

Park and Recreation Influencing Trends

The following information highlights relevant regional, and national outdoor recreation trends from various sources that may influence the City of Meridian’s recreation planning for the next several years.

Demographic Trends in Recreation

The highest ranking age cohort in Meridian in 2014 was 35 – 44 (15% of the population) followed by the 45 - 54 and 25 – 34 age cohorts (12.8% and 12.5% of the population, respectively). Planning for the next ten years suggests a growing demand for programs and services for baby boomers and senior adults (the 55 – 74 age range is predicted to grow by 2.9% by 2019).

Adult – The Millennial Generation

The 25-34 age range represents potential adult program participants. Many in this age group are beginning long-term relationships and establishing families.

The Millennial Generation, generally considered to represent those born between about 1980 and 1999 (ages 16 – 35). Twenty-five percent of the population in Meridian is included within the Millennial Generation.

In their book, Millennials Rising, the Next Great Generation, authors William Strauss and Neil Howe identify seven Millennials characteristics¹. These characteristics were discussed in a 2010 California State Parks Bulletin article entitled “Here come the ‘Millennials’: What You Need to Know to Connect with this New Generation”:

1. **Special:** Used to receiving rewards just for participating, Millennials are raised to feel special.
2. **Sheltered:** Millennials lead structured lives filled with rules and regulations. Less accustomed to unstructured play than previous generations and apprehensive of the outdoors, they spend most of their time indoors, leaving home primarily to socialize with friends and families.
3. **Team Oriented:** This group has a “powerful instinct for community” and places a “High value on teamwork and belonging”.
4. **Confident (and technologically savvy):** Upbeat and with a can-do attitude, this generation is more “optimistic and tech-savvy than their elders”.
5. **Pressured:** Millennials feel “pressured to achieve and pressured to behave”. They have been “pushed to study hard and avoid personal risk”.
6. **Achieving:** This generation is expected to do great things, and they may be the next “great” generation.
7. **Conventional (and diverse):** Millennials are respectful of authority and civic minded. Respectful of cultural differences because they are ethnically diverse, they also value good conduct and tend to have a “standardized appearance”.

The California State Parks article provides a broad range of ideas for engaging Millennials in parks and recreation².

Adult – The Baby Boomers

Baby boomers are defined as individuals born between 1946 and 1964, as stated in Leisure Programming for Baby Boomers³. They are a generation that consists of nearly 76 million Americans. In 2011, this influential population began 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. Emily Sheffield, Professor of Recreation and Parks Management at the California State University, at Chico, in the NPRA July 2012 *Parks and Recreation* magazine article titled, “Five Trends Shaping Tomorrow Today,” indicated that Baby Boomers are driving the aging of America with boomers and seniors over 65 composing about 39 percent of the nation’s population⁴.

In the leisure profession, this generation’s devotion to exercise and fitness is an example of its 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 65, park and recreation professionals are faced with new approaches to provide both passive and active programming for older adults. Boomers are second only to Gen Y/Millennials in participation in fitness and outdoor sports.⁵

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?”*⁶ Highlights are summarized below.

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. Their nostalgic mindset keeps boomers returning to the sights and sounds of their 1960s youth culture. 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.

In 2010, Baby Boomers represented 17 percent of the population in Meridian (those approximately 51 – 64 years of age).

Boomers will look to park and recreation professionals to give them opportunities to enjoy many life-long hobbies and sports. When programming for this age group, a customized experience to cater to the 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, as Ziegler suggests that 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 hectic pace they’ve lived during their

years in employment 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

Youth - Planning for the Demographic Shift

Emilyn Sheffield also identified as one of the five trends shaping tomorrow today that the proportion of youth is smaller than in the past, but still essential to our future. As of the 2010 Census, the age group under age 18 forms about a quarter of the U.S. population, and this percentage is at an all-time low. Nearly half of this population group is ethnically diverse and 25% is Hispanic.

Multiculturalism

Our country is becoming increasingly racially and ethnically diverse. In May 2012, the U.S. Census Bureau announced that non-white babies now account for the majority of births in the United States. "This is an important tipping point," said William H. Frey⁷, the senior demographer at the Brookings Institution, describing the shift as a "transformation from a mostly white baby boomer culture to the more globalized multi-ethnic country that we are becoming." Cultural and ethnic diversity adds a unique flavor to communities expressed through distinct neighborhoods, multicultural learning environments, restaurants, places of worship, museums, and nightlife.⁸

As the recreation field continues to function within a more diverse society, race and ethnicity will become increasingly important in every aspect of the 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.

While the City of Meridian has an overwhelmingly Caucasian population (91.3 percent in 2014), Meridian's demographic profile indicates that 2 percent of the population is Asian and .8 percent, African American. Additionally, 7.5 percent of the population is of Hispanic origin (irrespective of race).

- **Outdoor Participation varies by Ethnicity:** Participation in outdoor activities is higher among Caucasians than any other ethnicity and lowest among African Americans in nearly all age groups.
- **Lack of interest reason for not participating:** When asked who they did not participate in outdoor activities more often, the number one reason given by people of all ethnicities and races was because they were not interested.
- **Most popular outdoor activities:** Biking, running, fishing, and camping were the most popular outdoor activities for all Americans, with each ethnic/racial group participating in each in varying degrees.

Recreational Preferences among Ethnic/Racial Groups (Self-Identifying):

Nationwide participation in outdoor sports in 2013 was highest among Caucasians in all age groups and lowest among African-Americans, according to the 2014 Outdoor Recreation Participation Report⁹. The biggest difference in participation rates was between Caucasian and African American adolescents, with 65 percent of Caucasians ages 13 – 17 participating and only 42 percent of African Americans in this age range participating.

African-Americans

African American youth ages 6 – 12 (52% participation), are the only age group in this demographic to participate in outdoor recreation at a rate of more than 50 percent. By comparison, Caucasians in four of the five age groupings participated in outdoor sports at rates of 60 percent or more, with only those aged 45+ (40% participation) participating at under 50 percent. According to the 2014 Outdoor Recreation Participation Report, the most popular outdoor activities among African-Americans are: running/jogging and trail running (18%); fishing (freshwater, saltwater and fly) (11%); road and mountain biking and BMX (11%); birdwatching/wildlife viewing (4%); and, camping (car, backyard, backpacking and RV) (4%).

Asian-Americans

Research about outdoor recreation among Asian-Americans in the San Francisco Bay Area (Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Filipino)¹⁰ found significant differences among the four groups concerning the degree of linguistic acculturation (preferred language spoken in various communication media). The research suggests that communications related to recreation and natural resource management should appear in ethnic media, but the results also suggest that Asian Americans should not be viewed as homogeneous with regard to recreation related issues. Another study¹¹ found that technology use for finding outdoor recreation opportunities is highest among Asian/Pacific Islander populations. Over 60 percent of these populations use stationary or mobile technology in making decisions regarding outdoor recreation.

According to the 2014 Outdoor Recreation Participation Report, the most popular outdoor activities among Asian/Pacific Islanders are: running/jogging and trail running (24%); hiking (15%); road and mountain biking and BMX (14%); camping (car, backyard, backpacking, and RV) (11%); and, fishing (freshwater, saltwater and fly) (10%).

Caucasians

According to the 2014 Outdoor Recreation Participation Report, the most popular outdoor activities among Caucasians are: running/ jogging and trail running (19%); fishing (freshwater, saltwater and fly) (18%); road and mountain biking and BMX (17%); camping (car, backyard, backpacking and RV) (16%); and, hiking (14%).

Hispanics

In the United States, the Hispanic population increased by 43 percent over the last decade, compared to five percent for the non-Hispanic population, and accounted for more than half of all the population growth. According to Emilyn Sheffield, Professor of Recreation and Parks Management at the California State University at Chico, the growing racial and ethnic diversity is particularly important to recreation and leisure service providers, as family and individual recreation patterns and preferences are strongly shaped by cultural influences.¹²

Participation in outdoor sports among those who identify as Hispanic is at 7% nationwide, according to the 2013 Outdoor Recreation Participation Report.¹³ Those who do get outdoors, however, participate more frequently than other outdoor participants, with an average of 43 outings per year. Hispanic youth (ages 6 – 17) are the most likely age group to participate in outdoor recreation, in the Hispanic demographic, followed closely by those in the 25-44 age range. The most popular outdoor activities among Hispanics are: running and jogging (22%); road and mountain biking and BMX (17%); fishing (freshwater, saltwater and fly) (14%); Camping (car, backyard and RV) (11%); and, hiking (9%).

Multiculturalism and Marketing

Today the marketplace for consumers has dramatically evolved in the United States from a largely 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 today’s multicultural population of the United States, or the “new majority,” is 107.6 million, which translates to about 35.1 percent of the country’s total population. The United States’ multicultural population alone could essentially be the 12th largest country in the world¹⁴. Parks and recreation trends in marketing leisure services continue to emerge and should be taken into consideration in all planning efforts, as different cultures respond differently to marketing techniques.

Facilities

According to *Recreation Management’s* “2014 State of the Industry Report,”¹⁵ national trends show an increased user-base of recreation facilities (private and public). Additionally, parks and recreation providers responding to the survey indicated an average age of 23.8 years for their community recreation facilities. To meet that growing need, a majority of the parks and recreation survey respondents (69 percent) reported that they have plans to build new facilities or make additions or renovations to their existing facilities over the next three years. Nearly one-third (32.5 percent) of parks respondents said they have plans to build new facilities, and 28.9 percent said they plan to add to their existing facilities. More than half (52.2) percent are planning renovations to existing 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 verses 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.

Also according to the 2014 *State of the Industry Report* (p. 56), “parks and recreation departments continue to see a slow recovery from the lowest points of the recent recession”. While 69 percent plan for construction for parks, the average amount planned for construction in the 2014 budgets saw a slight decrease of 4.5 percent from an average of \$3,973,000 in last year’s survey to an average of \$3,795,000 for 2014. 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 splash play areas, trails, dog parks, park structures (shelters and restroom buildings); playgrounds; disc golf courses, open spaces (gardens, natural areas), synthetic turf sports fields; and concession areas.

Aquatics/Water Recreation Trends

According to the National Sporting Goods Association (NSGA), swimming ranked third nationwide in terms of participation in 2012.¹⁶ Outdoor swimming pools are not typically heated and open year round. Swimming for fitness is the top aspirational activity for “inactives” in 6 of 8 age categories in the SFIA “2013 Sports, Fitness and Leisure Activities Topline Participation Report”, representing a significant opportunity to engage inactive populations. Nationally, there is an increasing trend towards indoor leisure and therapeutic pools. Additional indoor and outdoor amenities like “spray pads” are becoming increasingly popular as well. In some cities and counties spray pools are popular in the summer months and turn into ice rinks in the winter months.

The 2014 Outdoor Recreation Participation Topline Report provided nation-wide trends for various outdoor activities, including the following water recreation activities: board sailing/windsurfing, canoeing, fishing, kayaking, rafting, sailing, stand-up paddling, and wakeboarding (**Table 1**). Among water recreation activities, stand up paddling has had the largest increase in participation in the past three years (23.9% increase) followed by several varieties of the kayaking experience: kayak fishing (20% increase), recreational kayaking (11.1%) and whitewater kayaking (6.6% increase). Fly fishing participation is up while other fishing activities are down in the past three years. Sailing participation has increased somewhat over the past three years, while rafting participation is down.¹⁷

**Table 1: Water Recreation Participation by Activity (in thousands)
(6 years of age or older)**

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	3 Year Average Change
Boardsailing/Windsurfing	1,128	1,607	1,151	1,593	1,324	-2.4%
Canoeing	10,058	10,553	9,787	9,839	10,153	-1.2%
Fishing (Fly)	5,568	5,478	5,360	6,012	5,878	2.4%
Fishing (Freshwater/ Other)	40,961	38,860	39,071	39,135	37,796	-0.9%
Kayak Fishing	no data	1,044	1,201	1,409	1,798	20%
Kayaking (Recreational)	6,212	6,465	8,229	8,144	8,716	11.1%
Kayaking (White Water)	1,369	1,842	1,546	1,878	2,146	6.6%
Rafting	4,318	4,460	3,821	3,690	3,836	-4.6%
Sailing	4,342	3,869	3,725	3,958	3,915	-5%
Stand Up Paddling	no data	1,050	1,242	1,542	1,993	23.9%
Wakeboarding	3,577	3,645	3,389	3,348	3,316	-3.1%

Source: Outdoor Foundation 2014 (numbers in thousands).

Dog Parks

Dog parks continue to see high popularity and have remained among the top planned addition to parks and recreational facilities over the past three years. 2014 saw the addition of a new association dedicated to providing informational resources for starting and maintaining dog parks, the National Dog Park Association. Recreation Magazine¹⁸ suggests that dog parks can represent a relatively low-cost way to provide an oft-visited a popular community amenity. Dog parks can be as simple as a gated area, or more elaborate with “designed-for-dogs” amenities like water fountains, agility equipment, and pet wash stations, to name a few. According to Dog Fancy Magazine, an ideal dog park should include the following:

- One acre or more surrounded by a 4- to 6-foot fence
- Shade and water
- Adequate drainage
- Parking near the site
- A double gated entry
- Benches
- Pet-waste disposal stations with pickup bags and covered waste receptacles

Fitness Programming

There have been many changes in fitness programs in the last fifteen years. What clients wanted in 2000 is not necessarily what they want today. The American College of Sports Medicine’s (ACSM’s) *Health and Fitness Journal*¹⁹ has conducted an annual survey since 2007 to determine trends that would help create a standard for health and fitness programming. **Table 2** shows survey results that focus on trends in the commercial, corporate, clinical, and community health and fitness industry. Some trends first identified in 2007 have stayed near the top of the list year after year while others came and went in popularity. Zumba made a brief appearance on the top 10 in 2012 but has fallen off the list of top 20 in 2014. Body weight training appeared as a developing trend in 2014 and is projected to stay strong in 2015 as is high-intensity interval training. Yoga is regaining popularity after falling out of the top 20 in 2009 and staying out of the top 10 until 2014. Fitness programs for older adults will remain strong in 2014 and 2015.

Table 2: Top 10 Worldwide Fitness Trends for 2007 and Predicted Trends for 2015

2007	Trends for 2015
1.Children and obesity	1. Body weight training
2.Special fitness programs for older adults	2 High-intensity interval training
3.Educated and experienced fitness professionals	3. Educated and experienced fitness professionals
4. Functional fitness	4. Strength training
5. Core training	5 Personal training
6 Strength training	6. Exercise and weight loss
7. Personal training	7. Yoga
8. Mind/Body Exercise	8. Fitness programs for older adults
9 Exercise and weight loss	9 Functional fitness
10. Outcome measurements	10. Group personal training

Source: American College of Sport Medicine

General Programming

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 that the benefits are endless. According to *Recreation Management's* "2014 State of the Industry Report,"²⁰ the most common programs, offered by survey respondents, include holiday events and other special events (78.1%), youth sports teams (69.1%), day camps and summer camps (64.7%), adult sports teams (61.3%), arts and crafts (60.9%), educational programs (60.5%), sports tournaments and races (56.8%), programs for active older adults (55.2%), fitness programs (61.4%), and festivals and concerts (53.2).

The report also suggested more than three in 10 (35.7%) 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:

1. Programming for active older adults (up from No. 5 on the 2013 survey)
2. Fitness programs (up from No. 3)
3. Teen programming (down from No. 2)
4. Adult sports teams (did not appear in 2013)
5. Holiday events and other special events (up from No. 6)
6. Mind-body/balance programs – yoga, tai chi, Pilates or martial arts (up from No. 7)
7. Environmental education (down from No. 1)
8. Educational programs (up from No. 4)
9. Festivals and concerts (up from No. 10)
10. Sports tournaments or races (down from No. 8)

Older Adults and Senior Programming

The American Academy of Sports Medicine issues a yearly survey of the top 20 fitness trends²¹ It ranks senior fitness programs eighth among most popular fitness trends for 2015. Whether it's SilverSneakers, a freestyle low-impact cardio class, or water aerobics, more and more people are realizing the many benefits of staying active throughout life.

According to the National Sporting Goods Association, popular senior programming trends include hiking, birding, and swimming.

Economic Impact of Festivals and Events

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 success rate for festivals should not be evaluated simplistically solely on the basis of profit (sales), prestige (media profile), size (numbers of events). Research by the European Festival Research Project (EFRP)²² 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, often defined very narrowly (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 been spawned partly as a reaction to larger festivals that have become prime economic-drivers. These community-based festivals often will re-claim

cultural ground based on their social, educational and participative value. For more information on the values of festivals and events, see the CRC Sustainable Tourism research guide²³ on this topic.

In 2014, festivals grew in popularity as economic drivers and urban brand builders. Chad Kaydo describes the phenomenon in the January 2014 issues of *Governing Magazine*: “Municipal officials and entrepreneur see the power of cultural festivals, innovation-focused business conferences and the like as a way to spur short-term tourism while shaping an image of the host city as a cool, dynamic location where companies and citizens in modern, creative industries can thrive.”²⁴ Examples of successful festivals include:

- South by Southwest (SXSW) – this annual music, film, and digital conference and festival in Austin, Texas, is a leading example. Launched in 1987, the festival’s economic impact has grown steadily over recent years. In 2007, it netted \$95 million for Austin’s economy. In 2013, the event topped \$218 million.
- Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival in California – this two-week cultural event draws big-name bands, music fans, and marketers, attracting 80,000 people per day.
- First City Festival in Monterey, California – Private producer, Goldenvoice, launched this smaller music event in August 2013 with marketing support from the Monterey County Convention and Visitors Bureau, drawing on the city’s history as host of the Monterey Jazz Festival. Adding carnival rides and local art, furniture and clothing vendors to the live music performances, the event drew 11,000 attendees each of its two days.

Healthy Lifestyle Trends and Active Living

Active Transportation – Bicycling and Walking

Bicycle friendly cities have been emerging over the last ten years. Cycling has become a popular mode of transportation as people consider the rising cost of fuel, desire for better health, and concern for the environment. Some people also use cycling as a mode of transportation just for the fun of it.

The Alliance for Biking and Walking published *Bicycling and Walking in the United States 2014 Benchmark Report*,²⁵ updating its Benchmarking report from 2012. The report shows that increasing bicycling and walking are goals clearly in the public interest. Where bicycling and walking levels are higher, obesity, high blood pressure, and diabetes levels are lower.

Design of a community’s infrastructure is directly linked to physical activity – where environments are built with bicyclists and pedestrians in mind, more people bike and walk. Higher levels of bicycling and walking also coincide with increased bicycle and pedestrian safety and higher levels of physical activity. Increasing bicycling and walking make a big impact on improving public health and life expectancy. The following trends as well as health and economic indicators are pulled from the 2012 and 2014 Benchmarking Reports:

Public health trends related to bicycling and walking include:

- Quantified health benefits of active transportation can outweigh any risks associated with the activities by as much as 77 to 1, and add more years to our lives than are lost from inhaled air pollution and traffic injuries.
- Between 1966 and 2009, the number of children who bicycled or walked to school fell 75 percent, while the percentage of obese children rose 276 percent.

- Bicycling to work significantly reduces absenteeism due to illness. Regular bicyclists took 7.4 sick days per year, while non-bicyclists took 8.7 sick days per year.

The economic benefits of bicycling and walking include:

- Bicycling and walking projects create 8-12 jobs per \$1 million spent, compared to just 7 jobs created per \$1 million spent on highway projects.
- Cost benefit analyses show that up to \$11.80 in benefits can be gained for every \$1 invested in bicycling and walking.

National bicycling trends:

- There has been a gradual trend of increasing bicycling and walking to work since 2005.
- Infrastructure to support biking communities is becoming more commonly funded in communities.
- Bike share systems, making bicycles available to the public for low-cost, short-term use, have been sweeping the nation since 2010. Twenty of the most populous U.S. cities have a functional bike share system.

In November 2013, the Institute for Transportation & Development Policy published a Standard for Transportation Oriented Design, with accessible performance objectives and metrics, to help municipalities, developers and local residents design land use and built environment “to support, facilitate and prioritize not only the use of public transport, but the most basic modes of transport, walking and cycling.” The TOD Standard, along with its performance objectives and scoring metrics, can be found at www.itdp.org/documents/TOD_v2_FINAL.pdf.²⁶

National Healthy Lifestyle Trends

The population of the United States is becoming more diverse. As demographics are experiencing an age and ethnic shift, so too are landscapes, daily lifestyles and habits changing. The number of adults over the age of 65 has increased, lifestyle changes have encouraged less physical activity; collectively these trends have created profound implications for the way local governments conduct business. Below are examples of trends and government responses.

- According to the article “Outdoor Exercise ‘Healthier than Gym Workouts,’” published in February 2011²⁷, researchers found that going for a run outdoors is better than exercising in the gym because it has a positive impact on mental, as well as physical health. Levels of tension, confusion, anger, and depression were found to be lowered. This aligns with the trend of adult fitness playgrounds that are popping up all over the world.
- While Americans have been notoriously unhealthy, a recent survey found that 58 percent of Americans adults are paying more attention to their personal health than in the past; 57 percent seek to eat a healthier diet, 54 percent seek to achieve a healthy weight; and, 45 percent want to reduce stress in their lives.²⁸
- The link between health and the built environment continues to grow as a trend for local governments. They are increasingly incorporating active living and physical activity into daily routines.

More and more, local governments are accepting the role of providing preventative health care through park and recreation services. The following facts are from an International City/County Management local government survey²⁹:

- 89% of respondents believed P&R departments should take the lead in developing communities conducive to active living.

- 84% had already implemented recreation programs that encourage active living in their community.
- The highest priority selected for the greatest impact on community health and physical inactivity was a cohesive system of parks and trails and accessible neighborhood parks.

Health and Obesity

According to the *Center for Disease Control (CDC)*, obesity continues to be a serious issue in America, growing at an epidemic rate—almost tripling since 1990. Overall, more than one-third (35.7%) of adults and 17% of children in the United States are obese.³⁰ These statistics illustrates the importance of intercepting the epidemic in youth.

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 nationally spend 4.5 - 8 hours daily (30-56 hours per week) in front of a screen (television and/or computer).

Shade Structures

Communities around the country are considering adding shade structures as well as shade trees to their parks, playgrounds and pools, as “a weapon against cancer and against childhood obesity”³¹; both to reduce future cancer risk and promote exercise among children. A 2005 study found that melanoma rates in people under 20 rose three percent a year between 1973 and 2001, possibly due to a thinning of the ozone layer in the atmosphere. It is recommended that children seek shade between 10am and 4pm, but with so little shade available, kids have nowhere to go. Additionally, without adequate shade, many play areas are simply too hot to be inviting to children. On sunny days, the playground equipment is hot enough to scald the hands of would-be users.

Trees would help, as tree leaves absorb about 95 percent of ultraviolet radiation, but they take a decade or more to grow large enough to make a difference. So, many communities are building shade structures instead. The non-profit Shade Foundation of American is a good resource for information about shade and shade structures, www.shadefoundation.org.

Trails and Health

That a connected system of trails increases the level of physical activity in a community has been scientifically demonstrated through the Trails for Health initiative of the (CDC)³². Trails can provide a wide variety of opportunities for being physically active, such as walking/running/hiking, rollerblading, wheelchair recreation, bicycling, cross-country skiing and snowshoeing, fishing, hunting, and horseback riding. Recognizing that active use of trails for positive health outcomes is an excellent way to encourage people to adopt healthy lifestyle changes, American Trails has launched a “Health and Trails” resource section in its website: www.americantrails.org/resources/benefits/.

The health benefits are equally as high for trails in urban neighborhoods as for those in state or national parks. A trail in the neighborhood, creating a ‘linear park’, makes it easier for people to incorporate exercise into their daily routines, whether for recreation or non-motorized transportation. Urban trails need to connect people to places they want to go, such as schools, transit centers, businesses, and neighborhoods.³³

Natural Environments and Open Space Conservation

The top ten recommendations of the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) Conservation Task Force were published in the November 2011 issue of Parks and Recreation Magazine³⁴. These recommendations are a compilation of best practices used by trend-setting agencies.

- 1) Take a leadership role in the community to promote conservation. Park and recreation agencies have a unique opportunity to bring governmental agencies, non-profit organizations, community leaders, and the public together for the cause of working together on community wide conservation objectives - clean water, wildlife habitat preservation, reducing energy use and improving environmental quality. Park and recreation agencies must lead the way in promoting conservation to diverse and underserved audiences.
- 2) Lead by example in employing best management conservation practices in parks. Park and recreation agencies should become the catalyst in the community for conservation by showing how best practices can be adopted-not mowing what you don't need to mow; stopping wasteful energy consumption; and reducing pesticide use for example. Show the public how conservation practices can benefit everyone.
- 3) Engage volunteers in conservation and stewardship. Create a sense of belonging and stewardship for parks by creating a personal sense of ownership and value. Enable people to identify with their parks and natural resources, and to care about their future. Sustain stewardship by creating meaningful public participation in implementation of conservation principles and practices.
- 4) Establish a strategic land acquisition strategy based on knowledge and awareness of significant natural and cultural resources (watershed protection, unique ecological characteristics, and sensitive natural areas deserving protection). As the largest owners of public land within most communities, park and recreation agencies should lead the way in developing a strategic vision for preserving open space and conserving important landscapes and natural features.
- 5) Engage youth in conservation. Get kids and teens outdoors and enjoying their parks. The experience of nature is inherently rewarding for youth. Set as a goal to connect kids in the community to nature and the outdoors. Children and youth will be fascinated by nature and will develop a lifelong affinity as well as a conservation ethic if they have early opportunities to enjoy nature and recreate outdoors in a safe, rewarding way.

- 6) Conserve energy in all ways. Park and recreation agencies must lead by example, showing the public how and why they should adopt practices that they can see demonstrated in parks and recreation facilities. Park and recreation agencies should adopt energy conservation measures that make sense and save public taxpayer funds.
- 7) Protect natural resources in parks and in the community. A core mission of public parks is to protect land and water resources and to be stewards of natural resources. This means committing personnel and resources to protect natural and cultural resources and creating sustainable long-term methods of funding this conservation mission. Parks and recreation agencies are entrusted with some of the most important public assets of a community and the conservation and long-term protection of this public trust is and should be a core component of every parks and recreation agency's mission.
- 8) Create sustainable landscapes that demonstrate principles of conservation. Utilize sustainable landscape practices to save taxpayer funds, to measurably improve conservation benefits, and to educate the public about conservation. For example, agencies can reduce turf grass and mowing frequency; replace turf with native plants; manage floodplains for multiple uses including conservation and public recreation; enhance wetlands for water filtration and groundwater recharge; plant model landscapes of drought tolerant native plants adapted to climate and culture; and promote parks as food sources through edible landscapes and community gardens.
- 9) Forge partnerships that foster the mission of conservation. The greatest and most beneficial conservation successes most often occur as a result of collaboration. Park and recreation agencies should partner with non-profit and community service organizations, universities and colleges, school systems, other governmental agencies, and non-traditional partners for conservation outcomes. Promote health, education, and other goals while working toward a common mission of conservation.
- 10) Utilize technology to promote conservation. Park and recreation agencies need to embrace technology to promote conservation. This is not only in applications such as GIS, but in utilizing social media to engage the public, especially youth. Technology is not to be feared as something that detracts from the conservation mission of parks agencies, but rather it is to be accepted as a means of sharing knowledge and connecting people to conservation and stewardship.

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.
- Research from the University of Illinois shows that trees, parks, and green spaces have a profound impact on people's health and mental outlook.³⁵
- US Forest Service research indicates that when the economic benefits produced by trees are assessed, the total value can be two to six times the cost for tree planting and care.³⁶
- Fifty percent of Americans regard outdoor activities as their main source of exercise.³⁷

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 space³⁸:

- 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.

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.”³⁹ A new trend started in China as they prepared to host the 2008 Summer Olympics. Their aim was to promote a society that promotes physical fitness and reaps the benefits of outdoor exercise by working out on outdoor fitness equipment.

“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 United States is now catching up on this trend, as park and recreation departments have begun installing “outdoor gyms.” 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. With no additional equipment such as weights and resistance bands, the equipment is fairly easy to install. Outdoor fitness equipment provides a new opportunity for parks 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.

Nature Programming

Noted as early as 2003 in *Recreation Management Magazine*, park agencies have been seeing an increase in interest in environmental-oriented “back to nature” programs. In 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.⁴⁰ A summary of the results follow:

- Sixty-eight percent of public parks and recreation agencies offer nature-based programming and 61% 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 that nature-based programs are on the rise. According to Tim Merriman, the association's executive director, the group was founded in 1954 with 40 members. It now boasts 4,800 members, with research indicating 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 about the "great outdoors". 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, 2000.⁴¹

In his book Last Child in the Woods: Saving Children from Nature Deficit Disorder⁴², Richard Louv introduced the concept of the restorative qualities of being out in nature, for both children and adults. This concept, and research in support of it, has led to a growing movement promoting connections with nature in daily life. One manifestation of this is the development of Nature Explore Classrooms in parks. Nature Explore⁴³ is a collaborative program of the Arbor Day Foundation and the non-profit organization, Dimensions Educational Research Foundation, with a mission of helping children and families develop a profound engagement with the natural world, where nature is an integral, joyful part of children's daily learning. Nature Explore works to support efforts to connect children with nature.

Sports and Recreation Trends

General Sports and Recreation Trends

The National Sporting Goods Association (NSGA) survey on sports participation in 2012⁴⁴ found the top five athletic activities ranked by total participation included: exercise walking, exercising with equipment, swimming, camping, and aerobic exercising. Additionally, the following active, organized, or skill development activities remain popular: hiking, running/jogging, bicycle riding, basketball, golf, and soccer. **Table 3** outlines the top twenty sports ranked by total participation in 2012.

Table 3: Top Twenty Sports Ranked by Total Participation (in millions) in 2012

Sport	Total
1. Exercise Walking	102.1
2. Exercising with Equipment	57.7
3. Swimming	48.6
4. Camping (vacation/overnight)	45.2
5. Aerobic Exercising	44.8
6. Hiking	42.2
7. Running/Jogging	40.0
8. Bicycle Riding	39.3
9. Bowling	35.5
10. Workout at Club	35.2
11. Weight Lifting	31.1
12. Fishing (Freshwater)	30.8
13. Wrestling	28.4
14. Basketball	25.6
15. Yoga	22.9
16. Billiards/Pool	21.8
17. Target Shooting	21.7
18. Golf	21.1
19. Hunting with Firearms	19.4
20. Boating, Motor/Power	17.0

Source: NSGA 2012

The Sports & Fitness Industry Association (SFIA) produces a yearly report on sports, fitness and leisure activities in the US. The following findings were highlighted in the 2013 Report⁴⁵:

- Overall participation in sports, fitness and related physical activities remained relatively steady from 2011 to 2012.
- Fitness Sports had the largest increase in participation (2% increases to 61.1%).
- Racquet Sports participation also increased (1% increase to 12.8 %) but still remains the 2008 peak rate of 14 %.
- Both team (21.6%) and water sports (12.5%) participation increased slightly while individual (36%) and winter sports (6.6%) participation decreased slightly.
- Outdoor Sports participation remained stable at around 49%.
- Spending on team sports at school and lessons/instruction/sports camp was expected to increase in 2013 as it has in 2011 and 2012.
- 28% of all Americans are inactive while 33% are active to a healthy level (engaged in high calorie level sport/fitness activities in a frequent basis). Idaho ranked among the states with the highest among five activity levels measured (from 38% to 43.6%).

The Ten-year History of Sports Participation Report⁴⁶ published by NSGA shows national trends in team sports and individual sports. Overall participation trends indicate a general increase in 2011 for most team sports. However, softball and volleyball show a decrease in participation

through 2011. Over the decade individual sports show a dramatic increase in aerobic exercising, exercise walking, exercising with equipment, hiking, kayaking, running/jogging, target shooting and target shooting with an airgun, tennis, weightlifting and working out at a club. **Table 4** illustrates a ten year change in participation for selected activities including both team sports and individual sports.

Table 4: Ten-Year History of Sports Participation (in millions) 2001-2011

	2001	2003	2005	2007	2009	2011
Aerobic Exercising	24.3	28.0	33.7	34.8	33.2	42.0
Archery (Target)	4.7	3.9	6.8	6.6	7.1	6.3
Backpacking/Wilderness Camping	14.5	13.7	13.3	13.0	12.3	11.6
Baseball	14.9	14.6	14.6	14.0	11.5	12.3
Basketball	28.1	27.9	29.9	24.1	24.4	26.1
Bicycle Riding	39.0	36.3	43.1	37.4	38.1	39.1
Billiards/Pool	32.7	30.5	37.3	29.5	28.2	20.0
Boating, Motor/Power	22.6	24.2	27.5	31.9	24.0	16.7
Bowling	40.3	39.4	45.4	43.5	45.0	34.9
Camping	45.5	51.4	46.0	47.5	50.9	42.8
Dart Throwing	16.9	n/a	n/a	12.1	12.2	9.3
Exercise Walking	71.2	79.5	86.0	89.8	93.4	97.1
Exercising with Equipment	43.0	48.6	54.2	52.9	57.2	55.5
Fishing (Freshwater)	39.1	33.2	37.5	30.8	29.0	28.0
Fishing (Saltwater)	11.3	10.6	10.0	10.4	8.2	9.7
Football (tackle)	8.6	8.7	9.9	9.2	8.9	9.0
Golf	26.6	25.7	24.7	22.7	22.3	20.9
Hiking	26.1	25.0	29.8	28.6	34.0	39.1
Hockey (ice)	.2	1.8	2.4	2.1	3.1	3.0
Hunting w/Bow & Arrow	4.7	5.0	6.6	5.7	6.2	5.1
Hunting with Firearms	19.2	17.7	19.6	19.5	18.8	16.4
In-Line Roller Skating	19.2	16.0	13.1	10.7	7.9	6.1
Kayaking	3.5	4.7	7.6	5.9	4.9	7.1
Mountain Biking (off road)	6.3	8.2	9.2	9.3	8.4	6.0
Muzzleloading	3.0	3.1	4.1	3.6	3.8	3.1
Paintball Games	5.6	7.4	8.0	7.4	6.3	5.3
Running/Jogging	24.5	22.9	29.2	30.4	32.2	38.7
Skateboarding	9.6	9.0	12.0	10.1	8.4	6.6
Skiing (Alpine)	7.7	6.8	6.9	6.4	7.0	6.9
Skiing (Cross Country)	2.3	1.9	1.9	1.7	1.7	2.3
Snowboarding	5.3	6.3	6.0	5.1	6.2	5.1
Soccer	13.9	11.1	14.1	13.8	13.6	13.9
Softball	13.2	11.8	14.1	12.4	11.8	10.4
Swimming	54.8	47.0	58.0	52.3	50.2	46.0
Target Shooting	15.9	17.0	21.9	20.5	19.8	19.6
Target Shooting (Airgun)	2.9	3.8	6.7	6.6	5.2	5.3
Tennis	10.9	9.6	11.1	12.3	10.8	13.1
Volleyball	12.0	10.4	13.2	12.0	10.7	10.1
Water Skiing	5.5	5.5	6.7	5.3	5.2	4.3
Weight Lifting	21.2	25.9	35.5	33.2	34.5	29.1
Workout at Club	26.5	29.5	34.7	36.8	38.3	34.5
Wrestling	3.5	n/a	n/a	2.1	3.0	3.2

Note: Participated more than once (in millions), seven (7) years of age and older.

Source: NSGA 2012

Youth Sports

The 2013 SFIA sports participation report indicates that in 2012 youth (ages 6-12) participation was highest for outdoor (63.1%), team (53.1%) and individual sport (49.8%). Children in this age group have increased interest in camping, while young adults ages 18 – 24 are becoming more interested in running/jogging.

The NSGA Youth Sports Participation Report from 2001 – 2011 indicates that 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. In 2011, in-line roller skating experienced the largest percentage decrease in participation. For youth ages seven to 17 years, exercise walking, exercising with equipment, and swimming, followed by overnight/vacation camping had the highest number of participants in 2011⁴⁷.

In 2009, an article in the Wall Street Journal observed that, in recent years 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 played lacrosse in 2009.⁴⁸ A 2011 report, "U.S. Trends in Team Sports", finds that Lacrosse and other niche team sports and volleyball are continuing to experience strong growth for youth and adults.⁴⁹

Adult Recreation: Pickleball

No adult recreational sport is taking off faster than pickleball⁵⁰. Pickleball is a racquet sport played on a badminton court with a lowered net, perforated plastic ball and wood paddles. While it originated in the Pacific Northwest in the 1960's, it has grown exponentially since 2000. The USA Pickle ball Association (USAPA) estimates that there were about 500 pickleball players in 2000, with that number growing to 125,000 in 2013. It's especially popular with the 50 plus crowd because it is low impact but gets the heart rate pumping.⁵¹ Pickle ball is an attractive programming option for recreation managers because it is adaptable to a variety of existing facilities – four pickleball courts fit in one tennis court.

Outdoor Recreation

The Outdoor Foundation releases a "Participation in Outdoor Recreation" report, annually. According to the 2014 report⁵², while the actual number of outdoor recreation outings increased since 2012, the participation rate fell slightly, due to population growth. The foundation reports that the top outdoor activities in 2013 were running, fishing, bicycling, camping, and hiking. Birdwatching is also among the favorite outdoor activities by frequency of participation.

The Outdoor Foundation's research brought the following key findings.

Participation in Outdoor Recreation

- **Return to Nature:** Nearly 50% of Americans ages six and older participated in outdoor recreation in 2013. That equates to a total of 143 million.
- **Top Five Biggest Participation Percentage Increase in Outdoor Activities in the Past three years (2014 Topline Report):** Adventure Racing, Triathlon (Off Road), Stand up paddling, Kayak fishing, Recreational Kayaking.

- **Recreation for Exercise:** More than 70% of outdoor participants were motivated to recreate outdoors as a way of getting exercise.

Youth Participation in Outdoor Recreation

- **Good News about outdoor participation rates of female youth:** Participation rates among girls and young women increased by two percentage points – bringing young women’s participation to the highest since 2006.
- **The Influence of Family:** Most youth are introduced to outdoor activities by parents, friends, family, and relatives.
- **Physical education in schools:** The importance cannot be understated. Among adults ages 18 and older who are current outdoor participants, 74% say they had PE in school between the ages of 6 and 12.

Outdoor recreation trends are also a recurring topic of study by the United States Forest Service through the Internet Research Information Series (IRIS). An IRIS report dated January 2012⁵³ provides the following recent nature-based outdoor recreation trends: Participation in walking for pleasure and family gatherings outdoors were the two most popular activities for the U.S. population as a whole. These outdoor activities were followed closely in popularity by viewing/photographing wildlife, boating, fishing, snow/ice activities, and swimming. There has been a growing momentum in participation in sightseeing, birding and wildlife watching in recent years.

Trail Recreation and Cycling Trends

For trail-related recreation activities such as hiking, bicycling, and running, the 2014 Outdoor Recreation Topline Report indicates a positive three-year trend for running/jogging, hiking, road biking, and BMX biking. Additionally, participation in trail running and mountain biking is up significantly over the past two to three years.

Table 5: Trail Recreation Participation by Activity (in thousands) (6 years of age or older)

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	3 Year Change
BMX Bicycling	1,904	1,811	2,369	1,547	2,175	2,168	1.9%
Bicycling (Mountain/Non-Paved Surface)	7,592	7,142	7,161	6,816	7,714	8,542	6.4%
Bicycling (Road/Paved Surface)	38,114	40,140	39,320	40,349	39,232	40,888	1.4%
Hiking (Day)	32,511	32,572	32,496	34,491	34,545	34,378	1.9%
Running/Jogging	41,130	43,892	49,408	50,713	52,187	54,188	3.1%
Trail Running	4,857	4,833	5,136	5,610	6,003	6,792	9.8%

Source: Outdoor Foundation 2014.

Other Cycling Trends

- Bicycle touring are becoming a fast-growing trend around the world, including the US and Canada. “Travelers are seeking out bike tours to stay active, minimize environmental impact, and experience diverse landscapes and cityscapes at a closer level.”⁵⁴

- Urban bike tours, popular in cycle-friendly cities in Europe, are taking hold in the United States as well. Bikes and Hikes LA, an eco-friendly bike and hike sightseeing company founded last September, offers visitors the opportunity to “see the city’s great outdoors while getting a good workout.” In New York, a hotel and a bike store are partnering to offer guests cruisers to explore the city during the summer of 2014.⁵⁵
- One of the newest trends in adventure cycling is “fat bike”, multiple speed bikes that are made to ride when other bikes can’t be ridden, with tires that are up to 5 inches wide run at low pressure for extra traction. Most fat bikes are used to ride on snow but they are also very effective for riding on any loose surface like sand or mud. They also work well on most rough terrain or just riding through the woods. This bike offers unique opportunities to experience nature in ways that wouldn’t be possible otherwise.⁵⁶

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.

A secondary issue caused by the decreased stay is the need for a clinical facility to promote community reintegration. 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.

The fundamental goal of TR services is to enable participants to return successfully to their communities. This not only means they need to have the functional skill but also that they have physical and social environments in the community that are receptive to the individual.

Another trend is the 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*⁵⁷. 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 the essence of the elements. 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.

Role and Response of Local Government

Collectively, these trends have created profound implications for the way local governments conduct business. Some local governments are now accepting the role of providing preventative health care through parks and recreation services. The following concepts are from the International County/County Management Association⁵⁸.

- Parks & Recreation departments should take the lead in developing communities conducive to active living.
- There is growing support for recreation programs that encourage active living within their community.
- One of the highest priorities is a cohesive system of parks and trails and accessible neighborhood parks.

In summary, the United States of America, its states, and its communities share the enormous task of reducing the health and economic burden of obesity. While numerous programs, policies, and products have been designed to address the problem, there is no magic bullet to make it go away. The role of public parks and recreation as a health promotion and prevention agency has come of age. What matters is refocusing its efforts to insure the health, well-being, and economic prosperity of communities and citizens.

Administration Trends for Recreation and Parks

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.

Agency Accreditation

Parks and Recreation agencies are affirming their competencies and value through accreditation. This is achieved by an agency’s commitment to 150 standards.

There are currently 116 agencies around the nation that have received the **Commission for Accreditation of Parks and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA) accreditation.**

Additional benefits of CAPRA accreditation include:

- Boosts staff morale
- Encourages collaboration
- Improves program outcomes
- Identifies agency and cost efficiencies
- Builds high level of trust with the public
- Demonstrates promise of quality
- Identifies best management practices

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) - Compliance

On September 14, 2010 the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) issued an amended regulation implementing the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA 2010 Standards)⁵⁹. On March 15, 2011 the amended Act became effective and, for the first time in history, includes recreation environment

Accreditation is a distinguished mark of excellence that affords external recognition of an organization's commitment to quality and improvement.

Accreditation has two fundamental purposes; to ensure quality and to ensure improvement.

The National Recreation and Parks Association administratively sponsors two distinct accreditation programs. The Council on Accreditation of Parks, Recreation, Tourism and Related Professions (COAPRT) approves Academic institutions and Commission for Accreditation of Parks and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA) approves agencies. It is the only national accreditation of parks and recreation agencies, and is a valuable measure of an agency’s overall quality of

design requirements. Covered entities were to be compliant with design and construction requirements and the development of three-year transition plan by March 15, 2012. Implementation of the three-year transition plan must be complete by March 15, 2015.

Funding

According to Recreation Management Magazine's "2014 State of the Industry Report", survey respondents from parks and recreation departments/districts reporting about their revenues from 2011 through 2013 reveals the beginning of a recovery from the impact of the Recession of 2008. From 2011 to 2012, 82.6 percent of respondents reported that their revenues had either stabilized or had increased. This number grew to 84.8 percent of respondents when reporting on the 2012 to 2013 time frame and, by 2015, 95 percent of parks and recreation department respondents are expecting revenues to either increase (49.7 percent) or remain stable (45.4 percent).

Marketing by Parks and Recreation Providers

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
- Tagged
- 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 internet 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 percent of Blacks and Hispanics own a cell phone, compared with 80 percent of whites).⁶⁰ By 2015, mobile internet penetration is forecast to grow to 71.1% for Hispanics compared to 58.8% for whites.⁶¹

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