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Park-hungry Tigard brainstorms for ideas

An advisory panel will examine possible sites, recreation programs and financing options

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TIGARD -- Tigard is short of parks for a growing population and has no recreation programs, but volunteers with the city Parks and Recreation Advisory Board hope to change that.

Board members are meeting with community and neighborhood groups to find new park sites and gather ideas for financing land purchases and recreation programs, Chairman Carl Switzer said.

Board member David Baumgarten will meet at 7 p.m. Wednesday with the Metzger Citizen Participation Organization No. 4M at Metzger Park Hall, 8400 S.W. Hemlock St.

A Tigard parks master plan developed in 1999 recommended 11 acres of park space for every 1,000 residents. But the city is providing only 7.8 acres of parks per 1,000 residents, according to a report last year by a consultant, Don Ganer & Associates.

The city of about 45,000 has about 347 acres of parks and greenspace, the Ganer report said.

Some of Tigard's parks, such as Cook Park, are active spaces with ball fields, picnic tables and other amenities, Switzer said. Others are open spaces without amenities, although some, such as the Fanno Creek trail system, offer walking or running surfaces.

"We're finding, in this day and age, that there's a lot of latent demand for recreation and a high demand for open space," he said.

Last year, the city increased the fees it charges developers to provide new parks when they build new housing. The fees for a single-family house, which climbed from \$1,852 to \$3,893, reflect the city's need for more parks and the rising price of land, Dennis Koellermeier, Tigard's public works director, said last year.

The increase in the fees, called parks system development charges, will provide more money to buy park land, but it isn't clear that it would wipe out the shortage immediately. The availability of land and property

prices must be determined first, Switzer said.

Although the advisory board expects to submit a list of potential park sites to the City Council within two months, Switzer was reluctant to talk about specific sites or areas of the city where the board might look at land. Some property owners could raise prices if they think the city is interested in a purchase, he said.

In addition to discussing park needs at community meetings, Switzer said, the advisory board hopes to gain ideas about recreation programs and how they could be paid for.

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