

Lawrence Parks & Recreation Department

A Comprehensive Master Plan

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.*

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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.*

Develop the 1,515 acre Clinton Lake leased property as the special area that it is for both outdoor passive and active recreation. Develop a portion of it as a multi-use regional park that can also accommodate events that are not appropriate for our other neighborhood or community parks.

Vision Action Strategies

The following recommendations are the specific work plan outgrowth of the Vision Action Strategies. Each task addresses issues to implement the changes associated with the strategy. Chapter Seven illustrates in detail the timing associated with the task implementation.

Task 1: Develop, administer, and enforce consistent policies and procedures to enhance the department operations and efficiencies.

- A. Create consistent policies and procedures for all staff in all divisions. Both internally and with other departments, policies and procedures need to be consistent within the City structure.
- B. Create and distribute (via computer) operations and procedures manuals for all Centers, Pools, and Complexes. Consistency needed internally in terms of the operations and management of the facilities.
- C. Develop and publish comprehensive rules and regulations for all parks and recreation facilities. Consistency needed throughout the organization on rules and regulations.
- D. Research and hire Park Ranger staff. In response to a growing concern in community for park safety.
- E. Research and hire a Park Planner. In response to CIP needs and desires of the community.
- F. Research and hire Maintenance Staff. In response to system responsiveness to maintenance of existing and future facilities.
- G. Research and hire support staff (accounting and computer). Proposed change will drive need for strong internal support staff growth.
- H. Research district for maintenance efficiencies. Facility growth will create demands and response times/efficiencies on the Department.

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- J. Create identification system and enforcement policies for recreation facility users. Again, in response to a safety concern and a consistency in enforcement of rules.
- K. Consistent use of everyone using RecTrac for management. This is essential for maximization of use of activity based costing model.
- L. Consistent use of everyone using MainTrac for maintenance. This is essential for maximization of use of activity based costing model.

Task 2: Develop a communication network between all City departments, partners, and the community to increase awareness, understanding, and advocacy.

- A. Increase radio communications – all City employees on the same network. Consistency will help build a broader base of support between departments.
- B. Install electronic bulletin boards in all recreation facilities. Communication tool with the public to keep an ongoing presence.
- C. Implement regular communication between other City Departments and demonstrate the value parks add to the team. Build value and team attitude with other Departments to strengthen internal partnering.
- D. Create focus groups (by topic) of recreation centers. Use the Nature Center as a model. Implement as facility is developed. This creates an excellent tool to assure the Department is responsive to the public's needs.
- E. Create and hold workshops for local developers, planners, realtors, and landowners on land values and parks and preservation issues. This is a proactive opportunity to work with groups who impact parklands.
- F. Create and implement a tree preservation, pruning, and planting procedure campaign. A value response to the community's desire.
- G. Recruit like service providers for periodic meetings. Build partnerships link forums in the community.
- H. Re-institute mid-management team meetings on a Citywide basis. This strengthens internal partnering through communication.
- I. Enforce site plan inspections for all City and private projects. This sends a consistent message between regulations and enforcements. Hiring an inspector in the Parks and Forestry Division reiterates that consistency.
- J. Emphasize supervisory staff communication with the P&R Advisory Board with an annual session (park tour, meeting, retreat). This allows the Board and Supervisors to interact on a predictable and regular basis for both to work to enhance the Department.

Task 3: Create a better understanding and support of operational costs and funding with key city leaders during the design of all capital projects to ensure the operational and maintenance dollars are available prior to construction.

- A. Establish maintenance standards. Standards allow for both internal and external uniform understanding of expectations and performance.
- B. Create four to five park models to implement and evaluate standards. This creates an internal benchmarking and ultimate approval system.

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- C. Implement system wide. With approval, implement.
- D. Hire Maintenance Staff. (See Task 1)
- E. Create Activity Based Costing Model (ABC) for park maintenance. Track costs of doing business to build/strengthen the efficiency of the Department. (See ABC model at end of *Funding the Implementation and Sustention* section.)
- F. Add full time entry-level positions under Supervisors at the recreation facilities. Build the support base of staff as the Department grows.
- G. Create ABC (activity based costing) for operations. Track costs of doing business to build/strengthen the efficiency of the Department. (Refer to ABC in Section 8.)
- H. Create an operational budget for each facility. Build accountability in the system by facility.
- I. Continue to use staff's input and expertise on needs, design, and priorities of capital projects. Design must respond to program, operational, and maintenance forces.
- J. Master plan projects will include construction plus operating and maintenance cost projections. The Department must understand operational and maintenance impact on the system.
- K. All future RFP's for design consulting will include a requirement for operations and maintenance costing in the project Scope of Services. Design firms must respond with services that include broader implications than capital costs.

Task 4: Develop consistent policies and procedures to facilitate land use planning, acquisition, and priorities to include sales tax usage as the primary funding tool.

- A. Establish acre per 1,000 population standards and service area standards as part of the Master Plan. The standard established is 12 to 15 acres per 1,000 people. (See page 3 under the Facility Analysis Section.)
- B. Establish park site evaluations rating system/criteria for acquiring new parks. This allows objective analysis of the suitability of the property.
- C. As part of the Master Plan, establish the priorities within the urban growth area. This is shown in the mapping and addresses the communication priorities for growth. (See maps located at the end of the Facility Analysis Section.)
- D. Make acquisition of land a priority of the Plan. Following the Bike Work Program. This is in response to the community's desire for links and access. It works in concert with the Bicycle Work Program developed in 1998.
- E. Create additional neighborhood parks, facilities, and trails that provide safe community linkages and neighborhood connections. Responding to the public desires, the maps indicate potential new neighborhood, community, and natural parklands as well as new community centers.
- F. Develop a model of good linkage – a section of the bike trail. This works in concert with the Bicycle Work Program.

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Task 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.

- A. Create and implement a continuous improvement cycle. It is imperative that programs are responsive to the customer. If they are not, the Department needs to stop offering them.
- B. Support staff professional continuing education to identify trends in parks and recreation. Likewise, staff must be trained in the latest trends to provide fresh and creative programs to the community.
- C. Program Development. The following areas were identified by the public and staff as core program areas to focus on:
 - Define need for pre-school and after school programs.
 - Develop programs for pre-school and after school and where possible, enhance existing partnerships and/or develop new partnerships.
 - Define need for senior programs.
 - Develop programs for seniors and where possible, enhance existing partnerships and/or develop new partnerships.
 - Define need for teen programs.
 - Develop programs for teens and where possible, enhance existing partnerships, and/or develop new partnerships.

Task 6: Provide written partnership policies and procedures to ensure equitable and cooperative working agreements among partners.

- A. Reevaluate and update any existing agreements not in compliance with this goal. Partnerships must be a shared investment. Where this is not the case, the Department must make changes.
- B. Develop new agreements with other public and private agencies. The Department must expand this shared opportunity to best leverage all community assets.
- C. RFP contracts with catering services for all catering needs of the Department – with return of revenue to the Department. A model that can easily support the vision of the organization and the community's needs.
- D. Identify 10 new partnership opportunities. Research and development with a measurable outcome.
- E. Create process to educate partner's managers at the local level the equity terms of the contract – with support at the highest level of the partner's leadership. Education not only at an administrative level, but also at an implementation level is critical to the success of a partnership. The Department must drive this education with all its partners and staff.

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Task 7: Develop an agency wide marketing plan to promote the recreation services, facilities and parks to enhance the opportunity for increased community use.

- A. Develop more and consistent signage in the parks including the Department's logo. It is important to create brand loyalty and support for the Department as it continues to evolve.
- B. Develop more consistent employee uniform standards with funding to support. It is important to create brand loyalty and support for the Department as it continues to evolve.
- C. Evaluate facility availability and market them. Underutilization of facilities is bad business. The Department must understand each facility's function and maximize its use.
- D. Develop and distribute a comprehensive brochure of rental facilities, fees, etc. This is a critical communication link to accomplish the above.
- E. Create a Parks Foundation to actively solicit private funds for parks acquisition, development, and long term care. As explained under implementation and sustention, this is a key tool in positioning the Department for future success and less tax dependence.
- F. Marketing Plan. The following outlines the steps involved in making sure the Department implements a strong plan to continue to positively position the Department and provide a high quality product.
 - Develop a marketing plan with priorities.
 - Implement the marketing plan.
 - Fund marketing budget to 3% of Department budget (national average).
 - Reflect actual value of annual budget including discounts, trades, and advertising sales.
 - Build brand awareness and image.
 - Promote quality programs and facilities.
 - Provide recognition program of partnerships.
 - Use existing technology to enhance connection with community.
 - Build model to report financial and management objectives to foster support.
- G. Develop "The Benefits Are Endless" campaign. Research and implement the national parks association model.
- H. Research enhancing the current logo. As a communication tool, enhance the image of the Department with a fresh logo.
- I. Create a sponsorship development program from a single in-house coordination point. Businesses are strongly in need of a single source contribution point for all sponsorship needs. This task will enhance internal performance (less people and time chasing sponsorships) while strengthening satisfaction (less distracting calls for money).

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Task 8: Establish an additional future signature park that creates a strong sense of community pride and livability.

- A. Develop the 1,515 acre Clinton Lake leased property as the main events park in Lawrence – need to name it as well. The opportunity at Clinton Lake is so unique to any community that the Department must build upon its strengths. The site offers a wide variety of program flexibility and passive recreation opportunities.

Finally, another quality of life issue for Lawrence, though not specific to parks, is the sign ordinance. This plan in its support of quality of life through stewardship, service, and quality products must also support the protection of environment from visual clutter. While not a specific task, it is a policy of support from the Department.