

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.