

## Key Considerations Resulting from the Process

### Demographic & Parks and Recreation Trends

- According to Spokane Vitals 2009, overall, Spokane is faring better than comparable metros in business growth, educational attainment, and quality of life.
- Median age for Spokane residents is 37 years, almost the same as the County (36.9 years) and the State (37 years).
- Median household income for Spokane residents at \$42,798 is lower than Spokane County and the State of Washington.
- Owner occupied housing units is less in Spokane than in the County and State. (City of Spokane 53.4%, Spokane County 60.4%, and Washington State 69.2%)
- Education attainment for Spokane residents indicates the majority of the 25 years and older cohort has a high school degree or some college.
- Population in Spokane is projected to increase by 7,800 by 2014.
- The United Health Foundation has ranked Washington 11th in its 2009 State Health Rankings.
- Participation in out-of-school activities and programs offer support for youth and working families; and benefit youth socially, emotionally, and academically. [Note: Currently, the primary form of afterschool programming in Spokane is managed through the Spokane Public School system.]
- Outdoor pools in Washington are only open for approximately three months out of the year. There is an increasing trend towards indoor leisure and therapeutic pools. Additional amenities like “spray pads” are becoming increasingly popular as well. All new and rehabilitated aquatics facilities in Spokane are currently out of doors.
- Environmental education programs were listed at the top of the 10 programs parks and recreation departments are planning to add within the next three years.
- Sixty-eight percent of public park and recreation agencies offer nature-based programming and 61 percent have nature-based facilities. More than 30 percent of public agencies offer no nature programming, and slightly less than 40 percent have no nature-based facilities. This trend reflects an interest in counter-balancing the nationwide concern of “nature deficit disorder” popularized by the federal government and the author, Richard Louvre (technology’s impact on our loss of commitment to exercise and being out of doors).
- Trails, parks, and playgrounds are among the five most important community amenities considered when selecting a home.
- National trends in the delivery of parks and recreation systems reflect more partnerships and collaborations to best use scarce resources and avoid duplication of service provision.
- The State of Washington is culturally rich. Ethnic trends in recreation are vast which requires a variety of programming.
- Dense urban living near waterfront areas is emerging as a trend across the country.

### Values, Mission and Vision

- The Department’s values statements are rich and varied. There is a strong sense of history and legacy that many other parks and recreation organizations do not have and therefore, the City of Spokane prides itself on this unique characteristic.
- A strong commitment and passion for the community’s urban forest has been addressed in the mission. The Department may find value in incorporating that into its organizational values.

- The mission clearly articulates that the community is defined as those “people who live, work and visit the city of Spokane” as the system is supported in large part by sales tax dollars.

### **Community Issues and Interests**

- Most who attend or participate in forums/surveys tend to have a special interest. An on-going challenge for public organizations is engaging as many community members with varying interests as possible in public processes to develop a global sense of community issues and interests.
- Identified community issues were consistently heard and observed in all engagement efforts including public forums, focus groups, interviews and questionnaires, as well as reports generated by Spokane community organizations such as Spokane Public Schools and the Spokane Regional Health District and others. The Department’s focus may be on how services can affect, influence or impact community issues as they cannot be solely responsible for satisfying or resolving issues independent of other organizations.
- According to survey data, parks and trails are the most important service the Department provides and have the highest current use and satisfaction rates amongst those surveyed.
- According to survey data, the greatest future need for outdoor facilities are trails and trail connections.
- According to survey data, outdoor recreation is the primary recreation interest among survey respondents.
- According to survey data, the greatest future need for indoor facilities is indoor aquatics facilities.
- According to survey data, a dedicated funding source would be the preferred method for future parks and recreation funding including how best to address the Department’s current \$35 million in deferred maintenance.

### **Parks and Recreation Services – Evaluation & Analysis**

- A number of parks and recreation services including, but not limited to some senior center services did not align with the Department’s values or vision. Although these services are expectedly important to certain community members, the fundamental question is whether they are “parks and recreation services” or “social services,” therefore, supported by another city department with relevant mission(s).
- The City has committed resources to local non-profit youth and senior centers to assist in the provision of recreation and other social services on behalf of Parks and Recreation. Additionally, the Parks and Recreation Department engages in contractual agreements for golf personnel services. These agreements are inconsistent in expectations and fund allocation, and require consistent evaluation to ensure responsible distribution of financial resources and that service delivery expectations are being met.
- As a result of the assessment, many services seem to have the capacity to generate additional revenues through advancing or affirming the services’ market position.
- Few formal collaborative efforts and partnerships exist between the City of Spokane Parks and Recreation Department and other public, non-profit or private organizations. Collaborations and partnerships are critical to reducing or eliminating duplication of services, and the most responsible utilization of scarce resources.
- As a result of the assessment, a number of services were identified which seem to have great potential for collaboration or partnerships with other public entities, non-profit organizations or the private sector.

- There were a few Department services, including neighborhood, community, and regional/major parks; trails; conservation lands; and inclusion services which were deemed “core” in relation to their alignment with Department values and vision, and therefore, are labeled “core services.”
- Maintain the quality and character of the current system in light of shrinking resources
- Assure that the system evolves to stay current with trends and needs while preserving and respecting strong historic aspects. This could include adding more recreational trails and enhancing opportunities for indoor recreation
- Grow the system efficiently and sustainably to accommodate projected increases in population
- Improve the walkability of Spokane’s park system to enhance the city as a healthy place to live
- Leverage Spokane’s park system to strengthen the city’s tradition of strong neighborhood identities and enhance its overall image as a desirable place to live, work, and visit
- Better planning collaboration and coordination between the Park Board, City Council, department staff, other City departments, and community stakeholder groups.
- There are many different, fragmented planning efforts and plans that need to be tied together, especially related to the downtown area, including Riverfront Park.
- Parks and Recreation Department representatives should be at the table for City initiatives such as the Green Team and the Sustainability Task Force and the Water Stewardship Program.
- Collaboration and coordination with other public agencies that own land that serves parks and recreation functions such as stormwater detention land that functions as a park to adjacent neighborhoods.
- The City of Spokane has a broad and well-distributed system of parks and conversation lands. In order to maintain this system as Spokane grows it will be imperative to identify new policies and strategies to guide the creation of new parks and open space.

### **Resource Allocation**

- The financial resource allocation philosophy includes a shift from a current 70% subsidy (General Fund)/30% cost recovery level to an overall Department goal of 60% subsidy (General Fund)/40% cost recovery. Given these conditions, a minimum of two to three years may be necessary to meet the new goal.
- A formal policy addressing financial resource allocation does not currently exist.
- The new direct and indirect cost definitions will require an adjustment to the current general ledger.
- It is important to ensure that all Department staff are pricing services consistently, following the same methodology.
- Existing deferred maintenance coupled with new recreation facility construction (resulting from the 2008 \$42.9 million bond) has placed a significant burden on the operating and maintenance budget of the department. The short and long term maintenance requirements of recreation facilities, parks and other physical properties in the system will continue to compound on the existing total deferred maintenance costs which are currently in excess of \$35 million.
- Spokane Parks and Recreation receives a dedicated 8% funding source from the City’s General Fund. Although this is a dedicated funding source, it has and is expected to be unstable due to the volatility of the economy. Additionally, it is questionably insufficient based upon existing demands, including the current \$35 million in deferred maintenance which already exists.
- The organization is positioned to lose approximately 26% of its full-time workforce over the next five years to retirements. While this provides an opportunity for new staff with different ideas and energy, it also leads to a significant loss of institutional knowledge.

- There are no formal strategies such as a parkland dedication ordinance to provide a consistent level of service for parks, recreation, and open space to serve growth areas.
- Parks and recreation level of service standards and proactively planning for parkland to serve new residential communities needs to be clarified.
- Without clear acquisition criteria the City runs the risk of receiving parkland that is not appropriate for park and or recreation purposes, or is not ideally located.
- If the City adopts a parkland dedication requirement for private residential developments, funds to develop and operate this new parkland will also be needed.
- There is a need to further clarify the details in the City of Spokane Charter regarding the sale of “other property” not determined to fulfill a current or planned future parks and recreation purpose.

## 2010-2012 Action Plan

The comprehensive planning process unveiled the most significant organizational priorities and subsequent actions the Department should dedicate its resources to addressing and resolving over the course of the next five years. These priorities create the framework and direction of the 2010-2012 Action Plan.

### Organizational Priority I. "Take Care of What We Have"

- Goal Ia. Confirm current deferred and perpetual maintenance demands
- Goal Ib. Identify funding strategies for deferred and perpetual maintenance requirements
- Goal Ic. Identify funding alternatives for the development, maintenance and operations of trails
- Goal Id. Develop a parkland dedication and/or fees in lieu ordinance for adoption
- Goal Ie. Review, update and approve previous Aquatics Master Plan
- Goal If. Maximize Urban Forestry level of service through sustainable revenues
- Goal Ig. Facilitate collaboration and cooperation between city departments, local and regional agencies, other organizations, stakeholders, and media outlets on issues and projects involving trees
- Goal Ih. Improve Urban Forestry community education and outreach
- Goal Ii. Improve the quality of the Urban Forest in ways that increase environmental, economic, and social benefits to the Spokane community

### Organizational Priority II. Policy Development - Parks and Recreation Service Sustainability

- Goal IIa. Develop a contract template for contractual agreements (including alignment with org values, mission, fair and equitable financial contribution determination, evaluation criteria, "out clauses", etc.)

- Goal IIb. Re-negotiate existing contractual agreements consistent with the contractual agreement framework
- Goal IIc. Adoption of a Property Acquisition, Development and Disposal Policy
- Goal IId. Adopt a Financial Resource Allocation Policy as defined in the Roadmap to the Future
- Goal IIe. Adopt a Pricing Policy as defined in the Roadmap to the Future
- Goal IIf. Align general ledger with new direct and indirect cost definitions
- Goal IIg. Implement recommended pricing methodology consistently across the system
- Goal IIh. Develop a Service Development Standards Policy

**Organizational Priority III.  
Enhance Quality and Quantity of Partnerships and Collaborations**

- Goal IIIa. Develop a template for partnership and collaboration agreements (including alignment with org values, mission, fair and equitable financial contribution determination, evaluation criteria, “out clauses”, etc.)
- Goal IIIb. Pursue partnerships and collaborations consistent with the partnership and collaboration framework
- Goal IIIc. Re-negotiate existing partnerships and collaborations consistent with the partnership and collaboration framework
- Goal IIId. Establish regular communications with City Council/Parks and Recreation Board and Neighborhood Council retreats
- Goal IIIe. Solicit community member opinion and interest on an annual, ongoing basis
- Goal IIIf. Establish regular formal communication techniques between the Parks and Recreation Board, Mayor’s office, City Council and the Community Assembly.

**Organizational Priority IV.  
Responsible Parks and Recreation Service Delivery - Efficient and Effective Use of Resources**

- Goal IVa. Implement the recommended operational strategies as identified in the Department's Service Portfolios

- Goal IVb. Develop an enhanced scholarship program
- Goal IVc. Conduct program cycle reviews on all recreation services annually
- Goal IVd. Develop a Staffing Succession Plan
- Goal IVe. Develop Social Marketing strategies

## **General Recommendations and Considerations for the 2013-2014 Action Plan**

The 2010-2012 Action Plan focuses on identified issues that resulted from the comprehensive planning process that can practically be addressed and accomplished by Department staff and governance through the end of 2012. However, there are supplemental actions the Department should consider beyond 2012 that may provide for an improved parks and recreation system. These general recommended operational strategies as determined throughout the planning process are listed below and are intended to lead the development of the 2013-2014 Action Plan.

- The Department continues to consider the notion of a thorough and comprehensive analysis of the merits of becoming a district rather than a municipal function. This will require extensive analysis and a significant amount of support from city and county governance. This effort should be a part of the agency's 2013-2014 Action Plan.
- The Department's values statements, mission statement and vision statement were thoughtfully and methodically developed. The Department is strongly encouraged to elevate the statements in the public eye, and ensure connectivity between values, mission and vision when making organizational decisions relative to service production and provision.
- The Department's staffing loads do not meet existing work demands and expectations. With the approval of the \$42.9 million Parks Improvement Bond in 2008 intended to fund the construction and development of a variety of aquatics and youth sports projects throughout the City of Spokane, staff from each work unit/division have realized increased workloads. These capital development funds and resulting projects were not accompanied by the operational and maintenance dollars needed to support the projects from a staffing perspective (or otherwise). The Department is encouraged to request additional staff (both FTE and part-time seasonal to compensate for these deficiencies.
- Recreation and Riverfront Park divisions should be managed separately due to scope and size of operations. Consideration of Riverfront Park as a quasi-enterprise operation may be of both financial as well as functional benefit.
- Participation in out-of-school activities and programs offer support for youth and working families; and benefit youth socially, emotionally, and academically. Currently, the primary form of

afterschool programming in Spokane is managed through the Spokane Public School system. Given the significant number of youth in the community who would benefit from some form of recreational activity during after school and out of school hours, the Department should continue to pursue enhanced partnership opportunities with the public school system to enhance these types of youth services.

- Environmental education programs were listed at the top of the 10 programs parks and recreation departments are planning to add within the next three years. Sixty-eight percent of public park and recreation agencies offer nature-based programming and 61 percent have nature-based facilities. More than 30 percent of public agencies offer no nature programming, and slightly less than 40 percent have no nature-based facilities. This trend reflects an interest in counter-balancing the nationwide concern of “nature deficit disorder” popularized by the federal government and the author, Richard Louvre (technology’s impact on our loss of commitment to exercise and being out of doors). The Department has the inherent ability and capacity to build upon environmental and outdoor recreation opportunities. With significant nature-based facilities and a strong community interest in the environment and outdoor recreation, the Department should take advantage of these factors and further develop relevant parks and recreation services.
- Although addressed in the Action Plan, the Department is encouraged to assertively pursue potential partnerships and collaborations to best use scarce resources and avoid duplication of service provision.
- The Department’s mission statement clearly articulates that the community is defined as those “people who live, work and visit the city of Spokane” as the system is supported in large part by sales tax dollars. This should always be considered when the Department defines its customer base relative to pricing, customer service and other relevant issues.
- Most attending or participating in public forums and surveys throughout the process tended to have a special interest. An on-going challenge for the Department will be to engage as many community members with varying interests as possible in public processes to develop a global sense of community issues and interests. This should include regularly scheduled public open houses including scheduling at locations that are atypical (e.g., religious institutions, schools).
- The Department’s focus should be on measuring how parks and recreation services affect, influence or impact community issues. Developing or acquiring available measurement tools and methods will assist staff in this process.
- According to survey data, parks and trails are the most important service the Department provides and have the highest current use and satisfaction rates amongst those surveyed. These statistics should be affirmed or challenged every three to five years.
- According to survey data, the greatest future need for outdoor facilities are trails and trail connections. These statistics should be affirmed or challenged every three to five years.
- According to survey data, outdoor recreation is the primary recreation interest among survey respondents. These statistics should be affirmed or challenged every three to five years.

- According to survey data, the greatest future need for indoor facilities was indoor aquatics facilities. Considering the recent indoor aquatic facility development (i.e., downtown YMCA), this statistic should be challenged as circumstances have changed since the initiation of this planning process.
- According to survey data, a dedicated funding source would be the preferred method for future parks and recreation funding including how best to address the Department's current deferred maintenance demands and burden. This issue should remain a significant priority and assessed based upon any progress or productivity resulting from the related goals and actions listed in the 2010-2012 Action Plan.
- A number of parks and recreation services including, but not limited to some senior center services did not align with the Department's values or vision as the process unfolded. Although these services are important or critical to certain community members, the fundamental question is whether they are "parks and recreation services" or "social services," therefore, supported by another city department with relevant mission(s). This "divestment" will allow for the reallocation of Department resources to "true" parks and recreation services, thereby removing the Department from becoming the default for the management and provision of non-parks and recreation services. Beyond the Department's implementation of the recommended provision strategies as detailed in the Service Portfolios (Appendix G) as directed in the 2010-2012 Action Plan, this issue will require on-going Department attention and diligence connecting the dots between the issue and the Department's values, mission and vision. Essentially, divesting of services that are not parks and recreation services.
- The City has committed financial and other resources to local non-profit youth and senior centers to assist in the provision of recreation and other social services on behalf of Parks and Recreation. Additionally, the Parks and Recreation Department engages in contractual agreements for golf personnel services. These agreements are inconsistent in expectations and fund allocation, and require consistent evaluation to ensure responsible distribution of financial resources and that service delivery expectations are being met. As mentioned in the preceding recommendation, beyond the Department's intended efforts to improve these agreements making them fair and appropriate via the 2010-2012 Action Plan, this issue will require on-going Department attention and diligence connecting the dots between the issue and the Department's values, mission and vision.
- Many Department services have the capacity to generate additional revenues through advancing or affirming the services' market position via investment. This will require an entrepreneurial mindset that will inevitably provide opportunity to reallocate excess revenues to those "core" parks and recreation services demanding subsidy to survive.
- The Department is encouraged to take the lead in efforts to collaboratively cooperate on and between issues of interest to the Park Board, City Council, department staff, other City departments, and community stakeholder groups. This would include planning efforts requiring collective participation (e.g., Riverfront Park Master Plan).
- Department representatives should be at the table for City initiatives such as the Green Team and the Sustainability Task Force and the Water Stewardship Program.

- The Department is encouraged to lead collaborative efforts with other public agencies that own land that serves parks and recreation functions such as stormwater detention land that functions as a park to adjacent neighborhoods.
- The Financial Resource Allocation Philosophy includes a shift from a current 70% subsidy (General Fund)/30% cost recovery level to an overall Department goal of 60% subsidy (General Fund)/40% cost recovery. Given these conditions, a minimum of three years may be necessary to meet this new goal.
- In the event the City adopts a parkland dedication requirement for private residential developments, funds to develop and operate this new parkland will also be needed.
- There is a need to further clarify the details in the City of Spokane Charter regarding the sale of “other property” not determined to fulfill a current or planned future parks and recreation purpose.