Washoe County Parks Master Plan

Moving Forward

Washoe County Regional Parks and Open Space (Parks) is responsible for managing over 13,000 acres of parks, trails and open space including some of the most popular parks in the area. These resources take advantage of the County’s natural wonders and provide the region with an economic benefit that attracts new visitors while providing a quality of life that is treasured by a majority of the residents making this area a unique place to work and live.

“To provide exceptional parks, open space and recreational opportunities while preserving our natural, historical and cultural resources.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Park Type</th>
<th>Neighborhood and Community Parks</th>
<th>Regional Parks</th>
<th>Special Use Parks</th>
<th>Open Space &amp; Trails</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Locations</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acres</td>
<td>435 ±</td>
<td>2,694 ±</td>
<td>982 ±</td>
<td>9,113 ±</td>
<td>13,224 ±</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Washoe County’s population continues to increase creating a rise in park visitation and a surge in demand for new parks, trails and open space. This puts additional pressure on existing facilities, potentially exceeding their capacities and impacting the resources making maintenance unsustainable.

Responding to the Population

The physical size of Washoe County means the landscapes and natural resources vary throughout. Some are unique to a specific region and may need to be managed differently than other parts of the county. Furthermore, recreation needs also vary depending on the region. Therefore, the master plan created planning areas that would allow Parks to analyze and identify opportunities specific to each region.

Getting Back on Track

Parks has a rich history of acquiring land for the preservation of open space and the construction of parks and trails. Over the years there have been a total of 29 major land acquisitions and the construction of 22 parks. These were often helped by the passage of bonds through strong support of the voters for a total of 6 bonds over the last 60 years. Two of these bonds (SQ-1 and WC-1) brought in $172.5 million dollars between bonds and leveraged funds.

Resetting After the Recession

Since the Great Recession, Parks have learned how to cope with the new budget levels. Parks has been able to keep facilities open by maintaining them at a minimum level. Moving forward, to accomplish the goals of the master plan, Parks needs to discover new funding sources that will allow them to continue the mission into the future. This is a national phenomenon that continues to impact the status of Parks.

Washoe County Parks Timeline

- WC Park Master Plan
- Park Construction
- Park Acquisition
- Park Bond Issue Passed by Voters
- Reduction to WC Parks Budget

*Budget shown from 1996 - 2017
Population from the Nevada State Demographer
## Projections of 2007/2017 Budgets Based on Dollars Spent Per Person

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Current Budget</th>
<th>Potential Budget</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>341,420</td>
<td>$4.9M</td>
<td>$10.1M (NRPA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>422,000</td>
<td>$8.7M</td>
<td>$10.1M (NRPA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>464,520</td>
<td>$3.8M</td>
<td>$5.7M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2030</td>
<td>527,230</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2038</td>
<td>558,750</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Population from TMRPA Washoe County Consensus Forecast 2018-2038  
**Projected Budgets Based on Dollars Spent Per Person and Projected Population

### Goals Going Forward

#### Closing the Funding Gap

Based on National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) metrics for dollars spent per person and using the budget prior to the 2008 budget cuts, there has been a $48 million-dollar gap in spending. This has led to a backlog of maintenance and capital improvement projects. If this trend continues for another 20 years this gap could grow by another $94 million-dollars, creating a $142 million-dollar gap over a 30-year period.

#### Resetting Staff Levels

Based on the existing and projected population, Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) staffing levels are well below the national standards. Based on projected population Parks staff needs to nearly triple over the next 20 years.
Extensive outreach from the public and stakeholders’ group found that most residents wanted to see a focus of resources on regional parks. This is due to the willingness of most residents to travel far distances to get to a regional park. This is true because regional parks often have a variety of facilities that interest residents most which typically include sports facilities, playgrounds, recreation/community centers, aquatic facilities, dog parks, and natural and urban trails/trailheads.

**Takeaways**

**Residents Want Regional Parks and Open Space**
Extensive outreach from the public and stakeholders’ group found that most residents wanted to see a focus of resources on regional parks. This is due to the willingness of most residents to travel far distances to get to a regional park. This is true because regional parks often have a variety of facilities that interest residents most which typically include sports facilities, playgrounds, recreation/community centers, aquatic facilities, dog parks, and natural and urban trails/trailheads.

**Future Growth Should be Considered**
Future growth is not only tied to funding new parks, it also shows how much an area could grow over the next 20 years. Monitoring future growth and understanding the current needs of a region would be beneficial to Parks and allow them to more accurately plan for new parks, trails and open space.

**Where Would Washoe County Residents Like to See the Biggest Focus of Resources?**

- Connect existing parks with trails/trailheads
- Acquire future land to preserve open space
- Provide larger multi-purpose regional parks and develop existing park master plans
- Provide smaller neighborhood-based parks for future and existing residents

**Which Facilities Do Washoe County Residents Use Most?**

- Small Recreation and Sports Facilities
- Special Use/Other
- Small Parks and Playgrounds
- Large Recreation and Sports Facilities
- Large Parks and Playgrounds
- Recreation Centers/Museums
- Urban Trails Multi-Use Paths
- Hiking/Natural Areas/Open Space

*Source: 370 Survey Responses

*Source: 113 Public Outreach Meeting Responses; public was asked to choose three top choices
**Planning Areas**

**Introduction to Planning Areas**

The planning area boundaries identified in this master plan were developed to help Parks better analyze and identify priorities and opportunities specific to the different neighborhoods found throughout Washoe County. Although residents may recreate in parks, greenways/open space, trails and trailheads outside of the planning area in which they live, the majority of their recreation adventures will likely occur in the planning area boundaries where they reside.

**Planning Area Opportunities**

**Washoe County Park**
- North Valleys
  - Further Develop Sun Valley Regional Park
  - Build Out North Valleys Regional Park
  - Acquire Open Space and Connect Parks with Trails
  - Utilize Reclaimed Water Where Possible
- Peavine
  - Build Out Bartley Ranch Regional Park
  - Develop Existing Community & Neighborhood Parks
  - Update Existing Park Facilities
  - Further Develop Rancho San Rafael Regional Park
- Truckee Canyon
  - Monitor Future Use
  - Acquire Open Space

**City Park (Reno/Sparks)**
- Spanish Springs
  - Build Out Lazy 5 Regional Park
  - Develop New Parks
  - Plan a New Regional Park
  - Acquire Open Space & Connect Parks with Trails
- Steamboat
  - Build Out South Valleys Regional Park
  - Further Develop Hidden Valley Regional Park
  - Connect Parks with Trails
  - Update Existing Park Facilities
- Mount Rose
  - Monitor Future Use
  - Acquire Open Space & Provide Trails
- Pyramid
  - Monitor Future Use
  - Acquire Open Space
SOLUTIONS AND DRIVING CHANGE

**SHORT-TERM**

**DEVELOP A PROJECT LIST INCLUDING COSTS**

Further assessments need to be completed to determine what projects have priority based on the opportunities identified within each planning area. These lists can be used to determine staff levels required to maintain the project and to associate dollar amounts that can be used to secure funding. These assessments include:

- Strategize Acquisition & Priority Projects for State Conservation Bond
- Complete a Service Plan Study
- Further Develop the Capital and Infrastructure Preservation Program

**MID-TERM**

**SEEK ALTERNATIVE FUNDING**

Current funding levels are not sufficient to sustain Parks and provide the opportunities identified within the master plan. In order to provide the public with the level of service established in the past, alternative and sustainable funding sources should be pursued including:

- Develop Facilities and Programs That Generate Revenue
- Educate Policy Makers About the Benefits of Funding Recreation
- Conduct Feasibility Study for a Regional Park District
- Reconfigure the Residential Construction Tax (RCT) Districts

**LONG-TERM**

**RESTRUCTURE TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF CURRENT AND FUTURE LEGISLATION**

A bill was recently signed into law that creates a new state Division of Outdoor Recreation. This bill and other legislation acknowledge the environmental, economic, and educational benefits of parks, trails and open space. Parks should capitalize on this momentum by:

- Fostering Partnerships that Promote Economic Vitality Through Recreation
- Targeting Legislative Updates Supporting Diverse and Lasting Funding for Parks, Trails and Open Space
- Rebalancing and Distributing Capital Expenditures