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## **Section 6 Recreation Programs**

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### **6.1 Current Programs**

The City of Farmington, Parks & Recreation Department offers a wide range of recreation programs to adults and children of all ages, abilities and both genders. Offerings range widely from team sports, individual sports and fitness programs, themed & play specific activities to cultural enrichment. The City's regular programs are augmented by a broad array of special events, including seasonal activities, community celebrations and other features for children, adults and families. Additionally, community and other departmental partnerships help expand and broaden programs and activities offered through the Department.

Recreation programs the City currently offers include:

#### **Athletics/Sports – Youth**

Basketball  
T-Ball  
Tennis  
Kickball  
Swim Lessons  
Skate Lessons  
Golf  
Gymnastics  
Ski/Snowboard Classes  
Martial Arts/Self Defense  
In-Line, Skateboard Camps  
Baseball Camps  
Football Camps  
Lacrosse Camps  
Soccer Camps  
Volleyball Camps

#### **Athletics/Sports - Adult**

Golf  
Martial Arts/Self Defense  
Soccer League  
Volley Ball League  
Kickball League  
7-Man Touch Football League  
Softball Leagues  
Ski/Snowboard Classes  
Skate Lessons  
Fitness Programs

#### **Themed & Play Specific Activities/Cultural Enrichment (all ages)**

Playground Programs  
Trips –day and extended  
Recreation/Special Interest Camps  
Specific Training Classes  
Puppet Wagon  
Swim Bus  
Yoga  
Computer Classes  
Dancing  
Issue Specific Presentations-Programs  
Cards/Board Games  
Organ Lessons  
Whittling

Interest Specific Clubs  
Bowling  
Driving Refresher Courses

**Special Events/Celebrations:**

Easter Egg Hunt  
Halloween Walk  
Party on the Knoll  
Rambling River Days  
    Bed Races  
    Kiss the Pig  
    Dew Run  
    Kids Fun Friday (afternoon)  
P2 Day  
Earth & Arbor Day/Pond Clean Up  
Touch a Truck  
Annual Bike Auction  
Peddler in the Park  
Party on the Knoll  
Community Expo  
RRC Anniversary Dinner  
RRC Volunteer Recognition  
Outdoor Pool Events  
Spring Skate Festival  
National Skating Week  
Who Done It Hike?  
GPS Amazing Family Race  
Take a Kid Fishing  
CPR Saturday – Farmington  
Secret Holiday Shop for Kids  
Santa Calls

**6.2 Needs Analysis**

Recreation programming is clearly one of Farmington’s strengths. Programs currently offered are comprehensive and attempt to serve all sectors in the community. The staff is professional, knowledgeable, creative, dedicated and responsive to the needs of the community and to new trends in parks and recreation. There is no question that Farmington’s recreation/leisure programming capability is a positive influence on people’s perceptions of the City and is a source of pride for the Parks and Recreation Department. The Division excels at special programs and events, sports programs, senior programming and youth and family activities.

Of special note is the relationship the Division plays in fostering partnerships between the Division and businesses & organizations within and outside community. These partnerships offer greater recreation/leisure opportunities for City residents and visitors.

A general philosophy taken by the City of Farmington is that parks and recreation is an important service for the community and by this acceptance it recognizes that recreation/leisure programming, facilities and parks plays an important role in improving the quality of life for its residents and visitors. To support this belief the City Council has:

- Adopted a fee ordinance setting fees for parks and recreation, such as facility rental fees
- Approved a Strategic Revenue Plan providing the Parks & Recreation Department with direction to create a fee structure for recreation/leisure programs and facilities identifying at what percent that costs are to be recovered through fees and through general fund subsidy.
- Approved a scholarship program for qualified youths that underwrites program costs. Costs are covered by a sponsorship through the Rotary Club of Farmington and other funding sources.

Planning for the next 25 years is essential to completing and enhancing the current parks and recreation system as well as adapting it to changing recreation trends. The following list is intended to identify where the City could further expand or enhance an already excellent range of programs, activities, events and relationships for its residents and visitors.

### **1. Recreation Facilities**

Park and recreation facilities include features found within the community that fulfill a specific need for a certain segment of our population. Athletic fields for adults and youth, trails, swimming pools, tennis courts, ice rinks, skate parks and playgrounds are excellent examples of outdoor facilities as are gymnasiums/multi-use areas, cardio/weight training exercise areas, natatoriums and ice arenas for indoor facilities.

In the past, Farmington has been fortunate to have had an adequate inventory of both outdoor and indoor recreation facilities serving the needs of the community, but as the city grows and diversifies and the demand for more and better facilities increases our current facility inventory will not and does not meet these needs.

Outdoor programs such as T-ball, Soccer, Lacrosse and adult/youth softball/baseball, skateboarding, archery and disc golf and others, are limited in their ability to grow or non-existent because of limited and outdated field space (availability), or the lack of space in which to play, practice and hold tournaments (a potential source of revenue).

Indoor programs such as ice sports, aquatics, basketball, health/wellness, sport camps and dance, plus an increasing demand for off-season programs to be held year round, such as tennis and soccer, coupled with the demand for space and time from area recreation organizations and school district programs, taxes an already insufficient amount of indoor space and time availability.

Without question, more and better facilities are needed and it will take a clear vision towards the future of our citizens, elected representatives and city officials to create a planned and vibrant direction. This vision is a key component in charting the course for recreation programs and activities and is essential to meet the demands of a changing population and for future

generations. For it is a sign of a healthy community to be proactive in its approach to addressing the needs and wants of its residents and in recreation this is accomplished through a vision of diversity in programs and facilities for different ages, gender, interests and abilities. The Department should encourage and support partnerships with other governmental units and organizations that allow reciprocal use of fields and recreational facilities. This cooperative arrangement should be sealed in a written agreement that identifies facilities to be shared and the costs, if any, to use the facilities.

The City should also address future programming issues pertaining to all recreational facilities due to age and condition. A further analysis of the condition and age of recreational facilities is addressed in Section 7 Recreational Facilities. The purpose of analyzing recreational facilities is so that maintenance and upkeep can be budget for appropriately so that repairs or improvements can be made with minimal impact to recreational programs that occur at the recreational facilities. Additional analysis beyond the existing condition of recreational facilities should be completed that identifies current and future space needs, scheduled use including peak and off-peak times and costs associated with providing recreational programs at a recreational facilities.

## **2. Funding Opportunities**

Funding for new park and recreation initiatives and maintaining and improving the existing system will continue to be a challenge. As the existing parks and recreation system ages and new parks and facilities are developed it will be necessary to have in place funding sources to secure adequate dollars to develop and maintain the system at the high quality residents have come to expect.

In addition to existing funding tools (park dedication fees, general fund subsidies, liquor store profit transfers, program fees and partnerships) the City should explore other opportunities to secure new and additional funding sources to generate a solid base of funding to address these challenges. These opportunities may include; encouraging donation of land, expansion of partnerships (new & existing), creation of a parks & recreation foundation, development of facilities that generate revenue, voter approved bonds or taxes and a cumulative capital development fund.

The City has been the primary provider of recreation programs to people who live in the surrounding townships. While there has been discussion to create a different fee structure for people who do not live inside the corporate boundary of Farmington, it is important to note that the City should continue to offer recreational programs to all people living in the greater Farmington area, recognizing that nonresident registrations may be needed to fill out classes or programs.

Finally, support should be given to recreation programs and facilities that promote and encourage visitors to Farmington. These programs and facilities have a significant positive impact on the economic health of the city because of their potential for bringing in visitors, and additional dollars, into the community.

### 3. Technology – The Electronic Future

Technology has had a greater presence in recreation programs. On-line registration software and web based software has made it more convenient for participants to register for programs and events. No longer do participants need to drop a registration in the mail or drive to a municipal building to register. It is much more acceptable to make a payment for an on-line registration by either credit or debit cards. The Department has contracted since 2003 with a company initially called Community Season but recently with Premier POS to provide web based software for on-line registration. It has been a successful endeavor because it has allowed the use of credit cards to make payment for recreation program registrations. The Department utilizes the contractor's merchant account to complete transactions with credit or debit cards and the City pays a small charge to use the merchant account.

The Department is moving towards utilizing new web based software from Premier POS that will allow facility scheduling to occur on-line. This software has the capability of blocking any double scheduling of facilities while utilizing the speed and technology of the web based software to accept credit or/debit card payments. This will mean that City facilities that are needed for Department programs, activities and events can first be scheduled by City staff in order to guarantee that a facility has been reserved. Long-term it is envisioned that the public can go on-line to reserve and make payment for the use of Schmitz-Maki Arena, picnic shelters, Rambling River Center, outdoor pool and athletic fields.

As the Department continues to move towards using technology it will need to continue to research new technology that is available at a reasonable cost that will deliver good customer service. The maintenance and updating of the Department's existing website will need to be a priority in order to keep customers informed of changing information within the Department. Staffing resources should be allocated to complete the updates as needed. As technology changes it will be important to identify what technology should be acquired and then train staff on it. New technology can provide the following benefits:

- **expand community cohesiveness**
- **enhance parks and recreation services**
- **affect conservation of resources**
- **create a model department through the use of technology by improving service delivery and information dissemination to its stakeholders**

### 4. Teens/Adolescents (ages 12-17 yrs.)

Research shows that free time activities consist of 40-50 percent of an adolescent's life indicating to recreation programmers the importance of offering a diverse selection of positive recreation experiences from which to choose.

Programs that focus on socialization with peers that are presented in a relaxed, yet challenging context, designed to be outcome-based and incorporate youth development assets (cooperation, leadership, citizenship, responsibility, respect, honesty & creativity, etc.) offer the best opportunity for keeping youth engaged and focused on making positive choices.

Specific adolescent programming is a key element in keeping our youth safe, secure and developing into healthy adults. To this end, it is imperative that solutions be found addressing supportive funding opportunities and the availability of adequate recreation facilities for these and all recreation/leisure programs within greater Farmington.

Young people who are supported by adults, institutions (including parks & recreation departments), and policies tend to make healthier decisions, show higher levels of academic achievement, and ultimately give back to their communities in positive ways and are less likely to be involved in risky behaviors such as tobacco, drug and alcohol use, sexual activity, violence and gang activity. Attempts should be made to develop teen-based programming that is designed to keep young teens constructively active and supervised while having fun. This could be accomplished through the following methods:

- Identify/assess how many and when there is the greatest number of teens having unstructured and unsupervised time. (before and after-school, Friday and Saturday nights and school holidays including summer).
- Identify and develop a strategic direction that recognizes the unique needs of middle school and high school-aged youth.
- Have youth represent themselves and their peers in developing, implementing and evaluating programs.
- Seek outside partnerships and cooperative ventures that can work through barriers or roadblocks to providing programs for adolescents.
- Provide opportunities for program input through organization of discussion groups or an advisory group.
- Research and identify real or perceived road blocks that interfere in providing adequate adolescent programming.
- Work with the school district and other Farmington organizations to compile and inventory and information about programs, facilities and partnerships that are available and focus on adolescents.
- Identify road blocks and possible solutions.

## **5. Boomers/Seniors**

The aging of the baby boom generation will result in a significant increase in population above age 60 within the next 25 years. It is estimated that by 2030 in Minnesota alone that one in every four Minnesotans will be 65 years of age and older. For parks and recreation departments to be adequately prepared for this large group approaching their retirement years, we must understand what this group is all about, their attitudes and their recreation tendencies and how they can best be served. It should be noted Baby Boomers:

- Are better educated than their parents.
- Plan to keep working (at least part-time) and earning money during their retirement years.
- Are devoted to exercise, fitness and wellness.
- Work and play hard.
- Perceive themselves younger than what they are.

- Are nostalgic for their youth (60's culture).
- View retirement as a middle-life event.
- Are constantly on the go and over-programmed.
- Like up-scale goods, services and facilities.
- Have a different attitude in volunteerism – from civic obligation to special interest.
- Repudiate signs or symbols connecting them to being old.
- Tend to enjoy more individualized activities rather than group events.
- Are interested in arts & entertainment and life-long learning pursuits.
- Enjoy the outdoors such as parks, green spaces and trail systems.

To be adequately prepared for baby boomers as they approach their retirement years, recreation programming should incorporate demographic detail of this age group, their attitudes and their leisure tendencies. In order to reach the baby boomer population, the strategies in developing and implementing programs might include:

- Shifts away from current attitudinal, environmental and societal senior programming norms
- Develop programming that enhances life-long learning, technology, arts & entertainment.
- Establish programs and partnerships or cooperative ventures that address “active living” concepts.
- Develop programs that work within a compressed leisure timeframe (closer to home, shorter program time commitments, passive park spaces and individual non-programmed leisure opportunities).

## **6. Inclusive and Adaptive Recreation**

Inclusive recreation programs offer opportunities for individuals both with and without disabilities to participate together. The focus is on similar abilities, not differences. Emphasis is on providing understanding, disability awareness, building active participation for all people and involving families. The Department currently does not provide adaptive programs where person's with disabilities are segregated in order to learn leisure time skills that they can then use when mainstreamed into the programs offered to the general public. The ultimate goal should always be to promote and support people with disabilities in all recreation programs whenever reasonable accommodations can be made to allow for successful participation. Alternatively, the City should begin to explore the possible partnership with surrounding communities and school districts to provide adaptive programs that allow people with disabilities an opportunity to successfully learn and acquire leisure time skills in a segregated environment that allow them to mainstream into other recreational programs that are offered in their respective community. This may include the hiring of full-time, part-time and seasonal staff that could oversee the offering of adaptive programs while also overseeing the process of integrating people with disabilities into mainstream recreation programs. Training will also needed to be provided in order to make the process successful.

## **7. Health and Wellness**

City parks and recreation facilities and programs contribute significantly to the health and well-being of a community by providing opportunities and settings for physical and mental health. Physical health needs can be met by fitness activities, organized and supervised recreation programs and safe and functional trails for walking, jogging, roller-blading, and bicycling. Wellness demands can be satisfied with programs for life-long learning, and providing open spaces for unstructured, individualized recreation opportunities. The Department should look to develop recreational programming and activities that promote wellness, health and well-being for people of all ages. Development of recreational programs that promote health and wellness can be accomplished in the following ways:

- Provide target specific programming to encourage higher participation in recreational programs for mid-life people.
- Provide health & wellness opportunities for individual, non-structured participation.
- Develop or support programs that address the problems associated with obesity and their impact on the individual and society (financial, emotional, and physical).
- Promote regular physical activity and healthy eating and creating environments that support these positive behaviors.
- Develop or support a multifaceted health and wellness program that includes education, community involvement and recreation.
- Identify target-based outcomes for each age group.
- Market program to preteens, teens, and adults.
- Provide staff training to parks and recreation staff on how to support the healthy community program goals and objectives as they pertain to their jobs.
- Survey participants and develop other community measures to monitor the effectiveness of the program.

## **8. Trends**

Trends also play an important part in the type of recreation programs and activities a community needs. It is important that the department incorporates on-going trends analysis into its recreation program planning in order to help bring focus to the provision of recreation services that are most desired and needed by the community. The following are trends that the City should be addressing in the future planning of recreation programs:

- Young adults raised on youth athletics are seeking to maintain active lifestyles. In addition, interest in non-traditional and self-directed recreation is rising.
- More agencies are target marketing a bundling of services to their customers.
- There is an increasing focus on out-of-school activities for youth in order to better serve working families and in response to rising levels of youth crime during after school hours.
- Local park and recreation agencies are reportedly finding great success in programming for the pre-school age child by responding to parent feedback and desires. Requests center on opportunities to expose a child to a variety of activities to learn what the child may be interested in, and opportunities for interaction outside the child's own home. Family

programming for tot, starting at age 9 months, with an adult, are increasingly popular (swimming, gymnastics, cooking, music, art, story time, special one-time holiday classes, etc.).

- The introduction of club sports for youth is leading to greater sport specialization and year-round engagement in one sport versus a rotation of sports throughout the year.
- Interest in traditional sports, including baseball, softball, golf, and football, is declining while interest in nontraditional sports such as skateboarding, mountain biking, disc golf, lacrosse, and cricket is increasing.
- Self-directed sports and activities are growing in popularity among adults.
- More leisure time, especially among youth, is spent enjoying a multitude of media, technology, and entertainment options.
- An increase in foreign-born residents requires focus on reducing language barriers and gaining better understanding of the recreational needs for these individuals.
- Older adults, primarily Baby Boomers, are re-writing the script for aging by participating in active recreation years longer than previous generations. They have more discretionary income than previous generations, and are increasingly applying those funds towards leisure programming.
- Nationally, research shows obesity and related health concerns are rising along with health care costs. Parks and recreation play an important role in supporting the active lifestyles that can reduce health concerns and bolster preventative care.
- Recreation agencies are forming strategic alliances with health, social services, and educational agencies to offer more comprehensive health and wellness programs.
- Demand for programs and facilities providing a higher quality of amenities and services are becoming the norm. To meet these demands, parks and recreation departments must be more specific and diverse in developing recreation programs that address the needs and wants of a targeted group utilizing facilities that are perceived as high quality and sustainable and the group values.
- At regular intervals, identify trends in recreation to insure facilities and programs are based on changing needs and desires of the public such as active living, aging populations, environmental awareness, disc golf, programs/cultural diversity and quality vs. quantity programs and facilities.

## **9. Historical/Arts/Cultural Diversity**

As the City of Farmington continues to grow, it is likely that the diversity of the community will change. The Department should begin discussions on providing programs and activities that promote the cultural and historical aspects of Farmington so that they are not lost due to the change in the demographic makeup and the expansion of the community. Department staff should work with local and area-wide historical organizations, art organizations and county/state cultural resource organizations to identify culturally and historically significant areas of the community in order to possibly create development themes, interpretive areas, walking tours and special projects. A focus should be on conducting cultural/historical resource inventories as part of the design/development for all park projects.

At the same time as the community continues to grow, it will also be important to promote and build recreation opportunities for and with members of diverse cultural groups. This could

include the facilitation of group discussions with community members in order to identify needs and wants of specific groups. It could include the implementation of program formats that encourage the development of cross-cultural skills and communication, such as classes, workshops, special events, open facility, and resource centers that promote an understanding and appreciation of the different cultures found within the City.

The Dakota Valley Arts Council (DVAC) does provide an opportunity for members of the community to join an arts organization. While the DVAC has been actively involved in the creation, expansion and promotion of Depot Way Arts Park, it has been limited in the number of art programs and classes that it offers to the community. It may be beneficial for the Department to look at an opportunity to explore a partnership or collaboration on the offering of art classes to all age groups in the community utilizing the many different mediums used to create art.

## **10. Environment/Nature/Outdoor**

The City has a good diversity of natural areas and environmentally sensitive areas that could be used as teach areas that allows the community to be educated about the natural environment. The Department does provide albeit on a limited basis environment programs, there seems to be an opportunity to increase the offering of environmental programs. However due to limited staff and resources, expansion of environmental programs will be a challenge. In this case, staff members should look for opportunities to partner with other organizations or agencies who may have the staff and resources to provide environmental programs. The Department does currently partner with Three Rivers Park District and Dakota County Parks on several programs. However, there may be other opportunities that should be explored including area school district environmental programs and community education departments, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District, Vermillion River Watershed, private and public colleges and other private natural resource/conservation organizations. The goal of an environmental program should be to provide appropriate public access and offer a diversity of environmental education opportunities that are hands-on. Environmental programs should be created that take the following into consideration:

- Make it possible for people of all ages to learn about natural resources and the environment through education and self-guided exploration.
- Encourage and support opportunities that provide outdoor classrooms and gathering places where appropriate in city/public parks and open spaces to facilitate environmental learning programs by the city and outside groups.
- Explore the possibility of adding a broad based environmental summer camp into the existing summer recreation program schedule.
- Develop and/or enhance programs for youth that teach introductory and basic outdoor sports skills for a wide variety of outdoor sports i.e. cross country skiing, archery, fishing, etc.
- Develop/Partner on outdoor adventure type programming for youth and teens.
- Continue partnership with city staff on environmental education/awareness programs and explore new opportunities to enhance current programs or develop new ones.
- Explore partnerships with agencies and organizations to develop innovative programs such as specialized teen programming, special needs programming, health & wellness camps, environmental education camps and etc.

## **11. Volunteerism**

The Rambling River Center and recreational programs have in the past relied on volunteers from the community to run programs and provide customer service assistance at the Rambling River Center. While this has saved the City from having to allocate funds to pay staff to run certain programs or provide customer service at the Rambling River Center, it does create some limitations.

Youth organizations also provide a valuable volunteer service in the community. Most of the youth organizations utilize adult volunteer coaches, leaders and/or teachers to facilitate sports, educational or service programs. In most cases these organizations also rely on volunteers to provide administrative and organizational oversight for the organization. This keeps program fees down and makes them more affordable to interested participants.

Volunteerism has and will always be a struggle since it can sometimes be difficult to find people in the community who are interested in volunteering and are willing to commit their time to volunteering. It is difficult to predict future growth in volunteerism because it will depend on the value that the community places on volunteerism. In order to address continued volunteerism in the Department, it will be important to complete the following:

- Identify the value amount (time and dollars) placed on volunteer staffing and market this information to the community.
- Identify duties currently being completed by volunteers.
- Suggest possible solutions to a decreasing volunteer base and the impact it will have on recreation programming opportunities and daily facility operations of the Rambling River Center and Adopt-A-Park programs.
- Due to the expected increase of the senior adult population there should be an on-going review regarding the volunteer staffing levels at the Rambling River Center in the event that there would be a shortage of volunteers that would compromise customer service.
- Explore options that will help address the Center's staffing limitations and the decreasing role volunteers will play in day-to-day facility operations and on fundraising projects.