



## Chapter One - Introduction

### What is the Parks and Recreation Master Plan?

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan is a strategic guide for the department for the next ten years, through 2016, and will be updated in five years. It contains four main components: goals and strategies for the department, master plan recommendations, priorities for investment in the system at three funding levels, and strategies for new funding sources. The department's first master plan was adopted in 1980, and the most recent update was adopted in 1996.

### Why is the master plan being prepared?

All city departments are developing master plans or strategic plans that provide a context for citywide budget and planning efforts. As this plan is accepted by City Council, it will be incorporated into the Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan (BVCP), the city and county's guide to land-use decisions.

### How does the master plan fit with other planning efforts?

This master plan either directly or indirectly supports all five City Council goals related to transportation, affordable housing, the environment, economic vitality, and community sustainability. The plan also addresses the social, environmental, and economic filters established by City Council, as well as goals, policies, and growth projections for the BVCP. The department has worked with the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board (PRAB), the Planning Board, and other city boards and departments to coordinate strategies and recommendations.

### What has been accomplished since the last plan?

The 1996 Parks and Recreation Master Plan outlined an ambitious program of land acquisition. In November 1995, Boulder residents approved a 20-year tax measure, the .25 Cent Sales Tax, dedicated to acquiring land, building and maintaining parks, and renovating recreation and park facilities. Maintenance funding is allocated within the .25 Cent Sales Tax Fund for parks acquired or developed with the fund.

The department acquired 369 acres for city, community, neighborhood, and pocket parks. The new properties include:

- o 104 acres purchased for Valmont City Park, 17 acres of which are developed with trails, a service road, multi-purpose practice field, seating and picnic areas, irrigation, and infrastructure;
- o 191 acres for Area III City Park, which remains undeveloped;
- o 10 new neighborhood and pocket park sites, and
- o 5 neighborhood and pocket parks developed.

The department has also acquired, developed, or renovated numerous facilities, including the North Boulder Recreation Center (NBRC), the South Boulder Recreation Center (SBRC), Spruce and Scott Carpenter pools, the Boulder Reservoir bathhouse and concession building, the Skatepark, Flatirons Golf Course, Harlow Platts disc golf course, seven playgrounds, five ballfields, Eben G. Fine Park, four dog parks, tennis courts, and historic properties. (For more detailed information, see Appendix B, Boulder

### Parks and Recreation Department

The department is composed of two large divisions, described below, plus technical, finance, and administrative support.

**The Parks and Planning Division** is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the parks system, planning and developing new parks, and renovating existing parks and facilities. The division manages the department's master plan, park-site master planning, capital projects, and park construction activities. It also maintains developed and undeveloped parks, natural lands, cultural and water resources, bike paths, and the urban forest.

The natural and undeveloped lands consist of 1,100 acres throughout the system, including 574 acres of natural lands around the Boulder Reservoir, the majority of which is owned by Public Works-Utilities.

**The Recreation Division** is the largest division of the department, with more than 75 standard and 750 seasonal staff members. Daily operations include the management of the East, North, and South Boulder recreation centers, Scott Carpenter and Spruce Pools, East Mapleton and Stazio ballfield complexes, Pleasant View Fields, the Pottery Lab, Flatirons Golf Course, and the Boulder Reservoir.

There are more than 1,000 recreation programs offered annually, including visual and performing arts, team and individual sports leagues, tournaments and clinics, fitness classes, swim lessons and water activities, and other special programs and events.



Day camp at East Boulder Community Center

**Did you know.....**  
Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. prepared the city's first master plan in 1908?

Parks and Recreation History and Accomplishments.)

### **What is different about this master plan compared to earlier versions?**

The 1996 Parks and Recreation Master Plan focused on acquiring increasingly scarce park land to meet Boulder's future needs. This master plan addresses recreation facilities and programs as well as park needs. It also focuses on the needs of the under-served, and the department's role in contributing to social sustainability and economic vitality.

This master plan has been developed under much different economic circumstances than a decade ago. Since 2001, declining sales tax revenues, combined with national and local economic recessions, have created many fiscal challenges for the city and the department. The cumulative effect of budget reductions has affected the department's ability to meet maintenance standards, build parks, deliver services, and sustain facilities and programs.

The plan incorporates three funding scenarios outlined in the city's business plan: fiscally constrained plan (what can be accomplished with current funding levels), action plan (the next steps - what can be accomplished with additional money), and vision plan (what we want the system to be).

Although the department is operating in a fiscally constrained environment, the master plan suggests other funding scenarios for the future that include an optimistic vision for Boulder's parks and recreation system. This master plan makes recommendations on how to achieve sustainable funding, which in turn will help improve maintenance, services, and facilities and programs.

### **How does this master plan affect daily life in Boulder?**

The master plan addresses gaps in service and makes recommendations for improving parks and recreation facilities. These recommendations include construction of a neighborhood park, improved park maintenance, renovation of recreation facilities, and access to more affordable programs for the city's low-income and under-served populations.

Boulder has a mature parks and recreation system, with an extensive network of parks, greenways, recreation facilities, and natural areas. Looking to the future, this master plan reflects the department's intent to enhance the system's connections to the community, the environment, and resources that will support parks and recreation facilities and programs in the future.

#### **Parks and Recreation History in Brief**

Boulder's cultural history is closely linked to our love for parks and recreation, as Suzanne Hudson reveals in *A History of Boulder's Parks and Recreation*. As early as 1868, ten years after gold seekers arrived at the mouth of Boulder Canyon, Boulder had an unofficial park where the County Courthouse now stands. At the turn of the last century, residents began to see the need for more park land and voted to purchase 80 acres for what is now Chautauqua Park. Gifts of land included 1,800 acres from the U.S. Congress stretching from Flagstaff Mountain to Four Mile Canyon.

In the early 1900s, the city's Park Board invited renowned landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. to recommend a city improvement plan. Olmsted created the city's first master plan, which advised generous parks and open spaces and suggested preserving the Boulder Creek flood plain as park land.

Since World War II, citizens have approved funding for projects to enhance recreation opportunities, such as the Boulder Reservoir, the North, South, and East Boulder recreation centers, as well as the city's open space program. In the 1970s, the city also developed the Pearl Street Mall and began laying out the greenway trail along Boulder Creek. Recreation programs begun in the 1920s have expanded to include more than 1,000 programs today (for more information, see Appendix B, Boulder Parks and Recreation History and Accomplishments.)