

**PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION
STAFF REPORT**

MEETING DATE: March 4, 2014

AGENDA ITEM NUMBER: 3B

APPLICANT: Vern L. Krahn, Park Planner

REQUEST: Presentation and discussion only on review of the adopted Carson City Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

GENERAL DISCUSSION: From a planning perspective, it is important to periodically review the City's Parks and Recreation Master Plan to assess its implementation success, identify potential upcoming community issues, and possible future trends. Over the next six months, staff wants to take approximately thirty minutes of each Parks and Recreation Commission meeting to review various chapters in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan and take a "snap shot in time" as it relates to the implementation of the master plan since its adoption by the Board of Supervisors in 2006.

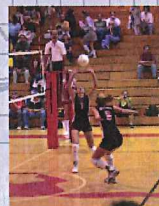
For this upcoming meeting, staff will be reviewing Chapters one and two of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan (Refer to Exhibit A). It is staff's intent to cover these chapters in a very broad approach, provide some background on the master plan's development for the new commissioners, discuss the key concepts that were used to develop the master plan, and be available to answer any Commissioner's questions.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: This agenda item is for presentation and discussion only. No formal action can be taken at this time.

PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN

CARSON CITY, NEVADA

ADOPTED APRIL 6, 2006



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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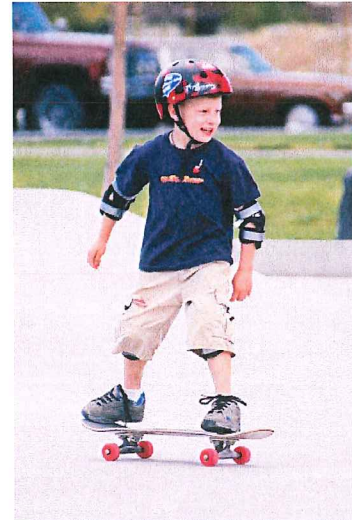
Recreation activities span an almost bewildering range—from quiet contemplation to cultural and theater events to vigorously active sports. They vary by age. Some forms of recreation are done individually, some in groups. Some activities require special surfaces or a specific facility (tennis, softball) and some are very general and can occur in a variety of conditions (picnic, kite flying). Some are best enjoyed in a natural setting (fishing, hiking). And, there are many other forms of recreation that fit in between these extremes.

To help meet the desires for this broad range of recreation activities, Carson City has developed an extensive park system (765 acres) and, with many partners, offers an extensive array of recreational programs. The City provides many recreation facilities (21 baseball/softball fields, 14 soccer/football fields, and tennis courts, playgrounds, picnic pavilions, etc.), as well as a community theater, aquatic facility with a 50-meter pool, a fairgrounds, and a number of natural parks and recreational trails. In 1996 Carson City residents approved Ballot Question 18 – The Quality of Life Initiative – that created a supplemental sales tax revenue source (1/4 of a cent) for parks, open space, trails and associated maintenance. This source has allowed development of many new facilities.

The Parks and Recreation Department has been diligent in finding the most cost-effective ways to provide services to the residents of the city:

- ✎ It has partnered with many organizations—in many cases the City provides the facilities and volunteers and non-profit groups staff the programs.
- ✎ It has been innovative and creative—where a recreation-related public need or desire has been identified, and another provider could not be found, the Department has taken on the responsibility to manage the program. Examples include the Latch Key, “Kamps” (Summer, Kinder and School Break), Family Nights, a new teen drop-in sports program, and a new adult soccer program.
- ✎ It has stretched every dollar — the Department maintains parks as well as other City properties and buildings, every facility is programmed to the maximum (there are very few open days for any facility).

However, notwithstanding creative management the Department is approaching the limits of the current facilities, budgets and staff resources. There aren't many areas in which greater efficiencies can be achieved.



The recreation facilities and programs in Carson City respond to an extraordinary range of ages, interests and abilities.

And yet there is still much that needs to be done: there are shortages of some recreation facilities to meet the needs of the current population, some areas of the City have more recreation resources than others, and additional facilities and programs will be needed for the future. It is projected that the City will grow by approximately 18% (to a population of 66,000) by 2025, and potentially to a population of 80,000 at buildout (an increase of 44%). New Carson City residents will create increased pressure on already heavily-used facilities unless additional facilities are provided. To provide additional facilities we will need new or additional sources of funding. This Master Plan addresses the City's current and future needs for parks and recreation facilities in Carson City.

I.1 BENEFITS OF PARKS AND RECREATION

Parks, recreation facilities, and programs offer a number of benefits. In addition to contributing to physical and psychological health, parks help to strengthen communities and make neighborhoods and cities more attractive places to live and work. Also, City parks offer a number of economic and environmental benefits and may even help to decrease crime rates.

Parks and recreation facilities improve health by providing places and facilities to exercise. Studies have shown that when people have access to parks and recreation facilities, they exercise more. The U.S. Center for Disease Control found that the creation of places for physical activity led to a 25% increase in the number of people exercising three or more days per week.¹ The American Journal of Preventative Medicine showed that creating or enhancing places for physical activity along with informational outreach led to a 48% increase in the frequency of physical activity. Increased physical activity helps to reduce the risk of heart disease, hypertension, certain types of cancer, and diabetes. Regular exercise also improves psychological health by relieving depression and anxiety².



Public parks and recreation facilities help to create a sense of community. Parks and recreation facilities offer a means for a variety of people to interact and recreate together including low-income families, senior citizens, and at-risk youth. Residents who live in neighborhoods with parks are more likely to have stronger social ties than other residents³. Access to well-designed and maintained public parks and recreation facilities has been linked to reduced juvenile crimes⁴.



If parks are well maintained and appropriate uses/regulations are enforced, parks generally increase the value of adjacent properties. They provide "green" relief from development and open up vistas, which tends to increase the value of adjacent properties. One study in Boulder, Colorado found that homes located next to a greenbelt were worth 32% more than houses located 3,200 feet away from the greenbelt⁵.

Parks, recreation facilities and recreation programs contribute to physical and psychological health, and help to strengthen communities.

Studies have also shown that parks may even increase the value of commercial property. In many states higher property values translate to additional property tax revenue for cities. In some circumstances this increase in tax revenue may be sufficient

1 Sherer, Paul. "Why American Needs More City Parks and Open Space." <http://www.tpl.org/content_documents/parks_for_people_Jan2004.pdf>

2 Ibid

3 Ibid

4 Ibid

5 Ibid

enough to partially offset the costs of maintaining and acquiring new park land⁶.

In addition to property tax revenues, parks and sports complexes can create additional city revenue through tourism. Well-maintained parks and recreation facilities add to the appeal of Carson City for tourists, and also attract visits to Carson City by residents from surrounding communities. These guests tend to spend money locally, boosting the local economy as well as sales tax revenues. Sports tournaments are a significant contribution to tourism, businesses and city revenues. Through surveys, Carson City has documented that in 2004, sports tournaments brought \$2.7 million in participant spending to the community.



Sports programs help teach teamwork, training and sportsmanship.

Other potential economic benefits of recreation include sales of recreation-related goods and services. As Carson City continues to expand its reputation for quality recreational opportunities (e.g. sports tournaments, the trail system, the rifle and pistol range, the fairgrounds, etc.) and as tourism increases and the population continues to grow, it may attract recreation-related stores to move into the area. The City will benefit from the additional employment as well as the tax revenues related to sales of recreation equipment.

Parks offer a number of aesthetic and environmental benefits. Parks provide relief from development with a sense of openness and vistas to the surrounding mountains. Trees and grasses in parks reduce air and water pollution, help to maintain cooler temperatures, and help manage storm water runoff. Additionally, parks can serve as detention basins and can be constructed in areas where other developments may be restricted (such as in floodplains).

Many residents are aware of the importance of parks and recreation facilities and over the years, many communities have shown that they are willing to invest their money into acquiring more parks and recreation facilities. Nationally, in 2002 there were 189 park funding measures listed on ballots in 28 states, proposing to increase taxes to create or improve parks—75% of these were approved equating to \$10 billion to be used for funding parks⁷.

I.2 WHAT IS A PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN?

The purpose of this Parks and Recreation Master Plan is to identify the recreation needs of today's residents, to anticipate those of tomorrow, and to assure they will be met through proper planning.

Carson City is projected to grow by as much as 44% before it reaches a 'build-out' population of up to 80,000 residents by approximately 2030 (see Trends, Section 4). The growth of Carson City and its surrounding region raises a number of important parks and recreation questions:

- Are there enough facilities to meet current and future needs? Are facilities keeping up with current and future trends? Are any obsolete?
- Are the facilities located in the right places for accessibility by most residents?
- Do the parkland dedication requirements for new development adequately mitigate the demands of the new development's own residents?
- Can City, School District, Community College and private resources be integrated so as to avoid costly duplication and still provide a well-rounded spectrum of recreation choices?
- If choices or trade-offs must be made, what should the priorities be?

⁶ This may be less true in Carson City, due to a recently enacted cap of property taxes by the Nevada Legislature that may reduce the City's ability to keep up with increasing maintenance costs.

⁷ Sherer, Paul. "Why American Needs More City Parks and Open Space." <http://www.tpl.org/content_documents/parks_for_people_Jan2004.pdf>

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan summarizes the answers to these questions. The Master Plan is:

- a broad-based vision of where we are today and where we wish to go (with regard to parks and recreation);
- a planning tool to coordinate the development of parks and recreation in conjunction with other land use decisions in the City;
- a compilation of policies that guide future decision-making with regard to parks and recreation; and
- an action-oriented list of strategies that become the Parks and Recreation Department's "to do" list for upcoming years.

I.3 MISSION STATEMENT

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan is guided by the Department's Mission Statement.

The Parks and Recreation Department's multi-faceted mission is:

- ❏ to maintain and preserve the natural beauty of Carson City's high desert environment by providing safe and aesthetically pleasing parks and facilities for recreational enjoyment;
- ❏ to provide both the citizens and the employees of Carson City with recreation facilities that are structurally sound, safe, and attractive;
- ❏ to provide the highest level of aquatic recreation to the citizens of Carson City;
- ❏ to provide a clean, safe, positive environment to facilitate the development of body and mind to all citizens of Carson City; and
- ❏ to provide quality recreational services in an effort to continuously accommodate the leisure needs of our growing community through a spirit of partnership, innovation, and a commitment to the highest level of service.



Mills Park is Carson City's "Central Park"

I.4 POLICIES AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

Throughout this document are found numerous policies and implementation strategies that are derived from the evaluation of needs and opportunities of Carson City's parks and recreation system. They are summarized in Chapter 8 and the Appendix. For background, as you review this document, keep in mind the following general definitions:

Policy: A statement of official position can usually be attached to the phrase "It is the policy of Carson City that..."

Implementation Strategies: A specific charge that can be assigned to a department staff member—in effect, a "To-Do" list. The Implementation Strategies can then be further broken down into finite *Action Steps* to achieve a particular strategy.

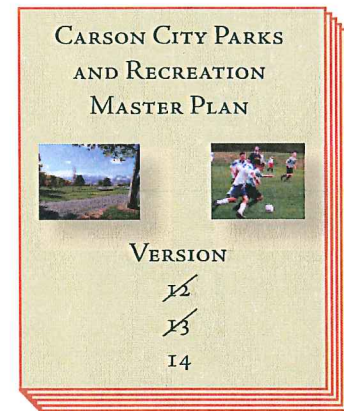
1.5 MAINTAINING AND UPDATING THE MASTER PLAN

To be effective, it is important that the Parks and Recreation Master Plan be kept current (reflect recent decisions) and be consistent with other planning documents within the City.

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan is intended to be a “living document,” that is, reflective of current attitudes, conditions and needs. Over time, conditions will change, opportunities will arise, and some directions will inevitably be foreclosed. The Master Plan needs to be adjusted to reflect these new conditions. If this is not done, the Master Plan will gradually slip out of currency, and will cease to be an effective reference and guide for decision-making. To remain current, the Master Plan must be reviewed and updated regularly, at least annually.

Making decisions that are not consistent with the Parks and Recreation Master Plan will undermine the Plan. When this happens, the Master Plan ceases to be an accurate reflection of City policy and direction, and the usefulness of the Master Plan is reduced and it is no longer a meaningful guide for decision-making—by the City or the public. To avoid this, the Parks and Recreation Department, Parks and Recreation Commission, and the City in general should adopt a “consistency policy” - *that is, a policy that all parks and recreation-related decisions will be consistent with the Parks and Recreation Master Plan.* The impact of this policy is that, when actions are proposed that are not consistent with the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, the City will either modify the proposed action to be consistent with the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, or amend the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, or both.

Finally, since this Parks and Recreation Master Plan was developed comprehensively (considering a broad range of factors), and in conjunction with the City’s Comprehensive Master Plan and the Unified Pathways Master Plan, it would be appropriate to follow a policy that assures that changes to the Parks and Recreation Master Plan will be considered in a comprehensive manner with these other two master plans.



Keeping the Parks and Recreation Master Plan current is essential to its cost-effective implementation.

1.5.1 POLICIES

1. The Parks and Recreation Master Plan is intended to be a “living document,” that is, reflective of current attitudes, conditions, and needs. To remain so, the Master Plan must be reviewed and updated regularly, at least annually.
2. The City will not make land use decisions that are in conflict with the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. When potential conflicts arise, prior to the proposed action, the City will either modify the proposed action or amend the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, or both.

2.1 POPULATION GROWTH AND THE NEED FOR PARKS AND RECREATION

Carson City is projected to grow to a population of 80,000 by the time it reaches 'buildout.' This represents a 44% increase above today's population. Based on today's use levels, this will create a need for additional parks and recreation facilities. Within this general growth pattern, there are varying growth rates projected for each age group of the population that will gradually affect the facilities and programs that will be needed in the future. It will be important to monitor these growth rates and adjust facility and program plans accordingly.

2.2 NEIGHBORHOODS AND RECREATIONAL EQUITY

To aid the evaluation and planning of Carson City's residential areas, this Park & Recreation Master Plan delineated 30 neighborhoods, based on consistency of block size, density, housing type, and defined by major roadways. These neighborhoods are not all equal in the amount of parkland and/or the type of recreational opportunities they offer: some neighborhoods contain multiple parks, others have none. Some are served by community parks, sports complexes, or natural parks. Some have access to school grounds, others do not.

One of the objectives of this Parks & Recreation Master Plan is to attempt to create equitable (not necessarily equal) recreational resources for each of its neighborhoods.

For example, the public opinion survey indicated that some neighborhoods would prefer to have natural parks and trails rather than neighborhood parks. Also, some neighborhoods that need parks are relatively built-out, with little or no land available for creating a new park. In these cases, equity might be achieved in other ways, such as by enhancing a school ground to serve as a neighborhood park, or by providing other kinds of recreation amenities, such as an urban plaza with shaded sitting areas and a water feature, or by providing a small playground in conjunction with a trail head.

2.3 EMPHASIS ON NATURAL PARKS

During the focus groups and initial neighborhood meetings, a preference was expressed in some neighborhoods for natural areas and trails rather than formal neighborhood parks. This preference was tested, and confirmed, in the Public Opinion Survey. This preference was very consistent throughout most of the neighborhoods of the city.



In neighborhoods where park land is not available, other forms of recreation amenities can provide 'equity.'



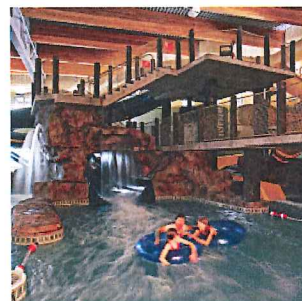
Carson residents expressed a desire to emphasize 'natural parks' for passive recreation.

As a result, wherever possible, a natural character is proposed for neighborhood parks. This includes:

- a preference for natural areas with walking paths rather than large turf areas;
- the development of trail heads as small natural parks by introducing play equipment, benches, and shade in an otherwise natural setting.

2.4 COMPREHENSIVE RECREATION CENTERS TO MEET A VARIETY OF INDOOR RECREATION NEEDS

The development of comprehensive, multi-use recreation centers is a growing phenomenon in the U.S. The combination of water play recreation, climbing walls, and elevated jogging/walking tracks, all in attractive, open settings has greatly increased the appeal and use of recreation centers by all ages. They have even become significant attractions for teenagers. Carson City has already created several of the elements of a recreation center in the combined facilities of the Aquatic Facility and Community Center at Mills Park. Creating a new, comprehensive recreation center will not only appeal to the broad spectrum of Carson City residents, it will also relieve the current pressures on the existing Mills Park facilities and free portions of them for other needed uses.



Source: BRS Architecture
Comprehensive recreation centers provide activities for all ages and are growing in popularity in many communities.

2.5 THE ECONOMIC POTENTIAL OF RECREATION

2.5.1 SPORTS TOURNAMENTS

Carson City has already demonstrated that it has the quality of facilities and organizational capacity to attract major tournaments to the city. These tournaments have generated significant revenues for local merchants as well as increased sales tax revenues that contribute to defraying the cost of facilities used by the tournaments. In 2005, out-of-area attendance for Carson City's five tournaments totaled 218 teams and 8,510 participants and spectators¹ and generated an estimated \$2.7 million in expenditures at Carson City stores, restaurants, gas stations, motels, etc.

Carson City has the potential to grow into an even greater center for year-round sports tournaments. The City currently has some of the highest quality softball fields in the western United States and it has the only indoor 50-meter pool in northern Nevada. With its JohnD Winters Centennial Park, Governors Field and Edmonds Sports Complex, Carson City is currently well-suited to provide large softball, baseball, swimming, and soccer tournaments.



Carson City's excellent sports facilities are used by local teams as well as for regional tournaments.

In the public opinion survey, a number of Carson City residents supported spending additional money to improve the quality of the City's existing recreational facilities. The survey also showed strong support for adding a number of recreational programs. In order to improve its existing facilities and create additional facilities, the Parks and Recreation Department may need to investigate new means to generate revenue—increasing the number and size of tournaments may be one such means.

¹ Comstock Shootout Soccer Tournament, Midnight Madness, Memorial Weekend Swim Meet, Senior Softball World Qualifier and High Desert Soccer Tournament.

2.5.2 UNIQUE AMENITIES ENCOURAGE TOURISM

Carson City has many unique features that could be used to attract additional tourism to the City:

- an extensive pathways system;
- a number of natural parks including Riverview Park and Carson River Park;
- the potential for further evolution of Mills Park into a grand and diverse “Central Park”;
- the proposed reconstruction of the historic Virginia & Truckee Railroad (V&T), including the depot, future trail and ‘whitewater’ river recreation improvements in the Carson River Canyon;
- a new, distinctive rifle/pistol/archery/trap range; and of course;
- the city’s beautiful foothills setting.

In order to take advantage of these amenities for tourism, the City needs to promote them more. Corporate events with recreational packages could be sold to attract conferences to Carson City. Also, a comprehensive recreation brochure could be produced to advertise all of the amenities that the City has to offer.

In addition to its own amenities, Carson City is a primary gateway to Lake Tahoe, a national recreation destination. The City must take advantage of this fortunate resource in all of its marketing, including recreation offerings.



Unique recreation amenities appeal to residents and visitors, and make Carson City an attractive place to live and visit.

2.5.3 A QUALITY PARK SYSTEM ATTRACTS BUSINESSES AND EMPLOYEES

Businesses and skilled workers are often attracted to areas that have a high quality of life. Areas that offer a number of parks, open space, trails, and recreational opportunities are often associated with a higher quality of life than places that do not offer these amenities, therefore cities with extensive parks and open space systems usually attract more businesses. According to a number of studies, owners of small companies ranked recreation, parks, and open space as the highest priority in choosing a new location for their business.² A regional economic analysis conducted for the East Bay Regional Park District (Oakland, CA) found that cities that offered a high quality of life were ranked as some of the best places to locate a business. In order for Carson City to compete with surrounding communities for future businesses, the City must strive to continually increase its quality of life.

2.6 CONSISTENT COST RECAPTURE

The City charges fees for many recreation programs and the use of various facilities. The degree to which fees recapture costs varies, as set by policies of the Department and the Board of Supervisors. However, previously several different formulas were used to determine the base costs (on which the recapture target is based). This Master Plan has established a clear definition of direct and indirect costs, and a method for determining each so that the cost recapture goals can be consistently applied throughout City recreation programs.

² Crompton, Jon L., Lisa L. Love, and Thomas A. More. 1997. *An Empirical Study of the Role of Recreation, Parks and Open Space in Companies' Location Decisions*. *Journal of Park and Recreation Administration* (1997): 37-58.

2.7 ADDITIONAL FUNDING IS NEEDED FOR NEW PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITIES

Currently, under state law, Carson City is allowed to charge \$1,000 of Residential Construction Tax (RCT) per new residence as an impact fee for parks. However, the actual cost of creating a new park, including land acquisition costs and park construction, is \$2,000 to \$3,000 per house. Therefore, for the City to provide parks for new development would cost more than is recaptured through the RCT. Like other communities facing a similar constraint, in 1996 the residents of Carson City approved Ballot Question 18, the aptly named Quality of Life Initiative that created funding for parks, trails, and open space. The City has numerous significant accomplishments to show for this confidence of the voters/taxpayers. However, the funds that come from the Question 18 sales tax will soon be committed for the next 15 to 30 years to pay for bonds to finance the remaining Question 18 commitments. There are additional parks and facilities outlined in this Master Plan that are needed today, and others that will be needed in the near future as we continue to grow. As a result, the City needs to identify, or create, additional funding sources to construct these facilities. Funding sources could include: increased allocations from the General Fund, another sales tax ballot issue, increased or additional impact fees, and philanthropic gifts.

2.8 MAINTAINING AND EXPANDING RECREATION PARTNERSHIPS

More than many communities, Carson City has a large number of partners that significantly increase the quantity and quality of recreation available to City residents. These partners range from large organizations such as the Carson City School District and Western Nevada Community College (WNCC), to the Youth Sports Association (YSA) the umbrella youth sports organization, as well as individual sports organizations such as American Youth Soccer Organization (AYSO) and Sierra In-line Hockey, the Tennis Club, to non-profits such as the Boys and Girls Club and the Children's Museum, to arts organizations such as the Brewery Arts Center—and many, many others.

Notwithstanding the extent of existing partnerships, there are opportunities to strengthen and broaden many of these partnerships. For example, the City currently has a Joint Use Agreement with the School District, under which the two share facilities. Under this agreement, the city uses the School District's gyms and fields while the School District utilizes the City's swimming pool, theater, and tennis courts. While the existing partnership between the City and the School District has been working, this partnership could be greatly expanded. For example, in exchange for additional City use of certain school grounds as public parks, the City could upgrade portions of those school grounds to neighborhood park standards. This would help the City to alleviate its current shortage of neighborhood parks in selected areas of the City and at the same time allow the School District to focus more on education and less on grounds maintenance. Under a 2001 Memorandum of Understanding, the City and the School District agreed to formulate specific policies regarding joint planning, use, and maintenance of facilities. These policies need to be formulated as soon as possible to take advantage of future facility development and to reduce duplications in service.



Many of Carson City's recreation programs are provided through partnerships with other organizations.

WNCC has indicated a desire to establish intramural sports programs (soccer, softball, flag football) for its students. However, it lacks the facilities and staff resources necessary to accomplish this task. There is a potential for the City and WNCC to joint venture regarding the development of multi-purpose fields in exchange for the City's use of WNCC classrooms and other facilities. The Parks and Recreation Department and WNCC could collaborate on overseeing the intramural programs and training students to staff both WNCC and city-wide recreation programs.

2.9 INNOVATION IN RECREATION PROGRAMS TO MEET CHANGING NEEDS

The Parks and Recreation Department has a history of reaching out for new ideas and innovating with new programs where there is a perceived need or demand. A number of the current popular offerings of the Department are products of this innovative and sensitive attitude. Utilizing surveys in the future will enable the Department to reach out beyond the existing pool of recreation users and their families to identify recreation needs and opportunities.

In addition to reaching out to the community, monitoring the demographic characteristic of the population will provide important insights, and early warning of changing conditions that may affect programs and facilities.



Many of the various programs that are outside of mainstream recreation programming in Carson City began as experiments and have expanded into more popular programs that serve many families.