

## Executive Summary

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The purpose of this comprehensive master plan is to provide the department and the community with a roadmap to continue to provide high quality park spaces, recreation facilities and programs in Lawrence. Leading communities around the country continue to support parks and recreation as a strong component in defining the quality of life issues for their community. It is no different in Lawrence. In the public survey and through the community meetings, the citizens of Lawrence value their parks, use their parks, and want more out of their parks. Seventy-six percent of those surveyed had a member of their household visit a Lawrence park in 1999. This is a very high percentage of use in a community. And of those who visited the parks, eighty-six percent believed they were in good to excellent condition. A real tribute to the staff and all associated with the department.

This community driven process engaged Lawrence citizens in interviews, public meetings and with a 1,200 household survey and a student survey. Additionally, an inventory and analysis of each park and facility was conducted, and a preparedness audit was performed on the department. The audit analyzed the departmental organizational structure and its ability to drive the mandated change. The facility and park reviews analyzed not only the physical condition, but also the programmatic flexibility and partnership potential for the site. With this feedback, a vision for the department was developed with community needs as its foundation.

The final components of the plan include the development of a phased action plan with developmental, capital and operational costs and the development of a systemic changes matrix to allow the department to evolve in a manageable process. Finally, a suggested realignment of the organization is provided to position the department to continue to provide the level of customer support the citizen's of Lawrence have come to expect.

### Public Survey

The survey instrument was developed at two levels. The first was for the general public, and the second was a student survey in the 27 Lawrence public and private schools, grades 4-11.

The resident survey was conducted during the fall of 1999. They were mailed to 1,200 randomly selected households in the City. Follow up phone calls were made to those who had not returned their surveys with the goal of receiving 400 completed surveys. 145 surveys were completed by phone with 397 returned by mail for a response rate of 542 completed surveys. The results for the random sample of 542 households have a 95% level of confidence with a precision of at least  $\pm 4.4\%$ . For the student survey, 373 randomly selected students in 27 schools, grades 3-12 received the instrument. The results for the random sample of 373 students have a 95% level of confidence with a precision of at least  $\pm 5.2\%$ .

## Major Findings - Resident survey

More than one-third (36%) of the households surveyed indicated that at least one member of their household participated in Lawrence Parks and Recreation (LPRD) programs during the previous year. 86% knew the City offered parks and recreation programs.

The sources for information that were most frequently mentioned by residents who participate in parks and recreation programs were: LPRD brochure (54%), newspaper (48%) and friends and coworkers (44%).

More than three-fourths (76%) indicated that at least one member of their household had visited a park during the past year. 98% of those surveyed indicated they knew where the city parks were located.

Of those who visited a park, 86% rated the overall condition of the parks excellent (34%) or good (52%).

The top four reasons residents do not use city parks and recreation facilities more often are that they are too busy to use them (45%), existing facilities are not close to home (25%), hours are not convenient (18%) or they use other facilities (16%).

Residents were asked to rate their satisfaction with the availability of various types of parks and recreation facilities in the city on a five-point scale, where 5 meant "very satisfied" and 1 "very dissatisfied". Satisfaction indicates how well the number of facilities meets the need of the residents; it does not necessarily reflect satisfaction with the condition of the facilities. The percentages have been adjusted to exclude the "don't know" responses.

<u>Top 5 Items</u>	<u>Combination of very satisfied and satisfied ratings</u>
Public landscaping/flower gardens	71%
Playgrounds for children	71%
Walking and biking trails	68%
Picnic facilities	68%
Neighborhood parks	68%
<u>Bottom 5 Items ratings</u>	<u>Combination of very satisfied and satisfied ratings</u>
Ice skating rinks	15%
Inline skating/hockey facilities	25%
Skateboard facilities	29%
Racquetball courts	31%
Volleyball courts	34%

The most important parks and recreation facilities to the residents are: walking and biking trails (48%), neighborhood parks (31%), public landscaping/flower gardens (25%), playgrounds for children (22%) and nature centers/nature trails.

The most important improvements that residents think should be made to existing parks are: linking neighborhood parks with walking and biking trails (41%), enhancing existing public landscapes (30%), expanding open space (25%) and renovating playgrounds (24%).

Over half (52%) thought LPRD should emphasize improvements to existing parks and recreation facilities over the next ten years, 23% thought the city should acquire more land for new parks and 19% thought the city should emphasize the construction of new parks and recreation facilities.

Nearly half (45%) of those residents surveyed indicated they would be either very likely (22%) or somewhat likely (23%) to register for LPRD classes on the Internet.

Nearly two thirds (63%) think non-residents should be charged more than residents to participate in LPRD programs and to use recreation facilities provided by the City of Lawrence.

#### Major Findings - Student survey

More than two-thirds (68%) of the youth surveyed indicated that there is a park within walking distance of their home, 31% indicate they use the park near their home at least once a week. More than half (56%) indicated they use the park closest to their home at least once per month. 71% indicated they use other parks in Lawrence in addition to the one closest to home.

59% use the City's recreation centers.

Based on the percentage of "very interested" responses relative to indoor recreational activities the following were the most popular: indoor swimming (57%), video/arcade games (56%), indoor basketball (45%) and billiards/pool (42%).

Based on the percentage of "very interested" responses relative to natural oriented recreational activities the following were the most popular: canoeing/boating (47%), exploring/playing in the woods (46%) and trail walking/hiking (43%).

Based on the percentage of "very interested" responses relative to outdoor recreational activities the following were the most popular: concerts/entertainment (56%), bicycle riding in the neighborhood (46%), outdoor basketball (46%), bicycle trail riding (45%), baseball (40%), soccer (40%) and in-line skating (40%).

## Facility Analysis

Another component of this plan was to physically review each park facility the department manages and make recommendations for improvements and/or enhancements. Additionally, mapping was performed to document gaps in current service areas to provide a guideline for the department in its future growth and development of new facilities. The culmination of this analysis is the capital improvement plan (C.I.P.) and action plan.

An accepted benchmark standard for level of service determination in communities today is 12 to 15 acres per 1,000 population. With a population of approximately 80,000 people, Lawrence should have in the range of 960 and 1,200 acres of parkland. It has 1,457 acres not including the leased Clinton Lake property (YSI, Eagle Bend Golf Course, Outlet Park and the Clinton Lake Sports Complex site) or the newly acquired property northwest of the City. The community feedback indicated a need to focus on maintaining what the department has, to develop trail linkages and to acquire some land. This intuitively reinforces the standards and will be reflected in the Action Plan. Because the City is continuing to grow, all opportunities to acquire flexible land areas for future needs use should be researched.

## Organizational Alignment

As the Department positions itself to accomplish the Action Plan there are alignments to be made in the organization to either create better efficiencies or balance the levels of responsibility to allow the system to implement change. Many times without proper realignment during a strategic shift in an organization the system can be overwhelmed by the change. This can lead to unfulfilled goals, disenchanted staff, low morale, high employee turnover, under or unserved customers, and/or low customer satisfaction.

During the development of the plan, the consulting team evaluated the Lawrence Parks and Recreation Department organizational system. The process utilized a staff survey that focused on accountability and responsibilities. Individual and group interviews were conducted after the employee surveys were completed, to establish organizational outcomes to be achieved with the redesign. The defined outcomes are:

- Reduce the number of direct reports to the Director.
- Streamline the direct reporting process.
- Align functionality with accountability and responsibility.
- Evaluate positions that are lacking to meet established service level standards desired, and new positions when projects come online.
- Eliminate organizational design based on personality.
- Eliminate cylinder management and incorporate matrix management to maximize resources and build teamwork in the organization.
- Incorporate accountability at all levels in the organization not just at the top.

- Incorporate a support division that eliminates bureaucracy and supports administratively the recreation division and the parks division to maximize their service delivery.
- Eliminate pay inequities for positions that have the same level of accountabilities and responsibilities.

During the review process, three models were created that demonstrated alternatives to meet the desired outcomes. These models were narrowed to one and presented to staff for their input and comments. Several work sessions were held with staff to gain their support and ultimate consensus on the organizational redesign. Likewise, the City Manager and Personnel Division of the Administrative Services Dept. provided input and changes were made to meet his expectations. The presented organization addresses the majority of the desired outcomes.

There is not the level of staffing in place to meet the current level of operational standards expected by the public. This will ultimately reduce the City's ability to keep up with preventative maintenance levels required to maintain the parks and recreation assets as well as the level of programs the community desires. Unless there are new positions created or contract positions hired, the department will continue to be unable to keep up with the growth of the system. Lawrence is a growing and vibrant community. The City has been fortunate to have capital dollars to build and develop exceptional parks, indoor and outdoor facilities, trails and special use facilities. Operational dollars need to follow to keep up with the standard of care the public has come to appreciate and support. The department as a whole should not develop additional facilities or parks without resources to follow. Unless the department increases operational revenues through a combination of user fees and taxes, the system and employees will remain in a very stressed state. The Administrative Services Dept. will need to reevaluate several positions in the reorganization to meet the current inequities in place.

### Vision

The following is the vision for the Lawrence Parks and Recreation. It is an outgrowth of the community input process and the facility and organizational analysis. It will serve as the touchstone for the department as decisions are made throughout the use of this plan. It is used to define the preferred future for the Parks Department.

*Lawrence Parks and Recreation will provide essential, high quality, cost effective parks, facilities and programs. The department will seek innovative partnerships to support and add value and equity to core programs and facilities. The department will enhance existing parks and facilities while continuing to develop new sites and services to support a growing community. Services provided will be exceptional and effectively communicated to citizens to increase their awareness and accessibility. The department will be environmentally sensitive in managing parks and open spaces throughout the community.*

Out of the vision grew eight action strategies that begin to detail the tactical work plan for implementing the master plan. Those vision action strategies are:

- 1. Develop, administer, and enforce consistent policies and procedures to enhance department operations and efficiency.*
- 2. Develop a communication network between all City Departments, Partners, and the Community to increase awareness, understanding, and advocacy.*
- 3. Create a better understanding and support for operational cost and needed funding with key City leaders during design of all capital projects to ensure operational and maintenance dollars are available prior to construction.*
  - Establish maintenance standards and operational dollars for all parks and recreation facilities that provide cost effective operations without sacrificing quality.*
- 4. Develop consistent policies and procedures to facilitate land use planning, acquisition, and priorities to include sales tax as the primary funding source.*
  - Create additional neighborhood parks, facilities, and trails that provide safe Community linkages and neighborhood connections.*
- 5. Create a lifetime customer by providing fun, innovative core recreation programs that are designed and created through effective research methods to meet the public's needs.*
- 6. Provide written partnership policies and procedures to ensure equitable and cooperative-working agreements between the partners involved.*
- 7. Develop an agency-wide Marketing Plan to promote recreation services, facilities, and parks to enhance Community use.*
- 8. Establish a regional park that utilizes the advantages of the Clinton Lake environment and provides facilities for events that cannot be accommodated in other parks in the system.*

### Action plan

The plan focuses on balancing a number of elements over the next five years. Those elements include creating linkages between parks with trails (survey priority), renovating existing parks and adding new support facilities (survey and staff priority), modifying internal support systems (staff priority), creating strong sport support facilities-practice and competitive facilities (staff priority) and building upon partnerships in the community (staff priority).

The Gantt charts document the sequence and timing of the implementation of the Vision Action Strategies and the Capital Improvement Projects. The vision action strategies are identified as tasks with subtasks illustrated with timeframes for accomplishments.

Likewise under the Capital Improvement Plan the Gantt chart identifies tasks to accomplish, with primary emphasis in the years 2001-2006. Other long-term projects are identified because of their importance and potential impact to the overall department and system.

The final component of this section is the Capital Improvement Impact. This schedule is to begin to forecast the financial impact on the department as the plan begins to rollout. It identifies three levels of financial impact; Planning costs, Capital costs and Operational costs. It also identifies potential funding sources for the Planning and Capital costs.