

2015 CRC Recommendations/Responses

Parks & Recreation

Recommendations	Department Response/Action Taken
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1. Develop a capital facilities plan for each major facility, showing future building and replacement needs. Ensure that funding for such capital spending is included, in detail, in all budgets.

Agree, plan to pursue. The Department plans to develop capital asset depreciation and replacement schedule for all divisions including buildings, facilities and equipment. The Parks and Golf Divisions have developed capital plans while the Recreation and Idaho Falls Zoo capital plans need further development.

2. Pursue Commission for Accreditation of Parks and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA) accreditation, with the first stage (self-assessment) to be completed in the 2016 fiscal year. These standards will aid in updating approaches to planning and projects and identifying new ideas.

Agree, plan to pursue. With approval to seek accreditation, the Department plans to complete the first stage of CAPRA Accreditation in the 2016 fiscal year.
Agree, plan to pursue with Policy Makers. The Parks and Recreation Department is in support of developing a Comprehensive Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan and is hopeful budget authorization would be approved from City Council for this effort.

3. Develop a Comprehensive Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan.
 4. City to prepare a City Master Plan, which would include the vision for the Parks and Recreation Department.

Citywide decision. The Parks and Recreation Department will discuss this recommendation with Community Development Services as they are the lead contact for developing a City Master Plan.

5. Improve and extend community outreach in an active way (e.g., use of Facebook and other social media, web pages, talks at community fairs, schools, senior center, clubs, etc.) so that the community is aware of P&R activities well BEFORE they occur.

Agree, in progress. The Department has a part-time Marketing and Sponsorship Coordinator position starting in the 2016 fiscal year who will be responsible for improving and extending our current outreach efforts including the continued development and implementation of a 52-week marketing plan that will be further developed into a CAPRA approved marketing plan.

6. Increase opportunities for public participation in program and activity design.

Agree, plan to pursue. The Department provides for public participation through a variety of methods and will continue those efforts while developing a Recreation Programming Plan in 2016.

7. City to establish, and publish, a policy on how the City (and by extension, P&R) is to handle its dealings with public partners of all types. Such a policy will assure the City that all partners comply with City regulations and laws, and agreed-upon practices of accountability, non-discrimination, accessibility, and other City goals and policies.

- Policy should describe how such partnerships are to be documented.
- Memoranda of Understanding (or Memoranda of Agreement) should document such partnership agreements.
- City should keep files on each such partner (by-laws, mission, goals)
- City should periodically review such partnerships, via minutes, annual reports, etc. from the partnering organization.

Citywide decision. The Parks and Recreation Department will discuss this recommendation with policy makers and other Department Directors.

8. As major facilities become too old, too crowded, and inadequate to fulfill the City's needs, the committee recommends that the City take a big-picture, holistic view for possible solutions rather than addressing them individually. For example, resolve the current issues with the Rec Center, Aquatic Center, Ice Arena, and Zoo facilities by planning a Recreational Complex that could be the nexus for our Connecting Our Community project. It would house a new Rec Center, a relocated Ice Arena, and a new Aquatic Center, and include for other activities and future growth. The present Ice Arena could be repurposed to accommodate a new Zoo Education Facility, a larger Zoo gift shop, office space for Zoo staff, and much needed storage space for the Zoo. This would also free up additional space for much needed parking.

Plan to evaluate further. The Department of Parks and Recreation believes that the development of a Comprehensive Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan, Taupthaus Park Master Plan and further capital project planning would be needed to fully endorse this recommendation.

9. Create a project matrix to provide information, at any point during an annual cycle, on the many projects being undertaken by the P&R Department. The matrix must show, at a minimum, both the current status and progress of existing projects and plans for future projects.

Agree, plan to pursue. As part of Taupthaus Park Master Plan, the Department will be creating a capital project specific webpage so that residents can follow the status of current projects and plans for future projects.

10. Develop a policy to determine the efficacy of continuing (or discontinuing) commitment to projects that have outlived their usefulness or require more resources (either human or financial) than the City can provide budgeting for or do not (as in the case of private developers) meet City rules.

- The policy should delineate a process by which the Department decides whether (or not) to take on new property, facilities, and programs.
- Such policy should include routine analysis that identifies those areas and programs that are least relevant to the Department and provides a means for divesting the City of such, or of determining means of repurposing or reusing them.
- Cease the acquisition of properties or lands if the Department has no means of providing ongoing maintenance and improvements.
- Ensure that private developers follow City rules for areas (such as retention ponds and rights-of-way) for which the City must provide maintenance. If possible, developers should build in lower-cost or revenue-producing uses.

11. Develop a Five-Year Plan for each major facility and program. Such plan should include regular, specific, measurable facilities revenues, use, and development plans for each major facility or program.

BUDGET:

1. Standardize the budget process throughout the Department. The process should be consistent among Department, Divisions, and Programs and should be focused on goals and objectives, and not merely be an annual update of the preceding year's report. Measurable metrics must be included.

2. Establish a MERF-like fund for small buildings such as storage sheds, equipment housing, picnic shelters, fences, restrooms, etc.

3. Make volunteer hours a budget line item. At present, volunteers make up a very large component of the work done in the P&R Department. Those hours should be captured and reported in the budget as a neutral line item in order to highlight the magnitude of this positive contribution.

4. Establish a revenue policy, including a cost-recovery plan, to balance considerations of age, affordability, and other demographics in setting user fees across all programs. Include consideration of the services P&R provides regionally, and periodically examine the contribution to Idaho Falls P&R funding from non-resident users from other cities, the county, etc.

5. Evaluate the costs and benefits of partial or full privatization of one or both cemeteries. Point of fact: The current annual expenditure to maintain the cemeteries is substantial.

STAFFING:

1. Hire an Assistant Director for the Department. The current situation does not allow the Director the time to accomplish long-range planning and evaluation on the Department level.

2. Hire a department-level Volunteer Management Coordinator. Moving these tasks functions to the Department level would allow more cost-effectiveness and better coordination for all segments of the Department (e.g., Division, Program).

Citywide decision. The Parks and Recreation Department agrees with this recommendation and will discuss with the policy makers and other departments.

Agree, plan to pursue. The Department has developed a five year plan for the Golf Division and is currently developing a five-year plan for the Idaho Falls Zoo. As part of CAPRA accreditation, the Department would be required to develop a strategic plan that would outline department wide action items for the next five years.

Agree, in progress. The Department has been improving the budget process each year. The City is also in the process of Priority Based Budgeting for the next fiscal year that will provide improved and more measurable budget metrics.

Agree, in progress. The Department was successful in developing with City Council and the Municipal Services Department, a Parks Capital Improvement Fund (PCIF) during the 2014-15 fiscal year. The PCIF fund needs to be further developed to allow for increased annual contributions that will follow capital improvement plans and depreciations schedules of park assets.

Agree, plan to pursue. This recommendation would need to be discussed with the Municipal Services Department to determine if this is permissible. In addition, the Department will be hiring a Special Events and Volunteer Coordinator in 2016 who will be responsible for the effective supervision, recruitment, selection, orientation, training and retention of volunteers, including further development procedures on background screening.

Agree, plan to pursue. This recommendation would need to be discussed and approved with the policy makers. The Department does review all fees and charges annually. If approved, and as part of CAPRA accreditation, the Department would establish a comprehensive revenue policy that is periodically updated regarding fees and charges for services and the strategies and methodologies for determining fees and charges and levels of cost recovery, including non-resident rates.

Plan to evaluate further. The Department of Parks and Recreation believes that the development of a Comprehensive Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan would allow this recommendation to be explored more thoroughly.

Agree, plan to pursue with Policy Makers. The Parks and Recreation Department is in support of hiring an Assistant Director for the Department.

Agree, in progress. The Department will be hiring a full-time Special Events and Volunteer Coordinator during the 2015-16 fiscal year.

3. Hire a department-level Grant Writer. As with #2 above, this person could pursue and write grants at all levels of the Department.

Agree, plan to pursue with Policy Makers. The Parks and Recreation Department is in support of hiring a department-level Grant Writer.

4. Appoint a Zoo Director. There is a great need for the Director to be engaged in strategic and long-range planning, and fundraising, among others.

Agree, in progress. The Department has developed a selection committee and has advertised the position in the last year. The committee believes finalizing the zoo five year strategic/business plan will provide a clear path forward for the new Zoo Director.

5. Write a detailed Staffing Plan, identifying succession candidates and workforce development strategies.

Agree, plan to pursue.

6. The above-mentioned Staffing Plan(s) must also ensure that proper training, certifications, and re-certifications are both planned and budgeted for.

Agree, plan to pursue.

FACILITIES

1. Begin analysis and planning for an orderly replacement of the old and inadequate Recreation Center with a new facility that accommodates the current unmet need, anticipates expected City growth, offers a balanced municipal fitness and class program for all people in the community, and adds the cost efficiencies and ADA functionality of a more up-to-date facility. CAPRA Standard 7.11 will be helpful in this regard.

- Ensure that projected costs of such replacement are incorporated into City financial planning.

Agree, plan to pursue with Policy Makers. The Parks and Recreation Department is in support of developing a new facility.

2. Establish a vision for enhanced, up-to-date infrastructure (see ADMINISTRATION #8 above). Multiple aging facilities are rapidly becoming too old, too crowded, and inadequate to the City's needs. The committee urges that these infrastructure needs be promptly addressed by developing new facilities plans for the Rec Center, the Aquatic Center, the Ice Arena, and Zoo staff and education facilities through a single, big-picture view rather than as piecemeal, partial solutions. For example, design a City recreational complex that can combine aquatic, ice, and other recreational activities.

Agree, plan to pursue with Policy Makers.

3. Build (or re-purpose the existing ice arena as) a multi-function building for the Zoo. It would house the education unit, adequate and up-to-date employee offices, a larger gift shop, and adequate storage.

Agree, in progress. The Department of Parks and Recreation is currently developing a plan for the future of the ice arena.

MAINTENANCE AND OPERATIONS

1. Develop a policy for Department-wide sharing of personnel. Functions that apply across Divisions and Programs within the Department (such as volunteer management, grant-writing, advertising, events planning, fees-tracking, and some maintenance functions) could be more cost-effective and more easily coordinated from the Department level.

Agree, plan to pursue. The Department does minimal sharing of personnel and this needs to be a priority going forward, including the cross training of critical support positions.

2. Prepare an analysis of playground needs with the intent of bringing them up to ADA and safety standards.

Agree, in progress. The Department has two (2) Certified Playground Safety Inspectors who conduct regular and consistent inspections of all city playgrounds, including identifying routine maintenance and recommendations for replacement(s) as required.

3. Continue/complete ADA and energy audits. Continue and increase attention to environmental and sustainability issues.

- Make available an annual list of ADA audit findings, the remaining barriers to completing them, and the schedule for ameliorating them.
- Balance mechanical improvements that improve energy efficiency against the cost of implementation, especially in buildings already reaching (or past) their life spans.

Agree, plan to pursue. The Department would welcome further ADA and energy audits.

4. Develop guidelines for P&R in which the needs entailed in acquiring new facilities or acreage or equipment are delineated. If there is no budget or staff to work with, it would be best not to acquire in the first place. Private developers must follow these guidelines and City rules to allow City takeover of maintenance in such a way that it is doable, more cost effective, and possibly even revenue-producing

5. Coordinate with city attorney to review and address concerns about Tautphaus Park Zoological Society compliance with 501(c)3 requirements and City goals.

6. Provide a technology upgrade for the Zoo. Provide staff with mobile electronic devices in order to facilitate communication, data collection and analysis, report preparation, research, and grant preparation. Convert the Zoo's watering system to a computerized operation similar to the P&R's centrally controlled irrigation system.

PERFORMANCE METRICS

1. Establish a system of performance metrics that establishes goals and shows progress towards desired CAPRA accreditation.

2. Conduct systematic studies to assess who Department users are and to move away from the "anecdotal" approach to planning specific programs/activities. Department should then evaluate existing programs and community needs and develop a Recreation Programming Plan for people of all ages and abilities.

- Carry out a formal survey of parks usage by time/day, demographics, and activity types.

Plan to evaluate further. The Department of Parks and Recreation believes that the development of a Comprehensive Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan would allow this recommendation to be explored more thoroughly.

Agree, plan to pursue. The Department of Parks and Recreation will work with the City Attorney and Zoological Society to confirm compliance.

Agree, in progress. Technology upgrades are on-going and part of the five-year plan for the Zoo. Security at Zoo was recently improved with the installation of new cameras. Watering system has been evaluated and conservation strategies are on-going.

Agree, plan to pursue.

Agree, plan to pursue. The Department provides for public participation through a variety of methods and will continue those efforts during the CAPRA process of developing a Recreation Programming Plan in 2016.