

# TOWN of CARY

## 2011/2012 Parks, Recreation & Cultural Resources Master Plan

### Trends

A challenge of parks and recreation departments is to continue to understand and respond to the changing characteristics of those it serves. In this fast-paced society it is important to stay on top of current trends impacting parks and recreation. The following information highlights relevant local, regional, and national parks and recreational trends from various sources.

The Town of Cary's demographic profile shows consistent population growth in the next five years and will experience a projected age shift. Staff will need to stay current with program development to address diverse trends that reflect to a more diverse population. The trends listed below can help parks and recreation professionals respond to their community's changing needs.

#### **Aquatics National Trends**

According to the National Sporting Goods Association (NSGA), swimming ranked fourth in terms of participation in 2009 and 2010. Outdoor swimming pools are only open three months out of the year in North Carolina. There is an increasing trend towards indoor leisure and therapeutic pools. Additional amenities like "spray pads" are becoming increasingly popular as well. In some cities spray pools are popular in the summer months and turn into ice rinks in the winter months.

The Town of Cary does not operate an indoor or outdoor aquatic facility. The Master Plan survey indicates a high interest in aquatics. Indoor lap and leisure pools rated as the next highest priorities for indoor facilities to be added, after an indoor track. Adding an outdoor aquatic center ranked as the 3<sup>rd</sup> top priority (along with new parks) for future funding improvements.

#### **Athletic Recreation National Trends**

##### ***Sports Participation***

The 2010 NSGA Survey on sports participation found some of the top ten athletic activities ranked by total participation included: exercise walking, exercising with equipment, camping, swimming, bowling, and working out at athletic clubs. Additionally, the following active, organized, or skill development activities remain popular: bicycle riding, hiking, running/jogging, basketball, golf, and soccer.

**Table 1** further outlines the top twenty sports ranked by total participation in 2010 and the percent change from 2009.

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**Table 1: Top Twenty Sports Ranked by Total Participation 2010**

Sport	Total	% Change*
Exercise Walking	93.4	-3.4%
Exercising with Equipment	57.2	4.0%
Camping (vacation/overnight)	50.9	3.0%
Swimming	50.2	-6.1%
Bowling	45.0	0.6%
Workout at Club	38.3	-2.6%
Bicycle Riding	38.1	-1.5%
Weight Lifting	34.5	1.8%
Hiking	34.0	2.8%
Aerobic Exercising	33.1	3.0%
Fishing	32.9	-22.0%
Running/Jogging	32.2	1.0%
Billiards/Pool	28.2	-11.1%
Basketball	24.4	-5.0%
Boating, Motor/Power	24.0	-13.9%
Golf	22.3	-3.9%
Target Shooting (net)	19.8	-2.4%
Hunting with Firearms	18.8	0.3%
Yoga	15.7	20.9%
Soccer	13.6	0.6%

*\*Percent Change is from 2008*

*Source: NSGA 2010*

The Ten-year History of Sports Participation Report published by NSGA shows national trends in team sports and individual sports. Overall participation trends indicate a decrease in general. Team sports such as basketball, soccer, tackle football, softball, and volleyball had an increase in participation from 2006 through 2008, however by 2010 show a decline. Since the report lacrosse has become one of the country's fastest growing team sports. Participation in high school lacrosse has almost doubled this decade. An estimated 1.2 million Americans over age seven have played lacrosse within the previous year. Individual sports show an increase in backpacking, swimming, boating, camping, and exercising with equipment.

**Table 2** illustrates a ten year change in participation for selected activities including both team sports and individual sports.

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**Table 2: Ten-Year History of Sports Participation (in millions) 2000-2010**

	2010	2008	2006	2004	2002	2000
Aerobic Exercising	38.5	36.2	33.7	29.5	29.0	28.6
Backpack/Wilderness Camp	11.1	13.0	13.3	15.3	14.8	15.4
Basketball	12.5	15.2	14.6	15.9	15.6	15.6
Bicycle Riding	26.9	29.7	26.7	27.8	28.9	27.1
Billiards/Pool	39.8	44.7	35.6	40.3	39.7	43.1
Boating, Motor/Power	20.0	27.8	29.3	22.8	26.6	24.2
Bowling	39.0	49.5	44.8	43.8	42.4	43.1
Camping	44.7	49.4	48.6	55.3	55.4	49.9
Canoeing	NA	10.3	7.1	7.5	7.6	6.2
Cheerleading	NA	2.9	3.8	3.8	NA	NA
Exercise Walking	95.8	96.6	87.5	84.7	82.2	86.3
Exercising with Equipment	55.3	63.0	52.4	52.2	46.6	44.8
Fishing	33.8	42.2	40.6	41.2	44.2	49.3
Football (tackle)	9.3	10.5	11.9	8.6	7.8	7.5
Golf	21.9	25.6	24.4	24.5	27.1	26.4
Hiking	37.7	38.0	31.0	28.3	27.2	24.3
Hockey (ice)	3.3	1.9	2.6	2.4	2.1	1.9
Hunting w/Bow & Arrow	5.2	6.2	5.9	5.8	4.6	4.7
Hunting with Firearms	16.3	18.8	17.8	17.7	19.5	19.1
In-Line Roller Skating	7.4	9.3	10.5	11.7	18.8	21.8
Mountain Biking (off road)	7.2	10.2	8.5	8.0	7.8	7.1
Muzzleloading	3.1	3.4	3.7	3.8	3.6	2.9
Paintball Games	6.1	6.7	8.0	9.4	6.9	5.3
Racquetball	NA	NA	4.0	NA	NA	3.2
Running/Jogging	35.5	35.9	28.8	26.7	24.7	22.8
Scooter Riding	7.4	10.1	9.5	12.9	13.4	11.6
Skateboarding	7.7	9.8	9.7	10.3	9.7	9.1
Skiing (alpine)	7.4	6.5	6.4	6.3	7.4	7.4
Snowboarding	6.1	5.9	5.2	6.6	5.6	4.3
Soccer	13.5	15.5	14.0	13.3	13.7	12.9
Softball	10.8	12.8	12.4	12.5	13.6	14.0
Swimming	51.9	63.5	56.5	53.4	53.1	60.7
Target Shooting	19.8	20.3	17.1	19.2	18.9	14.8
Target Shooting - Airgun	5.3	5.0	5.6	5.1	4.1	3.0
Tennis	12.3	12.6	10.4	9.6	11.0	10.0
Volleyball	10.6	12.2	11.1	11.8	11.5	12.3
Water Skiing	5.2	5.6	3.6	5.3	6.9	5.9
Weight Lifting	31.5	37.5	32.9	26.2	25.1	24.8
Workout at Club	36.3	39.3	37.0	31.8	28.9	24.1
Wrestling	2.9	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

Source: NSGA 2011

### **Youth Sports**

Specific offerings for kid's fitness are slowly increasing in health and fitness facilities. Facilities are offering more youth-specific exercise equipment. Individualized youth sports training opportunities are becoming more popular as well. For youth ages seven to 11, bowling, bicycle riding, and fishing had the highest number of participants in 2010; however ice hockey, mountain biking, and tennis saw the highest percent of increase of the sports in the survey in 2010. Important to note of the six mentioned sports above, ice hockey is the only team sport. In-line skating experienced the largest percentage decrease in participation followed by scooter riding and fishing.

Another noteworthy trend is the increase in 'pick-up' play in team sports. In recent years, the Sporting Goods Manufacturers Association (SGMA) noticed that participation in team sports has been driven by organized/sanctioned play. However, in 2008, there were seven team sports where 'casual/pick-up' play exceeded organized/sanctioned play. Those sports were basketball, ice hockey, field hockey, touch football, lacrosse, grass volleyball, and beach volleyball. It is believed that this is the result of athletes and their families feeling the pinch of the economy. Many people are choosing the less expensive ways to play sports and stay active.

### **Synthetic Turf – Alternative Field Surfaces**

Often the demand for use of athletic fields exceeds the reasonable and suggested optimum hours available to adequately operate and maintain these natural turf fields; therefore, alternatives should be evaluated. Two potential alternatives could be the use of synthetic turf or skinned fields:

- Synthetic turf is likely to be the most readily accepted option. The initial cost and long-term maintenance should be studied and compared to natural turf to determine its cost effectiveness. While synthetic turf does not require mowing, it does require vacuuming and/or brushing and a little watering. Vandalism to the fields is also a consideration unless the fields are fenced and protected during non-use hours. The use of synthetic surfacing would extend the use periods for each field and would not be affected by lack of water.
- The use of skinned or dirt surfaces for athletic fields are not uncommon in Europe and South America, but acceptance in many U.S. communities may be met with some resistance. The development of skinned fields would be affected by wet conditions caused by rain or snow and would require dragging or rolling to remove ruts. Wind erosion would also be a factor that needs to be considered for dirt fields.

Typically, the use of synthetic or skinned surfaces do not adapt well into an established park setting. Therefore, these alternatives could be best adapted in a complex arrangement or at remote sites that would not disrupt the expected park use. The use of alternative type surfaces may be necessary in some areas and in some quantity to offset the growing demand for athletic fields with the limited space to build new ones.

*Note: Synthetic Turf – Installation costs for synthetic turf fields can run 60% higher compared to natural turf fields, but they typically cost less than half the cost of natural turf to maintain annually. Synthetic turf can be used continually and therefore increase revenues. Installing one or more synthetic turf multi-purpose fields may be a consideration.*

There are conflicting reports as to the safety of synthetic field surfaces. These factors should be considered when evaluating retrofitting or the new installation of field surfaces.

### **Baby Boomer/Older Adult Trends – Planning for the Demographic Shift**

Baby Boomers—those born between 1946 and 1964, as stated in *Leisure Programming for Baby Boomers*. They are a generation that consists of nearly 76 million Americans. Beginning in 2011, this influential population will begin their transition out of the workforce. As baby boomers enter retirement, they will be looking for opportunities in fitness, sports, outdoors, arts and cultural events, and other activities that suit their lifestyles. With their varied life experiences, values, and expectations, baby boomers are predicted to redefine the meaning of recreation and leisure programming for mature adults.

In the leisure profession, this generations' devotion to exercise and fitness is an example of their influence on society. When boomers entered elementary school, President John Kennedy initiated the President's Council on Physical Fitness; physical education and recreation became a key component of public education. As boomers matured and moved into the workplace, they took their desire for exercise and fitness with them. Now as the oldest boomers' are nearing 60, park and recreation professionals are faced with new approaches to provide both passive and active programming for older adults. Jeffrey Ziegler, a past president of the Arizona Parks and Recreation Association identified "Boomer Basics" in his article, *"Recreating retirement: how will baby boomers reshape leisure in their 60s?"*

#### **Boomer Basics:**

- Boomers are known to work hard, play hard and spend hard.
- They have always been fixated with all things youthful. Boomers typically respond that they feel 10 years younger than their chronological age.
- Swimming pools have become less of a social setting and much more of an extension of boomers' health and wellness program.
- Because boomers have, in general, a high education level, they'll likely continue to pursue education as adults and into retirement.

The Town of Cary's demographic profile indicates that 26.3% of the current population is between 45 and 64 years of age.

Boomers will look to park and recreation professionals to give them the skills needed to enjoy many life-long hobbies and sports. When programming for this age group, a customized experience to cater to their need for self-fulfillment, healthy pleasure, nostalgic youthfulness, and individual escapes will be important. Recreation trends will shift from games and activities that boomers associate with senior citizens. Ziegler suggests activities such as bingo, bridge and shuffleboard will likely be avoided because boomers relate these activities to being old.

Boomers will reinvent what being a 65-year-old means. Parks and recreation agencies that don't plan for boomers carrying on in retirement with the same pace they've long lived at will be left behind. Things to consider when planning for the demographic shift:

- Boomer characteristics
- What drives Boomers?

- Marketing to Boomers
- Arts and Entertainment
- Passive and Active Fitness Trends
- Outdoor Recreation/Adventure Programs
- Travel Programs

## **Facilities – National Trends**

According to Recreation Management Magazine's "2011 State of the Industry Report," national trends show an increased user-base of recreation facilities. To meet that growing need, a majority of the 2011 State of the Industry Survey respondents (60.3%) reported that they have plans to build new facilities or make additions or renovations to their existing facilities over the next three years. Nearly a quarter (24.2%) of respondents said they have plans to build new facilities, and just over a quarter (25.9%) said they plan to add to their existing facilities. Another 43.6 percent are planning renovations.

Also according to the Report, parks and recreation respondents said the average amount planned for construction for parks fell by 12.7 percent from an average of \$3,907,000 in last year's survey to \$3,411,000 this year. There was very little change in the types of features and amenities included in the facilities of the survey respondents from last year to this year. The most commonly found features include locker rooms (57.5% of respondents have locker rooms), classrooms and meeting rooms (57.4%), bleachers and seating (56.8 percent), outdoor sports courts for basketball, tennis, etc. (54.1%) and concession areas (53.9%).

### ***Indoor Recreation Facilities***

The current national trend is toward "one-stop" indoor recreation facilities to serve all ages. Large, multi-purpose regional centers help increase cost recovery, promote retention, and encourage cross-use. Agencies across the U.S. are increasing revenue production and cost recovery. Multi-use facilities versus specialized space is a trend, offering programming opportunities as well as free-play opportunities. "One stop" facilities attract young families, teens, and adults of all ages.

Amenities and specialty parks that are still considered "alternative" but increasing in popularity include the following:

- Climbing walls
- Cultural art facilities
- Green design techniques and certifications such as Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED). A recent Building Commissioners Association (BCA) survey indicated that 52 percent of the recreation industry survey respondents indicated they were willing to pay more for green design knowing that it would significantly reduce or eliminate the negative impact of buildings on the environment and occupants.
- Two of the emerging specialty parks include skate parks and adult fitness parks. The Sporting Goods Manufacturers Association estimates there are about 1,000 skateboard parks in the United States.

Researchers have long touted the benefits of outdoor exercise. According to a study published in the *Journal of Environmental Science and Technology* by the University of Essex in the United Kingdom,

*“as little as five minutes of green exercise improves both mood and self esteem.”* A new trend emerging in parks and recreation aims to enable people to reap these benefits by working out on outdoor fitness equipment.

This trend got started in China as they prepared to host the 2008 Summer Olympics. Their aim was to promote a society that promoted physical fitness. The United States is catching up on this trend, as park and recreation departments have begun installing “outdoor gyms.” According to John Drew from ExerSkys, *“The equipment is designed to use resistance of the body and weight.”* Equipment that can be found in these outdoor gyms is comparable to what would be found in an indoor workout facility, such as leg and chest presses, elliptical trainers, pull down trainers, etc.

Outdoor fitness equipment provides a new opportunity for park and recreation departments to increase the health of their communities, while offering them the opportunity to exercise outdoors. Such equipment can increase the usage of parks, trails, and other outdoor amenities while helping to fight the obesity epidemic and increase the community’s interaction with nature.

### **Fitness and Health National Trends**

There have been many changes in fitness programs in the last ten years. What clients wanted in 2000 is not necessarily what they want today. Fitness programs that have increased in popularity since 2000 include outdoor exercise, boot camp, personal training, post-rehabilitation, kids-specific fitness, and sport-specific training. Declining programs since 2000 include dance, health fairs, sports clinics, aerobics, stress-management classes, and weight-management classes. (*IDEA Health and Fitness Association*)

The American College of Sports Medicine’s (ACSM’s) Health and Fitness Journal conducted a survey to determine trends that would help create a standard for health and fitness programming. **Table 3** shows survey results that focus on trends in the commercial, corporate, clinical, and community health and fitness industry. The Worldwide Survey indicates the following shift in fitness trends between 2009 and 2010.

**Table 3: Worldwide Fitness Trends for 2009 and for 2010**

2009	2010
1. Educated and experienced fitness professionals	1. Educated and experienced fitness professionals
2. Children and obesity	2. Strength training
3. Personal training	3. Children and obesity
4. Strength training	4. Personal training
5. Core training	5. Core training
6. Special fitness programs for older adults	6. Special fitness programs for older adults
7. Pilates	7. Functional fitness
8. Stability ball	8. Sport specific training
9. Sport-specific training	9. Pilates
10. Balance training	10. Group personal training

Source: American College of Sport Medicine

### ***Health and Obesity Trends***

The United Health Foundation has ranked North Carolina 35th in its 2010 *State Health Rankings*, up two ranks from 2009.

The State's biggest strengths include:

- Low prevalence of binge drinking
- Low occupational fatalities rate
- High immunization coverage

Some of the challenges the State faces include:

- Low high school graduation rate
- High percentage of children in poverty
- High infant mortality rate

### ***Economic Effects***

Inactivity and obesity in the United States cost the country hundreds of billions of dollars annually. Some local governments are now accepting the role of providing preventative health care through park and recreation services. The following are facts from the International City/County Management Association.

- 89 percent believe P&R departments should take the lead in developing communities conducive to active living.
- Nearly 84 percent supported recreation programs that encourage active living in their community.
- 45 percent believe the highest priority is a cohesive systems of parks and trails and accessible neighborhood parks.

As obesity in the United States continues to be a topic of interest for legislators and our government, there continues to be research suggesting that activity levels are stagnant among all age groups. The following are statistics that support this concern.

- Only 25 percent of adults and 27 percent of youth (grades 9-12) engage in recommended levels of physical activity.
- 59 percent of American adults are sedentary.
- Children born now have a lower life expectancy than their parents.
- 4.5 - 8 hours daily (30-56 hours per week) – children are wired.
- Prevalence of overweight children:
  - ages 2–5 years (12.4%)
  - ages 6–11 years (17%)
  - aged 12–19 years (17.6%)

### ***Festivals and Events***

#### ***Economic Impact of Festivals***

In the context of urban development, from the early 1980's there has been a process that can be characterized as 'festivalization', which has been linked to the economic restructuring of towns and cities, and the drive to develop communities as large-scale platforms for the creation and consumption of 'cultural experience'. The Town of Cary, however, finds itself with additional options

with its regional athletic complexes for sporting event opportunities as well as events based out of the amphitheaters in town. All of which can benefit the community through tourism.

Research indicates the success rate for festivals tends to be evaluated on the basis of profit (sales), prestige (media profile), size (numbers of events), and numbers of visitors. Research from the European Festival Research Project (EFRP) indicates there is evidence of local and city government supporting and even instigating and managing particular festivals themselves to achieve local or regional economic objectives (sales, jobs, tourists). There are also a growing number of smaller more local community-based festivals and events in communities, most often supported by local councils, that have become prime economic-drivers.

The Town of Cary ranked festivals and special events as the top program to expand in the 2011 Community Survey.

There is much to be learned about trends and expectations each year in order to make the most of each event. FestivalsandFairs.Net, an online festival resource, listed the following 2011 trends:

- Economy – In 2011, people are expected to be more comfortable spending their money at craft shows, fairs, and festivals.
- Holidays – For 2011, the trends are pointing toward an emphasis on holidays and specific events.
- Arts – A variety of art offerings such as music, cultural arts, scrapbooking, jewelry, digital art, etc. are trends to watch.

### **General Programming Trends – National Trends**

One of the most common concerns in the recreation industry is creating innovative programming to draw participants into facilities and services. Once in, participants recognize the benefits are numerous. According to Recreation Management Magazine's, June 2011 "State of the Industry Report," the most popular programs, offered by more than half of the survey respondents, include holiday events and other special events (64.3%), fitness programs (61.1%), educational programs (60.4%), day camps and summer camps (56.3%); mind-body/balance programs such as yoga, tai chi, Pilates and martial arts (51.4%); and youth sports teams (50.7%). Sports training was not in the top ten, however golf instruction and tennis lessons are a fast paced trend.

The report also suggested slightly less than a third (31.9%) of respondents indicated that they are planning to add additional programs at their facilities over the next three years. The most common types of programming they are planning to add include:

- Fitness programs (planned by 26.8% of respondents planning to add programs)
- Educational programs (25%)
- Teen programming (24%)
- Mind-body/balance programs (22.5%)
- Active older adults (20.9%)
- Day camps and summer camps (20.8%)
- Environmental education (20.3%)
- Individual sports activities (18.9%)

- Holiday events and other special events (18.6%)
- Sports tournaments or races (18%)

### ***Community Therapeutic Recreation***

Nationally, therapeutic recreation as a service is experiencing many struggles and challenges. The changing face of health care is having a dramatic effect on therapeutic recreation (TR) services in many rehabilitation settings and specifically in physical rehabilitation settings, thus affecting community recreation programs. In the past, clinical facilities provided programs such as wheelchair basketball, but due to the reduction of expenditures, facilities no longer provide such services and expect communities to address these needs. These shifts put more pressure on community therapeutic recreation programs to respond to gaps in service.

Community therapeutic recreation programs address the needs of all people with disabilities. Disabilities may include autism, developmental, physical, learning, visual impairments, hearing impairments, mental health and more. These programs serve children, youth, and adults of all ages.

The types of programs offered by a community therapeutic recreation program may include **specialized, inclusive, and unified programs**. **Specialized recreation** programs generally serve the needs specifically for someone with a disability. A “Learn to Swim” program for children with autism or an exercise program for adults with arthritis are just two examples of specialized programs. An **inclusive program** is one in which a person with a disability chooses to participate in a regular recreation program with a reasonable accommodation, alongside typical peers who do not have a disability. A third type of program is a **unified program**. This program is for individuals with and without disabilities who participate together as a “buddy”, or are paired or matched -- able-body with disabled. Many Special Olympic programs are offered as unified programs.

There is a renewed focus on serving people with psychiatric disabilities. In 2004, The National Council on Disability (NCD) issued a comprehensive report, *Livable Communities for Adults with Disabilities*. This report identified six elements for improving the quality of life for all citizens, including children, youth and adults with disabilities. The six elements are:

1. Provides affordable, appropriate, accessible housing
2. Ensures accessible, affordable, reliable, safe transportation
3. Adjusts the physical environment for inclusiveness and accessibility
4. Provides work, volunteer, and education opportunities
5. Ensures access to key health and support services
6. Encourages participation in civic, cultural, social, and recreational activities

The right to enjoy services and programs offered to all members by both public and private entities is critical. Unlike persons with physical disabilities, people with psychiatric disabilities face attitudinal barriers of those around them. Attitudinal barriers are exemplified by policies, programs, and beliefs about psychiatric disabilities. Fortunately, the mental health system is moving toward a model based on recovery. This model believes that everyone with a mental health diagnosis is able and capable of living independently within the community with supports.

The current economic conditions have also put constraints on community recreation programs. Staff are cutting budgets, yet also trying to determine how to provide recreation services to people with disabilities.

### *The Role of the ADA*

How a community interprets and implements the guidelines of the ADA regarding parks and recreation programs and services for children, youth, and adults with disabilities ultimately depends upon the philosophy of staff and how accepting they are of people with disabilities. Some organizations provide a basic level of service as per the law and other communities embrace the notion of accessibility and choose to exceed what is expected.

*“People with disabilities are allowed equal access to all services provided by local, state, and federal governments, including recreational services. The ADA allows full and equal access by persons with disabilities to any place of public accommodation, governmental or private.”*

*July 26, 1990, the United States officially recognized the rights of people with disabilities by enacting the American’s with Disabilities Act (ADA).*

In 2010, the U.S. Department of Justice issued an amended regulation implementing the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA 2010 Standards). For the first time in its history, recreation environment design elements have been included. The new requirements for design and construction become effective on March 15, 2012 and a self-evaluation access audit must be in place at this time. All units of state and local government are required to comply with the new regulations. Standards apply to all alternations or added sites.

### ***Multiculturalism***

#### *National Trends*

Recent articles in parks and recreation have addressed multicultural and diversity issues in the leisure service profession. More than ever recreation professionals will be expected to work with, and have significant knowledge and understanding of, individuals from many cultural, racial and ethnic backgrounds.

Today the marketplace for consumers has dramatically evolved in the United States from a large Anglo demographic, to the reality that the United States has shifted to a large minority consumer base known as “new majority”.

The San Jose Group, a consortium of marketing communications companies specializing in reaching Hispanic and non-Hispanic markets of the United States suggests that the current United State’s multicultural population or the “new majority” is 107.6 million, which translates to be about 35.1 percent of the country’s total population. The United State’s multicultural population could essentially be the 12th largest country in the world.

Park and recreation trends in marketing and providing leisure services continue to emerge and should be taken into consideration in all planning efforts.

## Natural Environments and Open Space

### *Economic & Health Benefits of Parks*

There are numerous economic and health benefits of parks, including the following:

- Trails, parks, and playgrounds are among the five most important community amenities considered when selecting a home, according to a 2002 survey of recent homebuyers conducted by the National Association of Home Builders and the National Association of Realtors.
- Research from the University of Illinois shows that trees, parks, and green spaces have a profound impact on people's health and mental outlook. US Forest Service research indicates that when the economic benefits produced by trees are assessed, total value can be two to six times the cost for tree planting and care.
- Fifty percent of Americans regard outdoor activities as their main source of exercise. "There's a direct link between a lack of exposure to nature and higher rates of attention-deficit disorder, obesity, and depression." In essence, parks and recreation agencies can and are becoming the "preferred provider" for offering this preventative healthcare." – Fran P. Mainella, former director of the National Park Service and Instructor at Clemson University.

The Trust for Public Land has published a report titled: "The Benefits of Parks: Why America Needs More City Parks and Open Space." The report makes the following observations about the health, economic, environmental, and social benefits of parks and open space:

- Physical activity makes people healthier.
- Physical activity increases with access to parks.
- Contact with the natural world improves physical and physiological health.
- Residential and commercial property values increase.
- Value is added to community and economic development sustainability.
- Benefits of tourism are enhanced.
- Trees are effective in improving air quality and act as natural air conditioners.
- Trees assist with storm water control and erosion.
- Crime and juvenile delinquency are reduced.
- Recreational opportunities for all ages are provided.
- Stable neighborhoods and strong communities are created.

According to the 2011 Master Plan Community Survey nature preserves/natural areas ranked as the 3<sup>rd</sup> top outdoor amenity to add, expand, or improve.

### **Nature Programming**

In April 2007, the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) sent out a survey to member agencies in order to learn more about the programs and facilities that public park and recreation agencies provide to connect children and their families with nature. A summary of the results follow:

- Sixty-eight percent of public park and recreation agencies offer nature-based programming and 61 percent have nature-based facilities.
- The most common programs include nature hikes, nature-oriented arts and crafts, fishing-related events, and nature-based education in cooperation with local schools.
- When asked to describe the elements that directly contribute to their most successful programs, agencies listed staff training as most important followed by program content and number of staff/staff training.
- When asked what resources would be needed most to expand programming, additional staff was most important followed by funding.
- Of the agencies that do not currently offer nature-based programming, 90 percent indicated that they want to in the future. Additional staff and funding were again the most important resources these agencies would need going forward.
- The most common facilities include: nature parks/preserves, self-guided nature trails, outdoor classrooms, and nature centers.
- When asked to describe the elements that directly contribute to their most successful facilities, agencies listed funding as most important followed by presence of wildlife and community support.

Figures from the Association for Interpretative Naturalists, a national group of nature professionals, demonstrate nature-based programs are on the rise. Research indicates that about 20,000 paid interpreters are working nationally, along with an army of more than 500,000 unpaid volunteers staffing nature programs at parks, zoos and museums. The growth of these programs is thought to come from replacing grandparents as the teacher of these outdoor programs. It is also speculated that a return to natural roots and renewed interest in life's basic elements was spurred as a response to September 11, 2000.

### ***Outdoor Recreation***

Local parks and recreation departments are a common place for residents to look when getting outside for leisure activities. It is often the mission of parks departments as well as private or non-profits to get more people outdoors.

The Outdoor Foundation released the 2010 Participation in Outdoor Recreation report. The report highlights growth in nature-based outdoor activities and continued decline in youth outdoor participation. The Foundation states that the trends show the beginning of adjustments in American lifestyles brought about by a challenging economy, shifting demographics, and changing times. Their research shows the following key findings:

#### *Participation in Outdoor Recreation*

- **Return to Nature:** Nearly 50 percent of Americans ages six and older participated in outdoor recreation in 2009. That's a slight increase from 2008 and equates to a total of 137.8 million Americans.
- **Plans for the Future:** While less than a quarter of all participants reported getting outside two times a week or more in 2009, 82 percent said that they plan to spend more time participating in outdoor activities in 2010.
- **The Economy:** 42 percent of outdoor participants said the economy impacted how often they participated in outdoor activities in 2009.

- **Fitness and Health Benefits:** Outdoor participants rate their fitness level at 6.4 on a 10-point scale versus 4.9 for non-participants. In terms of health, outdoor participants rate their health level at 7.5 versus 6.6 for non-participants.
- **Preservation of Land:** The majority of Americans agree that preserving undeveloped land for outdoor recreation is important. A large percentage of outdoor participants also believe that developing local parks and hiking and walking trails is important and that there should be more outdoor education and activities during the school day.

#### *Youth Participation*

- **More Indoor Youth:** An overall downward slide in outdoor recreation among 6 to 12 year olds was realized.
- **The Influence of Family:** Most youth are introduced to outdoor activities by parents, friends, family, and relatives.
- **Physical education in schools:** The importance can't be understated. Among adults ages 18 and older who are current outdoor participants, 83 percent say they had PE in school between the ages of 6 and 12. That compares with just 70 percent of non-outdoor participants.

#### **Recreation and Park Administration National Trends**

Municipal parks and recreation structures and delivery systems have changed, and more alternative methods of delivering services are emerging. Certain services are being contracted out and cooperative agreements with non-profit groups and other public institutions are being developed. Newer partners include the health system, social services, justice system, education, the corporate sector, and community service agencies. These partnerships reflect both a broader interpretation of the mandate of parks and recreation agencies and the increased willingness of other sectors to work together to address community issues. The relationship with health agencies is vital in promoting wellness. The traditional relationship with education and the sharing of facilities through joint-use agreements is evolving into cooperative planning and programming aimed at addressing youth inactivity levels and community needs.

Listed below are additional administrative national trends:

- Level of subsidy for programs is lessening and more "enterprise" activities are being developed, thereby allowing subsidy to be used where deemed appropriate.
- Information technology allows for better tracking and reporting.
- Pricing is often determined by peak, off-peak, and off-season rates.
- More agencies are partnering with private, public, and non-profit groups.

#### **Marketing**

Niche marketing trends have experienced change more frequently than ever before as technology affects the way the public receives information. Web 2.0 tools and now Web 3.0 tools are a trend for agencies to use as a means of marketing programs and services. Popular social marketing electronic tools include:

- Facebook
- Whirl
- Twitter

- You Tube
- Flickr
- LinkedIn

Mobile marketing is a trend of the future. Young adults engage in mobile data applications at much higher rates than adults in age brackets 30 and older. Usage rates of mobile applications demonstrate chronologically across four major age cohorts, that millennials tend to get information more frequently using mobile devices such as smart phones. For example, 95 percent of 18-to-29-year-old cell phone owners send and receive text messages, compared to 82 percent of 30-to-49-year-olds, 57 percent of 50-to-64-year-olds, and 19 percent of 65 and older. It is also a fact that minority Americans lead the way when it comes to mobile access. Nearly two-thirds of African-Americans (64%) and Latinos (63%) are wireless internet users, and minority Americans are significantly more likely to own a cell phone than are their white counterparts (87% of blacks and Hispanics own a cell phone, compared with 80% of whites).

### **Trend Analysis Summary**

The following are key behavioral trends that impact the Town of Cary. These will be important to evaluate for future planning efforts.

- There is an increasing trend towards indoor leisure and therapeutic pools. Additional amenities like “spray pads” are becoming increasingly popular as well.
- Some of the top ten athletic activities ranked by total participation included: exercise walking, exercising with equipment, camping, swimming, bowling, and working out at athletic clubs.
- The most common programs offered in communities are holiday events and other special events, fitness programs, educational programs, day camps and summer camps; mind-body/balance programs such as yoga, tai chi, Pilates and martial arts; and youth sports teams.
- Festivals and events were ranked at the top of the 2011 Community Survey as programs to add in Cary. Festivals and special events as a platform for local economic development is a trend.
- Fitness, educational, teen, mind/body balance, and active adults were listed at the top of the ten programs parks and recreation departments are planning to add within the next three years.
- Trails, parks, and playgrounds are among the five most important community amenities considered when selecting a home.
- A national trend in the delivery of parks and recreation systems reflects more partnerships and contractual agreements to support specialized services.
- The majority of Americans agree that preserving undeveloped land for outdoor recreation is important. A large percentage of outdoor participants also believe that developing local parks and hiking and walking trails is important and that there should be more outdoor education and activities during the school day.
- Web-based niche marketing tools are more popular for agencies to use as a means of marketing programs and services.
- Multicultural park and recreation trends in marketing and providing leisure services continue to emerge and should be taken into consideration in all planning efforts.
- Community therapeutic recreation programs and inclusion services are considered an important trend when planning for the future.

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