



PROS Plan Livability & Economic Development Focus Group

Date: Summer 2025

Location: Survey & Interviews

The department developed an online survey that was open from July 1 to August 15, 2025. It was sent to Ashland Chamber of Commerce members and the department's list of special use permit holders for events. To augment low response rate to the online survey, staff also referenced the city-wide 2024 Ashland Livability Survey results.

Results

The City of Ashland's economic development focus is on building a diverse local economy that improves our economic resilience, keeps dollars local, and provides year-round, living wage jobs. The ingredients we need to build that economy are (a) a high quality of life that attracts businesses, residents, and visitors, and (b) economic development capacity so that we have the tools to attract and support businesses.

Ashland Parks & Recreation Department plays a crucial role in the quality of life here in Ashland. Using the results of the 2024 Ashland Livability Survey, below are the strengths, opportunities, and recommended focus areas for Ashland Parks & Recreation Department to support local economic development.

Strengths.

- Lithia Park is a anchor asset for livability and tourism
- Paths and walking trails. In 2024, 93% of Ashland residents rate Ashland's availability of paths and walking trails as good or excellent.
- Preservation of natural areas. In 2024, 81% of Ashland residents feel that the Ashland community is doing a good or excellent job of preserving our natural areas.



- City Parks. In 2024, 91% of Ashland residents rated City Parks as good or excellent.

Threats.

- Air quality. A significant portion of Ashland's high quality of life is based on outdoor access. Over the last ten years, however, there has been a significant increase in number of days with poor air quality. Ashland Parks & Recreation Department has very limited indoor facilities to still support the community's park and recreation needs when the air quality makes it unsafe to be outside. *[In 2024, only 55% of residents felt Ashland had good air quality, compared to 85% in 2016. – Ashland Livability Survey]*
- Recreation programs or classes. Overtime, Ashland residents have reported a significant drop in the quality and/or availability of APRD recreation programs or classes. *[From 2016 to 2024, there was an 8 percentage-point drop in the percentage of Ashland residents who felt that APRD provided good or excellent programs and classes. In the written comments, youth activities were the most-often cited programmatic need. – Ashland Livability Survey]*
- Recreation centers or facilities. Overtime, Ashland residents have reported a significant drop in the quality and/or availability of APRD recreation centers or facilities. *[From 2016 to 2024, there was a 12 percentage-point drop in the percentage of Ashland residents who felt that APRD provided good or excellent recreation centers or facilities. In the written comments, Daniel Meyer Pool was the most-often cited facility that needed improvement. – Ashland Livability Survey]*
- Uncertainty on the economy

Recommended APRD Focus Areas.

- Indoor recreational facilities that provide year-round access and programming.
- Youth recreational programs that improve the quality of life for youth and families living in the area.
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Parks & Recreation Department



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