



# Boulder Parks & Recreation

**TO:** Parks and Recreation Advisory Board

**FROM:** Yvette Bowden, Director, Parks and Recreation Department

**SUBJECT:** Matters from the Department

**DATE:** November 23, 2015

## A. Service Reach - Financial Aid

In accordance with the Master Plan's direction to increase service reach to low-income youth and adults and focus on financial sustainability, the department is making changes to its existing financial aid program (Reduced Rate Program). In the current program, community members whose income level is 50% of the area median income<sup>1</sup> qualify for a 50% discount off department services. Though an average of 900 individuals, including 500 youth, utilize the program each year, the department believes that there remains unmet need by community members who would like access to the department's programs and services.

Program changes intended to enhance the program's reach and access will include:

- Elimination of the proof of legal presence in the United States requirement.
- Update of median income limit ranges to reflect the most recent fiscal year HUD income levels and allow for severely low-income patrons to gain access to services at a discounted rate by expanding floor income ranges to zero dollars.
- Reduction in the number of required registration forms.
- Expansion of program registration sites to all three recreation centers.
- Examination of the feasibility of introducing Colorado's Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) that provides a pathway for families to gain access to affordable childcare through subsidies to licensed community programs [applicability to offered City of Boulder Kids Kamps programming].

Additionally, staff is evaluating a sliding scale approach to further enhance the reach of the financial aid program. A sliding scale proposal might allocate a larger percentage discount (and thus subsidy) to those who are severely low-income and a smaller percentage discount to those with a less severe low income level. This calculation method is commonly used for scholarships in municipalities as well as in the healthcare sector. In 2016, staff will continue to explore the feasibility of sliding scale methodology including pursuing alternate revenue sources. Staff may pilot a sliding scale methodology with 2016 City-delivered summer youth camps while allowing the department to strategically measure usage and fiscal impact in a more targeted fashion.

Additional/Next steps include:

- Evaluation of a sliding scale framework to determine its financial implications;
- Exploration of a streamlined enrollment with partners in the community (e.g. Boulder Housing Partners);
- Creation of marketing and outreach to Spanish speaking community members through increased bilingual materials and a go-to-the-user approach;
- Research of the size, characteristics and health and wellness needs of Boulder's low-income community; and
- Consideration of a 2016 pilot implementation with summer camps.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/il/il2014/2014summary.odn>

