

SECTION 5. CREATING A SUSTAINABLE SYSTEM

Portland’s future off-road cycling system must coordinate with and further the City’s environmental preservation efforts, contribute to increased community health of Portland residents (both physical and economic), and last into the future. Achieving these outcomes will require careful planning and intentional management. This section outlines overarching approaches to ensure the City creates a sustainable off-road cycling system.

Foundational Recommendations

A citywide off-road cycling system will depend on supporting the foundational components of a healthy and active community – the City’s parks and natural areas, trail networks, and its broader active transportation systems.

Related Recommendations

Foundational Recommendations

1. Support the ongoing protection, restoration, and management of City natural areas. Engage the Portland community in natural area stewardship and educational programs.
2. Support the ongoing maintenance and enhancement of the City’s parks.
3. Develop parks and trails in underserved areas, where residents do not currently have safe and convenient access to parks, natural areas or trails.
4. Build the planned active transportation network, with an emphasis on the regional trail network and bikeways that serve people of all ages and abilities, to facilitate access to off-road cycling facilities by foot, bicycle and transit.
5. Expand the City’s network of natural surface trails for all users to expand recreational opportunities and meet community demand.

Designing and Building Sustainable Off-road Cycling Facilities

The City should design, plan and build off-road cycling trails and bike parks that achieve all components of sustainability – ecological, social, and economic. Such facilities respond to the site’s unique conditions, local user needs, and the financial capacity of the managing agency.

Sustainability Components	Ecological
	Ecologically sustainable off-road cycling trails and bike parks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieve a net ecological benefit by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protecting sensitive natural resources • Avoiding, minimizing, and mitigating impacts on soils, sensitive plant and animal species, and habitat. • Enhancing ecological conditions through restoration. • Build community stewardship for public lands.
	Social
	Socially sustainable off-road cycling trails and bike parks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide desired user outcomes (experiences and benefits) for all users at • Reduce user conflict

- Limit unintended risk
- Limit creation of informal, unsanctioned trails or features
- Engage trail users in positive management

Economic

- Limits capital and ongoing maintenance expenses
- Enhances local quality of life
- Contributes the economic well-being of the managing agency and the larger community

Facilities which fail to achieve one component of sustainability will soon become unsuccessful across all components. For example:

- A trail that erodes will not only disturb nearby streams and vegetation, but will also become more difficult to ride or hike (no longer providing desired user outcomes) and cost more to maintain.
- A trail that does not provide a desired user experience (like access to a viewpoint), could result in the creation of demand trails which cause environmental degradation and require the managing agency to act to remediate.
- A trail whose maintenance needs exceed available funding is likely to be poorly maintained, resulting in deteriorating trail conditions, erosion, widened trails, and unmet user outcomes.

Managing Public Properties

The City of Portland owns public land to provide services to the public and to forward important community goals, many of which are related to public and community health, the environment, or economic resiliency. The City of Portland must constantly prioritize available revenues to provide needed services, forward community goals, and properly steward taxpayer dollars.

Public and community health goals might include:

- Providing necessary public services, like drinking water, stormwater or wastewater management, or flood management.
- Providing recreational opportunities or access to nature
- Promoting the health and safety of users of a property
- Limiting nuisance activities on a property or reducing adverse impacts on neighbors.

Environmental goals might include:

- Enhancing wildlife and fish population health
- Preserving and restoring fish and wildlife habitat
- Improving stream and riparian health
- Supporting water quality and sustainable stormwater management

Economic Goals

- Minimizing the cost of construction, maintenance and management

- Minimizing financial liabilities
- Supporting economic development or tourism

The City must weigh these various objectives for each property when deciding the best way to develop (or not develop) and manage each public property. For example,

- Developed parks are designed, constructed, and managed for outdoor recreation. They provide places for people to play and spend time outdoors. Developed parks can contain natural areas that are managed predominantly to protect and enhance their ecological value and functions.
- Utility properties, such as wastewater treatment plants, maintenance yards, or pump stations, are designed, built, and managed primarily to provide a utility service to residents and businesses. On some properties, like hydroparks, compatible recreational use can also be provided. But for many utility properties, recreation is a minor, or even restricted, use.
- Natural areas can be managed for multiple purposes. They might be acquired and managed to preserve particularly high value natural resources (like wetlands, remnant oak habitat, or habitat for special status wildlife or fish species). Or, they may have been acquired and restored to allow streams and rivers to naturally flood without damaging homes or businesses or to protect water quality. Some are acquired with the intention of providing recreational access through trails, water access, or other facilities. Many properties were acquired and are managed for two or all three of these purposes.

The goals for each property help determine the appropriateness of a property for trails or bike parks. They also guide decisions about trail or bike park location, design, and management. These decisions, and a site's physical conditions, then determine what level of investment will be necessary to build, maintain, and manage an off-road cycling facility.

Ideally, investments in trails and bike parks should achieve multiple community goals, such as increasing overall recreational opportunities and access to nature, building community through stewardship, restoring natural resources and wildlife habitat, providing for active transportation, and managing stormwater.