

## II. SALIDA PARKS AND RECREATION - PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

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### A. INTRODUCTION

Salida, Colorado, is located in the Arkansas Valley of the Rocky Mountains. The City sits among some of the most scenic landscapes in the state. Not only is the City situated in a large picturesque valley, but the Arkansas River roars its way along the northern edge of downtown. The community is transitioning from an agriculture-ranching based economy to one that is supported by tourists seeking the outdoor recreation opportunities, as well as the growing arts community that has developed in Salida.

#### *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.

#### *Project Vision*

The vision for this project is to create a plan that "finger prints" the City of Salida by utilizing an open public process to understand the needs and priorities of the community in regards to parks, recreation facilities, trails, and open space. Once these determinations have been made, the project should create system definitions and standards, and create realistic recommendations and a timeline action plan. Additionally the plan will identify available resources by identifying existing and future opportunities and projected conceptual costs, along with potential constraints.

#### *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 community is growing and attracts people through its small-town feel, visible parks, majestic views, outdoor recreation opportunities and quality of life. Focus group participants expressed that there are high expectations for this Master Plan and that it provide priorities and an Action Plan for parks, recreation, trails and open space. 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.

#### *Staffing and Organizational Overview*

Currently the City's aquatics and recreation department is staffed by:

- Aquatics Center / Recreation Manager (Full time)
- Aquatics Coordinator (Part Time)
- Aquatics Maintenance (Part Time)
- Life Guards (Part Time)
- Swim Instructors (Part Time)
- Front Desk Staff (Part Time)
- Recreation Coordinator (Part Time)
- Programming Staff (Part Time)
- KORE Director (Part Time - Unfilled)
- Events Coordinator (Part Time - Unfilled)
- Triathlon Race Director (Part Time)



The City's park maintenance is done by the Public Works Department and is staffed by:

- Park Maintenance Worker (1 full time)
- Summer Maintenance (1 full time Memorial Day to Labor Day)
- Seasonal Maintenance (40 hours/ wk, Memorial Day to Labor Day)
- Centennial Park is maintained by Aquatic Center Staff (1 part time - 20 hours/week, seasonal)

***Note: The Public Works Department also estimates that an additional 200 to 300 hours of park maintenance is done by non-park maintenance staff annually.***

For the past three years, the Recreation Department has worked hard to increase delivery of recreational services. Prior to 2004, staffing for City related recreation functions had been seasonal and somewhat limited. The inability to retain staff due to limited funding and low pay scales has produced an inconsistency in services.

To limit expenses, the aquatics and recreation are solely staffed by part time employees. Part time employees are not given any benefit packages and are therefore less expensive for the City. However, it is, at times, hard to find and retain quality staff members who are willing to work for part-time wages. Turnover is costly and may offset any savings from not offering benefits or full-time employment.

### ***Parks & Facilities***

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.



#### **City-Owned Facilities:**

- Hot Springs Pool
- Scout Hut
- Alpine Park
- Centennial Park
- Chisholm Park
- Koenig Greenbelt
- Mack Witty Park
- Marvin Park Sports Complex
- Monarch Spur Trail
- Nuno Park
- Pickett Park
- Riverside Park
- Thonhoff Park
- Trailside Park
- Trailside Trail Access
- SteamPlant Theatre

### ***Local and Regional Partnering Organizations and Agencies***

The City of Salida works with many organizations and agencies to assist in delivery of leisure and recreation activities to its citizens. Many of the entities that the City works with are government agencies (local, state or US Government) such as:

- Chaffee County
- Salida School District R32J
- US Forest Service
- Colorado State Parks (Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area)
- Bureau of Land Management
- Town of Buena Vista

These government agencies have independent goals and objectives in maintaining and developing leisure and recreation opportunities within their jurisdictions and often require working with the City to see them through. In most cases, the relationship between the City and these agencies seems to be working well in regards to leisure and recreation matters.

Many other non-government organizations also assist in meeting the leisure and recreation needs of the City such as:

- SPOT (Salida -area, Parks, Open Space & Trails)
- GARNA (Greater Arkansas River Nature Association)
- Salida Mountain Trails
- Chaffee Ball & Bat Association
- Salida Soccer
- Salida Babe Ruth
- Salida Adult Volleyball
- Salida Golf Club
- Salida Tennis Club
- Boys & Girls Club

Residents of the greater community take great pride in “stepping to the plate” in providing leisure and recreation opportunities through volunteer efforts, developing plans and securing funding for development. Some organizations such as the Salida Golf Club and the Boys and Girls Club work mostly independently and are able to sustain their needs without relying on the City for assistance. Other groups seek City support to meet their goals and objectives.

What seems to be lacking is an oversight committee, such as a commission or advisory board, which can help make tough decisions, act as project and department champions, and define priorities and needs (especially with the limited funds available from the City).

#### ***Related Planning Efforts and Integration***

As stated, many of the groups listed above have developed plans or ideas in relation to improving leisure and recreation opportunities for the community. These plans include:

- **Chaffee County Trails Master Plan (SPOT - March 2003)** – As part of the 2000 Chaffee County Comprehensive Plan, the purpose of this plan is to provide jurisdictional agencies with a comprehensive planning tool for the development of a trail system in Chaffee County. The plan focuses on Chaffee County trails systems and municipal trails systems for Salida, Buena Vista and Poncha Springs. The City shows some of the trails described in this plan as part of its overall Comprehensive Plan.
- **Southern Chaffee County Parks and Recreation Plan (2003)** – The purpose of this plan was to:
  - Assess parks and recreation within the Southern Chaffee County Parks & Recreation (SCCPRP) area by examining leadership, programs, services and facilities
  - Analyze needs after looking at standards and doing comparisons with other communities, and gathering citizen’s input
  - Propose options to meet identified needs and recommend specific actions and strategies to accomplish the recreation goals of the community

One of the primary recommendations of the plan was to develop a Recreation District that would encompass the Southern Chaffee County area. Due to what was

deemed as non support for the initiative, it was never brought forth before the voters.

- **Colorado State Parks - Arkansas Headwater Management Plan (2001)** - The purpose of this plan is to oversee management of the Arkansas River (from approximately Leadville to Pueblo) and monitor its many uses. The plan seeks to emphasize the river's natural resources, sustainability, and standards for public land health, recognizing and respecting private property, while embracing numerous recreational, educational and commercial activities. The City works closely with the State to ensure its needs in regards to the Arkansas River are not in conflict with this plan.
- **Bureau of Land Management - Arkansas River Travel Management Plan (To be completed in 2007)** - The purpose of this plan is to define travel uses (i.e. ATV, Motorcycles, Bicycle, Equestrian, Foot) for BLM lands that border the Arkansas River. The primary interest for the City of the Salida would be the official designation of trails (primarily bicycle) on BLM lands north and east of the City.
- **Salida Mountain Trails (2007)** - This plan has been formulated by a citizen group that is working closely with SPOT (see Chaffee County Trails Master Plan) and BLM (see Arkansas River Travel Management Plan) to create bicycle trails and access to county and government lands. This plan has not been adopted by the Salida City Council nor is it part of the City's Comprehensive Plan.
- **Marvin Park GOCO Grant Request (2006)** - This grant request was put together by Chaffee County officials and local baseball/softball organizations to make improvements to the City-owned Marvin Park athletic fields. Improvements to the facility would include permanent restrooms, announcer booth, equipment storage, foul ball netting and dugout improvements. The City has pledged \$5,000 towards the \$101,000 project budget (31% Salida group's funds, 69% GOCO funds). The grant request was submitted to GOCO fall of 2006. The grant request was not awarded. The authors would like to re-submit the grant request but have been asked by City staff to wait until the Parks, Trails, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan has been completed.
- **Sports Complex Proposal at Vandaveer (2006)** - This plan has been formulated by a citizen group that includes sports associations and submitted to the City Administrator in 2006. The purpose of this plan/proposal is to explore with the City the relocation of the ball fields at Marvin Park and the addition of new baseball fields on a portion of the Vandaveer property. Additionally the plan/proposal would include new public tennis courts, sand volleyball courts, dog park and other community spaces. This plan /proposal has not been adopted or endorsed by the Salida City Council nor is it part of the City's Comprehensive Plan.

- **Arkansas River Trust - Upstream Whitewater Park Expansion, Downstream Whitewater Park Expansion, Salida Freeride Park (2007)** - The purpose of these proposed projects is to further expand river access and white water recreational opportunities. Additional proposed projects include the development of a “Freeride” park adjacent to the Marvin Park athletic fields. This plan /proposal has not been adopted or endorsed by the Salida City Council nor is it part of the City’s Comprehensive Plan.
- **Skate Parks Expansion** - This citizens group seeks to build an additional skate park on Salida School District R32J, Holman Avenue Property adjacent to the new soccer fields. This plan has not been endorsed or adopted by the Salida City Council nor is it part of the City’s Comprehensive Plan.
- **Tennis Courts Improvements or Development** - The Salida Tennis Club seeks to improve existing City tennis courts or build new ones in another location. This plan has not been endorsed or adopted by the Salida City Council nor is it part of the City’s Comprehensive Plan.

***Summary of 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 and BLM Travel Management Plan, are State directives and 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 directive from the City and as a result are not taken as seriously as they need to be. The creation of an advisory board that could act as a conduit for citizens groups may assist in seeing more of these plans come to fruition.

**B. PROJECT METHODOLOGY**

*The following task list provided the framework for this planning effort:*

**Task 1: Public Involvement and Goal Setting**

The project process followed the steps listed below:

- Orientation meeting with the project staff
- Focus group meetings with:
  - SPOT, GARNA, SMT, Colorado State Forest Service, Planning Commission, FIBARK, Salida Tennis Club, Salida Golf Club, Skate Park Expansion Committee, Chamber of Commerce, Chaffee Ball and Bat Association, Salida Soccer, Salida Babe Ruth, Salida Adult Volleyball
  - Private Providers/Frequent Park Users: Local Churches, Local Citizens, Local Businesses, Local Schools (public and private)



- Commissions & Boards: Tree Board, City Planning Commission, Chaffee County Visitors Bureau
- Government Entities: Chaffee County, Poncha Springs, Salida City Council
- One public involvement meeting with 20 Salida residents and stakeholders to gather broad-based community input
- One presentation to City Council about the master planning process to gather input
- Interviews with the Salida staff to gather information on key issues, challenges, and opportunities

## **Task 2: Data Collection/Existing Conditions Inventory/User Survey**

### ***Demographic and Trends Analysis***

The consultant has compiled information available from the U.S. Census Bureau, Chaffee County, and ESRI Business Solutions. Additional information is provided on state and national trends and other markets.

### ***Inventory of Services and Classification of Needs***

The consultant has developed a comprehensive assessment of parks, recreation, open space, trails, and special use facilities to determine current conditions. All mapping of facilities and open spaces is incorporated into a dynamic digital database that becomes the property of the City of Salida upon completion of the project.

### ***Statistically-Valid Survey***

RRC Associates, in conjunction with GreenPlay, administered a statistically-valid, random sampling Needs Assessment Survey. A total of 3500 surveys were distributed as follows:

- City of Salida Households, P.O. Boxes, 2nd Homeowners – 3036
- Town of Coaldale – 100
- Town of Cotopaxi – 100
- Town of Howard – 14
- Town of Poncha Springs – 250

A total of 535 surveys were returned from the community, (393 from Salida, 19 from Poncha Springs, 93 outside City Limits, 8 unknown) representing a statistically-valid response rate of approximately 15 percent. Overall results for the entire survey have approximately a 95% level of confidence with a margin of error of +/- 4.2% overall.

## **Analysis**

### ***Facilities and Programs***

The assessment includes an analysis of publicly available facilities and programs provided by other public and private entities located in the Salida area.

### ***Financial Resource Analysis***

An analysis of existing budget procedures, resources, capital improvement plans, cost recovery, and traditional and alternative funding has been performed. Recommendations will be provided to address the potential development of a pricing methodology that is effective and responsive to the parks and recreation system of Salida.

### ***Level of Service Standards***

The *composite values analysis* methodology is a GreenPlay team innovation, called the **Geo-Referenced Amenities Standards Program (GRASP®)**. This methodology builds on traditional capacity analysis, but can track not only the quantity (or capacity), but the quality of components of an entire parks and recreation system, including core program areas.

### ***GIS-Based GRASP® Perspectives***

The GreenPlay team developed GIS based **GRASP® analysis perspectives** for the major components of the Master Plan that were determined through the planning process. The maps include a regional context map and inventory map. Analysis mapping has been prepared from multiple perspectives including a neighborhood perspective, walkability perspective and a trail perspective.

### ***Recommendations and Action Strategies***

The Parks, Recreation, Trails and Open Space Master Plan is intended as a living document that changes as conditions in Salida change. The Recommendations and Action Plan are comprised of the following elements:

- Summation of public and stakeholder input and comments.
- Data on the City parks, recreation facilities, trails and open space inventory, along with Level of Service recommendations.
- Complete survey results with tabulations that provide further analysis of collected data.
- Digitally synthesized demographic information for the City.

### ***Parks, Recreation, Trails and Open Space Recommendations***

The recommendations are realistic and implementable within the capabilities of the City. Recommendations will look to provide guidance for parks and recreation maintenance standards that meet the desired level of service of the community, identify development and design standards for existing and new parks and determine priorities for the City to provide for the leisure and recreation needs of the community.