

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.I 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.

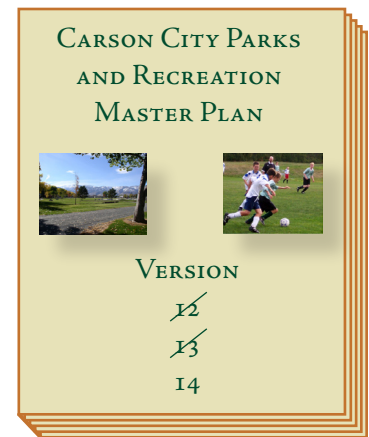
I.5 MAINTAINING AND UPDATING THE MASTER PLAN

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.

I.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.