350,000		\$350,000	CIP
2023	Talbot School Basketball Reconstruction	\$69,000	\$55,680	\$124,680	CIP/CDBG
2022	Deering Oaks ADA Walkway --State St to Ravine, Pond Edge	\$118,000		\$118,000	CIP
2023	Deering Oaks ADA Walkway--Playground to Ravine Walkway	\$149,000		\$149,000	CIP
2023	Acquisition: North Deering Park	\$80,000	\$720,000	\$800,000	Land Bank, TPL, ORLP, LMF
2023	Skatepark Expansion	\$305,000	\$103,470	\$408,470	CIP, Foundations, Private Donations
2023	Dougherty Field Improvements: Basketball and Playground	\$345,000		\$345,000	CIP
2022	Western Prom Signage (Large)		\$20,000	\$20,000	Maine Med
2022	Acquisition: Redlon Woods	\$112,500	\$112,500	\$225,000	Land Bank, Private Fundraising
2022	Acquisition: Riverton Trolley Park Parcels	\$27,000	\$23,000	\$50,000	Land Bank, Private
2021	Dougherty Field Playground CDBG Equipment Purchase		\$137,000	\$137,000	CDBG
2022	Evergreen Cemetery Columbarium Phase II	\$108,000		\$108,000	CIP
2022	Lyseth Playground	\$325,000		\$325,000	275K CIP, 50K impact fees
2022	Western Prom Wall Repair--Valley St Auto Garage	\$25,000	\$12,500	\$37,500	WP license fee
2022	Public Restrooms, Vault Toilets: Payson Park Playground, Payson Park Tennis, Evergreen Cemetery, Dougherty Field	\$75,000		\$75,000	CIP
2022	Public Restrooms, Metal City Toilets: Deering Oaks/Park Ave, Eastern Prom Tennis, Fox Field		\$75,000	\$75,000	CDBG

2023	Public Restrooms, Metal City Toilets: Monument Way, Fish Pier, Spring Street		\$75,000	\$75,000	ARPA
2021	Evergreen Cemetery Frontage Improvements	\$53,000	\$24,000	\$77,000	Nauman Trust
2021	Fox Field Basketball Lighting	\$95,000		\$95,000	Sustainability office LED grant
2021	Futsal Court and lighting at Fox Field	\$174,000		\$174,000	CDBG, CIP, Impact Fees
2021	Longfellow Playground Netclimber	\$27,000		\$27,000	CIP
2021	Payson Tennis and Basketball Resurfacing	\$29,000		\$29,000	CIP
2021	Western Prom Master Plan		\$40,000	\$40,000	Grant and Friends Group
2021	Amethyst Lot Interim Park	\$340,000		\$340,000	CIP
2023	Community Garden Shed and Fence Replacements	\$137,000		\$137,000	CDBG
2021	Maine Med: Western Prom Switchback Trail Improvements		\$50,000	\$50,000	
2021	Riverton Softball Drainage and Erosion	\$65,000		\$65,000	CIP
2023	Deering Oaks Playground Replacements	\$55,000		\$55,000	CIP
			<b>Total</b>	<b>\$4,511,650</b>	

In the previous three years, the Department has completed the major projects shown above, along with numerous other smaller projects, ongoing maintenance and repairs, public engagement and, as noted elsewhere, a very large increase in dealings with people experiencing homelessness and the resulting encampments.

# AGENDA ITEMS NOVEMBER 2020-OCTOBER 2023

Meetings of the Park Commission with links to agendas for quicker access to packets of meeting agendas, notes and supporting materials.

- [November 2020](#)
- [December 2020](#)
- [January 2021](#)
- [February 2021](#)
- [February 2021 Strategic Planning Meeting](#)
- [March 2021](#)
- [April 2021](#)
- [May 2021](#)
- [May 2021 Greenspace Gathering](#)
- [June 2021](#)
- [July 2021](#)
- [August 2021](#)
- [September 2021](#)
- [October 2021](#)
- [November 2021](#)
- [December 2021](#)
- [January 2022](#)
- [February 2022](#)
- [February 2022 Strategic Planning Meeting](#)
- [March 2022](#)
- [April 2022](#)
- [May 2022](#)
- [June 2022](#)
- July 2022 (no meeting)
- [August 2022](#)
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- [November 2022](#)
- [December 2022](#)
- January 2023(no meeting)
- [February 2023](#)
- [March 2023](#)
- [April 2023](#)
- [May 2023](#)
- [June 2023](#)
- July 2023(no meeting)
- [August 2023](#)
- [September 2023](#)
- [October 2023](#)
- [November 2023](#)



# PARKS INVENTORY FOR THE 2023 CITY OF PORTLAND, MAINE PARKS COMMISSION REPORT

## Park Inventory

The following sources were used in drafting the below inventory of Parks of Portland, Maine: 1. Section 2-44, City Code for City of Portland, Maine, revised 7/10/14 (the “Land Bank Ordinance”) 2. Section 18-11, City Code for City of Portland, Maine, revised 5/28/14 (the “Parks Ordinance”)

**N.B.** School playgrounds and athletic fields are not included in the park inventory even though the City of Portland does maintain and fund ongoing maintenance and replacement. PARKS IN THE CITY OF PORTLAND, MAINE

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

Back Cove Park and Trail  
Barrows Park/Baxters Sundial  
Baxter Pines  
Baxter Woods  
Bayside Park, also known as Stone Street Playground Bell Buoy Park  
Belmeade Park  
Capisic Pond Park  
Clark Street Park  
Congress Square Park  
Deering Oaks Park  
Dougherty Field  
Eastern Promenade Park, East End Beach, Fort Allen Park  
Fessenden Park  
Fort Gorges  
Fort Sumner Park  
Fox Field/Kennedy Park  
Harbor View Park and Tate-Tyng Park  
Heseltine Park  
Lincoln Park  
Lobsterman Park  
Longfellow Square  
Monument Square  
Munjoy South Playground  
North Deering Park (added 12/23)  
Payson Park  
Peppermint Park  
Pleasant Street Park  
Post Office Park  
Riverside Golf Course  
Riverton Trolley Park (incorrectly listed as Riverton Park in the Ordinances)  
Stroudwater Parks (there are 2 listed in the Ordinances)  
Taylor Street Park  
Tommy’s Park

Western Promenade Park

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

Andrews Square – N.B. This Park consists of a flagpole only

Bayside Trail

Bedford Park

Boothby Square

Boyd Street Gardens

Bramhall Square

Caldwell Square

Clark Street Playground

Tate-Tyng Playground (not in alphabetical order because of association with Harborview Park)

Longfellow Park

Marada Adams Playground N.B. This Park is located at the corner of Beckett and O’Brion Streets and is not the Adams School Playground Martin’s Point Park

Nason’s Corner Park

Pedro Field

Pleasant Street Playground

Quaker Park

South Street Playground

Trinity Park

Winslow Park

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