POWERED BY TOURISM: VISIT BEND GRANTS $500,000 TO 11 IMPACTFUL COMMUNITY PROJECTS

Now in its fifth year, the Bend Sustainability Fund has reinvested more than $3.8 million of visitor-tax dollars into tourism-related projects that benefit the people, environment, and economy of Bend.

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(BEND, Ore.) From replacing hundreds of thousands of single-use containers at food cart pods to building one of the only adaptive cycling centers on the West Coast, 11 local projects will receive funding through the 2026 Bend Sustainability Fund (BSF), a key grant program in Visit Bend's broader destination-stewardship strategy that ensures tourism continues to support the long-term health of our community.

An independent advisory council of Bend community members reviewed applications that collectively requested more than $1 million. With $500,000 to award, the council recommended funding 11 grant recipients. Projects that expand outdoor access for people of all mobilities will receive nearly half of this year's funding, which comes entirely from a fee visitors pay to stay at hotels, vacation rentals, and other lodging properties in Bend:

- ➔ Oregon Adaptive Sports will create an Adaptive Cycling Center at Pine Nursery Park — just the third on the West Coast — offering state-of-the-art adaptive cycles.
- ➔ The Onward Project will double its fleet of rugged, all-terrain "AdvenChair" wheelchairs, allowing families and friends to hike together regardless of mobility challenges.
- ➔ Central Oregon Trail Alliance will install "ride-over" cattle guards at the Cline Butte / Cascade View trail system, removing barriers for all cyclists, including adaptive riders.
- ➔ Mt. Bachelor will upgrade Sunrise Lodge so adaptive skiers can move between the lodge and chairlifts more easily.

Grants this cycle also support venues and spaces that strengthen year-round community and cultural infrastructure. Funding will upgrade the Tower Theatre's lighting system, improve the Volcanic Theatre's sound and production capabilities, enhance wayfinding and infrastructure at

Skyline Disc Golf Course, and install new signage at the Petersen Rock Garden, preserving a 91-year-old historic folk art landmark.

Harnessing Bend's visitor economy to support environmental stewardship remains a core pillar of Visit Bend's work. The largest grant this cycle, $100,000, will help The Environmental Center launch a regional reusable dishware "Wash Hub" — a centralized commercial dishwashing and collection system designed to replace more than 250,000 pieces of single-use packaging at food cart pods and events.

The Base Trail on Pilot Butte will also receive significant improvements. The Deschutes Trails Coalition will replace aging stairs, improve drainage, and maintain safe, continuous access on one of Bend's most iconic and heavily used trails. Meanwhile, Glick Forestry will install 14 boot-brush stations at high-traffic trailheads — including Rim Rock, Tumalo Falls, and Green Lakes — to help prevent the spread of invasive species.

Grants range from $5,148 to $100,000. In total, the Bend Sustainability Fund has now awarded $3,883,094 across 42 projects since its inception in 2021. These investments directly reflect what Bend residents consistently say they value: environmental protection, infrastructure improvements, and expanded access to recreation, while enhancing the visitor experience.

Projects were evaluated on shovel-readiness, demonstrated community support, long-term impact, and visitor benefit as defined under state law. After scoring, Visit Bend's board of directors approved all 11 of the council's recommendations. Eight of the 11 recipients are first-time awardees.

Visit Bend is asking residents to rank this year's funded projects through a two-week online community ballot. The top two vote-getters will each receive an additional $1,000 in support. The ballot is open now through April 1 and will be shared through Visit Bend's website and social media channels. It is also available here.

How the Bend Sustainability Fund works

The Bend Sustainability Fund is supported entirely by a portion of Bend's transient room tax (a 10.4 percent lodging tax) paid by visitors who stay overnight at commercial lodging properties and vacation rentals within city limits. The majority of that revenue — more than $9 million annually — goes directly to the City of Bend to help fund roads, police, fire, and other core services, offsetting costs that would otherwise fall more heavily on residents.

Visit Bend uses a separate, restricted portion of those visitor-generated dollars to fund the Bend Sustainability Fund. By law, those funds must support projects that create, steward, or protect tourism-related facilities with a life of at least 10 years. Projects eligible for BSF funding must demonstrate meaningful visitor use while delivering lasting community benefit. Past

investments have included trail restoration, cultural facility upgrades, recreation infrastructure, and environmental initiatives designed to sustain Bend's outdoor spaces.

By directing visitor-generated revenue into tangible community assets, the Bend Sustainability Fund ensures tourism continues to support local organizations and businesses while strengthening the quality of life for residents. Find a full list of funded projects since 2021 and additional information about the Bend Sustainability Fund at sustainability.visitbend.com.

2026 Bend Sustainability Fund Grantees

Organization	Amount	Project
The Environmental Center	$100,000	Replacing single-use packaging with reusable tableware "wash hub" system.
Volcanic Theatre	$38,470	Upgraded acoustics and lighting for events.
The Onward Project	$61,850	Three additional adaptive AdvenChairs.
Oregon Adaptive Sports	$63,747	New east side adaptive cycling center.
Glick Forestry	$16,989	Boot-brush stations at busy trailheads.
Petersen Rock Garden	$5,148	New museum information signage.
Central Oregon Disc Golf Club	$15,000	Wayfinding, safety, and course quality improvements.
Mt. Bachelor	$51,000	New accessible ramps and door buttons.
Deschutes Trails Coalition	$56,396	New safe/sustainable steps on Pilot Butte.
Tower Theatre	$80,000	Installation of a new lighting console.
Central Oregon Trails Alliance	$11,400	Six new ride-over cattle guards.

About Visit Bend

Visit Bend is a non-membership, nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting and enhancing the visitor experience while stewarding a vibrant and sustainable community in Bend, Oregon. We serve as a leading source of information on Bend's lodging, dining, outdoor recreation, arts and culture, and vacation planning.

About the Bend Sustainability Fund

The Bend Sustainability Fund reinvests short-term lodging tax revenue paid by visitors into tourism-related facilities that create and steward sustainable experiences within Bend's community. Established in 2021, the fund supports projects designed to protect, enhance, and sustain Bend as a special place to live and visit for generations to come.

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