

TOWN of CARY

2011/2012 Parks, Recreation & Cultural Resources Master Plan

(10-21-11)

Benchmarking Comparative Data Analysis

Comparative data from the following seven communities was collected and analyzed in comparison to the Town of Cary. The communities were chosen because they are known for having quality parks and recreation systems.

- Clarksville, TN
- Fort Collins, CO
- Lakewood, CO
- Naperville, IL
- Plano, TX
- Rockville, MD
- Scottsdale, AZ

Each community was sent a benchmarking data request form and self-reported the data.

Benchmarking Data Sought

Requested benchmarking data included:

- Population
- Parkland acreage
- Parks and Trails Level of Service
- Community/Recreation Centers and Aquatics
- Cultural Arts and Historical Facilities

Table 1 below illustrates a compilation of data from responding communities.

Limits of Comparative Data and Analysis

Benchmarking is an important tool that allows the comparison of certain attributes of a municipalities' management of public spaces (parks, recreation, aquatics, and related services) with other similar communities. It is very difficult to find exact comparable communities because each has its own unique identity, its own way of conducting business, and differences in the populations they serve. Geographic location also should be taken into consideration when comparing aquatic amenities. It is important to keep in mind that while many park and recreation departments serve primarily its residents, others serve a large portion of nonresidents. This being said the benchmarking information presented here should be used as a catalyst for the Town of Cary to continue to research best practices for more specific areas when they are needed.

Analysis of Benchmarking

Population

- Of the benchmarked communities, Cary has the third lowest population.

Parkland Acreage

- **Cary ranked fourth in total acres of developed parkland and fifth in amount of developed park acres per 1,000 residents.**
- **Cary ranked second in number of acres of undeveloped park land.**

Parks and Trails Level of Service

- Five of the eight communities indicated that they have park level of service standards; three of which stated the standard is one mile for neighborhood parks (Cary included). One community, Naperville, indicated the standard is ½ mile, and Rockville stated the standard as a 10-minute walk.
- Level of service goals varied among the seven agencies that responded. **Cary ranked fifth highest in the parkland acre standards per 1,000 residents (at 7.5 per 1,000).**
- Total miles of agency maintained trails showed a significant variance among the eight agencies: from seven miles in Clarksville, to 210 miles in Scottsdale. Cary ranked 6th (61.76 miles) in total miles of trails out of the eight communities.
- **When measuring miles of trails per 1,000 residents, Cary ranked fourth, with .45 miles of trails per 1,000 residents.**

Community/Recreation Centers and Aquatics

- **All agencies indicated they operated/managed indoor community/recreation centers.** The number of centers ranged from two indoor community/recreation centers in Naperville, to 12 in Rockville. Service provision strategies differ from one agency to another, which explains the variance. Cary operates/manages three indoor recreation/community centers.
- Seven agencies reported total cumulative square footage of indoor community/recreation centers. Of those, the range is between, 6,600 SF in Naperville, to 262,477 SF in Plano. Cary ranked sixth with, 68,668 SF of cumulative space provided to residents in community/recreation centers.
- Of the seven responding agencies, **Cary ranked sixth with .5 SF of community/recreation centers per population.** The highest is Rockville with 2.6 SF per population.
- Five of the eight agencies responded as having fitness spaces in their community/recreation centers. Of those, the number of fitness spaces ranged from one in Scottsdale to five in Rockville. Cary reported they have no fitness spaces in recreation/community centers. It is important to recognize service provision strategies vary in communities depending upon other organizations and demand.
- **Four communities indicated they operate indoor aquatics facilities.** Rockville reported one indoor pool, while Plano and Fort Collins each said they have two indoor pools and Lakewood reported four indoor aquatics spaces. The Town of Cary does not operate a facility with indoor aquatics.
- **Five communities reported having outdoor rectangular pools.** Of those Plano, Rockville, and Scottsdale each have one rectangular pool, Lakewood reported three outdoor pools and Clarksville reported five. The Town of Cary does not operate and outdoor pool or aquatics facility.

- **Six communities reported managing outdoor aquatic centers with play features.** Fort Collins, Lakewood, and Naperville each reported one aquatics center, while Rockville reported two, Scottsdale reported three, and Plano reported four aquatics centers.
- **Six communities indicated they manage other specialized indoor recreation facilities,** such as a stand-alone senior center managed or owned by the agency.

Cultural Arts and Historical Facilities

- Six communities reported managing or owning cultural arts facilities
- Seven communities reported managing or owning historical facilities.
- All eight communities reported having a public art program. Operations of the public art programs varied from contractual agreements, to management by a separate entity, or within the parks and recreation department.
- Funding for public art programs in communities included:
 - Municipal general fund
 - Based on project utilizing Capital Improvements budget
 - Percent of capital budget
 - Private funds
 - civic organization contributions

Table 1: Benchmarking Comparison – Cary, NC

| Topic | Cary, NC | Clarksville, TN | Fort Collins, CO | Lakewood, CO | Naperville, IL | Plano, TX | Rockville, MD | Scottsdale, AZ |
|---|--|-----------------|------------------|--------------|---|--|----------------|----------------|
| Population (2010) | 136,590 | 132,000 | 143,986 | 144,382 | 141,853 | 264,560 | 61,209 | 217,385 |
| Parkland | | | | | | | | |
| Total acres of developed park and recreation land | 1,200 – 5 th | 500 | 820 | 1,152 | 2,408 | 3,423 | 707 | 3,887 |
| Developed Park Acres per 1,000 population | 8.8 – 4 th | 3.8 | 5.7 | 8.0 | 17.1 | 13.0 | 11.6 | 17.9 |
| Total acres undeveloped park and recreation land | 1,306 – 2 nd | 110 | 102 | 6,010.5 | 85 | 570 | 354 | 112 |
| Park Level of Service Standards & Trails | | | | | | | | |
| Service area standard for parks | 1 mile for neighborhood parks, 2 miles for community parks, Entire community for metro parks | NA | 1 mile | DNR | ½ mile “walk to” service to Neighborhood Parks (and smaller) and amenities like playgrounds and basketball. | Within 1 sq mi area for neighborhood parks in residential zoning | 10-minute walk | DNR |
| Level of service goal or standard | 7.5/1000 – 5 th | 4.7/1000 | 7/1000 | 52/1000 | 17/1000 | 15/1000 | 18/1000 | DNR |
| Miles of agency maintained trails | 61.76 – 6 th | 7 | 63 | 195 | 57.7 | 65 | 68 | 210 |
| Trails per 1,000 | 0.45 – 4 th | 0.05 | 0.44 | 1.35 | 0.41 | 0.25 | 1.11 | 0.97 |

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|--|--------------------------|-----------------|------------------|--------------|----------------|-----------|---------------|----------------|
| Community Centers and Aquatics | | | | | | | | |
| Total number of indoor community/recreation centers | 3 | 3 | 10 | 8 | 2 | 4 | 12 | 7 |
| Total cumulative square footage community/recreation centers | 68,668 – 6 th | *DNR | 239,000 | 211,205 | 6,600 | 262,477 | 157,982 | 126,427 |
| Community/recreation Center SF per population | .5 – 6 th | NA | 1.7 | 1.5 | .05 | 1.0 | 2.6 | .6 |
| Number of centers with fitness spaces, e.g. cardio and weight equipment | 0 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 4 | 5 | 1 |
| Number of centers with indoor aquatics | 0 | 0 | 2 | 4 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| Number of outdoor pools (rectangular) agency manages | 0 | 5 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Number of outdoor aquatic centers (with aquatic play features) agency manages | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 3 |
| Other specialized indoor recreation facilities, such as a stand-alone senior center managed or owned by agency | Yes | No | Yes | Yes | No | Yes | Yes | Yes |

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|--|---|-----------------|---------------------------|---|----------------|------------------------|---------------------------|--|
| Cultural Arts and Historical Facilities | | | | | | | | |
| Cultural arts facilities managed or owned by agency? | Yes | No | Yes | Yes | No | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Historical facilities managed or owned by agency? | Yes. | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | No |
| Public art program in agency? | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | **Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| If yes, how funded | Municipal General Fund Also based on project utilizing Capital Improvements budget | Other | Percent of Capital Budget | Private funds, civic organization contributions, donations from private individuals | NA | Municipal General Fund | Percent of Capital Budget | General Municipal Fund and Private Funds |
| Types of project applied to | Public | Public | Public Only | Public | NA | Public Only | Public and Private | Public |

*Did Not Respond

**The Naperville Park District is a separate government entity from the City of Naperville. The public art program with the City includes the “Century Walk,” some of which are located on the Riverwalk, which the Park District maintains.