



Chapter Three - Trends, Key Issues and Community Needs

This chapter identifies the key demographic trends, community needs, facilities management issues, and financial challenges that have implications for the parks and recreation system.

The department considered the following documents and data, among others, in creating the master plan:

- o Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan (BVCP) 2005 Update
- o City of Boulder Housing and Human Services Master Plan 2006-2015
- o City of Boulder Transportation Master Plan 2003 Update
- o City of Boulder Parks and Recreation Department 2005 and 2001 citizen surveys
- o City of Boulder Parks and Recreation Department 2002 Needs Assessment
- o City of Boulder Parks and Recreation Department 2006 Informal Internet Survey

Key Demographic Trends

To prepare this master plan, the department considered the community's profile--Boulder's demographic and recreation trends, as well as parks and recreation needs that have implications for the future. Demographic sources include *City of Boulder: A Demographic Profile* (Department of Housing and Human Services, April 2004), *City of Boulder Census 2000: Populations, Households, and Housing* (prepared by the Boulder Planning Department), the Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG), and the U.S. Census

Bureau and U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

Boulder's key demographic trends

- o **Increased population.** By 2030, Boulder's population is projected to be 124,400 in Areas I and II (Source: City of Boulder Long Range Planning Division).
- o **Aging population (more seniors).** Boulder's median age without university students was 35 in 2000 and is expected to peak at 51 in 2030.
- o **High proportion of at-risk youth.** A 2004 survey of 1,960 Boulder County youth conducted by the Boulder County Public Health Department and the Boulder Valley and St. Vrain school districts found that almost half of high school students drank alcohol, and about a third were binge drinkers. More than half of local high school seniors had tried marijuana and had sex, and 16 percent had attempted suicide.
- o **More poverty.** Approximately 14 percent of Boulder's population lives below poverty level; 27 percent of Latino families had incomes below poverty level in 2000.
- o **More limited-English speakers.** Boulder is home to many people who speak limited English. For example, the Spanish-speaking population nearly doubled between 1990 and 2000, increasing from 4.5 percent to 8.2 percent. (See Appendix D, Boulder Community Profile, for more information.)

Recreation as a Social Service

As part of their mission in human services, parks and recreation departments worldwide are working to help young children and at-risk youth make healthy life choices.

Recreation as a social service has its roots in movements such as the founding of the YMCA and programs for inner-city youth in New York City in the late 1800s.

In recent years, society has acknowledged that leisure is a right of all citizens, and that access to recreation is necessary for a community to achieve a high quality of life. As part of its mission, the department is committed to reaching out to residents to provide access to programs and services regardless of age, income, or culture.

What is a core program?

The Parks and Recreation Department's core programs provide basic life skills or human services that are not provided elsewhere in the city (or not at an affordable rate). They are the foundation of the department and are central to its mission. Core recreation programs include: public open swim, learn-to-swim lessons, as well as the Youth Services Initiative and EXPAND (see page 14 for more information).

Sustainable Practices

The department is committed to being a leader in environmental sustainability and a model for the community to follow. This will be accomplished by using environmental practices and best management practices in all areas of operations and maintenance, water quality measures, new park design and construction, park renovation, and facility construction and renovation. The department will partner with city departments and other agencies to leverage city resources and showcase environmental projects.

As part of the city's focus on sustainable architecture in design and construction, the department used the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED™) criteria for municipal buildings in renovating and expanding the North Boulder Recreation Center. The center received a LEED™ Silver Classification by the U.S. Green Building Council for the renovation which incorporated many environmentally sensitive design elements and construction practices. A solar water-heating system was installed that consumes half the natural gas of comparable buildings. Heat-reflecting roof panels and "low-e" insulating windows help keep the building cool in summer. Energy-efficient use of recycled materials included reprocessing the parking-lot asphalt. The recreation center is landscaped with drought-tolerant shrubs and is maintained without using pesticides.

What demographic trends mean for parks and recreation

Boulder's demographic trends point to the need for:

- o **Community connections.** Boulder is a retirement destination and has many new and short-term residents. One quarter of the city's population is college students. Programs that help foster community connections and relationships among neighbors and across generations are particularly important.
- o **Changes in parks and recreation programs and facilities and their uses.** Increasing population numbers may require new parks and recreation facilities. Increasing numbers of children of single-parent families and families with both parents working may require after-school, evening/weekend, and summer programs. The needs of active seniors and limited-English-speaking residents may require changes in facilities, programs, and services.
- o **Collaborations with other agencies, organizations, and individuals.** The department will collaborate with other city and county agencies to meet the community's needs for facilities, programs, and services. Given the lack of adequate resources to accomplish the department's goals, providing programs for at-risk children and youth, for example, may require working more closely with Housing and Human Services, the Boulder Public Health Department, the Boulder Valley School District (BVSD), the YMCA, and local sports and arts organizations.
- o **Bridges to close the widening gap between the rich and poor.** Boulder is trending toward wealthier households on one end of the economic scale and more low-income households on the other. This income disparity may have implications for parks and recreation programs and services. For example, do types of services and fees compete with private clubs favored by more affluent residents? Do they aim for middle-income residents? Do they offer affordable

opportunities for lower-income residents? Do they try to appeal to and accommodate all residents?

- o **New opportunities.** Redevelopment of the Transit Village, the Twenty Ninth Street area, and other parts of the city will provide the department opportunities to develop new parks, plazas, and recreation facilities. Such opportunities offer the possibility of enhancing services for the community and will be addressed by partnering with neighborhoods, sports groups, and other agencies and organizations.

Facilities Management Issues

City policies, financial resources, and management practices determine how the department manages parks and recreation facilities. Policies and management trends throughout the city have evolved over time and have resulted in operation and maintenance changes for the department. Given budget reductions and more land to maintain, site management issues have put a strain on the department's budget, especially expenditures related to:

- o **Maintaining facilities for other departments and agencies.** Over time, the department has assumed some maintenance responsibilities (such as landscaping, snow removal and trash service) for city facilities in addition to those operated by the department. The department maintains landscapes in Boulder's Municipal Complex, three public libraries and other public sites. Since 1998, the department has also had a cooperative agreement with BVSD to maintain school sites located next to 16 urban parks. The department is creating priorities for maintenance responsibilities based upon its mission and business plan. Maintenance funds are not sufficient to meet the demands of ongoing and long-term maintenance of all these properties.
- o **Weed management.** The city uses an integrated pest management (IPM) approach to minimize pesticide use in landscape and turf management. Nonchemical weed control requires weeding by hand and machine.

- o **Wildlife management.** Prairie dogs, mosquitoes, bears, raptors, and other animals affect park and recreation facility management practices and require potentially costly solutions to protect public property. Several park sites are currently impacted by prairie dogs, and on-going management (requiring staff time and funding) will be necessary to prevent, reduce, or eliminate conflicts. As park sites and recreation facilities

are developed or re-developed, the design will incorporate materials and methods to prevent wildlife encroachment and minimize conflicts.

- o **Drought.** Boulder's parks face lingering effects of the 2001-2002 drought, which damaged trees, turf, and plants and resulted in weed growth.
- o **Increasing energy costs.** Rising natural gas, electricity, and gasoline costs have resulted in higher utility and

Drought Management Lessons Learned

The drought of 2002 created major problems for the Parks and Recreation Department but also created new opportunities. The drought was responsible for the early demise of hundreds of street and park trees as well as shrubs and turf areas. The department has completed the following projects to manage future droughts:

1. **Alternative irrigation water.** Working with the Public Works Department, the department uses ditch water to irrigate park land at Martin Park and portions of Foothills Community Park and Valmont City Park. These irrigation systems use city-treated water, if needed, when the ditches are not running.
2. **Computerized irrigation system.** In 2004, the department completed a multi-year project to replace an aging irrigation control system with a computerized system that allows staff to program water use from a central computer and to monitor the amount of water used from the main water line. Fifty-six park sites have been retrofitted with 73 new computerized irrigation controllers, allowing irrigation managers to monitor and adjust daily water usage.
3. **Water conserving methods.** The department is using drip or subsurface irrigation in new or renovated park sites to directly irrigate turf and individual plants and use less water.

Urban Wildlife Management Plan

The city has an Urban Wildlife Management Plan (UWMP) that integrates wildlife conservation with urban land uses and provides the framework for implementing ecologically based management practices. A team from the Office of Environmental Affairs, OSMP, Parks and Recreation, and Planning has developed the framework and prairie dog component. Implementing the plan will require the coordination of several city departments, as well as other governmental agencies.

The city's vision is to provide for the long-term ecological sustainability of wildlife, while proactively reducing conflicts between humans and wildlife. The UWMP recommends the protection of animal species, not individual animals, and emphasizes humane, non-lethal control of wildlife whenever possible. It establishes policies and procedures for managing wildlife within the city on both public and private land, and outlines actions for long-term management of wildlife in the city. The UWMP includes a prairie dog management component with the objectives of conserving prairie dog populations, where possible, in the urban service areas and removing them from urban areas where they conflict with humans and other land uses.

As park sites and recreation facilities are developed or renovated, the department will design them to incorporate materials and methods to prevent wildlife encroachment and minimize conflicts. Management of wildlife, specifically prairie dogs, is an ongoing maintenance and management issue. The department will collaborate with other city departments to be more efficient and effective in minimizing or eliminating conflicts. For more information on the Urban Wildlife Management Plan: www.boulderwildlifeplan.net

Benefits of Boulder's Municipal Trees

Trees make Boulder a more enjoyable and beautiful place to live, work, and play. They provide many benefits, such as increasing property values and mitigating pollution and stormwater problems. In 2005, the Parks and Recreation Department contracted with the U.S. Forest Service to conduct the STRATUM project, a tree resource analysis tool that quantified the dollar value of the annual environmental and aesthetic benefits of trees. Highlights of this study are:

- o Boulder's trees reduce stormwater runoff by intercepting 6 million cubic feet of rain. Citywide, the average tree intercepts 1,271 gallons of stormwater annually.
- o Boulder's trees annually save 1,826 MWh of electricity and 11,403 MBtu of natural gas from shading and climate effects.
- o Each city tree annually absorbs nearly a half-pound in air pollutants; ozone absorption totals 3.5 tons.

Use of Technology

New technologies have helped the Parks and Recreation Department improve databases and service for program participants and plan for park purchases, development, and renovations. Since 2001, the department has:

- o created interactive maps for the public to access information
- o developed an automated program registration system
- o developed a database of the entire parks and recreation system
- o inventoried all 37,500 of the city's park and street trees
- o developed a parks assets data base with geographic information systems (GIS) and global positioning systems (GPS) that allows users to reference information such as the physical and environmental elements of park sites and recreation facilities

Response to 2001-2006 Budget Cuts

Responding to economic conditions since 2001, the department reduced its operating budget by nearly \$2 million and its capital budget by more than \$1.1 million. The department responded with the following management strategies:

- o consolidation of the Parks and Planning divisions, with funds reallocated to other areas of need
- o reduction of seasonal staff hours from 248,000 in 1999 to 153,000 in 2005
- o restructuring and/or eliminating 14 full-time employees
- o increased marketing efforts

fuel costs. Since 2005, the costs of natural gas and electricity increased by 30 percent, and diesel fuel costs increased more than 50 percent, resulting in higher vehicle, materials, and construction costs.

Major Funding Issues

The city's economic decline that began in 2001 highlighted the critical need for a process to help make objective funding decisions. If economic conditions decline, the department will use the guiding principles from the city's business plan, as well as the department's investment strategies and analyses to determine funding priorities.

The guiding principles for the Parks and Recreation Department Business Plan are:

- o Allocate appropriate levels of subsidy based on community interests and values.
- o Provide and prioritize services within the existing cost-recovery model.
- o Strive to meet parks and recreation standards.
- o Enhance community health, well-being, and quality of life.
- o Ensure the public trust.

The department's long-term outlook for financial sustainability has emerged as the most critical issue of the master plan. Major funding issues include the following:

Declining revenues. The department relies on sales-tax sources to fund 39 percent of its budget, either directly through two sales-tax funds or indirectly through the General Fund. Between 2001 and 2004, the local and national recession, coupled with the closure of Crossroads Mall and declines in retail sales, resulted in a more than 17 percent drop in sales and use tax, the primary revenue source for the city's General Fund. These factors translated into a cumulative 12 percent reduction in the department's annual operating budget (more than \$1.4 million since 2001), a 20 percent reduction in the General Fund subsidy

to the department's Recreation Activity Fund, and a \$1.1 million annual reduction in the capital improvement program (CIP) budget.

Lack of stable long-term funding. The key issue for parks is identifying how to fund both park maintenance and park renovation projects currently funded by the .25 Cent Sales Tax before the tax expires at the end of 2015. Through this tax, donations, memorandums of understanding, leases, and other funding sources, the department has acquired approximately 369 acres of land since 1996. The department also has relied on the sales tax for parks operation and maintenance funding and for some services such as citywide park trash services that were formerly paid for by the General Fund. The sales tax must be renewed or replaced by another funding source so the department can continue to build, maintain, and renovate parks and recreation facilities. Beyond renewing the .25 Cent Sales Tax and the citywide shared .15 Cent Sales Tax, the department must seek additional permanent funding sources that offer increased reliability compared to expiring sales-tax initiatives and allow completion of the action and vision plans (see Chapter 7).

Expiring sales tax dilemma. Two sales-tax initiatives that will expire between 2012 and 2015 provide more than a quarter (28 percent) of the department's budget. The .25 Cent Sales Tax funds 27 percent of the department's budget and pays for operations and bond payments. The .15 Cent Sales Tax pays for maintenance at Pleasant View and Stazio fields. By 2015, the department will have a \$3.8 million budget shortfall if the .25 Cent Sales Tax is not renewed (in 2006 dollars). In that case, the department will have to re-evaluate how to pay for programs and services. Other communities facing similar funding crises have been forced to mothball parks and facilities, close recreation centers, and eliminate programs. To avoid major cuts in programs and services, the department soon must develop a sustainable funding solution.

2007 Parks and Recreation Budget

The 2007 Parks and Recreation Department's \$22.8 million budget is composed of funding from six sources:

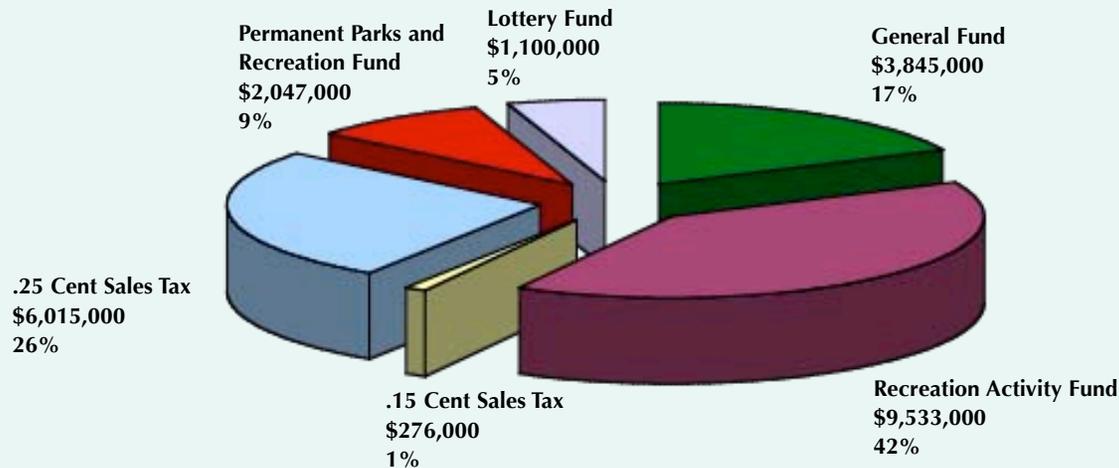
- 1) **General Fund:** \$3.8 million for general park maintenance, forestry, and department administration, plus partial support of recreation programs. This represents 4.3 percent of the city's General Fund budget.
- 2) **Recreation Activity Fund (RAF):** \$9.5 million, currently 78 percent from program and facility revenues and 22 percent from General Fund and other subsidies for all recreation programs and facilities (including the recreation centers, outdoor pools, Stazio and Mapleton ballfield complexes and 19 satellite ballfields, Pleasant View Fields, Boulder Reservoir, and Flatirons Golf Course).
- 3) **Permanent Parks and Recreation Fund:** \$2 million from a dedicated .9 mill property tax, development excise tax, and donations, which are used for capital improvements, including funding for land acquisition, planning, park development and renovation/refurbishment of assets and infrastructure.
- 4) **.25 Cent Sales Tax Fund:** \$6 million dedicated to parks and recreation purposes, including paying debt service on land acquisitions, park, forestry, and natural lands maintenance, renovation of assets, and capital construction. The tax expires in 2015.
- 5) **.15 Cent Sales Tax Fund:** \$276,000 provides funding for maintenance of Pleasant View Fields and Stazio Ballfield Complex. The tax expires in 2012.
- 6) **Lottery Fund:** \$1.1 million to pay debt service on Area III land and to provide funding for park, capital projects, conservation and natural lands management. The fund is shared with Tributary Greenways and Open Space and Mountain Parks (OSMP). For the 2007 and 2008 budgets, OSMP has given its share to the department to provide a short-term solution to the RAF budget shortfall. The department's typical Lottery Fund allocation is \$525,000, plus an additional \$150,000 budgeted in Parks and Recreation for Tributary Greenways.

Complex and Restrictive Budget Structure

The economic factors that influence the department are further impacted by the complex nature of the budget structure. The department's \$22.8 million 2007 budget is derived from six funds, each of which has specific functions and restrictions (see Appendix E, The Six Parks and Recreation Funds). For example, the Permanent Parks and Recreation Fund provides money for developing new parks, but not for their maintenance.

The department faces the on-going challenge of balancing the needs of recreation programming, park maintenance, and park development within the restrictions of the dedicated funds. The budget structure limits the department's flexibility to meet community needs and changing economic conditions, and makes it difficult for the department to direct funds to where they are most needed.

2007 Parks and Recreation Budget \$22.8 Million



What is "Cost Recovery"?

Cost recovery has emerged as a critical issue for recreation. Cost recovery means the proportion of a program or facility budget paid by user fees. Recreation programs and facilities are funded through a combination of admission fees to programs and facilities and citywide revenue sources, including sales and property taxes.

Cost-recovery rates and policies vary significantly by community. Cost-recovery policies are developed to ensure that subsidies are directed primarily to under-served populations. These policies provide a systematic framework to determine appropriate fee structures and evaluate programs that are not meeting designated minimum cost-recovery goals.

Direct costs are identified as specific, identifiable expenses associated with providing recreation services. On a fund level, this includes all expenses from the Recreation Activity Fund, partially supplemented by the department's other funds. Indirect costs are identified as department and city overhead expenses.

It is difficult to compare cost-recovery rates among cities because each community calculates rates using different criteria and includes different costs. Cost-recovery rates vary between 18 percent and 90 percent for cities located along the Front Range.

To illustrate, the following expenditures may or may not be included in reported cost-recovery rates:

- o Department and city indirect costs
- o Enterprise operations, such as golf courses
- o Facility maintenance and renovation
- o Equipment replacement
- o Custodial services and utilities

Please see the Core Services Business Model on page 28 for cost recovery goals for specific facilities, programs, and services.

To illustrate the expiring sales-tax dilemma, \$3.8 million of the department's 2007 budget funds the following items:

<i>North Boulder Recreation Center</i>	<i>\$1,050,000</i>
<i>Spruce and Scott Carpenter Pools</i>	<i>\$200,000</i>
<i>Capital projects</i>	<i>\$800,000</i>
<i>Facility maintenance</i>	<i>\$400,000</i>
<i>Playground and irrigation projects</i>	<i>\$225,000</i>
<i>Parks and natural lands maintenance</i>	<i><u>\$1,125,000</u></i>
	<i>\$3,800,000</i>

Lack of sustainable funding for the Recreation

Activity Fund (RAF). The major issue for the Recreation Division is that the current funding model is not sustainable. The RAF was created in 2001 to provide a flexible fund balance that could be used to offset declining revenues from a reduction in recreation center attendance or weather impacts at outdoor facilities. In 2004, the long-term sustainability of the RAF became a concern due to increased operating expenses, limited ability to raise fees and remain competitive, and projected fund deficits. In response to these factors, the department's 2006 budget was reduced by \$415,000. A projected 2007 RAF deficit of \$300,000 was reduced to \$150,000 due to increased revenue from new business processes, program initiatives, and increased marketing efforts.

As a short-term solution, the Open Space Board of Trustees has agreed to allow the department to use the OSMP portion of the Lottery Funds for 2007 and 2008, which would provide an additional \$370,000 in 2007 and \$390,000 in 2008. In 2009, the Lottery Fund agreement will be revisited. The .25 Cent Sales Tax Fund and Lottery Funds are being used to cover the 2007 budget shortfall, but a longer-term solution is required to avoid future deficits and to increase stability for the Recreation Division.

Cost-recovery rates. The cost-recovery rate for the city's recreation programs and services is approximately 75 percent, averaged across all programs and services. A majority of the programs and services funded through the RAF

exceed industry cost-recovery norms. Cities that provide more programming and access for the under-served typically have lower cost-recovery rates due to higher government subsidies. However, it is difficult to make comparisons between municipalities regarding cost-recovery rates (see sidebar at left). Cost-recovery goals and General Fund support for programs and services should be adjusted to reflect the cost of providing specific services, community benefits, and users' ability to pay fees. The funding for the action plan includes \$700,000 to align cost-recovery goals with the Core Services Business Model (see page 28).

Need for dedicated funding to improve

park maintenance. With additional park sites to maintain and reductions in budget and staff, the department has not been meeting maintenance standards systemwide. Parks developed with Permanent Parks and Recreation Fund money do not have an identified source for park maintenance, resulting in the need to compete with other city programs and services for limited General Fund allocations. In addition, because of reductions, the department's 2006 General Fund park maintenance funding was \$2.1 million, essentially the 1997 budget level. This did not address inflation and park system growth.

Need for additional funds to build the backlog of

unbuilt parks. Construction of parks has not kept pace with development in Boulder. There are approximately 165 acres of undeveloped parkland in the system, including 30 acres of neighborhood and pocket parks, 20 acres of community parks, and 115 acres at Valmont City Park. An additional 191 acres of city park land in Area III are held in reserve for future consideration. At an estimated cost of \$220,000 to \$440,000 per acre (2006 dollars) to install basic park elements such as irrigation, turf, trees, and playgrounds, an additional \$3 million to \$5 million beyond

Did you know.....
to lower cost-recovery rates, additional funding sources are needed?

current revenue projections is needed to build the 50 acres of community, neighborhood, and pocket parks. Although the Valmont City Park site plan will be revised to meet current community needs, the original plan estimated construction costs at \$84 million.

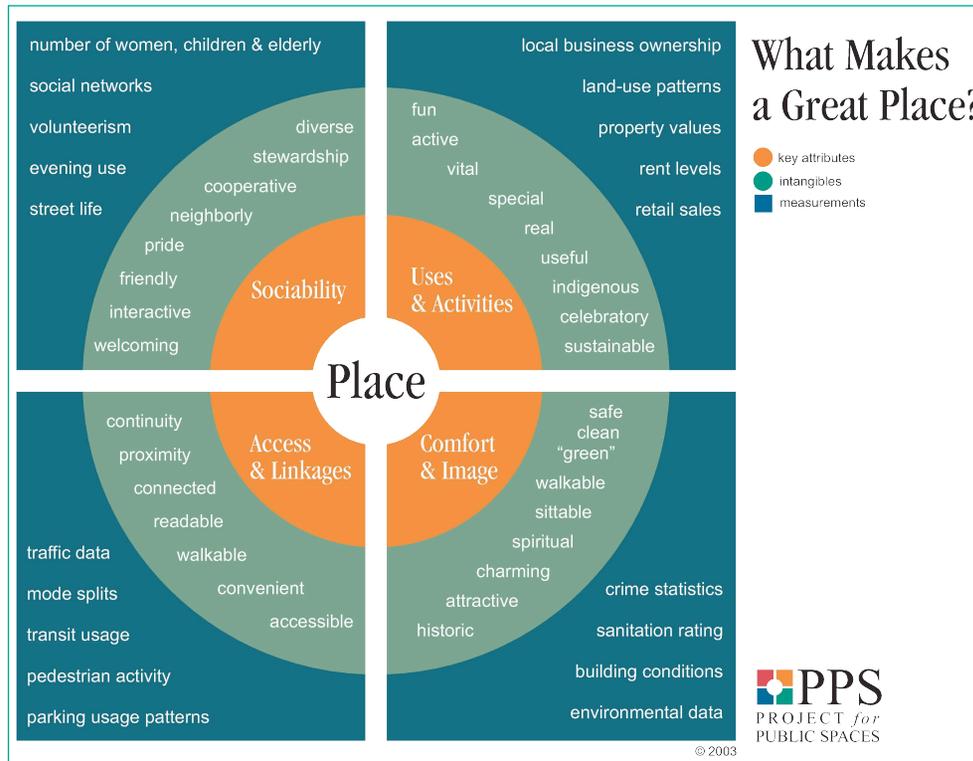
As maintenance funds have declined, the department's priority has been to take care of existing facilities and allow funds for new parks to accumulate until money becomes available to both build and maintain them. With the economic picture improving, the department is beginning to construct some undeveloped parks (see Appendix J, Prioritizing Park Development).

Renovation and refurbishment needs. In recent years, the department has not been able to invest in recreation facilities at the Boulder Reservoir and Flatirons Golf Course. Capital funds were used to renovate the North Boulder Recreation Center, to provide modifications to the South Boulder Recreation Center and Scott Carpenter pool, and to build the Pleasant View Fields. Given the aging infrastructure of the reservoir and golf course facilities and the department's reliance on revenue generation, one of the department's priorities for the future is to spend capital and renovation and refurbishment funds on these revenue-producing facilities. For parks, an additional \$650,000 per year is needed to restore and refurbish landscapes and infrastructure, including playgrounds, irrigation systems, shelters, parking lots, and restrooms.

Increasing competition from other public and private recreation facilities. The department's

ability to generate revenue at recreation facilities has been impacted by increasing competition from public and private fitness/recreation centers in Boulder and neighboring communities. To remain competitive, fees must remain reasonable, and facilities must be attractive and provide amenities offered by other communities. To attract and retain patrons, the department needs to focus additional resources on renovating recreation facilities.

Need to serve a wider community. The department intends to provide for Boulder's changing demographics by offering additional resources and outreach to the underserved, at-risk youth, limited-English speakers, and the growing senior population. However, such efforts will depend on finding stable new funds and developing new partnerships.



What makes a great place?

In evaluating more than 1,000 public spaces around the world, the Project for Public Spaces (www.pps.org) has found that successful ones have four key qualities:

Accessibility. A successful public place is well-connected to its surroundings, both visually and physically. It is visible from a distance and up close, has interesting edges, and is easy to get to and get through, ideally by a variety of transportation options.

Activity. People are continually engaged in a range of activities--walking, eating, playing, relaxing, socializing, reading. There is a good balance between men and women, people of different ages and ethnic groups, and individuals and groups.

Comfort and image. Comfort includes perceptions about safety, cleanliness, and availability of places to sit. A comfortable place makes a good first impression.

Sociability. A sociable place is one where people choose to meet friends, where they seem to know each other by name or face, and feel comfortable interacting with strangers. People smile and make eye contact. It is a place to take people when they come to visit and to point to with pride.

2005 City of Boulder Parks and Recreation Survey

In 2005, the department conducted a citizen's survey (see Appendix G, 2005 City of Boulder Parks and Recreation Survey Results) that updated information regarding the use of city parks and recreation facilities, their strengths and weaknesses, and priorities for additional programs and facilities. The department mailed surveys to 1,200 randomly selected Boulder households. Of the 1,092 eligible households that received the mailed survey, 402 responded, for a response rate of 37 percent. Survey results were weighted so that respondent age, gender, and tenure (years in Boulder) reflected their proportions for the entire city. The margin of error is plus or minus five percentage points for any given percentage point. Some key findings of the 2005 City of Boulder Parks and Recreation Survey:

Boulder is an active community. Within the past year, respondents said they:

- o walked (98%), exercised (94%), jogged (91%), ran (90%), and bicycled (89%)
- o relaxed at a park--read a book, picnicked, played games or catch (86%), swam, fished, relaxed, or socialized at a reservoir or lake (63%), used a group shelter or picnic area (47%), and played at a playground (43%)
- o "dropped-in" for exercise (53%); participated in a fitness class (51%)
- o swam at an indoor pool 'open swim' drop-in (44%)
- o swam at an outdoor pool 'open swim' drop-in (42%)
- o played field sports--soccer, football, rugby, field hockey, lacrosse, ultimate frisbee (36%)
- o played court sports or took lessons--basketball, volleyball, tennis (31%)
- o played golf or took golf lessons (22%)
- o went boating (sailing, canoeing, windsurfing) on a reservoir or lake (21%)
- o used an indoor swimming pool for swim lessons or water exercise classes (21%)

Residents place a high value on the Parks and Recreation mission. The vast majority of survey respondents (85%) rated parks and recreation facilities, programs, and services as "essential" or "very valuable." They placed the highest value on recreational opportunities for children (94%) and teens (93%). Nine out of ten respondents (89%) said helping to maintain and improve the physical health of the community and providing recreational opportunities for adults and people with disabilities were essential or very valuable. Some 88 percent and 87 percent, respectively, said recreational opportunities for low-income residents and seniors were essential or very valuable. The lowest-rated purpose--but still "very valuable" to 85 percent of respondents--was maintaining and improving the mental well-being of the community.

Maintaining the parks and recreation system is more important than new development. Asked to rate their most important priorities, 87 percent of respondents said maintenance and renovation of existing parks, 81 percent said keeping recreation facilities open for as many hours as possible, 75 percent said keeping admission and pass fees at current levels, and 70 percent said maintenance of the athletic fields. Lower on the priority list were developing existing vacant parks (57%), acquiring new parks (48%), and developing new athletic fields (26%).

Fitness and sports are the highest priority for programs and facilities. Nearly 90 percent of respondents rated the three recreation centers essential or very valuable to the community. Spruce and Scott Carpenter outdoor swimming pools were the next priority (76%), then swimming (66%) and boating activities (58%) at the Boulder Reservoir. The Pottery Lab was last on the list, but was essential or very valuable to more than half (51%) of respondents. Concerning programs and activities, wellness/fitness topped the list (81%), followed by aquatics (74%), sports teams (66%), performing and visual arts (58% and 59%), gymnastics (31%), and golf (28%).

The highest priority for park development projects is vacant park sites. Respondents favored developing existing vacant parks over developing new multi-purpose fields or an 18-hole disc golf course. Priorities include: develop vacant neighborhood park sites (71%) vacant pocket park sites (66%), and existing incomplete community parks (57 percent said develop the East Boulder Community Park, and 51 percent said develop Foothills Community Park). About 40 percent of respondents said develop multi-purpose fields, and 20 percent favored an 18-hole disc golf course (See Appendix L, Disc Golf Study).

Did you know.....
the city's gymnastics program is the largest municipal gymnastics program in the state?