

## I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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### *Purpose of this Plan*

The City of Salida has taken the initiative to create a Parks, Recreation, Trails and Open Space Master Plan that will serve as an assessment, vision, and an action plan for implementation. The citizen-driven plan is funded partially by a planning grant from Great Outdoors Colorado and will establish a clear set of goals, policies, and objectives that will provide direction to staff, and elected officials for enhancement of the community's parks, trails, open space, recreation programs, services, and facilities. The Plan will provide an inventory, assessment, and recommendations for providing facilities, programs, and services to best serve the recreation needs of the citizens and its contribution to the quality of life of the community.

### *Overview of Salida Parks and Recreation*

Prior to 2004, staffing for City related recreation functions had been limited. The Aquatic Center had been staffed year round, but the Recreation department was primarily a summer program with a few holiday-related events. Today, while funds are still limited, there has been a more consistent and increasing delivery of recreational services. The City's park maintenance is done by the Public Works Department, with the exception of Centennial Park which is maintained by the Aquatic Center staff.

The City operates and maintains a number of parks, trails and an indoor aquatics facility. Parks range from small pocket parks to large community parks used for special events and community gatherings. The hot springs pool, while old, is used heavily by the community and out of town visitors.

### *Current Situational Analysis*

Salida is the county seat for Chaffee County and sits in the heart of the Arkansas Valley. The Arkansas River runs through the City and draws river enthusiasts from around the region, state and country. The City strives to provide parks and recreation services with the limited resources and staffing in recent years. Yet, due to age and lack of funding, many of the City's facilities are in need of upgrading. The Master Plan will play an integral role in identifying priorities for funding, operations, maintenance, and capital improvements.

### *Related Planning Efforts and Integration*

Plans and proposed ideas that exist and have created or might create additional leisure and recreation opportunities in the City of Salida are numerous. Some plans, such as the Arkansas Headwater Management Plan, are State directives and therefore the City has no choice but to adhere to the conditions of that plan when seeking to utilize the resource. Other plans created by well intentioned citizens are done independently to some degree without any buy-in or direction from the City. As a result, these plans are not taken as seriously as they need to be. The creation of a commission or advisory board that could act as a conduit for citizen groups may assist in seeing more of these plans come to fruition.

### *Community Profile/Demographic Information*

The primary service area for this analysis will be the City of Salida, and the Town of Poncha Springs, Colorado. Population estimates for 2000 are taken from the U.S. Census, 2005 population estimates are from the Colorado Department of Local Affairs and Economic and Planning Systems, published in the Chaffee County Housing Needs Assessment report in January of 2007. All population projections for the State of Colorado, the United States, as well as population projections for Salida and Poncha Springs for 2012, are taken from ESRI Business Solutions. Colorado Department of Local Affairs Economic and Planning Systems reported estimated 2005 populations for City of Salida of 5,333, and Poncha Springs of 570. Other demographic data shows:

- Salida's population is primarily made up of older adults.
- Twenty-one percent of the population of Salida and 15.6% of Poncha Springs' population has a bachelor's or master's degree
- Salida's median household income is 39% lower than the median household income for the State of Colorado and 30% lower than the median for the U.S.

### ***Public Input***

The results of the public input process should provide a base for decision making when determining future recreational needs for the community. For the most part, the survey results were consistent with what was learned in the focus groups and public meetings. Trails and indoor recreation opportunities ranked as the highest priority for new facilities. Restrooms ranked high as a park amenity need. Recreation programs differed slightly but were primarily focused around fitness and special events in both the survey and focus/public meetings.

Salida residents seem willing to explore options such as increasing property taxes or becoming a Home Rule city to increase funding for leisure and recreation opportunities. Should the City choose to move in this direction it will be important to have a clear vision of what funds will be used for in order to have community support.

### ***Finances and Cost Recovery***

Examples across the country show a wide range of department subsidy levels or tax investment. These range from 15% to 80% and higher, depending upon the mission of the organization, construction funding payback, operation funding availability, the community's philosophy regarding subsidy levels and user fees, and structure of agency budgets.

On the whole, the City has recovered approximately 50% of operational and maintenance costs for all parks, facilities, programs and services for 2004, 2005 and 2006. In 2007, cost recovery is projected to drop from 48% to 42%.

### ***Recommendations***

There is a strong and growing trend in the United States for public leaders to recognize that parks, recreation, trails, open space and related “Quality of Life” amenities are not secondary services provided by governmental agencies, but that they are integral to creating communities where people want to live. These services should be seen as **investments** in the long-term vitality and economic sustainability of any vibrant and attractive community. The City of Salida is poised to recognize these factors, and create improvements that will enhance the City for years to come.

The following **Goals and Objectives** are outlined to create a process for focus and implementation. Over the next 5 to 10 years, there will be many influences that will have an impact on the success of this plan. Funding availability, city staff buy-in and political and community support will play a significant role in the implementation process.

**Goal One: Maximize Implementation Effort**

Objective: Collaborate to Strategically Achieve the Goals of the Master Plan

Objective: Inform and Empower Staff to Implement Master Plan Recommendations

**Goal Two: Organizational Development**

Objective: Create an Organizational Vision

Objective: Define Core Services

Objective: Create a Cost Recovery Philosophy and Policy

Objective: Create a Parks, Recreation, Trails and Open Space Advisory Board

**Goal Three: Maximize Partnership Opportunities**

Objective: Formalize All Partnerships

Objective: Maximize partnerships with School District and other governmental agencies through the development of Inter-Governmental Agreements (IGAs)

Objective: Maximize efforts of Non-profits/Grants/Volunteers

**Goal Four: Improve Park Maintenance Efficiencies**

Objective: Understand How Park Maintenance Dollars are Being Spent

Objective: Evaluate park maintenance duties to determine if current departmental priorities are in line with community priorities

Objective: Examine the operations of the parks maintenance department to determine whether the operations could be restructured, merged, and/or outsourced to better handle the City’s park maintenance criteria

Objective: Partner with community groups to assist in the cleanliness and stewardship of parks, trails and athletic fields

**Goal Five: Increase Funding For Parks and Recreation**

Objective: Research Potential Traditional Funding Opportunities

Objective: Pursue Alternative Funding to Implement the Master Plan

**Goal Six: Recreation Program Expansion**

Objective: Develop a standard practice for customer program feedback

Objective: Develop program evaluation criteria and process and implement annually

Objective: Implement new programs based on research and feedback

**Goal Seven: Capital Improvement Priorities**

Objective: Budget for and prioritize playground replacement

Objective: Increase quality of general park design to improve appearance, safety, and accessibility

Objective: Renovate/upgrade parks and outdoor facilities to create equitable levels of service throughout Salida

Objective: Improvements to Salida Hot Springs Pool

**Goal Eight: Plan for the Continued Improvement and Development of Salida's Existing Parks**

Objective: Adopt greenspace definitions and designate properties according to definitions

Objective: Update land dedication policy to ensure equitable level of service in new development

Objective: Provide that greenspace development ensures an adequate level of service to residents within walking distance of each home

Objective: Plan for the immediate recreation needs within the Vandaveer development

Objective: Create a unique and quality greenspace system that will be enjoyed by generations to come

**Goal Nine: Plan for the Creation of a Complete Trail System**

Objective: Extend the trail system to provide an adequate level of service within the community.

Objective: Create connections to public lands outside the City of Salida

Objective: Create and adopt trail design and Construction Standards

**Goal Ten: Plan for the Continuation of the Open Space Program**

Objective: Continue to develop the open space system to meet the needs and expectations of the community.