

## Winchester-Clark County Parks and Recreation Master Plan

### I. Introduction

#### A. Purpose

Recognizing the need to enhance recreational opportunities for the citizens of Clark County, the City of Winchester, Clark County Fiscal Court and Parks and Recreation Board have commissioned the preparation of the Winchester-Clark County Parks and Recreation Master Plan. The purpose of the plan is to identify park and recreation needs throughout the area and to develop strategies that can be implemented to provide services consistent with existing and potential resources of the area.

Although the primary intended audience for this plan is the Winchester City Commission, Clark County Fiscal Court, Parks and Recreation Board and the Recreation Department staff, the document should also serve as a useful reference for other agencies and individuals such as the Planning Commission, School Board, Chamber of Commerce, Tourism Commission, Industrial Authority and others who are concerned with the provision of enhanced parks and recreation services within the community.

Although a great deal of community input and research was generated, this document is not intended to be all inclusive. It is recognized that priorities and attitudes change, therefore, the document is intended to be used as a guide in providing direction for the future of parks and recreation in Winchester-Clark County.

#### B. Products

This report contains the following components:

1. An analysis of benefits and national trends in parks and recreation;
2. Analysis of demographic and population characteristics of the county including age characteristics;
3. Community input analysis including survey results and personal interviews with various segments of the population;
4. Park and recreation facilities and programs inventory for the public parks including discussion of the facilities by park type and discussion of park and recreation facilities provided by others including the school board;
5. Analysis of recreation standards for facilities and programs along with a distribution of parks by category and classification;
6. Recommendations for improvements to existing and future parks and recreation facilities including acquisition, development and other components to enhance recreational opportunities;
7. Investigation of funding opportunities from federal and state grants, private foundations and other mechanisms.

#### C. Importance of Parks and Recreation

There are a multitude of reasons why this Master Planning effort, additional planning and the future of parks and recreation in the Winchester-Clark County community are very important.

- The Parks and Recreation Board manage approximately 93 acres of land designated for park purposes. The schools operate several additional acres of campus and recreation area. These agencies have the responsibility to manage that land consistent with the health, safety, and welfare of the community. This land must be maintained for highest and best use.
- For many residents, parks provide their only access to the natural environment. For all residents, they provide generally free, passive and active outdoor recreational opportunities.

- The quality of a community's park and recreation system is an indicator of overall quality of life of people, communities, and our society as a whole. This information is important for tourism, convention planners and corporations making decisions to locate.
- Property values around parks tend to be considerably higher than other areas; thereby, making an annual contribution to the community in the form of higher property tax revenues, as well as additional profits to the owners at point of sale. More valuable properties also tend to be maintained at a higher level, improving the appearance of the community and instilling community pride.
- Parks make the community a more healthy place by reducing the effects of noise and air pollution;
- Parks and open space are important to our physical and emotional well being. It brings meaning, purpose, and pleasure to people's lives. It contributes to both the years in one's life as well as the life in those years.
- Parks preserve important natural and cultural features for future generations to enjoy.
- Recreation and parks play an integral role in providing opportunities for interaction within families, work groups, neighborhoods, and the community.
- Parks, recreation and open space are not mere expenditures, but an investment in the future well being of individuals and groups as well as the continued viability of the community.

## II. Parks & Recreation Benefits/National Trends

### A. Benefits

Recreation, as defined in the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, is the “refreshment of strength and spirits after work; also, a means of refreshment or diversion”. The word first appeared in the 15th century. Recreation, or leisure, is the last thing many of us “do” when everything else is done. But, leisure choices can impact one’s life in a much greater way than could be apparent at first. The “new millennium” enthusiasm for parks and recreation is evident by the growing agenda for facilities, programs, and partnerships at the local, state and national levels.

Although there is virtually no research addressing the relationship between concepts of community and recreation services, the conceptual basis exists for suggesting that recreation and park services contribute to one’s perception of the good community. A good community has been defined as the effectiveness of primary group relationships, autonomy, viability, power distribution, participation, commitment, diversity, and control.

The National Recreation and Parks Association, in an effort to promote parks and recreation, in 1996 established the *Benefits are Endless* campaign. The formalized campaign, available through the Kentucky Recreation and Parks Society, educates individuals on the many benefits of parks and recreation. Benefits are categorized by community, environment, and economic. Specifically they are:

#### **Community —**

- strong, vital, involved communities
- connected families
- ethnic and cultural understanding and harmony
- community pride
- support for youth
- lifelines for the elderly
- reduced alienation
- reduced delinquency
- outlets for conflict resolution
- social bonding
- understanding and tolerance

#### **Environment —**

- environmental health and protection
- catalyst for relocation
- physical health and well-being
- stress reduction
- source of community pride
- enhanced property values
- clean air and clean water
- preservation of open space
- protection of the ecosystem

#### **Economic —**

- economic stimulant
- reduced healthcare costs
- reduced vandalism and crime
- revenue generator
- enhanced land values
- catalyst for tourism
- productive workforce

The benefits of parks and recreation are truly endless but were most brilliantly stated by former president, Harry S. Truman:

*“The right of children to play, to sing, and to dance; the right of youth to sport for sports’ sake; the right of men and women to use leisure in the pursuit of happiness in their own way, are basic to our American Heritage.”*

## **B. National Trends**

It is recognized that a good community parks and recreation system is based on the quality of services provided and the ability to anticipate and respond to changing trends. The challenges of political, social, economic and technological change have been immense. Unrelenting financial problems, more federal and state requirements, increased demands for services to an aging population, program requirements catering to greater diversity of lifestyles, a shrinking and ethnically changing work force, stiffer competition for tax dollars, increasing violent crimes in parks, a movement toward privatization of operations, computerization, shrinking public images of the professions, and lack of citizen involvement are among the challenges faced by public recreation and park agencies.

A review of the recent futurist literature by scholars and professionals in parks, recreation and leisure studies that focuses primarily on the 1990 decade offers a background of the challenges facing public park and recreation agencies. The First Annual Leisure Watch National Issues Survey in 1989 produced a National Issues Agenda for the 1990s. An "issue" was defined as "a difficulty or problem that has a significant influence on the way an organization functions or on its ability to achieve a desired future". Recreation and park administrators, planners and educators in 13 states in the USA and provinces in Canada were asked to identify issues that they expected would have the greatest impact on their organization's and/or patrons' near future. In order of frequency of choice, the issues identified were:

1. Economy/consumerism e.g., the need to better define economic impact of recreation opportunity;
2. Business management e.g., increasing costs and decreasing resources;
3. Technology and science e.g., genetic engineering/life prolonging technology;
4. Family/social relationships e.g., growth of nontraditional families;
5. Politics/government/legislation e.g., need for federal and state funding support;
6. Fitness/sports e.g., motivating the no participant (youth, disabled, aged);
7. Medicine/health/wellness e.g., growth of employee wellness services;
8. Education, learning, and training e.g., prevalent illiteracy;
9. Environment/ecology e.g., management of increased demand for open space/resources;
10. Workplace/employment e.g., decline of the power of labor unions;
11. Demographics e.g., an aging population;
12. Travel/tourism e.g., keeping pace with new demands such as ecotourism.

National issues can also be assessed from the programs offered at the National Recreation and Park Association Congresses.

Since 1983 a total of 65 national issues have been considered; of these the most frequently used topics were constituents, fiscal resources, and space resources.

The most comprehensive study focusing on trends and issues in local government recreation and parks was completed in 1992. This study solicited opinions from a jury of 36 experts from the American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration (mostly practitioners) and the Academy for Leisure Sciences (mostly educators). More than 650 trends and issues suggested by jurors in the first round were then condensed into 106 unique trends and 89 unique issues. These items were rated as to their impact over two consensus-building rounds, which narrowed them down to 11 key trends and 13 key issues having the highest ratings. Table 1 lists the top ranked trends according to rated impact and Table II lists the top ranked issues according to rated impact for local government recreation and park systems.

**Table 1**  
**Top Ranked Trends**  
**In Local Government Recreation and Parks**

**Extreme Impact**

1. Deteriorating park and recreation infrastructure
2. Increasing crime (violence, drug use, vandalism, gangs) in community parks
3. Declining park and recreation budgets relative to costs
4. Increasing competition for shrinking federal, state, and local tax resources
5. Massive public sector debt

**Great Impact**

1. Neglect of children
2. Greater cultural diversity (growing and more influential minority populations)
3. Greater difficulty in providing equal opportunity for leisure to all people
4. Declining quality of life and livability of urban areas (insufficient open space, deteriorating city)
5. Greater division between “haves” and “have-nots”
6. Increased public demand for participation, accountability and productivity in government

**Table 2**  
**Top Ranked Issues**  
**In Local Government Recreation and Parks**

**Extreme Impact**

1. How to ensure adequate finance for capital development (land/open space, facilities)
2. What spending priorities should be set in the face of budget cuts or when services are stretched too thin
3. How to make parks safe places (from crime, vandalism, gangs, substance abuse) while maintaining visitor enjoyment
4. How public parks and recreation can strengthen its political position and shape the future through affecting state and national policy
5. How to compete successfully for funding against other community services (education, health, police)

**Great Impact**

1. Should park and recreation services be managed more like a business
2. How to build on the wellness movement to promote alternative programs to drug abuse, anti-social behavior, etc.
3. How to make services more accessible to low income groups, single parents, and homeless people
4. How to increase local tax support
5. How to build public trust and satisfy demands for accountability
6. How to ensure investment in infrastructure maintenance and improvement (community pride)
7. How to foster coalition building and cooperation between other related disciplines (community networks, resource sharing, service consolidation)
8. How to develop public recognition that parks and recreation contributes to the health and well being of society and counteracts the effects of disabilities

**Community Trends** - Community involvement in recreation facility design is a new trend. Neighborhood identity can be developed through a park but can also be lost through a park. Unless local residents are incorporated into all phases of park planning, development, and management they will end up requiring protection from their park rather than receiving enjoyment from it.

**People Trends** - The impact of the Americans with Disabilities Act will increase in the future. A shift is occurring toward the development of service initiatives for older adults. Today, children are the most “at risk” age group in society. The youth must continue to be the prime constituency group for parks and recreation. The median age in the United States, about 33 in 1990, is expected to be 36 in 2000. Between 1990 and 2000, the number of people between 35 and 44 is expected to jump by 16%, and those between the ages of 45 and 54 will increase by 46%, compared with an overall expected population growth of 7.1%. Not only are older people becoming a larger segment of the population, but they are enjoying better health and longer life with greater economic and

political power. By 2020, when baby boomers reach 65, the elderly will be 20% of the US population. Women are moving gradually up in the social and economic hierarchy of the nation and in the next two decades will force open the door of the executive suite. There is a growth of a national society. Americans travel more (9% per year increase in common-carrier passenger miles for all modes from 1981 to today); we see and hear the same messages in the mass media; intermarriages are more frequent; schools teach essentially the same thing across the county--all this having a leveling influence.

**Natural Resource Trends** - Much of the desired new land acquisition appears to be development of linear green spaces designed to link people using foot and bicycle transportation to parks, shopping and other neighborhoods. Within this trend is another, the recycling of no longer used or underutilized built environments as linear parks--such as abandoned railroad beds and roads. The protection of natural resources and open space was the first priority for the future. Public recreation is positioned to lead in land stewardship because collectively they are often one of the largest land managers in a community. Public agencies will increasingly need safety consultants and risk management plans. A primary ingredient for park safety is public support. The park and recreation community must be maintained as a leading provider of safe and healthful leisure services. The increase of specialization in recreation interests will mean that the amount of knowledge about specific forms of leisure behavior will have to increase for those in the planning process. It will mean that planning of such recreation environments will have to be done with the continual and direct participation of those who will use those facilities.

**Management Trends** - Privatization in government services is increasing across the country. Parks and recreation systems that are successfully utilizing privatization are those that have completely re-envisioned and re-invented government. Park and recreation agencies are insistently seeking strategies to concurrently generate revenue and expand service levels to broader segments of society. A recent trend is selling services at discount prices to maximize facility use and generate varying levels of revenue from multiple sources. Another trend is price fencing which allows customers to logically and rationally segment themselves into rate categories based on their needs, behaviors, and willingness to pay. This allows parks and recreation agencies to develop better rationale for use fee rates. A third trend is price bundling which markets two or more services into a single "package" at a special price. Citizens are increasingly participating in public processes to plan programs and formulate policies. Public parks and recreation must remain customer oriented. The high cost of losing a customer means: 1) the average wronged customer will tell 8-18 others; 2) 92% of unhappy customers never purchase the service/goods again; and 3) it costs five times as much to recruit a new customer than to retain an old customer. Agencies must be able to trust citizens, try new programs, improve the quality of current programs, develop strategies to quickly remedy the complaints of unhappy customers, stand behind what they say, and establish "no questions asked" customer policies in order to remain viable. The desired philosophy of the profession for the future supports diversity and customization of services. Recreation involves the value of freedom of choice.

Efficiency without sacrificing effectiveness is the future challenge in parks and recreation. Key concepts include greater attention to public and community relations, innovative fiscal management, better mastery of information systems, and greater sophistication in sales and marketing. The most important element, though, is the development of a broader and more sensitive definition of parks and recreation without sacrificing essential ingredients of enjoyment and personal well-being.