

## Why Parks Are Necessary

Seven in ten Americans regularly visit their local park and recreation facilities. An even larger number—nine in ten—agrees that their communities benefit from everything their local park and recreation agencies offer.<sup>1</sup>

### Social Importance

Parks are a tangible reflection of the quality of life in a community. They provide identity for citizens and are a major factor in the perception of quality of life in a given community. Parks and recreation services are often cited as one of the most important factors in surveys of how livable communities are. Cities that are considered livable have a higher success in recruiting new businesses to their communities.

### Economic benefits

Nationally, operations and capital spending by local and regional public park agencies generated nearly \$140 billion in economic activity and supported almost 1 million jobs in 2013.

In Oregon, \$1,913,297,02 in economic activity (transactions) was generated by local parks and recreation in 2015; 17,015 jobs were supported by parks and recreation in 2015; \$474.88 in economic activity was generated per person due to parks and recreation in 2015; \$716,303,856 in salaries, wages and benefits were generated due to parks and recreation in 2015.<sup>2</sup>

Local and regional public park agencies directly provided more than 356,000 jobs in the United States during 2013, equating to nearly \$32.3 billion in operations spending. Operations spending by park agencies generated nearly \$80 billion in total economic activity, boosted gross domestic product (GDP) by \$38.8 billion and supported nearly 660,000 jobs that paid in excess of \$24 billion in salaries, wages and benefits.

### Positive Effects on Residential Property Values – Portland, Oregon<sup>3</sup>

A pair of studies conducted in 2000 and 2001 analyzed the same set of more than 16,400 home sales in Portland, Ore., using two different methods. The first found that the 193 public parks analyzed had a significant, positive impact on nearby property values. The existence of a park within 1,500 feet of a home increased its sale price by between \$845 and \$2,262 (in 2000

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<sup>1</sup> *Why Parks and Recreation are Essential Public Services*, National Recreation and Park Association, 2018, <https://www.nrpa.org/our-work/advocacy/advocacyresources/>

<sup>2</sup> *The Economic Impact of Local Parks*. National Recreation and Park Association, 2015, pp. 1–26, *The Economic Impact of Local Parks*.

<sup>3</sup> “Resources and Library:” *Economic Benefits of Open Space, Recreation Facilities and Walkable Community Design*, American Trails, Mar. 2010, [www.americantrails.org/resources/economics/Economic-Benefits-Trails-Open-Space-Walkable-Community.html](http://www.americantrails.org/resources/economics/Economic-Benefits-Trails-Open-Space-Walkable-Community.html).

dollars). Additionally, as parks increased in size, their impact on property value increased significantly.

### Health Benefits

A research team led by Kathleen Wolf, a research social scientist with the U.S. Forest Service Pacific Northwest Research Station, found that the health benefits associated with urban nature have a calculable economic impact. The researchers found that urban nature could provide an annual savings and benefits in the United States of up to \$6.8 billion, specifically by reducing prescription costs for ADHD and Alzheimer’s disease by nearly \$3.4 billion, and increasing graduation rates, which results in increased lifetime annual income. The findings suggest that investing in urban parks can improve both the livability of a city and quality of life.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Watts, Andrea. “Nearby Nature - A Cost Effective Prescription for Better Community Health?” *Science Findings*, no. 203, Jan. 2018, pp. 1–6.