

PATHFINDERSSM GENERAL SUMMARY

About PathfindersSM

PathfindersSM is a facilitated workshop of stakeholders who gather together to focus on the role, functions, and priorities of an organization, in this case the Boulder Parks and Recreation Department (BPRD), and its relationship with the community. The name PathfindersSM has been chosen to reflect the role of those attending the workshop to discover and show others a path or way forward. The workshop is designed to form consensus around choices that are part of the Boulder Park and Recreation Master Plan Update.



On Saturday, February 9, 2013, a total of 44 participants attended a PathfindersSM event at the East Boulder Community Center. Organizations represented at the event included the Audubon Society, Boulder Area Realtors Association, Boulder CVB, Boulder Mountainbike Alliance, Clinica, Colorado Chautauqua Association, Growing Gardens, Growing Up Boulder, Intercambio, PLAY Boulder, South Boulder Little League, University of Colorado, VIA Mobility Services, YMCA, as well as the Boulder Parks and Recreation Advisory Board (PRAB), staff from the Boulder Parks and Recreation Department, and representatives from other municipal offices and boards.

An additional PathfindersSM event was conducted on Tuesday, February 12, 2013 with BPRD staff at the Flatirons Event Center. Thirty-eight employees attended representing functions such as recreation programming, park operations, facility maintenance, urban forestry, ecology, planning, construction, volunteer coordination, financial management, marketing, communications, and departmental leadership.

This general summary of the PathfindersSM events recaps the activities of both workshops and identifies the themes and findings that emerged out of the group work. A discussion of common themes is presented as a conclusion. For additional detail on the participants, activities, and results, please see the detailed PathfindersSM report (forthcoming).

Community PathfindersSM Workshop

Where We Are: A Perspective on Boulder Parks and Recreation

This module consisted of a panel discussion by Kirk Kincannon (Director, Boulder Parks and Recreation Department), David Driskell (Executive Director, Boulder Community Planning and Sustainability), and Louise Chawla (Professor of Environmental Design, University of Colorado). Kincannon provided context for the event by reviewing the expanse of programs and facilities offered by BPRD making the point that park and recreation services are highly valued in Boulder, as evidenced by the fact that approximately 90% of all residents interface with the department each year. Driskell

reiterated the notion that Boulder places a high priority on environmental, social, and economic sustainability. He referenced several planning projects that aim to keep the city on the cutting edge of providing a built environment that achieves all three sustainability goals and made the point that some of the most successful endeavors are the product of public-private partnerships, not simply direct provision of desirable places by the City of Boulder. Chawla also mentioned the importance of the built environment in achieving public health goals such as promoting physical fitness, social interaction, mental well-being, and sense of community. She also touted the importance of planning events such as the PathfindersSM workshop to address persistent challenges such as providing fair and easy access of park and recreation services to underserved populations.

Preferred Future

Participants were asked to assume it is the year 2018 and consider the phrase, “BPRD has been incredibly successful over the past five years. It has...”. They were then asked to develop three to five phrases that finish the prompt, describing the preferred future of the department and the community of Boulder. Most responses reflected these concepts:

- ...engaged underserved/minority groups in more programming
- ...engaged underserved/minority groups in decision-making
- ...identified sustainable funding sources to provide access to low-income users
- ...avoided unnecessary duplication of facility/service provision with other providers in the community
- ...provided safe, close-to-home parks to all residents, especially youth
- ...developed more public/private/BVSD partnerships for program delivery and park access
- ...developed more partnerships to promote holistic/public health, especially for youth
- ...monitored usage of programs/facilities by user groups, including underserved populations
- ...clearly tied priorities, and organizational performance, to funding
- ...developed a sustainable plan for the management and maintenance of facilities
- ...determined clarity for the role of the City of Boulder in community park and recreation services
- ...transformed Boulder’s urban parks into the finest in the nation

Change and Possibilities

For this second exercise, each table of participants was provided a poster with the BPRD mission statement. Groups were asked to think about how to revise the existing mission statement considering the results of the last activity, themes that had emerged so far during the planning process, and the principles of a strong mission statement. After the exercise, the room identified the following key words and ideas that appeared multiple times during the activity:

- Creative
- Places
- Health
- Accessible
- Partnerships/collaboration/network/system
- For all
- Welcoming
- Sustainable
- Community
- Opportunities

System-wide Planning

In this exercise, tables were provided a poster listing nine themes that have emerged so far during the planning process. Groups were asked to rank each theme with an 'A,' 'B,' or 'C' to indicate if pursuing issues associated with each should be a near-, mid-, or long-term priority, respectively. Participants were also asked to suggest broad goals for each. Each of the themes are listed below, with comments on the results of the exercise.

- Community Health and Wellness – one of the highest priorities. Goals included engaging youth, combating obesity, ensuring accessibility/programs for all populations, and developing partnerships with organizations such as BVSD.
- Recreation Programming – important, but relatively less urgent. Goals included evaluating programs for effectiveness and redundancy in the community, serving diverse populations, and ensuring financial sustainability.
- Environmental Stewardship – generally important. Goals included maintaining existing community attitudes and finding new innovative ways to keep the City and BPRD on the cutting edge of sustainability.
- Asset Management – generally high priority. Goals included addressing the maintenance backlog, using existing facilities before building new ones, and finding opportunities for shared/flexible facilities.
- Financial Sustainability – one of the highest priorities. Goals included exploring and enhancing partnerships, realigning facilities/services to reduce redundancy and fill unmet needs, and developing a clearer and firmer decision-making framework for prioritizing competing funding needs.
- Community Building and Relationships – one of the highest priorities. Goals included actively developing new partnerships, getting involved in more community special events, and diversifying uses and user groups.
- Youth Engagement and Activity – generally important. Goals included developing partnerships with youth-oriented organizations (particularly BVSD), continuing to involve in planning and decision-making, and reducing barriers to physical and mental health.

- Connecting Parks, Facilities, and Trails – important, but relatively less urgent. Goals included addressing physical barriers to parks and trails, increasing the involvement of BPRD in the upcoming update of the Transportation Master Plan, and developing partnerships with other city/county agencies that manage rights-of-way.
- Organizational Change – generally important. Goals included making data-driven decisions, seeking out diversity in community leadership advice on policy, reducing silos in the BPRD, building teams more, and setting common goals among those teams.

Action Strategies

The final exercise required groups to develop action items for specific themes. Participants were asked to identify who would be responsible for each action and a timeframe for completion. After actions were developed, individuals were asked to vote on their preferred items. The most popular action items are summarized below:

- Develop community action group of kindred providers; assigned to Kirk Kincannon and Chris Coker (YMCA) for this Quarter (Theme: Community Building and Relationships).
- Pursue joint planning effort to develop a shared vision and identify barriers/opportunities; assigned to Kincannon, CMO, and BVSD Board for immediate action (Theme: Community Building and Relationships).
- Assess gaps or duplication in community parks and recreation services; assigned to BPRD staff and the master plan team for immediate action (Theme: Financial Sustainability).
- Expand Adopt-a-Park to neighborhood park level to promote awareness, ownership, and communication; assigned to BPRD and neighborhood representatives to design in 2013 and implement in 2014 (Theme: Community Building and Relationships).
- Designate/prioritize funding to address the maintenance backlog; assigned to BPRD staff and City Council for the upcoming budget cycle (Themes: Asset Management; Financial Sustainability).
- Develop partnership with BVSD focused on youth health and activity; assigned to BPRD staff, BVSD staff, and public health representatives for action later in 2013 (Theme: Youth Engagement and Activity; Community Health and Wellness).

Staff PathfindersSM Workshop

Where We Are: A Perspective on Boulder Parks and Recreation

This module consisted of a panel discussion by Kirk Kincannon, Jeff Dillon (BPRD Parks and Planning Superintendent), and Alice Guthrie (BPRD Recreation Superintendent). Dillon provided a summary of Driskell's presentation on Saturday, and Guthrie summarized Chawla's presentation.

Update on Community PathfindersSM Workshop

Following the panel presentation, BPRD staff members in attendance at Saturday's community workshop provided a brief summary of their perceptions of the process and the overall importance of the event to the planning process. The staff presenting for this module were Alison Rhodes, Abbie Poniatowski, Lisa Martin, Teri Olander, and Jeff Haley.

Reflections

For their first exercises, participants were asked to reflect on the presentations they had heard and, with their table groups, develop a list of two to three top themes to keep in mind for BPRD's future. Most responses reflected these concepts:

- Partnerships/collaboration
- Community health and wellness
- Sustainability
- Proactive asset management
- Finding a "north star" to guide the department
- Enhanced accountability
- Engaging all youth
- Articulating the successes of the department

Change and Possibilities

Before this exercise, the participants were told about the mission statement activity conducted with the community group on Saturday. Each table of staff members were then asked to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the mission statement revisions and to identify key words or phrases that should be included in mission, vision, or other planning statements. After all groups reported to the entire room, individuals were asked to vote on their preferred keywords and ideas. Concepts that were deemed to be most important were:

- Continuing environmentally sustainable practices
- Using collaboration/partnerships instead of just direct service provision
- Public health and overall community wellness
- Ensuring safety
- Strategic asset management
- Taking care of facilities we have instead of prioritizing the development of new facilities
- Creating accountability and defining measureable outcomes

Visioning

In this exercise, tables were provided guidance on crafting a strong vision statement, and then were asked to develop one for BPRD. These visions helped to amplify and add to the overall suggestions received from the community PathfindersSM workshop.

Action Strategies

The final exercise required groups to develop action items for specific themes, similar to the activity conducted at the community workshop. Participants were asked to identify who would be responsible for each action and a timeframe for completion. After actions were developed, individuals were asked to vote on their preferred items. The most popular action items are summarized below:

- Develop a nature outreach program; assigned to BPRD staff with OSMP for completion in two years (Theme: Community Building and Relationships).
- Conduct a staffing analysis; assigned to "all" for ongoing action (Theme: Financial Sustainability).
- Develop a relationship with BVSD to engage youth. No ownership or timeline identified (Theme: Youth Engagement and Activity).
- Develop neighborhood gatherings in parks; assigned to Marketing, Programming, and Parks for completion in 2014 (Theme: Community Building and Relationships).
- Formalize department partnership criteria and plans; assigned to Recreation staff and PRAB for completion in the first Quarter of 2014 (Theme: Organizational Change).

Conclusion

Although discussed in varying degrees of detail, a number of concepts received the most attention during both PathfindersSM workshops. Of the nine emerging themes used to frame the exercises, six received the most attention:

- Community Health and Wellness
- Asset Management
- Financial Sustainability
- Community Building and Relationships
- Youth Engagement and Activity
- Organizational Change

The remaining three (Recreation Programming; Environmental Stewardship; and Connecting Parks, Facilities, and Trails) were broadly recognized as important but appeared to be regarded as values that the community already prioritizes and/or as methods for achieving success in the prevailing six areas.

The resulting six themes inform the development of strategic action areas, which will be further explored and expanded in coming weeks as the Parks and Recreation Master Plan Update is finalized. Moving forward, these strategic action areas will serve as a framework for drafting strategic recommendations and action items for the plan:

- Engagement of underserved populations
- Development of partnerships to serve youth
- Development of partnerships to provide access to urban parkland
- Prioritization of public health in facilities, programs, and services
- Development of transparent and consensus-based decision-making frameworks

- Use of data in decision-making
- Proactive and sustainable management of assets
- Reduction of unnecessary redundancy in facilities, programs, and services
- Prioritization of addressing gaps in facilities, programs, and services
- Better communication of role of parks and recreation in advancing public health