



Master Plan

Parks, Open Space, Trails & Recreation

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER ONE - EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Durango Parks and Recreation Department (“Department”) embarked on an update to their Parks, Open Space, Trails and Recreation Master Plan (“Plan”). This Plan is meant to be a living document and will provide the Department a roadmap for addressing community needs for the next five to ten years. It details the current state of the system while identifying focus areas based on a comprehensive assessment of community values and priorities.

This Master Plan sought community input to identify their vision and expectations for the future of the parks and recreation system. Community input was received via focus groups, key stakeholder interviews, public forums, a project website (www.durangoparksplan.com), a community online open survey and a statistically-valid community survey. The information gathered from the community engagement process was combined with technical research to produce the final Master Plan.

This plan establishes recommendations for the Department to achieve the vision the community has for the parks and recreation system as well as to achieve greater financial sustainability without sacrificing the value of the park assets and amenities or reducing the level of experiences and services available to users. Going forward, the Department will embrace a continual process of community engagement to evaluate available resources and funding to accomplish the goals identified in the Plan and new goals that will emerge in the future.

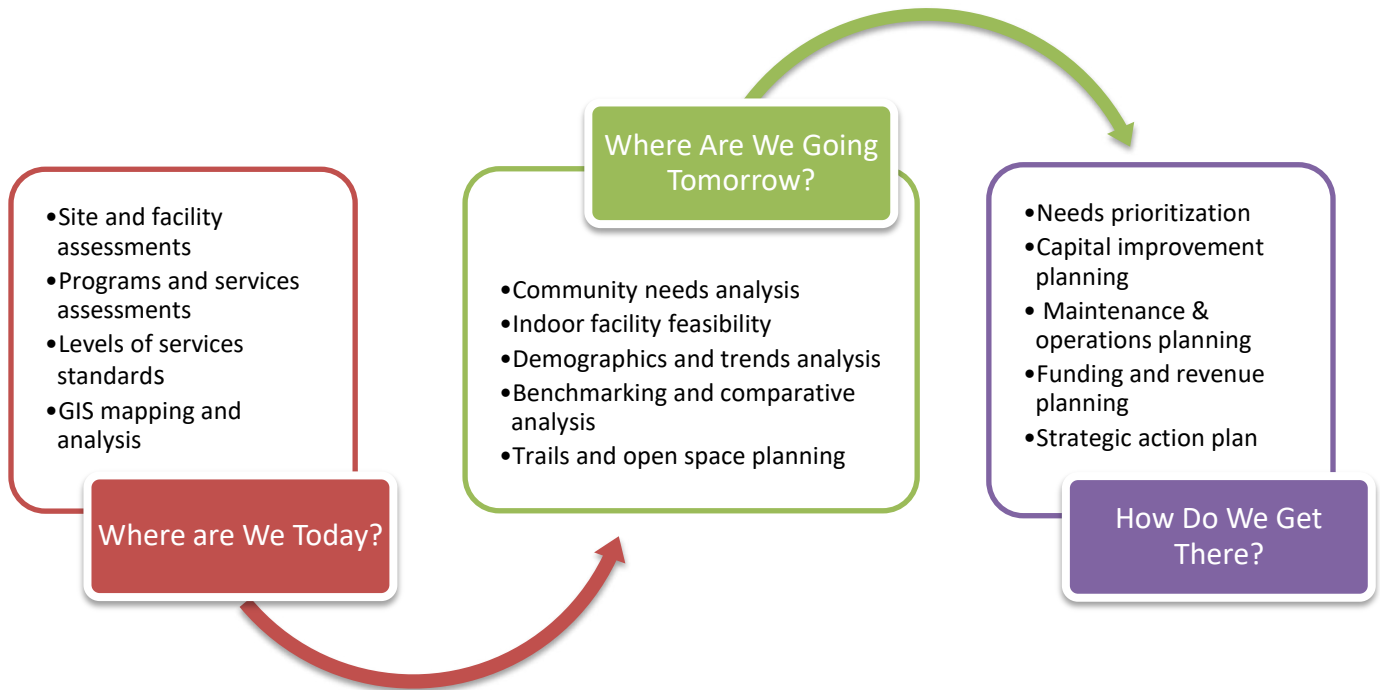
1.1 MASTER PLAN GOALS

The goals of the Parks, Open Space, Trails and Recreation Master Plan include:

- Engage the community, leadership and stakeholders through innovative public input means to build a shared vision for parks, open space, trails, and recreation in the City of Durango for the next five or more years.
- Utilize a wide variety of data sources and best practices, including a statistically-valid survey to predict trends and patterns of use and how to address unmet needs in the City of Durango.
- Determine unique Level of Service Standards to develop appropriate actions regarding parks, open space, trails, and recreation that reflects the City’s strong commitment in providing high quality recreational activities for the community.
- Shape financial and operational preparedness through innovative and “next” practices to achieve the strategic objectives and recommended actions with achievable strategies.
- Educate the Durango community about and Recreation Department project budgeting and planning information to ensure transparency and a community-wide understanding of the use of Parks and Recreation sales tax funds.
- Develop a dynamic and realistic strategic action plan that creates a road map to ensure long-term success and financial sustainability for the City’s parks, open space, trails and recreation, as well as action steps to support the recreation-oriented community and businesses that call Durango home.
- Continue to provide information regarding Parks and Recreation Department project planning and budgeting to ensure transparency and a community wide understanding of the use of the dedicated Parks and Recreation sales tax funds.

1.2 PROJECT PROCESS

The Master Plan update followed a process of data collection, public input, on-the-ground study, assessment of existing conditions, market research, and open dialogue with local leadership and key stakeholders. The project process followed a planning path, as illustrated below:



1.3 VISION, MISSION AND CORE VALUES

1.3.1 VISION

The following vision presents how Durango Parks and Recreation Department desires to be viewed in the future:

To be the reason why people want to be in Durango.

1.3.2 MISSION

The following is the mission for how Durango Parks and Recreation Department will implement the vision:

Enrich lives every day.

1.3.3 CORE VALUES

- Service Excellence
- High Quality Offerings
- Innovation (+Fun)
- Health and Wellness
- Sustainability (Environmental + Fiscal)

1.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are derived from an iterative visioning process with the staff and the consulting team. These encompass a wide variety of areas starting with the Big Moves that are overarching and visionary in nature.

BIG MOVES	
•	Connect trails (SMART 160 East and West, Animas River Trail)
•	Sustained dedicated funding
•	Implement Durango Mesa Park Plan
•	Enhance branding, marketing and telling the Parks and Recreation Department story to the community
•	Address aging facilities and infrastructure
•	New parks and recreation facilities
•	Existing Recreation Center expansion or build a new multi-use recreation facility
•	Continue to seek alternative funding for new development, operational funds, capital projects
•	Maintain and upgrade existing facilities
•	Continue to develop and enhance Lake Nighthorse Recreation Area

Staff and the consulting team also dove deeper into recommendations of individual areas including:

- Operations and Maintenance
- Programs
- Marketing and Branding
- Parks, Facilities, Trails and Open Space

Each of these areas has a Strategy / Tactic which is tied to one or more of the Big Moves, Core Values, with a Timeline (Short, Mid, Long-Term), Budget Needs, Performance Metrics and Lead Division that is responsible for implementing them. The details are in an action matrix that is managed by and updated on an ongoing basis by staff.

1.4.1 OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE

- Ensure adequate funding for staffing and maintenance for new development
- Involve maintenance and operational staff in planning new parks and facilities
- Incorporate adaptive management and be flexible with existing facilities' use
- Be innovative, sustainable and forward thinking in design
- Follow best practices with written documentation, SOPs etc.
- Institute a web-based work order asset management system
- Develop facility maintenance management plans
- Improved maintenance hubs and satellite sites systemwide e.g. Lake Nighthorse Recreation Area
- Maintain dedicated funding for existing facility improvements
- Ensure replacement funds for upkeep of older and outdated equipment
- Secure partnership opportunities to leverage dollars, capacities and efficiencies
- Maintain appropriate staffing, provide training and fair compensation
- Create specialized facilities for childcare, etc. to free up dedicated space for operations and maintenance
- Provide an effective work space environment
- Build a maintenance and replacement schedule for equipment, facility infrastructure, etc.
- Ensure succession planning / training and cross training for staff
- Maintain effective inventory management system

1.4.2 PROGRAMS

- Build a Program Plan that drives development phases for Three Springs Community Park
- Offer new recreation programs (e.g. Fitness program, Life skills programs, eSports / eGaming, alternative wellness, gardens, open water activities, etc.)

1.4.3 MARKETING AND BRANDING

- Update website for online registration, memberships etc.
- Branding guidelines and consistency
- Partnering with others to help promote the website for offerings, etc. for visitors
- Interactive map of parks, trails and open space
- Better post registration communication
- Develop a real-time customer feedback and community input App for the Department (such as HAPPiFEET - www.KeepHappiFeet.com) to allow for real-time and GPS location based input from community members and visitors across all parks, trails, open space and recreation facilities.
- Enhance marketing of sponsorship opportunities

1.4.4 PARKS, FACILITIES, TRAILS AND OPEN SPACE

- Parks - Implement Durango Mesa Park in phases with the assistance of grant funding and community/private partnerships
- Parks - Provide new park amenities: community gardens, multiple pickleball courts, artificial turf
- Parks - Implement new amenities at Lake Nighthorse Recreation Area such as picnic facilities, swim beach, and open water opportunities
- Parks - Ensure parks are approachable, welcoming and feel safe

- Parks - Bathroom replacement (Rotary Park, Schneider Park and Folsom Park)
- Parks - Replacement of aging irrigation systems (Fassbinder Park, Viles Park, and Greenmount Cemetery)
- Facilities - Expanded / new recreation center with fitness, childcare, additional gym space, basketball court / sport courts, storage etc.
- Facilities - Add dedicated childcare space / Provide year-round ice
- Facilities - Remove Mason Center building and the former Chamber of Commerce building at Santa Rita Park unless the building can be used for the Water Reclamation Facility operations
- Facilities - Upgrade ski lift at Chapman Hill Ski Area
- Facilities - Better use of existing space e.g. Chapman Hill for summer programs
- Trails - Underpass at Camino del Rio and at Highway 550/160 near Home Depot
- Trails - Access to Lake Nighthorse Recreation Area
- Trails - Expand natural surface trails with partners and City staff
- Trails - Enhance signage and stewardship
- Hard Surface Trails - Complete Animas River Trail and SMART 160 Trail East and West
- Open Space - Identify and secure potential acquisitions for open space
- Open Space - Stewardship and maintenance of existing open space

1.5 CONCLUSION

The Durango Parks and Recreation Department (“Department”) has continued to grow and sustain a high level of service over the years. The wide variety of offerings it provides serve not only Durango residents but also La Plata County residents and the high number of tourists and visitors to the region. The Department’s sustained excellence was nationally recognized when they were awarded the prestigious National Gold Medal Award for Excellence in the Field of Park and Recreation Management by the American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration.

All of this would not have been possible without the dedicated and passionate support of the Durango community. From approving two dedicated funding measures (Half Cent Sales and Use Tax and Quarter Cent Sales and Use Tax respectively) to being active volunteers and advocates for parks, recreation, trails and open space, the community has embraced the value of parks and recreation in contributing to the exceptional quality of life in Durango.

Looking ahead, the Department is committed to providing sustainable stewardship and maintenance of existing assets while continuing to innovate and embrace new opportunities. From the expansion of Lake Nighthorse Recreation Area to plans for development of Durango Mesa Park, increasing trail connectivity and exploring plans to expand the Recreation Center, this 2019 Parks, Open Space, Trails and Recreation Master Plan has laid out a community-driven vision and ambitious goals for the future.

The successful implementation of this plan will depend on continued leadership and community support and, in working with the Durango community and staff for the past decade, the consulting team has no doubt that this support will continue and ensure that Durango continues to be the national benchmark for an exceptional quality of life for all those who live, work, play or visit.