

CHAPTER 5: RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 5: RECOMMENDATIONS

INTRODUCTION

The community recognizes that a dedicated and qualified staff at the CRPD provides programs, parks, and facilities. CRPD's challenge for the future will be balancing the need to acquire more land with the demands of maintaining existing programs, parks, and facilities.

As stated in previous chapters, the city's population will continue growing moderately to the northwest, southwest, and south, with faster growth expected toward the northeast and southeast. But no matter where growth occurs, the existing park system will face additional burdens from increased use. Compounding this situation will be Franklin County and neighboring city residents, who often use facilities and participate in programs offered by the City of Columbus.

The recommendations in this chapter were developed as a result of input from the public participation program (see Chapter 4: Needs Assessment). The recommendations are grouped into 11 categories or CRPD service areas:

- Administration;
- Customer Service;
- Programs;
- Parks;
- Facilities;
- Safety/Security;
- Land Acquisition;
- Park Services;
- Funding/Financing;
- Development; and
- Partnerships.

CRPD SERVICE AREA: ADMINISTRATION

CRPD strives to provide for everyone in the community by keeping program prices low and providing assistance when needed to help improve the overall well-being of the community.

With future growth, it is also anticipated that the City of Columbus will be **pressed to meet the demands** placed on its other municipal services such as fire and police protection, sewer and water services, and education. **Balancing the budgets** for all city operations—while providing adequate services—will continue to be an enormous challenge.

Best Management Practices in Administration

Best management practices (**BMPs**) in many of today's most effectively managed organizations consistently encompass **five components**. These components are provided below along with additional information about how they relate to the CRPD.

■ BMP 1: Know Your Community's Mandates and Expectations

Understanding the mandates of the Columbus community is imperative if the CRPD is to fulfill its **mission**:

“To create and maintain an enjoyable, safe, aesthetically pleasing and healthful environment for residents and visitors; to divert negative, expensive behaviors by providing positive economical and convenient leisure opportunities; to promote the preservation and wise use of natural resources; and to enhance the local economy through parks, recreation programs, festivals, tournaments, tourist attractions and special events.”

As the CRPD implements this master plan and better defines its core services, it will be appropriate to **refine the mission statement** to better reflect the current thinking that has resulted from the planning process.

An organization that does not understand community mandates operates from a reactive, crisis position and cannot manage for the future.

The success of the *Columbus Recreation and Parks Master Plan*, and the success of the department as whole, will require **vigilance in responding to the voice of the community** and a continued commitment to seek community input into the planning process.

CHAPTER 5: RECOMMENDATIONS

The **community mandates** identified during the public participation program are:

- Parks must be **safe** for all visitors.
- **Programming** must keep pace with the demands of the community.
- Park **maintenance** is a high priority.
- The public must be involved in **park planning and stewardship**.
- The city should **fund the department adequately** to meet the demands.
- **Facilities** should support the community they serve.
- The department must **communicate** more aggressively to the public.
- Land acquisition must result in completing the **trails** and protecting the city from **over development**.
- **Special events** are important and must be continued.
- The department needs to develop equitable access and facilities to **service all neighborhoods** in the city.

■ BMP 2: Maintain Consistent Standards

With **consistent maintenance and program standards**, an organization can demonstrate its ability to provide quality services. **Quality services** will ensure increased participation in and use of parks and recreation facilities. By establishing **specific and measurable standards**, the CRPD will guarantee equity of services citywide, and a product its citizens will support and value.

■ BMP 3: Provide a Broad Spectrum of Programs, Facilities, and Services

This management practice builds upon a baseline service level by **increasing service amenities and user fee support** in lieu of tax support from the customer. By transferring the cost of consumable activities to the user, more tax dollars are made available in the organization's operating budget.

The practice of **tiered programming and facility development** also encourages the growth of lifetime customers who are motivated to continue with a program longer as their skill level increases.

For example, aquatics uses tiered programming. Currently the CRPD offers instructional programs for children (i.e., "Learn to Swim"). Programs are differentiated not only by age but also by skill level and progression of

skills. Programs capture children for a lifetime of swimming programs. The CRPD offers programs that enhance people's skills as they become more comfortable in the water:

- Parent and tot learn to swim;
- Learn to swim: the basics;
- Learn to swim: improving strokes, breathing techniques, etc.;
- Learn to swim, advanced: prepare for joining swim teams;
- Swimming as therapy; and
- Master swimmers.

This program could be expanded to include recreational triathlons: swimming, biking, and running.

Lifelong customers are achieved by building relationships and determining what customers want. This requires programmers to change their management approach; the recreation programmer **manages the customers** instead of managing programs and services. Staff will have to become customer-oriented and understand customers' preferences, tastes, desires, and development through the programs. Managing customers means not just keeping people as customers but keeping them as **valuable customers**.

■ BMP 4: Construct Revenue-Producing Facilities

The practice of constructing **revenue-producing facilities** in park and recreation systems is proving to be both desirable to the public and fiscally responsible.

Facilities in this category typically include **golf courses, regional recreation centers that serve all ages, and family aquatic centers**. Multidimensional recreation spaces that appeal to all ages may include:

- Two or more gyms;
- Areas for fitness;
- Recreation classes;
- Aquatics;
- Game courts; and
- Community meeting space.

Family aquatic centers often include:

- Warm water;
- Zero-depth entry;
- Moving water and slides; and

CHAPTER 5: RECOMMENDATIONS

- Competitive and deep-water areas for a variety of aquatic classes.

These facilities not only provide a **destination site** for the entire community, but the operating costs can be dispersed over 40 to 50 years.

The CRPD needs to **update its program spaces and add new facilities** to adequately serve its residents. Ideally, the city should consider constructing these multi-use facilities in cooperation with a school system, a not-for-profit organization, or an adjacent city. Sharing the costs of construction and operation with an **appropriate partner** makes good fiscal sense and benefits the community as a whole. However, such a partnership must be mutual and meet the needs of the CRPD.

■ BMP 5: Develop Partnerships to Broaden Service Opportunities

While Columbus is benefiting from its existing partnerships, there are **many more agencies** that have indicated a desire to develop further partnerships with CRPD. The stakeholder interviews, focus groups, and community forums revealed the following potential partners for programs, facilities, and services:

- Catholic Social Services;
- United Way;
- Neighboring communities;
- Corporate headquarters located in Columbus (e.g., Wendy's and Red Roof Inns);
- Children's Hospital;
- Schools for shared use of facilities and land;
- Special interest groups (e.g., trails, rowing, and cycling);
- Commercial facilities such as hotels with pools;
- Homeless shelters; and
- Columbus Museum of Science and Industry (COSI) for cross promotions.

It is recommended that the CRPD assign personnel to **establish, manage, and evaluate more partnerships** and help attract grants, develop alliances, and create sponsorships to add value to services currently provided.

Organizational Structure

Public comments during the community forums and focus groups validate that the **CRPD staff**

is one of the department's strengths. Staff focus groups and staff interviews revealed a desire to strengthen and supplement the staff's abilities by improving communication and reinforcing the authority of various sections to make decisions. (See the **Appendix** for comments made by community members and staff.)

Based on these findings and comments, it is recommended that the **CRPD's organizational structure be reviewed and retooled** so staff can be more of an asset. This restructuring should occur after the CRPD vision and mission are redefined, core services and programs are identified, strategic goals prioritized, and service areas and service standards established. Parks and recreation organizations today typically use one of three organizational models:

- Traditional (cylinder);
- Matrix; and
- Drive and Support.

The CRPD can determine the model or modification of models that best fits its organizational culture.

■ Traditional Structure

The CRPD's existing organizational structure is the traditional hierarchical design. This structure is a cylinder-type design, which features many chains of command or layers to get services from another section or line of business. Often, the traditional structure creates a more bureaucratic workflow because of these many chains of command or layers. In cylinder management, all decisions are forced up to various levels of the organization based on the magnitude of the decision. The division that wants to move a decision forward seeks approval. Bureaucracy is heightened, not reduced.

Pros

- This structure is most common.
- This structure has been in place for more than 30 years.
- This structure has been perfected over the years.
- This structure makes developing a budget easy.
- This structure is not heavily layered with administrators.
- The public can easily understand this structure and work with it.

CHAPTER 5: RECOMMENDATIONS

Cons

- This structure takes a very cylindrical approach to management.
- Often, this structure doesn't allow the organization to grow its talent by moving people to manage in other areas.
- Very little decision making occurs at lower levels.
- This model is inefficient for increasing productivity.
- Management trends are moving away from cylindrical forms of management.

See Chapter 1 for a description of CRPD's current organizational structure.

■ Matrix Structure

Matrix management pushes more decisions to lower levels of supervision in the organization. This allows work teams to exist between divisions so that results are achieved and decision making is not pushed up to management-level supervisors. Work teams must achieve measurable outcomes. Managers must focus on achieving outcomes and reducing bureaucracy instead of micro-managing details in the operation. Supervisors work in the field and lead many work teams.

Pros

- The matrix structure can create a "learning organization."
- The matrix structure is efficient for increasing productivity.
- This model can create a team-driven organization.
- This model tends to move faster toward implementing the organization's stated vision.

Cons

- More time is required to plan for staff and higher levels of communication.
- This model can feel chaotic to staff members who have worked in a traditional organization.
- Developing all team roles takes time.
- This model requires that leaders trust staff at lower levels to make decisions and to follow through without being told.

■ Drive and Support Structure

Drive and Support—a new organizational model being tested around the United States—is being used by **organizations that want to operate with a large portion of their budget driven by earned income instead of taxes.**

Pros

- This model is highly productive and market driven.
- The "lead and support" teams are well defined.
- This model is very efficient.
- This structure allows staff who are entrepreneurial and creative to exist in one division.
- The public tends to appreciate this model because of the energy it creates for programs, parks, and facilities.

Cons

- If mismanaged, this model can build a "we/they" mindset.
- This model requires a park board to be flexible, not conservative.
- The public may "push back" because this model requires that people invest in themselves more than with the traditional model.

Objectives (Administration)

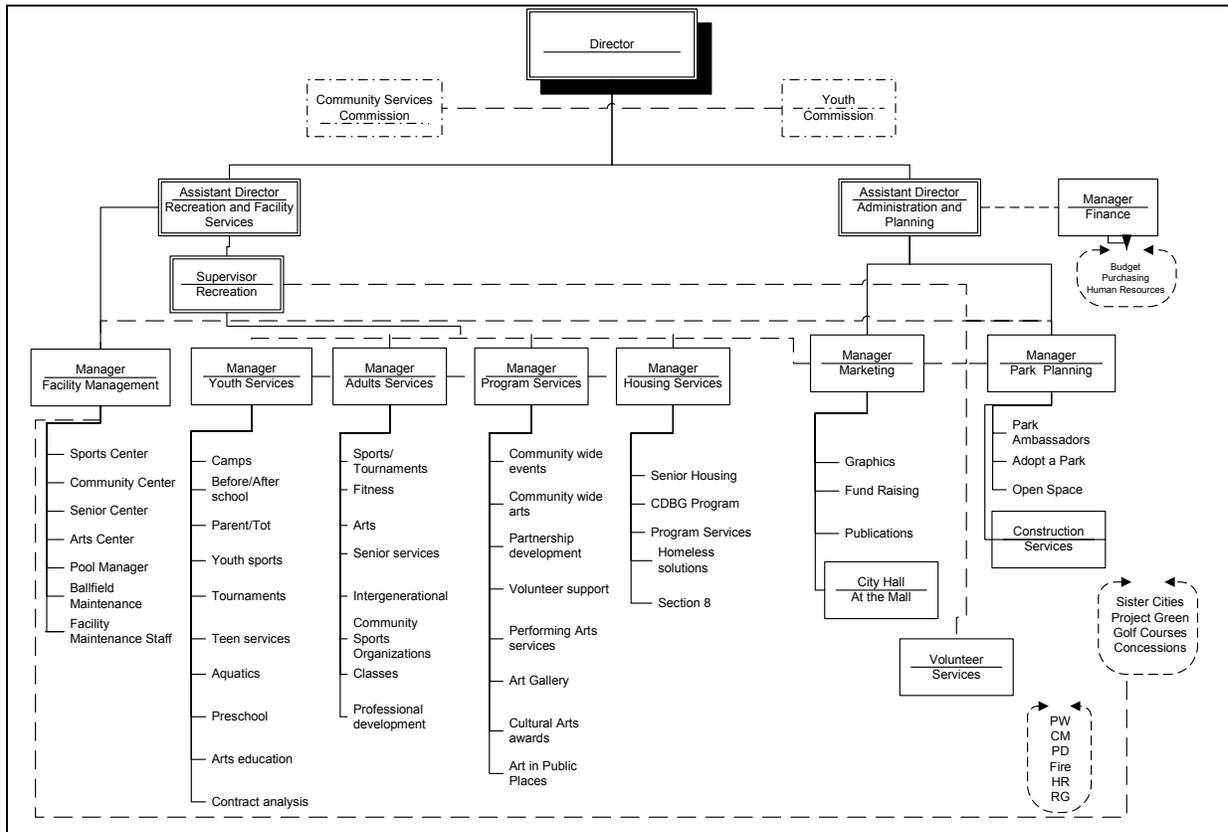
■ Objective I: Establish a One-Stop Shop and Locate All Department Heads Together to Streamline Operations and Efficiencies for Internal and External Customers.

Currently CRPD staff members are located in various areas around Columbus. **Multiple office locations** can produce communication problems, reduce teamwork, increase operational costs, and result in cylinder-management practices.

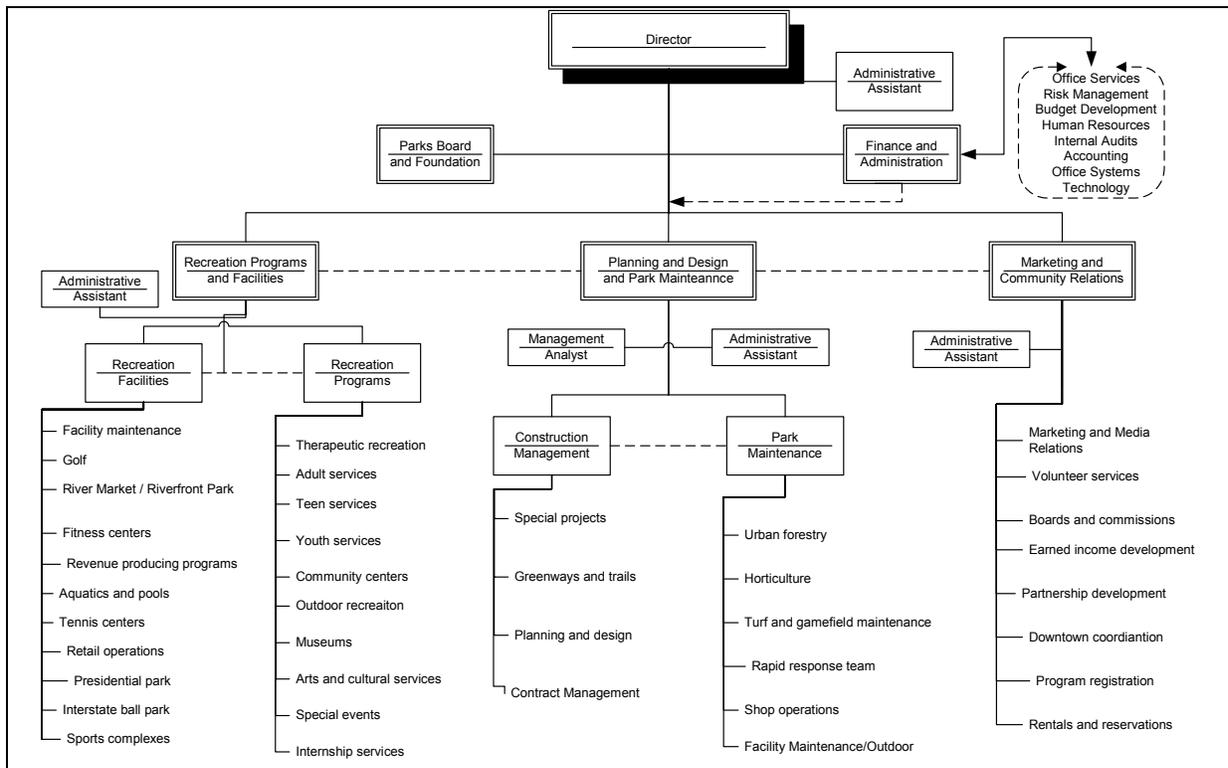
The CRPD can implement a **district-management approach**, with central administration at one location. Currently, a central office for public registration and rentals is located at 420 W. Whittier St. However, each CRPD center should be outfitted technically and staffed to function as a satellite office for registrations and rentals. The ability

CHAPTER 5: RECOMMENDATIONS

An Example of a Matrix Structure



An Example of a Drive and Support Structure



CHAPTER 5: RECOMMENDATIONS

for all sections and centers to accept debit and credit cards and e-commerce (Web-based registrations and rentals) will provide more convenience to the public.

For internal customers and staff, **centralizing administration and operations** can increase resource sharing and enable staff to use “economy of motion”—simple movements—by eliminating multiple steps to achieve the same results or purpose.

Several facilities, such as the Cultural Arts Center, are **special-use facilities** and must be evaluated for best operation practices. The Cultural Arts Center can be rented but requirements are stringent because of the condition of the building and artwork present. Coordination—a team approach to administration—will facilitate resource sharing.

■ **Objective II: Remove Turf Issues and Internal Competition among Departments and Strive toward the Same Goals; Management Must Remove Barriers to the Master Plan.**

In the past, the CRPD has not fostered a team approach to management and operations. This issue was highlighted in staff focus groups and interviews. Staff members commented that they want to help **improve internal communications and understanding** to strengthen relationships so that the CRPD’s mission and goals can be achieved.

The CRPD will need to **break down any existing barriers that separate divisions and sections and train the staff to work as a team**. The master plan will serve as a catalyst in creating work teams; but ultimately, staff members must want to change their thinking and attitudes about how they are managing and being managed.

■ **Objective III: Make Information Available to all Staff Electronically.**

The CRPD must be **technologically equipped in all areas** to improve dissemination of information and to increase productivity in all sections. All staff must have equitable access to the same technology and information.

Staff must accept the responsibility of reading, questioning, and understanding information being generated by all personnel within the CRPD. The **information flow must be two-**

way—from front-line staff to management, and from management to front-line staff. This is important so staff can answer questions from the community correctly. Staff should be responsible for helping implement the goals that create a better CRPD.

■ **Objective IV: Restructure the Organization Based on Serving Customers and Achieving the Vision.**

■ **Objective V: Improve by Reviewing and Evaluating Operations and Services Continuously, both Internally and Externally.**

Staff must understand the objectives and goals of the master plan to effectively implement and manage change. **Performance goals**—based on the plan and quantifiable—should be developed. These goals should be written and agreed to by all staff and then evaluated at set periods throughout the year.

Staff in Administration also should establish mechanisms for **rewarding and motivating** staff who reach their goals. Rewards can be monetary, or staff can be recognized through an awards program.

Evaluations should be developed for soliciting the community’s input on services and operations. Feedback must be internal and external, and upward and downward within the department.

The master plan must be seen as **dynamic**. It should mirror the changes happening in the community and should be revised as objectives are achieved.

■ **Objective VI: Implement Sustainable Practices throughout the Department as a Cultural Change.**

The city and the community should view the CRPD as a leader in managing by principles of sustainable practices. Sustainable design and planning is development **that meets the needs of the present** without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Sustainable design is based on the interdependence of environmental stewardship, social responsibility, and economics.

The CRPD should **begin to position its system in this manner** by implementing recycling of all applicable resources, protection and restoration of natural and cultural

CHAPTER 5: RECOMMENDATIONS

resources, and design practices that reduce energy inefficiencies. The CRPD should become the source of knowledge and information for the public.

Recommendations (Administration)

■ **Recommendation 1: Centralize administrative staff functions in one building or in a campus setting with multiple buildings.**

This will assist in providing a one-stop shop for customers and staff and reduce redundancies.

■ **Recommendation 2: Streamline functions to be less bureaucratic and time consuming for the staff.**

■ **Recommendation 3: Revamp evaluations so they are based on performance measures and efficiencies.**

■ **Recommendation 4: Update all areas so that they are computerized and technologically enabled.**

This **technology initiative**, which began at the onset of the master plan study, is nearly complete. All sites and designated CRPD personnel have e-mail services and new or upgraded computers. This initiative is in response to the CRPD's Information Technology Plan adopted in 2000.

The Information Technology staff and support have been removed from individual departments and centralized for the city. This means CRPD's IT priorities now are evaluated with the needs of other departments. It might be appropriate to recommend having control over these decisions so CRPD's goals can be implemented.

Web site development, which will allow the CRPD to share information with customers, should be considered a necessity to the quality of neighborhoods.

■ **Recommendation 5: Adopt sustainable practices that focus on environmental, educational, cultural, and individual resource-management plans.**

■ **Recommendation 6: Review and update the master plan periodically so it reflects achievements and changes within the community.**

Each year should culminate with a **review of the master plan** to identify areas where progress has been made or goals reached. This review should lead to an outline of priorities and goals for the next year.

A full review of strategies should occur in years three, four, and five. The accomplishment of each goal will trigger **outcomes** that may or may not have been outlined in the master plan. This is the reality of a dynamic plan, organization, and community, and reveals how quickly the macro environment can change.

A survey is usually implemented every two years. (Year one of a plan's implementation lays the foundation for the changes. Years two and three focus on actual implementation.) The same survey used during master plan development should serve as a baseline for determining if improvements are reaching their desired effect with the community. Certain questions—such as those evaluating the community's satisfaction, programming needs, and marketing effectiveness—should be used again in future surveys. These survey questions also capture information from those using the parks in a more passive and unstructured manner.

■ **Recommendation 7: Develop a customer service policy that puts the needs and convenience of the Columbus community as the highest priority.**

■ **Recommendation 8: Allow for consistent and open dialogue among the city, the CRPD, and the community on issues related to planning, design, capital improvements, and maintenance of parks and services.**

■ **Recommendation 9: Restructure the CRPD to empower front-line staff.**

Management principles that empower staff to communicate more effectively and **strengthen their decision-making abilities** will allow customers to be served more efficiently and the CRPD vision to be achieved.

CHAPTER 5: RECOMMENDATIONS

■ **Recommendation 10:** Revise and increase efforts in internal communications to improve employee relations.

CRPD SERVICE AREA: CUSTOMER SERVICE

The CRPD must develop, implement, and monitor customer service standards for all sections of the department.

These standards should:

- Be developed in **collaboration** with the staff so there is an understanding of and agreement with each;
- Become part of the **foundation** for CRPD operations; and
- Be integrated into a **revised employee evaluation**, where goals are set with performance measures that include a predetermined level of customer satisfaction with service delivery.

Customer service standards should be set for both **internal and external customers**. So that performance can be monitored and measured, these standards must be quantifiable—with specific numbers, dates, and baseline percentages with increases. Performance measures will be dynamic; change will be achieved incrementally. The level of customer service and expectation of performance should be raised each quarter or each year to reach the ultimate customer service goal set by the CRPD. See examples in **Table 5-1**.

Objectives (Customer Service)

■ **Objective I:** Make System-Wide Customer Service Delivery Recommendations; Administer and Tailor Customer Service Delivery Recommendations Based on Service Area.

■ **Objective II:** Implement an Ongoing Customer Service Training Program for the Entire CRPD Staff.

Training is highly recommended for all departmental personnel and particularly with the full-time, part-time, and seasonal staff that come in contact with customers daily. This training program should be geared toward **external customer service** as well as **internal customer service**. Training should be simple, easy to understand, and embody a proactive approach to making customers happy when they participate in CRPD services.

■ **Objective III:** Implement Pre- and Post-Evaluations for All Programs and Services.

Evaluations should be developed based on performance standards and customer satisfaction goals. Some of these performance standards should be **uniform**, reflecting the image and goals of the department as a whole; other performance standards should reflect the **individual** program area.

Evaluations of the **contractual instructors** should be conducted in the same manner. As representatives of the CRPD, contractual instructors should abide by same standards. See the **Appendix** for sample forms, which can be modified based on the CRPD's performance standards and goals.

Pre-Program Evaluations

Pre-program evaluations should be implemented for **all current programs** to establish baseline data and determine the participants' expectations for the program(s). Instructors and programmers can evaluate the **program criteria** and set the **goals** for the program to satisfy participants. If a participant's expectations are unrealistic, the pre-program evaluation allows the programmer and/or the instructor to talk with the participant and resolve the issue(s) before the participant becomes unsatisfied.

The pre-evaluation will also set the basis of comparison for the **post-program evaluation**. After the baseline is established, this evaluation mechanism should be used for programs in the **early stages of their life cycle** (new) and in the **latter stages** (old) so staff can make better decisions about refining new programs or eliminating or reducing programs on the decline.

CHAPTER 5: RECOMMENDATIONS

**Table 5-1
Customer Service Standards**

Area	Measure	Monitoring/Tracking Tool	Customer s
Recreation Programs	85 percent more than satisfied to very satisfied	Program evaluations	External
Recreation Facilities	90 percent meet or exceed standards	Shopper program	External
Park Services	24-hour response to park or facility emergencies	Report form tracked through database	Internal and External
Customer Services/ Administration	8-hour response to complaints	Report form tracked through database	Internal and External
Purchasing/Finance	2-day turnaround of purchase orders	Purchase order request forms	Internal
Rentals	Information sent to customer within 8 hours	Tracking form	External
Rentals	Refunds are sent within 3 days	Tracking form	External
Agency Partnerships	Produce database of partners and alliances for staff use by (insert appropriate date)	Time and release of database to staff	Internal
Registration	Confirmation for programs will be sent within 2 days	Computer program	External
Safety	The number of employees hurt on the job is reduced by a specific number	Workers' compensation claims	Internal
Technology	The CRPD responds within 24 hours to questions, comments, or complaints received via the Web page	Web log with dates and times; response times are reported along with the who, when, and method of resolution (verbal or written)	External
Technology	Computer downtime is limited to less than 2 hours to maintain productivity	Tracked through the job log with the IT Department	Internal
Administration	Employee evaluations will be revised by a predetermined date and conducted every quarter during the probation period and annually thereafter	Evaluation forms	Internal

CHAPTER 5: RECOMMENDATIONS

Post-Program Evaluations

These evaluations should be used for all programs to evaluate participants' **satisfaction** and give programmers and instructors information for continuously **improving** the program area and for generating new program **ideas**. The evaluations should be used also as performance measures for programming staff and contractual instructors. Sample post-evaluations, located in the **Appendix**, need to be customized to fit the needs of the CRPD.

■ Objective IV: Coordinate with Program Staff to Implement a Tracking System for Program Participation.

A tracking system is essential to evaluate **growth, decline, or stable participation in programs**, and to make informed decisions. For example, if program participation is declining consistently, tracking participation levels will provide the necessary supporting information the staff needs when deciding to change or discontinue a program—a decision that is not always popular. Tracking program participation over time is crucial for making decisions that will save money and time and allow new program areas to be established that offer a better use of facility space, instructors, and programmers.

The data captured by most **registration systems** will give the CRPD geographic and demographic information. This information will identify areas and populations within Columbus that are being served, and more importantly, those not being served. By using common methods such as GIS mapping or some other geographic approach to segment the population, the CRPD can evaluate program draw—how far participants will drive. By using age segmentation, the CRPD can determine the audience. Waiting lists can be used for a variety of programmatic decisions. For example, waiting lists can indicate that the demand is outpacing the supply, and more of the same type of programs are needed; that a certain instructor is popular; that the location and space are appropriate; and that the pricing is perceived to be a good value, etc.

Data can be used also to **profile participants** and target marketing efforts effectively. All paid media have specific market segmentation data, which they use to sell advertising space and time. By matching the program profiles to the right media source, marketing and advertising can reach the intended audience more

successfully than the broad approach currently used.

Information tracking also helps in developing **sponsorship packages**. Sponsors want to reach their targeted audience; to demonstrate similar target markets, tracking demographics from program registrations is essential.

■ Objective V: Implement Customer Satisfaction Surveys Regularly.

At a minimum, a customer satisfaction survey should be administered **every two years** to determine customer satisfaction ratings. Ideally, a customer satisfaction survey should be administered annually. Frequency will depend on the amount of funding available.

The customer satisfaction surveys completed for the master plan should be used as the **baseline** of current conditions. The same survey should be used annually to determine if the overall customer satisfaction rating is improving, declining, or remaining stable. The results can be published and used for discussion, goal setting, performance measures, and ongoing training. Positive ratings can be printed in marketing materials to demonstrate that customer service is a priority to the CRPD.

■ Objective VI: Implement External Focus Groups and Internal Roundtable Meetings to Continuously Improve Services.

External Focus Groups

Focus groups with representation from special interest groups, neighborhood patrons, area users and non-users, other service providers, potential partners and sponsors, and staff should be established at each site or for each CRPD service area. The use of external focus groups is an **ongoing, continuous improvement process** to encourage community input that will improve customer service and establish successful grassroots programs.

Internal Roundtable

Meetings with representative staff from registration, marketing, programming, and park services need to be **held regularly** to discuss program issues, competitors, customer service goals, performance measures, ratings, training, and continuous improvement strategies. The

CHAPTER 5: RECOMMENDATIONS

staff should be empowered to **make and implement decisions** with support from administration. CRPD staff should monitor customer service and take action routinely so customer satisfaction ratings continuously improve.

■ Objective VII: Implement a Shopper Program for All Areas Where Customers are Served by the CRPD.

A shopper program consists of **anonymous customer service audits** performed periodically by patrons and/or volunteers who rate the quality of services and standards for the department.

The staff sets **customer service standards** for each facility and program area that can and should be delivered to customers. Periodic, anonymous audits are set up by sending a letter and a standards rating form to patrons with an explanation of the process. **Results** of the customer service audit are sent to the department, and an **incentive** such as a discount is given to the shopper who participated. Results—tracked to demonstrate improvement in scores—are then used for internal roundtable discussions, goal setting, ongoing training, and a reward system. Substandard customer service can be identified and corrected on a case-by-case basis.

The goal of the shopper program: **to treat every customer at every site as if he or she were a shopper**. Because the program is anonymous, the staff never knows when a shopper is rating the services. Sample shopper program information, located in the **Appendix**, needs to be customized to fit the needs of the CRPD. Staff will need to define the customer service standards they will be held accountable for every day.

■ Objective VIII: Implement Multiple Methods for Customer Input.

To collect ongoing input from the community, the CRPD should consider implementing a **variety of input methods**. These methods should be established based on the CRPD's goals and performance standards adopted by the staff. Community input will help the CRPD gauge whether the staff is reaching stated goals and operating according to standards created. Data collected should be monitored, collected, and tabulated by a specific CRPD section, such as the Development Section. Information

gathered should be recorded and reported to staff either monthly or bimonthly. The following are some suggested customer input methods:

Suggestion Boxes

Suggestion boxes have been installed at each CRPD facility to demonstrate to patrons that the department is willing to **listen to their ideas, complaints, and suggestions**. Boxes should be in a very accessible area; suggestion forms should be consistent throughout the department and based on performance standards and goals.

Staff should collect **suggestion forms** from the boxes and forward them to the Development Section. By acting on justifiable suggestions and complaints, the CRPD will demonstrate its dedication to responding to customers. Any adjustments and improvements that result from a customer suggestion should be included in the department's public relations strategies.

Comments and Complaints through the Web

A link and a suggestion form can be developed for the CRPD Web site that allows the public to comment, compliment, or complain about any function or experience with the CRPD. All public comments should receive a response **within 24 to 48 hours** of receipt. The initial response should acknowledge the comment's receipt, who will handle it, and the performance standard for the CRPD's response. The Development Section or the Customer Service area should maintain and track a log of these comments.

Telephone Logs of Calls within the Department

Another effective but somewhat costly method is implementing technology that allows telephone call logging within the CRPD. This technology allows staff to **code phone calls as they are received** based on the nature of the call. These logs can be used to identify trends throughout the year, areas of concern, and consistent problems with parks or service areas. Phone logs also can help the CRPD understand the effectiveness of advertising campaigns.

This system is usually more effective when the **customer service section is centralized** and has a main phone number with multiple lines. The CRPD can determine the viability of linking the Mayor's Action Line technology with the

CHAPTER 5: RECOMMENDATIONS

CRPD phone system, which would make the logging method more cost effective. Reports could be shared with the CRPD. (The Mayor's Action Line logs comments and complaints for the City of Columbus and allows for efficient follow ups.)

■ Objective IX: Improve the Appearance of the Interior, Exterior, and Signage at Facilities.

Improving the appearance of facilities is another method of enhancing customer service. Adding **pleasant colors, paintings, plants, and decorations** to the interior as well as improving the exterior of the facilities will help create positive feelings and boost customers' opinions about services provided.

Informational and directional signage needs to be improved at most of the facilities to make it easier for patrons to know where and what programs are being conducted in the buildings. Improved signage at most of the facilities will allow new customers to find the facilities, events, and programs much easier. Currently the abundance of hand-made signs taped up in most of the facilities is unbecoming and unprofessional. Clear, attractive signs will help enhance the image of the facility as well as the department and will produce a much classier appearance that customers will appreciate.

The Development Section should develop standards for signs and for use of the CRPD logo to ensure **consistency** in image promotion. Park Services staff should help develop signage standards. Better signage will help improve customer satisfaction.

Recommendations (Customer Service)

■ **Recommendation 1:** Develop a system-wide in-house training program for customer service.

■ **Recommendation 2:** Create a participation-tracking system.

■ **Recommendation 3:** Establish external focus groups at each site or for each CRPD service area.

■ **Recommendation 4:** Conduct pre- and post- program evaluations.

■ **Recommendation 5:** Hold internal staff roundtable meetings quarterly.

■ **Recommendation 6:** Develop a program to respond to suggestions from the public.

This program might include suggestion boxes at each facility and site, a dedicated voice mail line, or e-mail capabilities. Using **technology** will make customer input more convenient.

■ **Recommendation 7:** Conduct an annual or biennial customer satisfaction survey.

■ **Recommendation 8:** Repair and/or replace deteriorated materials—interior and exterior items, landscaping, signage, etc.—at each facility and site.

CRPD SERVICE AREA: PROGRAMS

Program Pricing

According to 2001 budget figures, there are 180 full-time and 568 part-time employees responsible for delivering **recreation services to the community**. This area of the department is comprised of community recreation, arts programs and facilities, senior recreation, therapeutic recreation, and specialized recreation.

The staff services 28 recreation centers, 11 pools, seven senior centers, five athletic complexes, nine specialized facilities, Smith Farm, Indian Village Day Camp, Davis Performing Arts Center, and the Cultural Arts Center.

The recreation budget represents approximately 48 percent of the entire CRPD budget. Compared to other cities, this is considered high. In fact, Columbus' recreation budget for programming activities is in the **top one-third** among 22 cities.

The following table shows what percentage of the operations budget in each city is dedicated to recreation programming activities:

CHAPTER 5: RECOMMENDATIONS

City	Percentage of the Operations Budget Dedicated to Recreation Programming Activities
Boston	15%
New York City	16%
St. Louis	31%
San Francisco	34%
Seattle	34%
Portland	35%
Denver	35%
Kansas City	36%
Los Angeles	38%
Dallas	41%
Cleveland	45%
Detroit	45%
Houston	45%
Minneapolis	45%
Columbus	48%
Phoenix	49%
Miami	51%
Indianapolis	52%
Atlanta	52%
Chicago	52%
Philadelphia	76%
Baltimore	77%

Based on the City of Columbus 2002 Budget narrative, the Recreation Division's revenue summary for 2001 totaled \$1,478,294. The following areas produced revenue:

- Adult sports: \$674,000;
- Recreation centers: \$628,063;
- Senior citizen centers: \$62,770; and
- Swimming pools: \$113,461.

This equates to a tax subsidy level of approximately 90 percent, which is extremely high. Nationally, most recreation and parks organizations are striving to be at a 50 percent tax subsidy overall, or at a cost recovery of 35 percent minimum. The national averages for programming subsidy levels are listed below:

Program Area	Nationally
Adult Sports	0% Tax Subsidy
Fitness/Wellness	0% Tax Subsidy
Clinics	0% Tax Subsidy
Outdoor Education	0% Tax Subsidy
Rentals	0% Tax Subsidy
Dance	0% Tax Subsidy
Youth Sports (Individual)	10% Tax Subsidy
Day Camps	10% Tax Subsidy
Aquatics Programs	20% Tax Subsidy
Arts Programs	20% Tax Subsidy
Special Events	25% Tax Subsidy
After-school Programs	15% Tax Subsidy
Youth Programs (ages 13 to 15)	50% Tax Subsidy
Teen Programs	50% Tax Subsidy
Senior Programs	40% Tax Subsidy
Adaptive Recreation Programs	80% Tax Subsidy
Disadvantaged Youth/Families	80% Tax Subsidy

The CRPD must restructure its approach to program pricing. With the shrinking budget

and reduced allocations from the city, the CRPD will continue to struggle in its ability to adequately support and provide services to the public. **The CRPD cannot continue to rely solely on tax support for funding services.** The department can use the list above as a benchmark to determine what its level of performance should be for generating program revenue.

Core Areas of Concern

The program analysis revealed **six core areas of concern** that prevent the CRPD from maximizing the productivity of staff who are programming activities for the community, and reduce the staff's ability to provide quality customer service.

Administering quality customer service is a buzz phrase used by many organizations that have insufficient resources. The modus operandi for delivering quality customer service is smiling, being courteous with the customer, and then hoping the customer is satisfied. Essentially, **such organizations attempt to boost positive behaviors to make up for the lack of resources** such as up-to-date facilities, effective communication tools, well-maintained parks, and funding. Unfortunately, the staff is left with little recourse after the first line of service is rendered; customers still expect to receive a quality product. Nevertheless, it is difficult to deliver a quality product without these much needed resources.

Ultimately, this situation can translate into the staff delivering poor customer service. This lack of care for the internal customers—employees—can undermine the staff's ability to be efficient.

There are **six core areas of concern** that influence the quality of parks and recreation services:

1. There is a perception that **staff members tend to work less as a team** and more on their own. This is because there is a lack of trust and respect for employees in other areas of the CRPD organization.
2. Staff feels that **technology and access to computers** can be improved.

CHAPTER 5: RECOMMENDATIONS

3. The programming staff recognizes that **more sponsorship opportunities** are available in the community. Thus, there is a desire to discuss how development staff can assist programming staff in this area.
4. There is a perception that **organizational marketing is poor**. This is based on the limited capabilities of the CRPD Catalog and Web site and the lack of standards for promotion and advertisements.
5. The staff is frustrated by the inability to replace budgeted personnel because of **city-mandated attrition** policies.
6. Many staff members understand the impacts of the department's continuous budget cuts. The staff is concerned that the **lack of funding to improve services** has compromised programs.

These core areas of concern affect the support units providing direct service. These obstacles for the programming staff greatly compromise the quality of service to the community. The following analysis demonstrates how these core areas of concern will continue to affect the CRPD negatively unless corrected by actions outlined in this master plan.

■ Concern 1: Organizational Trust/Respect

Often when there is a lack of resources, trust is the first organizational trait that begins to erode. Trust erodes because internal customers begin to **covet each other's resources**. This mistrust is evident within the Recreation Division and between CRPD staff.

■ Concern 2: Technology

The lines of business at the CRPD must be defined and the appropriate technology should be applied to facilitate effective and efficient delivery of programs and services. While technology has been improving, some still perceive that technology is deficient. Although the computer is one of the organization's major means of communication, **not all employees know they have access to computers or understand the technology**.

CRPD computers have been upgraded to a minimum standard to accept most programs. However, the CRPD has not been able to **create easy front-end forms** for capturing data into the databases. If data cannot be captured in the registration system, recreation

programmers have little information about who their customers are and where their programs exist in their life cycle. Without such a system, staff in programs and administration will continue approximating their performance.

In addition, the **Web pages** that are developing need to have improved linkages, include mapping, and become interactive so that Web visitors can move easily from one link to another and discover new information at every visit.

■ Concern 3: Development

All staff interviewed said they have engaged independently in many different forms of development to survive. The **"money hunt"** makes programming difficult and adds undue stress on staff members, who want to develop quality programs.

Securing additional funding is part of the programming staff's role. Many staff expect that the Development Section should secure funding for programs and events. Thus, there is a continual need for training and education related to the funding process. Either the current role and expectation can continue, or there needs to be a fundamental change in how the Development Section is structured.

■ Concern 4: Marketing

Marketing efforts need to be improved to promote the quality of the recreation and parks system and improve the community's recognition of CRPD services. Marketing efforts should strive to eliminate the perception held by staff that **other organizations are unfairly "stealing the credits and thunder"** from the CRPD by either not mentioning the department at all, or by giving the department a small postscript during events. The marketing and media relations efforts should strengthen the CRPD's image in this area.

Staff members use many different communication devices. The quality of some marketing pieces is excellent. However, the **quality of most fliers used to disseminate information to the community is poor to marginal**. Marketing tools are not consolidated to promote the activities of the department effectively and collectively.

The public participation program indicated that patrons learned about programs mostly through friends and co-workers (49 percent). The

CHAPTER 5: RECOMMENDATIONS

second most popular method for learning about programs was by a visit or call to the parks office; that means the public took the initiative to get information instead of the CRPD getting the information to the public.

■ Concern 5: Personnel

Individual staff members carry an enormous responsibility to locate new funds, manage expense funds, promote activities, create programs, and negotiate internally for organizational assets. **Staff members negotiate** to acquire technology and to find agreements to appropriate mowing cycles and other forms of maintenance for athletic fields; they lobby to fill positions recently vacated. These negotiations occur in a hierarchical fashion, which slows the delivery of quality service.

While it is reported that the union is a strong influence among management-level staff, it is not evident in practice. Staff members interviewed do not feel that the union influences their personal work-schedule decisions and would prefer collaborative relationships with their supervisors.

The staff also perceives there is an **imbalance of accountability**. Each center is as good as its director, but there are **no performance measures in place** to determine performance quality. This does not motivate people to perform beyond the current level of expectation.

■ Concern 6: Finance

The CRPD budget is driven by the amount of funds staff can access and spend in a given year. **Most all staff members have incorporated systems, authorized by the organization, that create revenues to help make facility or program ends meet.** This is done through grants, sponsorships, and the Community Recreation Councils (CRCs)—groups of neighborhood volunteers served by a particular recreation center who act as liaisons, assist in fund-raising, give input on programming, and support the center’s director.

In some cases, the CRC funds become a shield so staff can avoid the city purchasing system. While staff members said they expected a \$1.5 million reduction in spending, **there was no discussion about generating new revenues to balance the reduction.** The staff is ready to initiate fee-based costing programs to recover these losses.

Important Programs

Survey results showed that members of the public who attended programs said their **satisfaction rating was high.**

According to the household survey, 22 percent of respondents participated in programs offered by CRPD; however, another 25 percent were unaware that Columbus offered programs.

Customer satisfaction with downtown events was rated the highest for availability and for participation. Concerts were rated second for availability and participation. However, participation drops by half for CRPD structured programs, with only 15 percent participation in outdoor education programs, for example.

According to the survey, the **top five most important programs** were:

1. Downtown and community festivals;
2. Concerts;
3. Outdoor education programs;
4. Recreational swimming; and
5. Adult arts/music theater.

According to the survey, the **top five most important recreation facilities** were:

1. Large multi-use parks for active and passive recreation;
2. Golf courses;
3. Community recreation centers;
4. Softball fields; and
5. Outdoor swimming facilities.

Programming Based on Demographics

Baby Boomers are aging. This demographic relates directly to survey results, which indicated a desire for **more adult programs.** Staff members in senior recreation will need to adjust how they approach Baby Boomers as Baby Boomers adjust to becoming older.

Baby Boomers are polarizing by income levels, by attitudes toward aging, and by the definition of “senior.” According to a Public Broadcast Service program on aging, on average and across all age groups, a person is considered “old” at 69. Among those presently aged 18 to 24, a person is considered old at 58; for someone currently 65 years old or older, 75

CHAPTER 5: RECOMMENDATIONS

is considered old. It is widely believed that most people feel 15 years younger than their age.

Yankelovich, a research firm in Norwalk, Connecticut, concluded in a 2001 report that the **most effective way to reach Boomers was to separate them into three segments**. The firm classified Boomers as Leading Edge (born between 1946 and 1950); Core (born between 1951 and 1959); and Trailing (born between 1960 and 1964). Future programming should address the needs of these “new seniors” through a more segmented approach.

While **teen programming** was not considered a high priority or given a high importance in the survey, effective teen programs should still be part of the department’s overall strategy.

Teens today—Generation Y or Echo Boomers—are very different than future teens. The CRPD will need to **continually evolve programming to meet the dynamics of these customers**. For example, the influx of information constantly changes how teens are being shaped for adulthood. According to American Demographics, one definition will not fit an entire generation. Diversity also will be undefined. There will be a wider mix of cultural and family backgrounds. Because future teens will be used to a very customized environment, they will be harder to impress.

Children will become more contributors than replicators. Instead of fantasizing about a certain role, they should be able to access the reality of it. For example, CNN today has a program that lets schoolchildren file stories instead of simply pretending they are filing stories via their teacher.

Objectives (Programs)

■ **Objective I: Classify Programs to Determine the Level of Subsidy or Cost Recovery, and to Establish Consistent Pricing Formulas.**

To apply a pricing strategy to supplement revenue streams to the department, the CRPD must adopt the philosophy of **revenue production**, which means that user fees from recreation and parks programs and activities will be part of the overall management of the recreation and parks budget.

Revenue production gives the city **needed cash flow for projects not budgeted in the current year**. It also gives staff the flexibility to provide services not normally provided through tax dollars.

There are three classifications for recreation and parks services:

Classification 1: Public Services

Public services usually have no user fees.

The general tax base supports the cost for providing these services. Public services allow an equitable level of access and benefit to the public. Examples include public access to picnic areas that cannot be reserved, parks, playgrounds, and trails.

Recreation programs are not considered public services because there are elements of exclusion—e.g., time offered, location, ages, cost, capacity, and interest. Recreation programs are consumptive by nature; when the program is over, the benefit is gone. Parks and their benefits exist in perpetuity and are available anytime for anyone.

Classification 2: Merit Services

Merit services give users a higher level of benefit than the general taxpayer; however, taxpayers as a whole benefit because merit services result in a more livable community, and there is a good public benefit. One example of merit services is swimming lessons.

Merit services can be priced using either a partial-overhead pricing strategy or a variable-cost pricing strategy. Partial-overhead pricing strategies recover all direct operating costs and a predetermined portion of fixed costs. The portion of fixed costs not covered by the price represents the tax subsidy.

Whatever the level of tax subsidy, the CRPD needs to communicate this information to the public.

Classification 3: Private Park and Recreation Services

Only the user benefits with private park and recreation services. Most organizations price these services using a full cost-recovery strategy. The price of these services is intended to recover all fixed and variable costs associated with the service. Examples of private services are golf and tennis lessons for individuals, or high-end competitive sports for

CHAPTER 5: RECOMMENDATIONS

individual youths and adults. In both cases, there is a high cost to provide the service.

■ Objective II: Establish a Resident/Non-Resident Policy to be Supported by All Programming and Service Areas.

The CRPD will need to determine a **resident and non-resident policy** for each type of program and service offered. Services that need such a policy include **pools, golf, and rentals as well as programs**. The differential between the resident and non-resident should be communicated to the public and staff. Nationwide, pricing can be up to a difference of 50 percent. Staff should apply pricing differentials on programs and services in high demand.

■ Objective III: Implement Registration for Programs and Activities to Ensure Customer Service and Satisfaction, and to Enable the Department to Track Usage Levels, Revenue Goals, Life-Cycle Positions, Market Penetration, and Capacity Utilization of Facilities.

■ Objective IV: Continue to Implement and Expand the Scholarship Program That Allows Participants to Enroll When They are Unable to Pay.

Part of the CRPD philosophy says that no child should be turned away if he or she is unable to pay for a program or service. The scholarship program, Private Leisure Assistance for Youth (P.L.A.Y.), should be expanded to ensure that monies are available for such children. These scholarship funds are part of the only trust fund held by the CRPD.

The Development Section raises between \$50,000 and \$66,000 per year to fund this program. However, the population is growing, and demands for assistance will grow as well. The CRPD should be ready to accommodate this growth. Scholarships can be funded through partnerships with **foundations, grants, and local business sponsorships**. The CRPD also can establish a **work-related program** that lets children work with the staff to earn extra “points” or “dollars” to be used for programs and services.

■ Objective V: Use an Activity-Based Costing Program—Consistent throughout the Department—to Determine Actual Costs to Deliver Program Services.

■ Objective VI: Expand Funding Opportunities—Sponsorships, Partnerships, and Grants—for Programs.

Programming staff will need to work closely with the Development Section to seek more funding through sponsorships and grants. By pursuing a higher funding goal, the staff’s responsibilities will increase. Thus, **staffing levels will need to be supplemented**. The cost-benefit ratio of adding staff to secure higher funding goals can be determined so that the budget impact is positive.

■ Objective VII: Equip the Department with the Proper Technology and Training so the Staff is More Responsive and Effective When Delivering Services.

■ Objective VIII: Establish Adequate and Safe Staffing Levels for Delivering Services.

Recreation centers should be staffed based on **safety and security standards** for the capacity of the facility.

■ Objective IX: Meet the Needs of the Community; Support the Vision of the Department and the Mission of the Division or Section.

■ Objective X: Provide Program Services to the Public in a Manner That Ensures Marketing has Accurate and Complete Information to Promote and Advertise Programs with Sufficient Lead Times.

■ Objective XI: Link All Programs and Services Back to the Mission of the Division or Section.

Recommendations (Programs)

■ Recommendation 1: Determine core and non-core programs, and the market position for all recreation programs.

Currently, the following programs are considered CRPD **core programs**:

CHAPTER 5: RECOMMENDATIONS

- Arts;
- Day camps;
- Aquatics;
- Special events and festivals;
- Youth sports;
- Adult sports;
- Golf; and
- Senior programs (at the centers).

Core programs usually share these **five elements**:

1. The program is typically offered year-round.
2. The program takes a large percentage of the budget.
3. The program has a long history and provides a long-term impact in the city.
4. The program has elements of partnership(s).
5. The program has tiered levels of services with a wide demographic appeal.

Based on these five elements, the CRPD can begin to determine the **core services that should be provided** to Columbus, and the core services **that actually can be provided** at the quality levels that the staff can deliver.

Programs offered at the centers are a core service. The centers must view the community they serve as the immediate 1- to 2-mile radius if there is another center or another service provider overlapping the same area. If there are no other centers or service providers overlapping, the service area would be a maximum of 5 miles. This criteria would define the core audience, and programming should match the demographics of the radius. **If another center or service provider exists, the directors must know what is being offered and should either complement the programming and use cross-promotion opportunities, or offer different programming.** This philosophy will reduce duplication and meet the needs of the community.

The facility analysis and parks analysis produced recommendations to ensure service gaps within Columbus are filled. See “Recommendations (Parks)” and “Recommendations (Facilities)” in this chapter to review how service gaps will be eliminated by implementing park and facility standards.

■ **Recommendation 2: Establish core recreation programs and develop consistent**

operational standards that support the outcomes to be achieved.

After developing the department’s core programs, staff must determine the outcomes from delivering these services. The public will have their own expectations for the programs; **adopting standards for program delivery will ensure that the public receives the same level of service and quality no matter where the core program is offered.** Standards must be created as a unit—in cooperation with all staff—so staff has input and buy-in and understands completely the expectations and evaluation of delivery.

■ **Recommendation 3: Enable the entire department to accept credit and debit cards—as well as payments through the CRPD Web site—for customer convenience.**

Customers should be able to register not only by **phone and fax but also by the Internet.** Currently, a few programs can accept Web-based registration. For example, the sports Web site can accept payment for team registrations. This capability should be available for all sections.

■ **Recommendation 4: Establish a level of tax subsidy for each core program based on true costs—both direct and indirect.**

The staff must determine **pricing structures and subsidy levels** for all program types. Each program should be categorized by the subsidy level that the department will support. The department should then apply an activity-based costing model to each service provided. When programs are priced, the staff needs to identify all direct and indirect costs consistently for each program or service.

Forms need to be customized to match the CRPD budget forms and line items, and the model needs to be incorporated into the form. Overhead or indirect cost formulas should be used consistently throughout the department.

The number of participants determines the price of the program. A minimum number of participants should be established so the **break-even point** for the program is known. After the true cost of the program is determined, the appropriate tax subsidy level approved in the pricing policy can be applied to determine the price.

CHAPTER 5: RECOMMENDATIONS

After the price is determined, it can be benchmarked against the going market rate in the area. The best way to benchmark is to **compare per-unit costs** (cost per game, cost per hour, cost per class, etc.). If necessary, the duration of a program or season can be shortened or lengthened to make the price more appealing.

■ Recommendation 5: Expand revenue opportunities for programs.

The department should develop a revenue plan that allows the recreation programming section to **expand the types of programs offered**. These opportunities may include extended trips, specialized programs, and tourism-based programs, where service pricing is based on covering the costs and generating revenue.

The CRPD should seek out and implement various **earned income opportunities**. Staff should institute market-driven fees for appropriate program classifications. Sponsorship packages and advertising should be developed to support recreation programs.

■ Recommendation 6: Expand and market special events more regionally and as tourist attractions to achieve larger economic impacts.

■ Recommendation 7: Partner with other service providers and schools to expand programming.

■ Recommendation 8: Determine pricing structures and subsidy levels for all program types.

The CRPD should develop a pricing formula that uses **costs and recovery goals for achieving desired revenues**. Activity-based costing principles should be used to determine direct and indirect costs.

■ Recommendation 9: Equip the recreation program with more technology so staff can be more responsive and effective when delivering services.

The department is in the process of implementing a **registration system** for recreation programs. The ability to register and track participation will give the department a wealth of information about **who is being**

served, and how much of the community is being served through CRPD programs.

All programming facilities and personnel should have access to **computers and software** to boost productivity. All staff should be trained in software use. The Internet and Web pages should be used to convey program information to the public and allow registration capabilities online.

Software programs within the registration system should capture information about the customers/participants for all services and programs. Staff using the system should be able to **generate reports for making informed decisions on program life cycles, market draw, advertising, promotions, service gaps, and other actions**.

■ Recommendation 10: Reevaluate hours of operation as well as staffing levels.

Centers must be open **when the public is generally ready to recreate**. Typically this is 9 a.m. or 10 a.m. for younger children with their parents, after school, after 5 p.m., Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays.

■ Recommendation 11: Offer special events downtown on a monthly basis.

The CRPD should develop a calendar of events for downtown parks that capitalizes on the **higher concentrations of people during peak times**. Partnerships should be developed with downtown organizations to offer joint events and festivals and create sponsorship opportunities. The programs, department image, and identity should be promoted. The Recreation Section also should work with the Parks Services Section to understand the effects of special events downtown on staff and resources, and to schedule appropriately for programming.

■ Recommendation 12: Develop a mission or reestablish the mission statement for the Recreation Division.

The mission statement for the Recreation Division should be reevaluated to ensure it is **supporting the department's vision, mission, and the goals** of the master plan. The staff should meet to review, and if necessary, reword the statement and support its implementation.

CHAPTER 5: RECOMMENDATIONS

Performance measures should be instituted based on the vision and mission of the department and division. Such performance measures will focus resources on the core services to be offered and support the department's long-term goals.

Performance measures and standards for staff should be mutually set, agreed upon, and tied to merit increases. These standards can be set based on the following types of performance measures:

- Revenues to expenses;
- Customer satisfaction levels met;
- Capacity of use;
- Participation and return rates;
- Cost effectiveness;
- Partnership developed;
- Quality of services;
- Cost per experience;
- Programs offered vs. those held;
- Subsidy reductions met through cost-effective measures; and
- System efficiency levels met.

The CRPD should implement an **evaluation system for programs** to obtain feedback on the department's ability to meet the needs of participants and the community. Each section should develop a mission statement that drives the goals and objectives and that follows the department's vision.

■ Recommendation 13: Develop instructor standards.

Standards for instructors should support the division's goals and mirror the department's standards.

■ Recommendation 14: Establish consistent standards for classifying senior services.

Each section should have the **same age and access criteria for seniors**. All program staff, registration, and customer service staff should agree upon what age defines seniors. Staff may want to consider dropping the senior age bracket and treating all adults the same.

■ Recommendation 15: Develop and implement a recreation program strategy to service gaps in the community.

The registration system will allow the department to understand the market draw and audience reach for programs. **By knowing who**

is being reached, the department also will learn who is not being reached. Such gaps can be represented graphically through a GIS mapping system. The demographic and market-potential information can define total market share; this information can be used with the registration information to **determine the market share controlled by the CRPD.**

■ Recommendation 16: Develop lifetime customers.

Relationship marketing should be used to create lifelong customers. This does not mean selling one program or service at a time to as many customers as possible in a season. A relationship marketing strategy uses customer databases—the CRPD registration system—and targeted and interactive communications to sell one customer at a time as many programs and services as possible over the lifetime of that customer's patronage. Relationship marketing requires programmers to **manage customers individually** instead of managing programs and services. The strategy focuses on getting participants, and then keeping them as valuable customers.

Achieving this kind of marketing requires that program managers remember customers' preferences and tastes, times, children's names, etc. It means talking with customers continuously and creating reasons for customers to **remain loyal** and not turn to a competitor because of the "hassle factor" involved in reestablishing preferences.

Relationship marketing also means programmers must **develop programs that continue to advance customers and their families in interests and skills**. This transition is done customer by customer—not section by section. The CRPD can start with a few customers at a time, beginning with the most valuable customers, and build a foundation from there. Relationship marketing also means training staff members to be customer service-oriented in their approach to the public. The other benefit of relationship marketing can be the development of an individual donor base.

■ Recommendation 17: Complete the plan for providing program services to the public in a timely manner.

The CRPD must market programs more effectively, schedule appropriate facilities and

CHAPTER 5: RECOMMENDATIONS

staff, coordinate with park services for necessary support, and share resources among other recreation staff.

To be more effective in communicating to the public, recreation activities should be planned so **sufficient time remains for promotion and advertising**. Planning activities should be a collaborative effort with marketing, park services, facility scheduling, and other recreation providers.

■ **Recommendation 18: Cross-promote and share resources with other divisions and sections in the department.**

The CRPD should **institute monthly planning meetings and an annual forecast planning meeting** that encompasses multiple sections and outside service-provider information to identify areas for collaborations and cross promotions. All facility scheduling should be computerized.

■ **Recommendation 19: Provide a consistent promotional image to the public.**

The Recreation Division should implement the marketing standards initiated by the Development Section when producing fliers or other advertising and promotional materials. The current system does not consistently demonstrate the same image to the public. To increase awareness and recognition of the CRPD's image, all collateral material should follow the guidelines for effective marketing.

CRPD SERVICE AREA: PARKS

During the needs assessment, public input was clear: It is important to develop **new neighborhood parks, acquire land for open space, and develop more hiking/biking trails**. In addition, there are significant needs for **community parks and larger, district-scaled parks with large recreation/community centers**. Also important is the equitable **distribution of parks** throughout the city.

The value of the park system reaches beyond health, safety, and welfare, producing **economic benefit** to citizens and the city. The importance of parks to the citizens of Columbus

is evident; a significant majority supports both **fee increases** and **tax assessment** for a dedicated funding source to support park maintenance.

Objectives (Parks)

■ **Objective I: Establish Neighborhood Parks as the Basic Unit or Foundation of Service.**

The CRPD system is an aggregate of many programs, parks, facilities, and special events. **Neighborhood parks should be the most accessible element** of the system. By definition, neighborhood parks should be available daily to a maximum number of city residents. To encourage use, these parks should be within walking distance of most city residents.

■ **Objective II: Provide an Equitable Distribution of Parks throughout the City.**

All city residents should have access to city parks of **different sizes and classifications** that contain a variety of **amenities and experiences**. Proximity to parks helps encourage use of parks. Therefore, minimizing the distance people must travel to parks increases the likelihood they will visit parks regularly.

■ **Objective III: Ensure Safe, Equitable Access to and Within All City Parks.**

Residents' proximity to parks will increase the likelihood of visits as long as residents feel safe getting to and strolling through the park. Park designs should incorporate circulation features that ensure **safe access to facilities** within the park and well-lighted sidewalks leading to the park.

■ **Objective IV: Use Acreage Standards for Parks that are Appropriate for Columbus.**

While the published standard for overall park acreage in Columbus is 5.5 acres per 1,000 residents, the city is currently exceeding this standard by providing 10 acres per 1,000 residents. Thus, the **standard should be updated** and a new standard derived by comparing national guidelines with local needs and priorities.

CHAPTER 5: RECOMMENDATIONS

Standards also should be developed for **individual park classifications** to ensure that all levels of parkland are adequately represented in Columbus. For example, the Columbus Comprehensive Plan states that mini-parks should no longer be developed and that the ideal minimum size for new neighborhood parks should be 5 acres.

■ Objective V: Ensure that Parks are Maintained to a Designated Level.

One of the highest priorities that surfaced from the public participation program was “**take care of what you have.**” The maintenance level for parks should be established based on park type and location. To promote this objective, maintenance standards should be applied and updated as needed. For more information, see “CRPD Service Area: Park Services.”

Recommendations (Parks)

■ Recommendation 1: Make acquiring land for neighborhood parks a high priority.

Although there are more than 100 neighborhood parks in Columbus, **not all residents are within a one-half-mile radius of a neighborhood park or community park.** For residential areas not within a one-half-mile radius of a neighborhood or community park, **land should be acquired for park use** when possible. Most likely this would occur as areas redevelop and land is acquired as part of a redevelopment project. Another option is **sharing use of land with a school system;** such partnerships should be expanded. More specific recommendations are presented in the Land Acquisition section of this chapter.

■ Recommendation 2: Locate neighborhood parks within one-half mile of all neighborhoods.

Neighborhood parks are the backbone of the CRPD system and should be easily accessible to a maximum number of city residents. These parks should be within a reasonable walking distance, which is about **one-half mile.**

Currently CRPD uses a service radius of one-half to 1 mile. A new standard based on a one-half-mile distance would encourage patrons to **walk or bike to these parks.** The construction of parking lots at neighborhood parks should be discouraged.

In some areas, the service radius for neighborhood parks is affected where overlapping coverage occurs; in these areas, a barrier may prevent pedestrian access from portions of the service area. For example, the proximity of Walden Park, Forest Park East, Northtowne Park, and Granville Park to each other creates an overlapping service radius. In such instances, creating a **pedestrian connection** that links each park could give users the opportunity for a different park experience at each site. There would be no need for new parkland in these areas.

In other areas, a barrier such as a **high-capacity roadway** or a **natural feature** such as a river affects the service radius. Berwick Park is an example of service radii cut off by wide, high-capacity highways. To overcome barriers to pedestrian access, CRPD developed an underpass of the Alum Creek Trail as well as sidewalks to connect Madison Mills to the neighborhood.

CRPD **community parks** often must function as **neighborhood parks.** But in areas where there is not service-radius overlap between neighborhood and community parks, and where a barrier effectively eliminates access, the potential for **acquiring new parkland** or for **increasing bicycle and automobile access** should be investigated.

Because multifamily neighborhoods have much higher densities than single-family neighborhoods, the need is great for park acreage with walking connections.

■ Recommendation 3: Establish a stewardship plan for each park.

A stewardship plan for each park would take a **holistic approach** to the management of park property. Stewardship plans would be specific to individual parks and would establish **land and facility management requirements** for both active and passive areas. Natural resource management plans for parkland would be incorporated into the stewardship plan for each park. The stewardship approach would have goals similar to the **development of facility maintenance standards.** Stewardship plans should be made public so residents understand the need and are encouraged to act as volunteers to be aware of and help implement each stewardship plan.

CHAPTER 5: RECOMMENDATIONS

■ **Recommendation 4: Acquire enough land to meet recommended standards for all classifications of parkland.**

In **Chapter 3: Programs, Parks, and Facilities**, standards were suggested and a comparison made between **suggested standards** and the amount of **existing parkland** within the CRPD system. Based on this comparison, there is a **shortfall in the amount of parkland currently needed** by the Columbus population.

The following calculation shows the **amount of parkland that the CRPD should acquire** to meet standards based on the current Columbus population of 711,470, and the projected population of 1 million for the year 2010.

Neighborhood and Community Parks

- CRPD currently has 659 acres of neighborhood parks and 1,422 acres of community parks for a total of **2,081 acres**.
- Based on the **2000 Columbus population** of 711,470, the suggested standards state that a total of 711 acres of neighborhood parks and 2,844 acres of community parks are needed (3,555 acres suggested—2,081 acres currently = **1,474-acre shortfall** currently).
- Based on the **projected 2010 Columbus population** of 1 million, the suggested standards state that a total of **1,000 acres** of neighborhood parks and 4,000 acres of community parks are needed (5,000 acres recommended – 2,081 acres currently = **2,919 additional acres to be acquired**).
- **Neighborhood parks make up 20 percent** of the recommended park acreage, and **community parks make up 80 percent**. Therefore, of the 2,919-acre projected shortfall for 2010, **584 acres** should be acquired for neighborhood parks, and **2,335 acres** should be acquired for community parks.

Regional Parks

- CRPD currently has **3,266 acres** of regional parks and more than **6,000 acres** of reservoir recreational land; in addition, Metro Parks operates more than **10,000 acres** of regional parkland accessible to Columbus residents for a total of more than **19,266 acres**.
- Based on the 2000 Columbus population of 711,470, the suggested standards state that a total of **7,110 acres of regional parks** are needed.
- Based on the **projected 2010 Columbus population** figure of 1 million, the suggested standards state that a total of **10,000 acres of regional parks** are needed by 2010. Therefore, there is no need to acquire land for regional parks.

Parkland Total by 2010

- Adding 2,919 acres of neighborhood and community parks to the city's parkland means parkland will make up **8.6 percent** of the city's land area.

■ **Recommendation 5: Establish a standard of parkland acreage per capita that is appropriate for Columbus.**

Columbus' currently published parkland-acreage standard of 5.5 acres per 1,000 residents, which includes both active and passive recreation, **falls below a recommended National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) guideline** of 11 acres to 20 acres per 1,000 residents.

However, when the existing amount of city parkland acreage—7,500 acres—is compared with the 2000 population of 711,470, then **Columbus has a ratio that is just below the low end** of the NRPA guideline. Columbus' park-acreage standard should be based on land acreage for **neighborhood, community, district, regional, linear, and conservation parks**. To meet current and future demands for parks and open space, the city should redefine the PDO by comparing Columbus' park acreage against benchmark cities.

CHAPTER 5: RECOMMENDATIONS

■ **Recommendation 6: Revise the city’s park classification system to include a designation for district park.**

The current CRPD park classification system has no designation for a **district park**. To promote a greater level of equity in park distribution, the city should establish **five Planning Districts**—Northwest, Northeast, Southwest, Southeast, and Central—covering the same geographic areas used during the public participation program (see Chapter 4: Needs Assessment). **The CRPD should then incorporate a district park within each of the five districts.**

Each district park should be a **signature park** that includes passive and active recreation activities and a district community/recreation center. The district park should include enough acreage to develop the types of activities desired within each district and support sustainability.

■ **Recommendation 7: Reevaluate existing properties and facilities to determine if each meets the needs of the CRPD.**

The CRPD system includes numerous categories of land and a wide variety of facilities. An evaluation should be made to determine if **each property and facility fits the department’s mission and needs**. Evaluation criteria should include:

- Conservation of natural resources;
- Active outdoor recreation opportunities;
- Opportunities to establish or expand cultural/indoor recreation facilities;
- Strong consideration for the future; and
- Input from the communities affected.

The CRPD should consider the possibility of **“trading” land with developers** if a high-priority parcel is available during the PDO process and the advantage to the public is clearly stated and established.

Conversely, properties and facilities should be considered for removal from the CRPD system if they are not consistent with the department’s mission. For example, the value and purpose of leased properties or facilities should be considered.

■ **Recommendation 8: Evaluate access and circulation barriers to city parks.**

Barriers that prevent adequate pedestrian access bisect some city parks. These barriers include both interstate and local roadways, and waterways. Sometimes **vehicular access is inconvenient** because nearby residents have to drive some distance to access the park. As future parkland is acquired, these **accessibility issues should be considered**.

■ **Recommendation 9: Continue developing multi-use trails throughout the city.**

In the Columbus area, the major focus for 2010 will be developing a **regional network of greenways and on-street bikeways** totaling approximately 165 miles that will link parklands, stream corridors, Metro Parks, and surrounding community trail systems into an integrated, easily accessible system. The plan also includes providing greenway corridors along Blacklick Creek, Big Walnut Creek, Scioto River, and Big Run. (**See Figure 5-1.**)

As gaps in the corridor plans are identified, the CRPD should work actively with public and private interests, including developers, utility companies, private owners, and civic organizations to link the remaining scenic easements or make land acquisitions.

■ **Recommendation 10: Coordinate with the Columbus Planning Division, and the Transportation and Public Service departments, to enhance pedestrian connections.**

Pedestrian access is a key element of the neighborhood park, which is primarily for residents within a one-half-mile radius. Generally these parks will not have parking lots; this encourages walking and biking to the park.

As neighborhood or area plans are updated, the city should identify a **one-half-mile radius around parks and schools as “pedestrian priority zones.”** These pedestrian areas should be high priority for upgrading the existing pedestrian circulation system and constructing new sidewalks and/or bike paths. Traffic-calming measures should be implemented within this zone to ensure pedestrian safety. In addition, the CRPD should continue coordinating with COTA to provide transit stops at as many community, district, and regional parks as possible.

CHAPTER 5: RECOMMENDATIONS

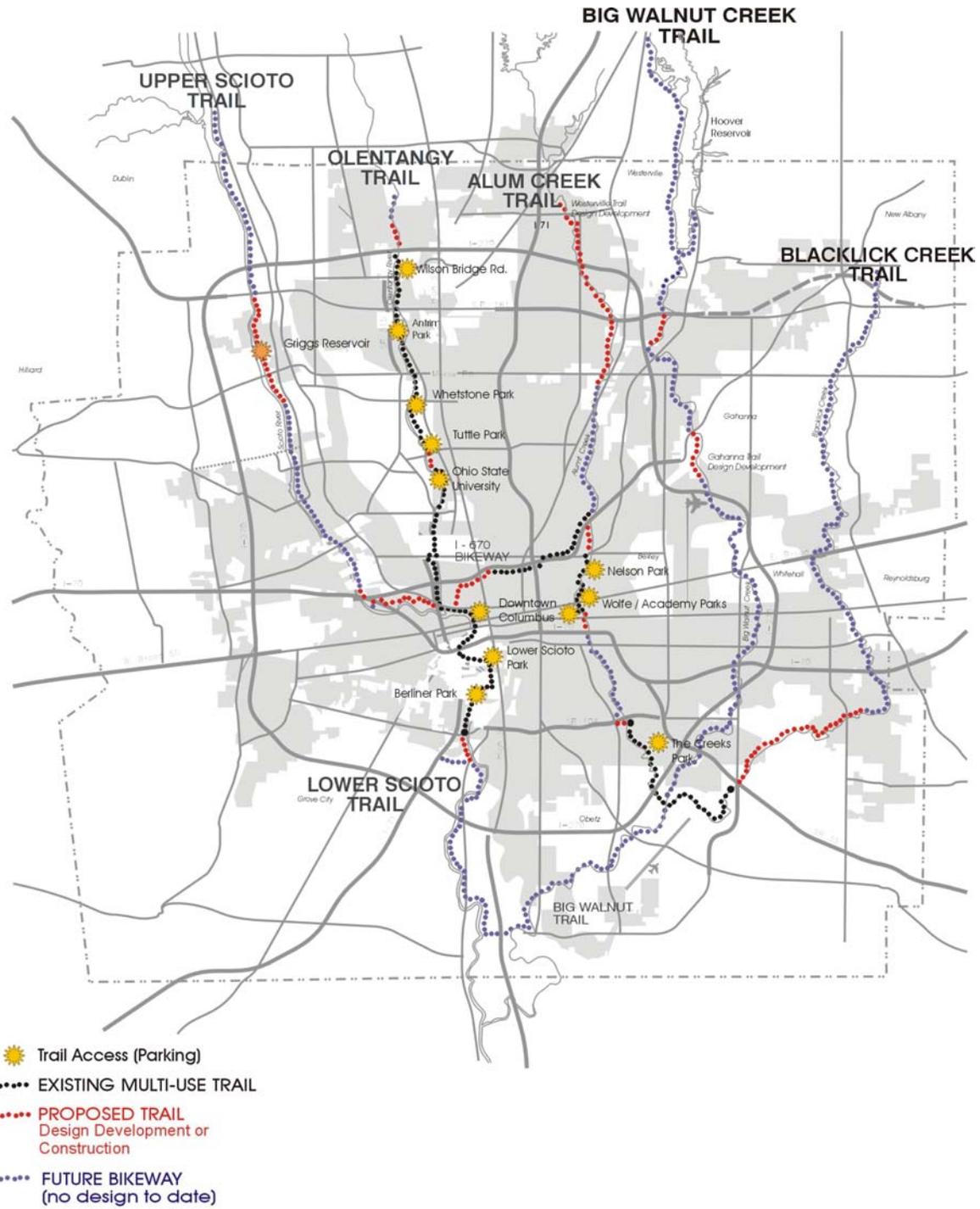


Figure 5-1

Multi-Use Trails

Recreation and Parks Master Plan
City of Columbus, Ohio

CHAPTER 5: RECOMMENDATIONS

■ Recommendation 11: Make facilities within a park accessible to pedestrians.

When patrons reach a park—particularly parks with active recreation—a pedestrian-friendly circulation system should allow easy and safe access to shelters, play areas, and ball fields.

■ Recommendation 12: Use the city’s Web site to let the public view project designs and provide input.

As the CRPD develops master plans for new facilities and parks, the public is involved at various stages. However, not all residents can attend meetings. To encourage maximum participation, the **master plan/design process should be accessible on the city’s Web site** for review by the public.

CRPD SERVICE AREA: FACILITIES

The quality and condition of recreation facilities relate directly to **customer satisfaction, facility use, and revenue generation**. Often, deferred maintenance and obsolescence have eroded the usability and attractiveness of CRPD facilities. Other well-kept facilities are good examples of how up-to-date facilities are appreciated and used.

Recreation/community centers are among the most heavily used CRPD assets. The needs assessment/public participation program indicated a need for **upgrading** existing centers and **developing** a new generation of larger, more comprehensive centers. Facilities will require a large percentage of both **capital and operating budgets** between now and 2010.

Objectives (Facilities)

■ Objective I: Upgrade and Maintain Facilities to a Designated Standard.

All facilities should adopt and use an **annual, systematic evaluation** to determine compliance with a pre-determined maintenance standard. This standard should be constructed to satisfy varying aspects of maintenance requirements for all facilities.

■ Objective II: Establish an Equitable Distribution of Community Centers throughout the City.

Community centers provide numerous activities and services to city residents and are an important element of the quality of life in Columbus. **Minimizing the distance residents must travel** to reach a community center could encourage a high level of use.

■ Objective III: Update Facilities to Accept Current Technology.

All existing facilities should allow the integration of **current hardware** required by today’s technology. The update plan should allow for flexibility in incorporating **future changes** in technology. This technology must serve the needs of staff and patrons as it relates to revenue-generating activities.

■ Objective IV: Equip Revenue-Generating Facilities to be Competitive in the Marketplace.

Park facilities can compete for activities involving rentals needed by groups or private parties. However, these park facilities must offer **attractive amenities** to the public. Such amenities should serve the needs of large gatherings held by businesses and private groups (e.g., receptions, retreats, reunions, and seminars). It is likely that **amenity upgrades involving technology** may be required as mentioned in Objective III above.

■ Objective V: Ensure Equitable Access to All Facilities.

Equitable distribution of and access to facilities benefit city residents as well as the CRPD. **Equitable access** focuses on the efficiency of residents getting to nearby facilities. Facilities should have pedestrian access and be served by the COTA system.

■ Objective VI: Encourage Shared-Use Facilities with Other Organizations.

Facility sharing would lower facility maintenance and construction costs for the CRPD and encourage **collaboration**; agreements would recognize the needs for activities and programs. A shared-use facility also would expose some community members—who would not otherwise have visited a park facility—to the park’s programs and activities.

CHAPTER 5: RECOMMENDATIONS

An agreement for a shared-use facility must be based on an **equitable partnership**. Each partner's contribution should be outlined and monetary values attached to demonstrate the balance of contributions.

The following are **examples** of shared-use facilities/partnerships in other locations:

- Outdoor pools at schools/parks with the Parks and Recreation Department in Mesa, Arizona;
- Indoor aquatic centers in Indianapolis, Indiana, with schools;
- Skatepark in Greenville, Ohio (the city parks and the county parks combined funds and together sought other funding to develop this park); and
- The Pacific Science Museum and Centrum Arts are partnering with Washington State Parks for buildings and for providing programming and increased tourist opportunities.

■ Objective VII: Encourage Rehabilitation and Reuse of Existing Structures for Facility Development.

When a new facility is needed, the CRPD should evaluate the feasibility of **rehabilitating and reusing** existing commercial, school, or other vacant structures nearby before deciding to build a new facility. The structure should fit the plan, and improvements must be cost effective.

Recommendations (Facilities)

■ Recommendation 1: Develop a database for life-cycle information.

A database should be compiled to document information about **installation and maintenance dates** for various systems within each facility. Some of these items may include HVAC systems, food-preparation equipment, and selected athletic equipment. The database could be used in evaluating life-cycle budgeting and projected purchases.

■ Recommendation 2: Develop a life-cycle analysis for each facility to anticipate when updates will be needed.

A facility life-cycle analysis involves evaluating the condition and projected life of that system, combined with maintenance costs. This information can be used to decide **whether to**

purchase a new system with its inherent long-term maintenance costs, or to **continue with the existing system** and incur regular upgrades plus maintenance costs. Initially, these decisions should be based on actual life and quality of the facility, and the possibility of facility replacement in the long term.

■ Recommendation 3: Include life-cycle costs in budgets.

Information gained from the life-cycle database and analysis should result in an **outline of long-range costs** projected to occur regularly. For example:

- A particular water-heating system is expected to have a 10-year life; the initial cost is \$30,000.
- The annual maintenance is \$1,000.
- Thus, the annual expenditure throughout the life of the system is \$4,000.

The viability of this expenditure can then be measured against the expected life span of the facility.

■ Recommendation 4: Establish a standard for each facility classification.

By drawing on the resources of Park Services and Recreation staff, the CRPD should develop **minimum development standards** for each facility type to:

- Provide a **uniform minimum level of service** across the system; and
- **Standardize certain equipment** and details for more efficient operation.

Benchmark cities can provide examples for these standards. A mechanism will be needed to monitor the implementation and maintenance of standards.

■ Recommendation 5: Implement facility maintenance evaluations.

The CRPD should implement **annual maintenance evaluations** for each facility to ensure timely reporting of each facility's condition. This information can be linked to the life-cycle analysis database for a more comprehensive record of equipment performance.

CHAPTER 5: RECOMMENDATIONS

■ **Recommendation 6: Construct or upgrade a district-wide community center in each of the five Planning Districts.**

Establishing a **district-wide community center** in each of the five Planning Districts will ensure that all Columbus residents will be within a short distance of a comprehensive facility containing a variety of programs and amenities. These facilities could be established by upgrading a facility that already exists in a central location within the district, or by constructing a new facility.

■ **Recommendation 7: Develop new facilities to produce positive revenue streams.**

For new facilities, the CRPD should evaluate actual costs for services provided and **charge a fee that produces a positive revenue flow**. This recommendation would let the CRPD continue providing quality services and offer new programs that involve more capital investment.

■ **Recommendation 8: Reevaluate hours of operation as well as staffing levels.**

The use of neighborhood facilities can fluctuate daily, weekly, or seasonally. Each facility needs to be **evaluated**, and programs and staff **readjusted**, to better serve the needs of immediate users. This also can produce a cost savings from reduced energy consumption related to heating, cooling, and lighting.

■ **Recommendation 9: Continue coordinating with COTA to ensure public transportation to community, senior, and cultural arts centers.**

Most current CRPD facilities have **transit stops** nearby. The CRPD should coordinate with COTA to ensure that all stops provide benches, protect passengers from bad weather and are well lighted to provide a sense of safety.

A **sidewalk** should connect transit stops to CRPD facilities. As part of the facility maintenance evaluations, the CRPD should incorporate **condition inspections** of transit stops, and create a coordination mechanism with COTA to ensure a rapid response to **maintenance issues**.

New facilities constructed should be “transit friendly.” Transit stops should be integrated into the facility designs—particularly for senior centers.

■ **Recommendation 10: Continue coordinating with the Columbus Planning Division and other public service departments to enhance pedestrian connections to parks and community, senior, and cultural arts centers.**

As neighborhood or area plans are updated, the city should identify a **one-half-mile radius** around community centers, senior centers, cultural arts centers, schools, or other shared facilities as “**pedestrian priority zones**.” These areas should be a high priority for upgrading the existing pedestrian circulation system and constructing new sidewalks and/or bike paths. **Traffic-calming measures** should be implemented within these zones to ensure pedestrian safety.

■ **Recommendation 11: Strengthen the partnership with Columbus Public Schools and other school districts within the city.**

There is a strong need for **Columbus Public schools and the CRPD to plan together**. City Code Chapter 3121 expressly encourages joint development between the two organizations. It is recommended that written agreements replace verbal agreements so that each party clearly understands obligations and responsibilities. These written agreements should be reviewed and updated every two to three years.

Other school districts within the Columbus city limits also should become partners with the CRPD to create opportunities that benefit both organizations.

■ **Recommendation 12: Develop facility design standards.**

Consistent facility designs will help ensure equitable distribution and establish an acceptable minimum quality for all new and remodeled facilities. In addition, **consistent designs** can significantly lower maintenance costs. Standards should establish space and equipment requirements and basic construction standards.

CHAPTER 5: RECOMMENDATIONS

CRPD SERVICE AREA: SAFETY AND SECURITY

Maintaining high standards of safety and security within the parks is essential to the success of the park system's future. High levels of security provide two important benefits:

- Security attracts and retains external customers; and
- Security raises the economic value of the community and neighborhoods.

High standards of safety internally at the CRPD will positively affect the park system operations by **decreasing injuries and increasing staff productivity**. A work environment free of hazards—coupled with updated equipment—will allow staff to operate more efficiently.

Objectives (Safety and Security)

■ **Objective I: Ensure All Parks and Recreation Facilities Have Safety and Security Standards.**

Parks and facilities should have a set of **standards** developed by staff from park services, recreation, and customer service. These standards should be **monitored and evaluated continuously** to ensure consistency. Standards should encompass items such as lighting, playgrounds, walkways, trees, parking lots, trails, and access points.

■ **Objective II: Institute Measures to Help Staff Ensure that Internal Work Areas are Safe.**

Each facility should develop an **operations manual** that includes safety and security standards that not only comply with OSHA standards but also with city and CRPD standards for a safe working environment. A **safety inspection form** can be developed to assist staff with compliance.

■ **Objective III: Develop a Partnership with the Columbus Police Department, Metro Parks, and the Neighborhoods that Encourages Involvement in Maintaining Safety in the Parks.**

A **neighborhood watch program** should be initiated wherever parks and trails are located near a neighborhood. A **volunteer program** can augment the watch program if there are no neighborhoods nearby. Staff should assist the Police Department in securing and developing these types of neighborhood relationships.

The **Police Department and Metro Parks** can be useful partners in training and evaluating security procedures. The partnership with Metro Parks at Three Creeks is a good model to use for Columbus parks near a Metro Parks regional park. A stronger presence in areas where security is an issue can reduce and eliminate unwanted activities.

■ **Objective IV: Design and Manage Parks to Sustain Safety and Security Practices.**

A combination of practices is required when designing a park for safety and security. The **Urban Parks Institute** offers many suggestions for guiding these improvements:

- Reduce isolation in the parks by using **signage with park design layouts** to direct people to more heavily populated areas in case they feel unsafe.
- **Reduce** the amount of derelict or **problematic land** surrounding the park.
- Locate restrooms and/or portable toilets beside activity areas or entrances to encourage **ease of surveillance**.
- Install public telephones in visible locations.
- Create **active edges** that can increase park accessibility to users who may feel more vulnerable in the park interior, and take advantage of existing streetlights.
- Have **entrances that are easily seen** and highly visible to promote casual use by passersby.
- Ensure there are **clear lines of sight** to playgrounds, fields, courts, and other park amenities by reducing manmade structures—walls, fences, and sheds—as well as bushes and other vegetation that block views.
- Create park-circulation designs that **connect and integrate** surrounding communities.
- Maintain primary access routes that are **clearly identifiable**.
- **Illuminate** pedestrian and vehicular routes, recreation facilities, and activity areas.
- **Mow multi-use trail edges** 2 to 3 yards to create a feeling of openness and increase visibility.

CHAPTER 5: RECOMMENDATIONS

- Ensure that trails have destination points of **higher visibility** and do not dead end.
- Position or direct lights so they extend beyond the edge of paths and **illuminate concealment areas**.
- Use **hierarchy types of lights** and intensities where appropriate.
- Use **lights** in coordination with **signage** to assist pedestrians.
- **Place signs at entryways, activity areas, and intersections** of paths and trails; these signs should have information on the park layout and indications of where patrons are in relationship to the layout (e.g., “You Are Here”).
- Use **trail markers**.

■ Objective V: Become a Leader in Advocating Recreation Safety for the City.

The CRPD can institute a number of **practices and policies** to increase overall safety for the recreation user and the recreation experience. By reducing safety and security incidences in the parks and recreation facilities, these policies can demonstrate to city departments the effectiveness of implementing safety and security measures. Standards can be recognized by agencies such as OSHA, NRPA, and the Ohio Recreation and Parks Association (OPRA). The department should practice good public relations by submitting its safety and security program for awards that recognize the department’s leadership role in this area.

Recommendations (Safety and Security)

■ **Recommendation 1: Design parks for safety during both acquisition and implementation.**

Passive supervision is the key factor for park safety. Park parcels acquired must have good and clear visibility from the street. Park development standards should be adopted (e.g., frontage on a street at a 100-foot minimum). Single-loaded streets adjacent to a park could be developed as an extension of the park to provide better visual access.

It is important to provide clear and open passage near structures, which might otherwise block views. Within undeveloped or conservation areas, invasive species such as honeysuckle creates site barriers to safety. Removing this type of invasive shrub provides

the CRPD two benefits: **safety and habitat restoration**.

■ **Recommendation 2: Develop a partnership with Metro Parks to share the use of park rangers for patrolling city parks.**

■ **Recommendation 3: Budget for and install additional security lighting in all parks and along bikeways and trails where appropriate.**

■ **Recommendation 4: Work with the Columbus Police Department and neighborhoods to develop a “neighborhood park watch” program, and encourage the police department to schedule regular patrols of parks.**

■ **Recommendation 5: Explore the potential of establishing a park ranger program to patrol parks and events.**

Existing unions and statutes surrounding these types of employees will make it challenging to implement such a program.

■ **Recommendation 6: Develop and offer classes and programs to the public that encourage park and water safety.**

■ **Recommendation 7: Ensure that all staff in the workplace are complying with safety measures.**

■ **Recommendation 8: Develop safe and secure methods for staffing facilities and handling money.**

■ **Recommendation 9: Create a process, to be used by staff and the public, for reporting unsafe conditions in the parks.**

CRPD SERVICE AREA: LAND ACQUISITION

One of the most important actions identified during the public participation program was the **acquisition of land for open space**. In addition, the **shortfall** of neighborhood and community parkland acreage requires land acquisition. Much of the shortfall exists outside the I-270 beltway, where some open land still remains.

CHAPTER 5: RECOMMENDATIONS

Land acquisition does not always require purchase; however, it does require an **organized program** of identifying land needs, regional locations, and potential acquisition properties. The acquisition strategy should be based upon priorities outlined in Chapter 4 and should guide a portion of the Capital Improvement Program as outlined in Chapter 6.

Objectives (Land Acquisitions)

■ Objective I: Ensure that Land Acquisitions Support the Department’s Mission.

Land acquired by CRPD should strike a balance between **active recreational parks and facilities** and **passive open space** to offer programs and experiences that can be enjoyed by all residents of Columbus.

■ Objective II: Balance Land Acquisition with Community Needs.

Community input during the master planning process revealed a concern about the need to **acquire land vs. the need to maintain current parks and facilities to a higher standard**. Land acquisition should be determined based on several factors, thus ensuring that land acquisition costs do not negatively affect maintenance budgets.

■ Objective III: Acquire Land Strategically for Future Park Development or Open Space, Natural/Cultural Resource Conservation, or Future Use.

The long-term acquisition of land by the CRPD should not be based simply on availability of a parcel or availability of land through the PDO. Land acquisition should be based on a number of factors including **projected growth patterns and projected park needs** in each Planning District. Each Planning District proposed in this plan should have a district park master plan for facilities and parks to provide an equitable distribution for residents.

Recommendations (Land Acquisition)

■ Recommendation 1: Modify the Parkland Dedication Ordinance (PDO).

The current land dedication ordinance should be revised to increase the number of parks within walking distance of residents’ homes. The PDO should require **a minimum of 10 acres** (active and passive) per 1,000 residents, and use a 5.5-acre standard for active recreation.

Along with language revisions to the ordinance, the modified PDO should state that:

- Land donations will be **deeded** when the case is heard at City Council;
- Funds should be set aside for **land appraisals**;
- Annual PDO **performance reports** will be prepared for public review; and
- Different land use patterns such as Traditional Neighborhood Development (**TND**) **codes** are taken into account.

■ Recommendation 2: Balance the need for parkland with the reality of funding for maintenance.

The 1993 Columbus Comprehensive Plan states that vest-pocket parks are not a high priority for acquisition, and if they are acquired, they would likely function as a gateway to a neighborhood or commercial district—not as a neighborhood park.

New CRPD acquisitions, donations, and dedications of land should meet the **neighborhood park minimum of 5 acres**. The requirement for dedicating civic spaces greater than 1 acre in TNDs should be revisited to determine if it meets community needs and desires for neighborhood parks. These very small open spaces should be owned and maintained by civic/business organizations and/or neighborhood/homeowner associations. Since all land has an associated maintenance cost, the CRPD should consider establishing a level of operation funding that can be part of any parkland donation. The donation should be sized to endow the minimum upkeep of the land. It also will be important to create a link between the land acquisition program and the operational budget so that **any budget established for land acquisition triggers a budget adjustment for maintaining that land**.

■ Recommendation 3: Establish objective criteria for evaluating parcels being considered for acquisition.

CHAPTER 5: RECOMMENDATIONS

The CRPD should establish a **written list of criteria** to evaluate whether a potential property should be acquired. Criteria for both potential active and passive recreation sites should be created to evaluate whether the parcel would provide value to the department and meet the CRPD mission.

Staff from the Planning and Design Section, Parks/Facility Maintenance Section, and Community Recreation Section should help establish **objective evaluation criteria and review each potential parcel**. Such criteria could include, but might not be limited to, the following:

- Existing and future land use/demographic patterns to ensure equitable distribution and appropriate neighboring land use;
- Quality of natural resources;
- Presence of cultural resources;
- Potential for park/facility linkage;
- Location of land;
- Location and classification of existing parkland in the vicinity;
- Proximity to a waterway;
- Pedestrian and vehicular access;
- Recreation value;
- Multiple-use benefit;
- Cost/benefit of the land acquisition;
- Method of acquisition; and
- Urgency for land acquisition.

■ **Recommendation 4: Acquire land that would link parks, community centers, local cultural facilities, and schools.**

Pedestrian circulation throughout the city and Franklin County is improving thanks to the continued efforts of the CRPD and other city departments, Metro Parks, Franklin County, MORPC, and other communities in the region.

Greenway and bike-path-development coordination will offer hundreds of miles of walking, biking, and running opportunities in the region. Greenways and trails will allow other facilities such as COSI, schools, libraries, and cultural heritage areas such as Underground Railroad elements to be accessed and protected. Additional educational and cultural partnerships and programs could be developed if access to additional facilities is developed.

Access between parks can allow residents to improve their physical fitness and provide corridors for wildlife. Land along waterways, abandoned railroad beds—and in some cases along vacated city streets—could be woven

together into a comprehensive pedestrian circulation system. This system also should be incorporated into the “**pedestrian priority zones**” around parks and schools.

Although most linkages should be acquired with a focus on providing healthy pedestrian activities, some **linear land acquisition** might include property that simply provides **open space**. The CRPD should continue coordinating with the Columbus Planning Division and Public Service Department to identify land that could decrease storm water runoff and improve water quality by preserving buffers along waterways.

■ **Recommendation 5: Give sites with natural resources a high priority for passive recreation.**

Linear areas along waterways are an important part of natural resource conservation in the city. Wetlands, ravines, land that includes critical habitat for threatened and endangered species, and large patches of undeveloped land are **high priorities for land acquisition**.

Linkages should be acquired to **minimize the fragmentation of natural areas** and improve the ecological value of these parcels. Partnerships and programs with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, the Nature Conservancy, and other non-profit agencies would increase the viability of natural resource conservation.

■ **Recommendation 6: Use various techniques for acquiring land.**

A **land acquisition strategy** should involve several methods that include:

- Fee simple land purchases;
- Land donations/gifts;
- Leases;
- Easements;
- Partnerships;
- Tax foreclosures;
- Property condemnation; and
- Land exchanges.

■ **Recommendation 7: Be proactive in acquiring land.**

As the city continues to grow, the needs for parkland continue to grow as well. There are currently many areas in Columbus that should be served by **neighborhood parks**. These needs must still be met; however, meeting

CHAPTER 5: RECOMMENDATIONS

these needs is partially a reactionary response. Underused land in the older, urbanized portions of the city should be identified as redevelopment opportunities that would result in land allocated through the PDO process.

A **proactive response** includes identifying lands that may be outside the current city limits, particularly in portions of the county where growth is most likely. Proactive acquisition should be a priority for establishing community, district, or regional parks that would provide large complexes for ball fields since these types of parks have similar effects on nearby land uses as regional shopping malls.

CRPD SERVICE AREA: PARK SERVICES

Manpower

The team of parks and facilities maintenance, forestry, and horticulture services is a **highly organized and productive group** at the CRPD. Traditionally, this team has performed reactionary services vs. taking a more cost-effective preventive/proactive approach to maintenance needs.

This team has survived with minimal staffing by using shortcuts and efficiency measures wherever possible. For example, the **trades staff** for facilities consists of the following:

- Two electricians;
- One plumber;
- Two HVAC service personnel;
- Two painters; and
- Two carpenters.

The staff is designated to serve 143 facilities that include 31 recreation centers, three administrative buildings, 11 pools, seven golf courses, and the art facilities.

The parks maintenance staff consists of 58 full-time staff, three part-time year-round staff, and 28 part-time, seasonal staff. This crew is expected to maintain more than 200 parks, 225 fields and courts, 132 street islands and median strips, 120 playground sites, boat docks, ponds, lakes, and 27 miles of trails. This staff also provides recreation program support for various sections of the department.

Land Acquisition and Development

From 1998 through the first half of 2001, the department acquired 347 additional acres. Approximately 71 percent of that land will need maintenance of varying degrees—from low-level mowing and minimal care, to high-intensity maintenance of sports fields, playgrounds, shelters, trails, and lawns. **Maintenance efforts have been increased to meet the demands of the community**—but without increasing the capabilities of Park Services.

Equipment

Park Services is becoming more inefficient because it is unable to replace old equipment with newer, more efficient equipment. When equipment is out of service, the number of efficient manhours is reduced. However, productivity can be increased with **newer equipment**. For example, a new mower can mow 12 to 15 acres in the same amount of time it takes for an old mower to mow 6 to 7 acres. If the number of staff will remain small, equipment should be replaced to sustain efficiencies.

Assets

Currently, Park Services maintains facilities in a reactionary mode instead of performing preventive maintenance proactively. Thus, the **lack of preventive maintenance** is diminishing the value of the city's assets.

According to the American Public Works Association (APWA), 3 percent to 5 percent of total asset values should go toward maintenance annually. For example, a recreation center with an asset value of \$200,000 should have a preventive maintenance budget of \$6,000 to \$10,000 annually for painting, repairs, replacements, and upgrades to electrical, plumbing, and HVAC systems.

The CRPD's 28 recreation facilities have an average asset value of \$200,000; thus, the **annual maintenance budget should be from \$186,000 to \$310,000**. These figures do not include pools, shelters, restrooms, golf courses, administrative offices, and other buildings within the CRPD.

CHAPTER 5: RECOMMENDATIONS

Trails

One of the highlights of Columbus' parks is the **greenways trail system**, which is extensively used. Access and connections to this system are fast becoming an expectation in new development areas.

Currently the CRPD has 35 miles of 10-foot to 12-foot asphalt trails. The department's goal is to have 155 miles of trails eventually.

Trails have long-term maintenance impacts just like any recreation facility. Maintaining trails can cost anywhere from \$10,000 to \$14,000 per mile for 10-foot to 12-foot asphalt trails; these figures include staff, equipment, and resources such as mowing, trash pickup, brush hogging, repairs to benches, lighting, trail markers, and trail repaving/resealing. The long-range impact of this trail system could reach more than \$1.5 million in maintenance costs annually when completed. Not only would manpower have to be increased but a strong volunteer base would have to assist where possible.

Forestry

Forestry responds to emergency storm calls and is responsible for maintaining 130,000 records for street trees in the right-of-way. These responsibilities significantly affect the health, safety, and welfare of the community. Forestry has a five-man crew that performs regular maintenance to street trees; maintenance records are stored in a database. Records maintenance should remain a high priority for the City of Columbus.

Standards

Parks and facilities should adopt performance standards. The following examples of **national standards** could be used as a foundation for developing Columbus' park standards. The CRPD should determine the number of modes and which standards to include. Each park and facility should be assessed to determine what level is necessary and desired. Developing standards will **assist in long-range budgeting and planning as new parkland is acquired**.

■ Mode 1

Mode 1 is **state-of-the-art maintenance** applied to a high-quality diverse landscape, usually associated with high-traffic urban areas

such as public squares, malls, governmental grounds, or high-visitation parks. Examples:

- **Turf care:** Height of grass is specified according to variety of grass. Grass is mowed at least every five working days. Aeration is performed no less than four times per year. Reseeding or sodding is performed as necessary. Weed control is included.
- **Litter control:** Performed once a day, seven days a week. If the area has extremely high visitation, frequency is increased.
- **Inspection:** Conducted daily by staff.
- **Restrooms:** Serviced at least once a day at a minimum. High-traffic areas may require multiple services per day.
- **Floral plantings:** Extensive plantings are usually part of the design. Multiple plantings are scheduled for at least two blooming cycles per year; maximum care including watering, fertilizing, disease control, disbudding, and weeding is necessary. Weeding is done a minimum of once a week; the desired standard is "weed free."

■ Mode 2

Mode 2 is high-level maintenance associated with well-developed park areas with reasonably high visitation. Examples:

- **Turf care:** Grass is mowed every five working days. Aeration is performed as required, but not less than twice a year. Reseeding or sodding is performed when bare spots are present. Weed control is practiced when weeds present a visible problem, or when weeds represent 5 percent of the turf surface.
- **Litter control:** Performed once a day, five days per week. Service can depend on use by the public and container size. Containers are serviced; high use may dictate once-a-day cleaning of containers.
- **Inspection:** Performed by staff at least once a day when regular staff is scheduled.
- **Floral plantings:** Some sort of floral planting is present, usually no more complex than two rotations of blooms per year. The care cycle is usually at least once a week; watering may be performed more frequently. Plant health and vigor dictate cycle of fertilization and disease control; beds are essentially kept weed free.
- **Restrooms:** Serviced at least once a day if open to the public; high use may dictate

CHAPTER 5: RECOMMENDATIONS

two servicings per day. Servicing should ensure an adequate supply of paper and that restrooms are reasonably clean and free from odors.

■ Mode 3

Mode 3 is a **moderate level of maintenance** at locations with moderate to low levels of development. A moderate level is performed at locations with moderate visitation; because of budget restrictions, these areas cannot afford a high intensity of maintenance. Examples:

- **Turf care:** Grass, mowed once every 10 working days, is normally not aerated unless turn quality indicates a need. Weed-control measures are typically used when 50 percent of small areas is weed infested, or the general turn quality is 15 percent or more of the surface area.
- **Litter control:** Performed a minimum of two to three times a week.
- **Inspections:** Performed once a week.
- **Floral plantings:** Only perennials or flowering trees or shrubs are included.
- **Restrooms:** When present, restrooms are serviced a minimum of five times a week, and seldom more than once per day.

■ Mode 4

Mode 4 is a moderately low level usually associated with a low level of development, low visitation, undeveloped areas, or remote parks. Examples:

- **Turf care:** A low-frequency mowing schedule is used based on species. Low-growing grasses may not be mowed; high grasses may receive periodic mowing to reduce safety hazards and aid in public use. Weed control is limited to legal requirements for noxious weeds.
- **Litter control:** Performed once a week or less.
- **Inspections:** Performed once a month.
- **Floral plantings:** None. More often wildflowers, perennials, flowering trees, or shrubs are in place.
- **Restrooms:** When present, restrooms are serviced five times per week.

■ Mode 5

Mode 5 includes high-visitation natural areas usually associated with large urban or regional parks. The size and user frequency may dictate

resident maintenance staff. Road and pathway or trail systems are relatively well developed. Examples:

- **Turf care:** Grass is normally not mowed; however, grassed parking lots and approaches to buildings or roads may be cut to reduce safety hazards. Weed control is performed on noxious weeds.
- **Litter control:** Performed based on visitation; may be more than once per day if crowds dictate.
- **Inspections:** Performed once a day when staff is available.
- **Floral plantings:** Only wildflowers, perennials, flowering trees, and shrubs are included.
- **Restrooms:** Service frequency is geared to visitor level; once a day is the common routine.

■ Mode 6

Mode 6 is a minimum maintenance level for low-visitation natural areas or large urban parks that are undeveloped. Examples:

- **Turf care:** Grass is not mowed. Weed control is performed only if required.
- **Litter control:** Performed on demand or on a complaint basis.
- **Inspections:** Performed once a month.
- **Floral plantings:** There are none.
- **Restrooms:** Service is based on need.

Technology

Park Services has **computerized its work order system for maintenance**; this has helped prioritize assignments based on risk, safety, and other criteria. The system also provides incredible information on tasks, location, and manpower. The Forestry Section is also being guided by a computerized tree-service request database for management decisions. This database has the potential of being integrated with GIS technology for use with park inventories.

Park Services is aware that accurate information is needed to make management decisions. This mindset has enabled Park Services to work as efficiently as it currently does. A **staff analyst** could be assigned to implement, record, track, and report on Park Services operations that could fully use the available technology.

CHAPTER 5: RECOMMENDATIONS

Safety

Park Services also is responsible for many factors that make the parks and recreation facilities **safe for use and secure from criminal activities**. A single solution will not fix or improve safety and security in parks; instead, a combination of many activities, from design to accessibility, is required. Some of these improvements are needed in Columbus.

The **Urban Parks Institute** offers many suggestions for guiding these improvements. For more information, see the previous section in this chapter entitled, “CRPD Service Area: Safety and Security; Objective IV: Design and Manage Parks to Sustain Safety and Security Practices.”

Funding

The City of Columbus has dedicated almost two-thirds of its budget for the police and safety departments. This leaves very little to be dispersed to other city departments. **The CRPD, in turn, disperses approximately 30 percent of its budget for park services.** This is low compared to other cities:

City	Percent for Grounds Keeping Operations
Boston	85.3
New York City	84.4
St. Louis	68.9
San Francisco	66.3
Seattle	65.6
Portland	64.9
Denver	64.4
Kansas City	64.0
Los Angeles	61.5
Dallas	58.5
Cleveland	54.9
Detroit	54.9
Houston	54.8
Minneapolis	54.6
Phoenix	51.2
Miami	49.4
Indianapolis	48.3
Atlanta	48.2
Chicago	48.0
Columbus	30.0
Philadelphia	24.3
Baltimore	22.5

These budgets included staff and equipment plus a prorated share of administrative costs.

Budget for CRPD Park Services

- 2000: Park Services was 30 percent of the CRPD budget.
- 2001: Park Services was 29.1 percent of the CRPD budget.

Park Services is **currently understaffed and under funded** and will continue operating using a reactionary approach, maintaining parks at a Mode 3 level or less. However, developing trails, recreational facilities, and park amenities—and acquiring land—without properly considering the long-term impact on Park Services will diminish the quality of the park-users’ experiences and reduce the return on taxpayer investments in parks and recreation.

According to the household survey, the community would like to have—and is willing to pay for—higher levels of maintenance and improvements to drinking fountains, restrooms, lighting, trails, and picnic shelters. A more **proactive approach** is necessary to meet the needs of the community and the department, and to preserve the value of city assets.

Objectives (Park Services)

■ **Objective I: Establish Amenities and Improvements Based on Customer Input and Department Resources.**

Information from the household survey should be used to **prioritize improvements**. The improvements desired most by the community included drinking fountains, additional restrooms, improved lighting, walking trails, and picnic areas.

■ **Objective II: Include Costs for Long- and Short-Term Operational and Resource Planning for New Programs, Parks, and Facilities.**

As new programs, parks, and facilities are designed to meet the community’s needs, the CRPD has to prepare **long-term budget requirements** for each item. Funding for these new areas must be determined before implementation.

CHAPTER 5: RECOMMENDATIONS

■ Objective III: Ensure That Park Services, Staff, and Equipment Levels are Equitable Based on the Growth in Parkland Acquisition and Development.

As the city and the department invest in and develop new parkland, there must be discussions and decisions about how to **adequately allocate resources**. Each park will have a standard maintenance level assigned, which will dictate necessary resources.

■ Objective IV: Use Technology for Tracking Resources and Projects to Ensure Better Decision Making.

Park Services has a **computerized work order system** that can allow cost tracking of projects, repairs, and improvements to parks and facilities. This information should be used to its fullest potential during **new-project planning**.

This technology can be used to estimate long-term budget impacts.

■ Objective V: Establish Maintenance Districts to Reduce Inefficiencies and Increase Productivity.

The creation or re-establishment of **maintenance districts** can reduce the amount of time the staff spends traveling between tasks and jobs. By assigning staff to specific districts, and supplying each district with the **appropriate equipment and supplies**, the amount of driving time and wasted resources should be reduced.

Districts also will produce a **reduction in response times** to parks and facility emergencies. Staff members will become more approachable because they will be more aware of the community being served.

■ Objective VI: Create Maintenance Standards for All Services Provided by Park Services.

■ Objective VII: Establish Unit Costs for Each Park Service to Enable Better Management Decisions and Resource Allocations.

Unit costs should be calculated for each service provided by Park Services. By streamlining the costs of all services, supervisors will find it **easier to budget by**

park, facility, and service. Unit costs should include:

- Cost/square foot (trades, custodial);
- Cost/acre (mowing);
- Cost/mile of trail;
- Cost/restroom building; and
- Cost/athletic field.

Recommendations (Park Services)

■ **Recommendation 1: Establish an equitable budget for additional staff based on the number of facilities, parklands, and services necessary for preventive maintenance.**

■ **Recommendation 2: Complete a resource-management plan.**

■ **Recommendation 3: Develop levels of maintenance for categories of parks.**

■ **Recommendation 4: Continue to expand the use of volunteers as well as staff involvement and supervision of volunteers.**

■ **Recommendation 5: Recreate the maintenance districts/zones that support a decrease in travel time and an increase in responsiveness to zone needs.**

■ **Recommendation 6: Restructure a rapid response team for special projects.**

■ **Recommendation 7: Install signs and lighting, and implement increased safety measures.**

■ **Recommendation 8: Include Park Services during the research phase of program development to better understand resource impacts to Park Services.**

■ **Recommendation 9: Increase public awareness of Park Services.**

■ **Recommendation 10: Develop a priority list of upgrades, improvements, and renovations necessary for the system.**

■ **Recommendation 11: Evaluate the operational impacts of having Park Services complete various functions vs. contractually outsourcing.**

CHAPTER 5: RECOMMENDATIONS

■ **Recommendation 12: Institute appropriate professional development training.**

CRPD SERVICE AREA: FUNDING/FINANCING

Each year the department receives **less and less funding** for park and recreation services. The CRPD's budget has been reduced by 16 percent, or \$5.2 million, from 2000 to 2002 because of depleted revenues in the city's General Fund. This reduction is expected to continue in 2003. Currently, the department has a proposed budget of \$30,881,739. The Division of Golf's budget will be \$4,934,958. The City of Columbus states that revenues from fees and charges are projected at \$2,903,009.

The department **must expand funding sources**, explore all potential areas for partnerships, and generate more revenues by pricing services such as programs, rentals, and events. The services themselves should dictate the current and correct value of what is being provided; the CRPD will have to determine the true costs of each service. This involves understanding all costs associated with the service, categorizing costs as either direct or indirect, and then deciding on the appropriate subsidy level, if applicable.

To charge market rates, the CRPD will need to **increase fees**. To charge higher fees, the CRPD should be able to defend the fees charged by communicating the true costs of providing the service; increasing quality; improving performance, aesthetics, and/or features; or a combination of these.

The CRPD must be **more aggressive** in the following areas:

- Pursuing partnerships;
- Securing grants; and
- Exploring more avenues for producing revenues and funding.

The strategy: relying on **multiple revenue streams**—not on one or two sources—to be more self-supporting.

Based on current funding levels and the increase in demand for services, programs, parks, trails, and facilities, the CRPD will face **difficult decisions** about what meets the community's needs. Such considerations can

lead to closing centers that drain resources and increase budget impacts.

The household survey indicated that 72 percent of the community would support **establishing a dedicated funding source** to pay for the operations and maintenance of parks, recreation facilities, and programs. The survey also found that 78 percent of the community is willing to pay an **increase in taxes** to have higher levels of maintenance for parks, trails, and recreation facilities. Of the respondents, 88 percent believed it was **important to fund improvements to parks and recreation facilities** compared to other city priorities. This type of support will allow the department to pursue not only tax-supported initiatives, but also many of the other sources suggested.

The CRPD is proud of its success in passing bond packages for capital improvements. Since 1960, CRPD has funded its capital improvements through a series of **voter-approved bond packages**. In Columbus, voter-approved bond packages are retired within the existing city income tax; thus, they do not increase taxes. Since 1956, a total of 10 bond packages for the CRPD—totaling more than \$151 million—have been presented to the voters, and all have passed. The last bond package occurred in 1999, totaled \$59.4 million, and was approved by 68 percent of the voters.

Objectives (Funding/Financing)

■ **Objective I: Develop a Level of Funding Required to Meet the Needs of Operations and the Community.**

For the department to understand the necessary capital and operational funding needed to meet community needs, the CRPD must complete a **full audit** of all repairs, renovations, new projects, and land acquisition needs. When the CRPD understands these impacts to the budget, it will be possible to target the best funding alternatives.

Currently, the park budget does not have the funding required to get the park system up to standards desired by the community and meet all demands. Thus, the CRPD should seek **long-term funding sources** that will allow the CRPD to bring parks and facilities up to the desired standards. It would be unwise for the CRPD to consider a sole funding source as the

CHAPTER 5: RECOMMENDATIONS

comprehensive answer. To sustain the CRPD, multiple funding sources are required.

■ Objective II: Use Funding Resources—Besides Taxing Methods—Such as Grants and Earned Income Opportunities.

The department must use **other sources of funding** to implement new projects and programs and sustain standards developed from the plan. The CRPD needs to implement a revenue policy and procedures that aggressively seek out new funding sources that **generate positive revenue streams** for the department.

■ Objective III: Develop a Department Culture that Supports Revenue-Producing Services, and Service Pricing Based on Benefits Received.

Many of CRPD's services are priced based on the 20 percent of the public that cannot pay for recreation services instead of on the 80 percent that can afford market-rate services. Demographic data indicate a per capita income of \$20,016 and an average household income of \$47,233 for 2003—both resulting from substantial increases in population. These data support a revenue policy of **pricing services based on a larger population that can afford benefit-driven recreation programming and facilities**.

It is recommended that the CRPD develop a three-tiered pricing program:

1. **Market Adjustment.** The goal will be to significantly reduce tax subsidy level in three to four years by increasing prices toward existing market rates for services/programs. This will include reducing the cost per experience/hour to \$3 or below within three to four years.
2. **Activity-Based Costing.** The goal will be to define true costs, adjust prices as necessary to cover costs, and then communicate to users at all levels the city's investment in the recreation experience.
3. **Revenue Management.** The goal will be to price services to the level of benefit received. The cost of higher maintenance modes will be incorporated into the pricing structures.

Recommendations (Funding/Financing)

■ Recommendation 1: Create a dedicated funding source by using a half-cent sales tax that expires within 10 years but is renewable.

The CRPD should define how the additional funds will be used—i.e., for open space, infrastructure, operations, etc.—and seek voter approval.

The City Mayor and City Council should support the additional funding source, which **should not replace but supplement existing tax support**. Including an expiration date appeals strongly to voters and gives the department the opportunity to make an impact that improves the image of parks and recreation and boosts the community's confidence.

The following **other sources** can be used for long-term funding:

- Sales and use taxes (e.g., food and beverage tax; hotel and motel tax; water, cable, and electric tax; sewer and solid waste tax; cell phone tax; motor vehicle tax/wheel tax; and occupational tax);
- Special improvement district/benefit districts;
- Business improvement districts; and
- Real estate transfer tax.

The city should develop a **formula for new residential development** to assure that parkland and recreational facility standards established by the city are met.

As the city approaches build out, the PDO should be changed to accept **real estate transfer fees** to maintain the infrastructure and support housing prices. Ideally, real estate transfer fees should amount to one-fourth or one-half percent of selling prices; this amount is then used to support parks and recreation facilities, which continue to sell the value of the neighborhood to the buyer.

■ Recommendation 2: Increase staffing levels to write and manage more grants, develop more partnerships, and establish more alliances.

CHAPTER 5: RECOMMENDATIONS

■ **Recommendation 3: Develop a parks foundation to assist with land donations and special fund-raising events that support park operations.**

Developing a **foundation** can offer benefits that encourage land and monetary donations. Foundations have a non-profit status, which allows for tax-deductible donations. In addition, foundation board members can seek funding differently than the CRPD council members. Foundation board members should provide support to all areas of the CRPD and should be closely aligned with the Development Section.

■ **Recommendation 4: Get approval from City Hall to change how revenues are managed (i.e., from the current practice of depositing all revenues into the General Fund, to entrepreneurial management of revenues).**

■ **Recommendation 5: Develop a three-tiered pricing program.**

Using the activity-based costing principles, the CRPD should develop a **three-level pricing program** that includes subsidized, break-even, and revenue-producing levels. Each program, service, and facility should be placed into one of these categories. The revenue goals and performance measures should be based on these categorizations.

■ **Recommendation 6: Eliminate areas of operations and assets that the public does not support, and funnel financial resources to core services.**

■ **Recommendation 7: Implement a front-foot assessment for street trees.**

There is a liability issue associated with street trees that can be addressed by having Forestry conduct an assessment. This assessment will determine the cost per front foot to maintain the street trees in the city appropriately.

■ **Recommendation 8: Develop and sustain park and recreation operations by using as many sources of revenue generation and funding as possible.**

Other cities and agencies nationwide use the funding sources in the list below. Columbus can use many of these sources, which should be considered during the planning and

implementation of new programs, parks, and facilities. The CRPD will have to select the sources appropriate for each project. Possible sources include:

- **Corporate sponsorships:** This revenue-funding source allows corporations to invest in developing or enhancing new or existing facilities in park systems. Sponsorships are used routinely for programs and events.
- **Partnerships:** Partnerships are a joint-development funding source or an operational funding source between two separate agencies, such as two government entities, a non-profit and a city department, or a private business and a city agency. Two partners jointly develop revenue-producing park and recreation facilities and share risks, operational costs, responsibilities, and asset management based on the strengths and weaknesses of each partner.
- **Foundation/gifts:** These dollars—raised from tax-exempt, non-profit organizations—are established with private donations to promote specific causes, activities, or issues. They offer a variety of opportunities to fund capital projects such as capital campaigns, gift catalogs, fund-raisers, endowments, sales of items, etc.
- **Recreation service fees:** These are dedicated user fees, established by a local ordinance or other government procedures, for constructing and maintaining recreation facilities. Fees can apply to all organized activities that require some type of reservation or to some other purpose as defined by the local government. Examples of such activities include adult basketball, volleyball, and softball leagues; youth baseball, soccer, and softball leagues; and special-interest classes. The fee gives participants the opportunity to contribute to the upkeep of facilities being used.
- **Intermodal Transportation and Efficiency Act:** This funding program, commonly called TEA-21 Grants, was authorized by the federal government in 1991. Funds are distributed through the state. There are several million dollars in enhancement revenues available for transportation-related projects such as bicycle and pedestrian trails, rail depot rehabilitation, landscaping, and beautification projects. These projects

CHAPTER 5: RECOMMENDATIONS

typically take three to five years to reach the construction stage.

- **Land and Water Conservation Fund:** These funds are awarded through the National Park Service and state park system for acquiring and developing parks, recreation, and supporting facilities.
- **Grants:** A variety of special grants either currently exist through the federal and state government systems or will be established during the life of current and proposed facilities.
- **Annual appropriation/leasehold financing:** This is a more complex financing structure that requires a third party to issue the bonds, construct the facility, and retain title until the bonds are retired. The city enters into a lease agreement with the third party, with annual lease payments equal to the debt service requirements. The bonds issued by the third party are considered less secure than the city's general obligation bonds and thus cost more. Since a separate corporation issues these bonds, they do not affect the city's debt limitations and do not require a vote. However, they also do not entitle the city to levy property taxes to service the debt. The annual lease payments must be appropriated from existing revenues.
- **Interlocal agreements:** These are contractual relationships between two or more local units of government and/or between a local unit of government and a non-profit organization for the joint use and development of sports fields, regional parks, or other facilities.
- **Agreements with private concessionaires:** This is a contract with a private business to provide and operate desirable recreational activities financed, constructed, and operated by the private sector with additional compensation paid to the city.
- **Fees/charges:** The master plan has documented that the CRPD is far undervalued and must position its fees and charges as market driven and based on what public and private facilities are charging. The potential outcome of revenue generation should be consistent with national trends related to public park and recreation agencies, which generate an average of 35 percent to 50 percent of operating expenditures.
- **Cost avoidance:** The department must take the position that it cannot be everything for everyone. The CRPD must be driven by the market and stay with the department's core businesses. By shifting its role as direct provider, the city will save money as it decides whether to provide a particular facility or program; this is a cost avoidance. Savings could be realized through partnering, outsourcing, or deferring to another provider of a service and/or facility.
- **Land trust:** Many counties have developed land trusts to help secure and fund the cost of acquiring land that needs to be preserved and protected for greenway purposes. This could be a good source for acquiring future land.
- **Greenway utility:** When greenway utilities are established, they are used to finance the acquisition of greenways and greenway development by selling the development rights underground for fiber-optic types of businesses.
- **Naming rights:** Many cities and counties have begun selling the naming rights for new buildings or renovations of existing buildings and parks to cover the associated development cost.
- **Rental car tax:** This tax is designated for land acquisition purposes. Some cities and counties have used a percentage of rental car taxes to support land acquisition or park improvements.
- **Establish a designated license plate for parks:** This funding mechanism can be used to finance improvements or programs in the state or city.
- **Cell towers:** Cell towers attached to existing light poles in game field complexes can be another source of revenue the city could seek for supporting the system.
- **Private developers:** These developers lease space from city-owned land through a subordinate lease that pays out a set dollar amount plus a percentage of gross dollars for recreation enhancements. These leases could be for restaurants, sports complexes, equestrian facilities, and recreation centers and ice arenas.

CHAPTER 5: RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Licensing rights:** This revenue source allows the department/city to license its name on all resale items that private or public vendors use when they sell clothing or other items containing the name of the department/city. The typical licensing fee is 6 percent to 10 percent of the cost of the resale item.
- **Capital improvement fees:** These fees are in addition to the set user rate for accessing facilities such as golf courses, recreation centers, and pools to support capital improvements that benefit users.
- **Merchandising sales:** This revenue source comes from the public or private sector on resale items from gift shops and pro shops for either all sales or a set gross percentage.
- **Concession management:** Concession management comes from retail sales or rentals of soft goods, hard goods, or consumable items. The city either contracts for the service or receives a portion of the gross percentage or a portion of the full revenue dollars, which incorporate a profit after expenses.
- **“Friends” associations:** These groups are formed to raise money typically for a single purpose such as a park facility or program that will better the community as a whole and its special interest.
- **Advertising sales:** This revenue source is selling tasteful and appropriate advertising for park and recreation-related items such as the CRPD Catalog, scoreboards, and other visible products or services that are consumable or permanent. This opportunity exposes the advertiser’s product or service to many people.
- **Easements:** This revenue source is available when the city allows utility companies, businesses, or individuals to develop an improvement aboveground or below ground on its property for a set period of time and a set dollar amount, which is received by the city annually.
- **Irrevocable remainder trusts:** These trusts are set up with individuals who typically have more than a million dollars in wealth. These people will leave a portion of their wealth to the city in a trust fund that allows the fund to grow over time; the city can use a portion of the interest to support specific park and recreation facilities or programs designated by the trustee.
- **Life estates:** This source of money is available when a person wants to leave his or her property to the city in exchange for living on the property until his or her death. Before the person’s death, the city usually can use a portion of the property for park purposes; all of it can be used for parks after a person’s death. This revenue source is very popular for individuals with a lot of wealth because their estates will be taxed greatly upon their death, and their children will likely have to sell this property because of probate costs. This opportunity, which allows the individual to receive a fair tax deduction annually on the property while leaving a life estate, is good for the city because it does not have to pay for the land.
- **Permits (special-use permits):** These special permits allow individuals to use specific park property for financial gain. The city either receives a set amount of money or a percentage from the gross service revenues.
- **Catering permits and services:** This is a license to allow caterers to work in the park system on a permit basis; a set fee or a percentage of food sales is returned to the city. Cities with their own catering service receive a percentage of food sales.
- **Business excise tax:** This tax of a new business that settles into a community is on products sold based on the wholesale cost. Park districts in Illinois use this as one of their revenue sources.
- **Parking fee:** This fee applies to parking at selected destination facilities such as beach parking areas, major stadiums, and other attractions to help offset capital and operational costs.
- **Equipment rental:** The revenue source is available when equipment such as tables, chairs, tents, stages, bicycles, roller blades, boogie boards, and other items are rented and used for recreation.
- **Entertainment tax:** This tax is on ticket sales for major entertainment venues such

CHAPTER 5: RECOMMENDATIONS

as concert facilities, golf tournaments, and car races to help pay for traffic control and sports stars who come to the city. This tax is based on the earnings vendors receive from their ticket sales. This tax also applies to video game machines.

- **Boulevard tax:** Homeowners who live along scenic routes pay this tax based on lineal foot of frontage. Kansas City uses this tax, which covers the cost of improvements, fountains, and turf and landscape care.
- **Ticket sales/admissions:** This revenue source is based on accessing facilities for self-directed activities (e.g., pools, skateboard parks, ropes course, ballparks and entertainment activities). These user fees help offset operational costs.
- **Special fund-raisers:** Many park and recreation agencies have special fund-raisers annually to help cover specific programs and capital projects.
- **Utility roundup programs:** Some park and recreation agencies have worked with their local utilities to set up a program that allows a consumer to “round up” the consumer’s actual utility invoice to the nearest dollar; revenues are dedicated to parks and recreation.

CRPD SERVICE AREA: DEVELOPMENT

The Development Section is comprised of **five major areas**:

- Marketing;
- Grants;
- Sponsorships;
- Volunteers; and
- P.L.A.Y.

Development supports CRPD staff by securing, and helping staff to secure, additional **financial and personnel resources** for programs and events. Development also **promotes** the CRPD within the community. There are five full-time and one part-time staff to handle these responsibilities.

Marketing

The Marketing area does not have a specific staff person in place to handle day-to-day functions. These duties are primarily handled by the **Section Head** with help from other Development staff. The marketing function is supported in the production area with a full-time graphics person and a part-time videographer.

Marketing promotes the department within the community. A Speaker’s Bureau has been established, and several videos have been produced highlighting various CRPD areas to increase the CRPD’s visibility. Marketing has pursued opportunities at **trade shows and at other community events** to distribute information and increase visibility and participation levels. New booth displays have been designed to attract attention at these shows.

Some of the **promotional materials** produced by the marketing team include the department brochure, some specialty brochures (Topiary Garden, Park of Roses), department poster, and event giveaways.

Internally, the focus has been on **image control**. Staff have received training in the design of brochures, fliers, and other printed materials.

Grants

One full-time staff member manages the Grants area. This person assists staff within the department by **researching and writing** grants or by providing research and writing assistance on others. The grants coordinator routinely researches a wide variety of grant opportunities to pass along to staff. This person also does follow-up reports and tracks grants submitted and received. The staff receives training in grant preparation.

Sponsorships

One person within the section manages sponsorship activities. This person’s primary responsibility is to **secure sponsorships** and help CRPD staff secure sponsorships for events, programs, and special needs.

Other duties include conducting cultivation interviews with area corporations, doing fund-

CHAPTER 5: RECOMMENDATIONS

raising for the P.L.A.Y program, and hosting training sessions on sponsorships for department staff.

This person also maintains the **centralized database** for cash and in-kind sponsors as well as for individual donations received from throughout the department. This staff person produces *The Dividend*, a quarterly newsletter for donors and potential donors.

Volunteers

One individual within the Development Section manages the volunteer office and the administration of the P.L.A.Y. program.

Managing the **volunteer office** includes organizing the park cleanup program, coordinating Adopt-a-Park and Adopt-a-Trail programs, and producing and distributing the *VolunTeam* newsletter (six times a year) and the *Searching for Volunteers* quarterly publication.

This volunteer staff person also accomplishes a number of **other tasks** that include:

- Processing criminal background checks;
- Matching volunteer requests to sites;
- Developing volunteer job descriptions and a volunteer resource manual for staff;
- Training staff;
- Coordinating the tracking/reporting of volunteer hours;
- Providing on-site coordination, training, and recruiting of volunteers for numerous CRPD special events;
- Leading a department-wide committee related to the volunteer program;
- Promoting and participating in the Speakers Bureau to recruit volunteers and support for the CRPD;
- Working with non-profit partners (e.g., CRC, Friends of Parks);
- Visiting area high schools twice a year to promote the Columbus Kids Care volunteer program; and
- Actively recruiting and exposing new groups/organizations to the CRPD.

The volunteer office is available to any section of the Department for **consultation, assistance, and guidance** in meeting specific volunteer needs. In 2001, the value of volunteers to the CRPD totaled more than \$3 million. This included the contribution of more than 220,000 volunteer hours. CRPD

volunteers are clearly an invaluable function for the department.

P.L.A.Y. (Administration and Fund-raising)

As stated previously, **one individual** within the Development Section manages the volunteer office and the administration of the P.L.A.Y. program.

This person:

- Processes individual applications;
- Collects/reviews and tracks group applications;
- Heads two department P.L.A.Y. committees (Policy and Group Review);
- Consults with staff and applicants regarding applications/procedures;
- Tracks allocations; and
- Trains staff as needed.

Since 1998, P.L.A.Y. has had the following growth in **dollars allocated** for scholarships:

- 1998: \$21,000;
- 1999: \$32,200;
- 2000: \$51,050;
- 2001: \$64,700; and
- 2002: \$49,658 (as of August 2002).

Objectives (Development)

■ **Objective I: Clearly Define the Role of the Development Section for Securing Additional Funding for the Department.**

Currently the Development Section is **understaffed**, has a **limited budget**, and is reaching only a **minor portion of the community**. The staff is frustrated with the lack of advertising and promotions funding needed to attract participants.

Staff members feel that they continue to explain to other staff that **they are a resource for finding and identifying funding** sources. The Development Section is not charged with supporting staff in the manner desired—which is to identify, write, and manage sponsorships, partnerships, and grants.

This master plan outlines the need for more funding from sponsorships and grants. To fulfill

CHAPTER 5: RECOMMENDATIONS

this need, **additional staff** members are needed. The cost of additional staff can be offset by the benefit of additional dollars obtained.

The Development Section must be **strengthened** so staff can be more effective in all five areas: Marketing, Grants, Sponsorships, Volunteers, and P.L.A.Y.

The CRPD needs a more **cohesive approach to managing marketing** services. This includes housing all communications, both internal and external, in one section. This section also needs to establish standards for all departmental promotional and advertising materials to ensure consistency in message quality and delivery.

■ Objective II: Continue to Expand and Package Sponsorship Opportunities for Programs and Events.

The keys to sponsorships are **matching the department's vision and goals to a company and its business objectives**. Partners and businesses must decide whether a sponsorship package or a partnership agreement is an effective way to reach their audiences.

Potential benefits from sponsorships vary in importance. In general, these benefits include:

- Improving the impact and recognition of the marketing message;
- Enhancing the relevance of the brand to the target market;
- Generating a desire to purchase the brand or reward the sponsor; and
- Heightening employee/distributor/supplier/client loyalty.

The idea is to match ways the company can **increase awareness of its product or company**—or the perception of its product or company—with the overall goals of the program, event, or service. Thus, all facts and figures must have historical numbers, targeted audiences, and marketing and promotions tools listed with their direct costs.

Partnerships—public/public, public/private, and public/not-for-profit—are a way of the future for park and recreation agencies across the country. (For more information about partnerships, see Partnership Trends in Chapter 1.)

■ Objective III: Create and Sustain a Recognizable Image, and Support the Identity.

In the past year, less than one-fourth of the community has participated in CRPD programs. Thus, the CRPD must **aggressively market its services** to the community and **increase community recognition** of parks and programs.

Image management is a process that establishes and manages the images (graphics such as a logo, taglines, and Web pages), the perceptions (customer satisfaction ratings), and associations (programs, events, and partnerships) that the community applies to the CRPD.

Images are managed by applying image elements consistently through effective communication methods. The better a department manages images, the **more consistently the community will respond** to recreation opportunities offered.

■ Objective IV: Increase Community Awareness of Services and Programs Offered.

Based on the household survey, more than one-third of the community does not know what the CRPD offers. Another 18 percent do not know the locations of parks and facilities. Because the CRPD Catalog is not effectively reaching the community, it cannot inform the community about programs. According to survey results, only 12 percent of respondents learned about CRPD programs through this guide. The department needs to **advertise and promote** parks, programs, and services to the community regularly—the goal should be daily—to increase awareness, build support and advocacy, and inform the community about how to access the department.

■ Objective V: Expand the Volunteer Program that Encourages Community Support for All Divisions and Sections Within the Department.

Volunteers can extend the department's capabilities, help it achieve many goals, and build advocacy for parks and recreation services among neighborhoods. A good volunteer program is successful when it creates conditions that encourage volunteers to do the work. The CRPD currently has a good volunteer program.

CHAPTER 5: RECOMMENDATIONS

Volunteer hours in 2001 provided the equivalent of **105 extra full-time employees**—a value of more than \$3 million. This program is being expanded continuously to help reach more of the community to support the new initiatives outlined in the master plan.

Recommendations (Development)

■ Recommendation 1: Develop a department-wide marketing plan.

The previous plan, which is four or five years old, will serve as a good starting point for a new plan with **broad objectives** to increase awareness, improve image, and leverage resources.

■ Recommendation 2: Work with each division/section of the CRPD to develop mini-marketing plans that meet their needs but also support the department's marketing goals and objectives.

Marketing should work with **each department quarterly** to outline upcoming projects, volunteer needs, and timelines for recruiting and screening volunteers.

■ Recommendation 3: Expand the staffing levels for the Development Section with specific representatives who support all divisions of the CRPD.

Staffing levels within the Development Section can be expanded to include people with **specific areas of expertise** responsible for specific areas.

Having a specialized, appointed person to provide unique services to internal customers can improve communications and will meet needs more effectively and efficiently. This approach also supports the **matrix management** principles discussed earlier in this chapter.

■ Recommendation 4: Fund and staff development functions appropriately.

Staffing levels need to meet the needs of the department and the community.

■ Recommendation 5: Establish a consistent image for the CRPD.

The Development Section should create a logo and a signage-standard manual that ensures consistent use of images. The Development Section should have the last review and approval on all uses of the CRPD logo and signage. Point-of-purchase displays (brochure racks, counter displays) at the centers should have a consistent look. Staff members should receive **ongoing training so they understand the effective methods of marketing and operations**. It will be important to create a public relations campaign that consistently produces stories about community involvement and increases program awareness. Kiosks related to the CRPD can be installed throughout the city.

■ Recommendation 6: Create revenue opportunities.

Advertising should be sold and run in CRPD brochures. It will be important to develop an advertising and promotion campaign for the CRPD Catalog.

■ Recommendation 7: Produce program catalogs that are more inclusive and targeted to the appropriate audience.

As stated previously, registration should be computerized to track users and develop user profiles. This information can then be used to match sponsors with appropriate audiences. Promotional materials should be distributed, especially at special events downtown. The CRPD Catalog should be restructured to have a two- to three-month shelf life and should be targeted toward a more **specific market segment**. Cost-effective layouts should be researched to increase production efficiencies.

■ Recommendation 8: Continue computerizing the registration function and facility rentals.

The computerization of the registration function and facility rentals should continue. By expanding this capability, staff will be able to efficiently **monitor activities at all facilities** with less manpower.

Marketing data can be collected as registrations are processed, and assessments can be run to track trends and identify facilities that are overloaded or underused.

CHAPTER 5: RECOMMENDATIONS

■ **Recommendation 9: Develop a department Web page or pages using established identity criteria and image standards to increase awareness and customer convenience.**

This will mean **hiring or contracting Web management staff and developing Web pages** that highlight information on all areas of the CRPD.

Marketing should provide **current information and allow online registration**. Web pages should be under the direction of the Development Section. The Development Section and Marketing should establish consistent Web page standards that include links to other organizations. Web pages should include capabilities for downloading maps and forms and for submitting suggestions, complaints, and other inputs.

■ **Recommendation 10: Create an area of market research resources for staff.**

The Development Section should create a **library-like resource area** that staff can use to research market data. Resources can include surveys, reports, magazines, books, and Internet sources as well as archival information on the CRPD.

■ **Recommendation 11: Develop criteria for equanimity of promotional materials.**

All core services that Marketing provides should be analyzed to determine the **cost for providing each service**. For example, direct costs for producing collateral material—such as fliers, high-end brochures, maps, guides, advertising, and promotional items—should be calculated.

Staff will have to be educated on “purchasing” marketing services for their programs and services. Costs for these services should either be **consolidated** in the marketing budget or **charged back** to the section requesting the piece. By understanding unit costs for services, the Development Section and other staff will be able to make informed decisions on advertising and promoting CRPD services and budget more accurately in the future.

Better advance planning is required to increase the effectiveness of marketing efforts and allow for cross promotions within the CRPD and with other recreation service providers in the city. It is recommended that a database be

developed to produce mailing lists of participants by interests, age, and location. This database would serve as a foundation for a direct-mail campaign for various programs or events.

All programs should be **categorized** so that the staff understands not only the most cost-effective methods for promotion and advertising, but also the amount of promotion and advertising based on audience size. Following is an example of equitable marketing:

Level One Marketing

Definition: Events that are small programs, have a limited audience (fewer than 20), and offer little or no revenue production.

Examples:

- CRPD Catalog;
- Flier (prepared distribution list);
- E-mail and fax broadcast to developed distribution list; and
- News release or public service announcement.

Level Two Marketing

Definition: Events that are larger programs, have a limited audience (20 to 50), and offer some revenue production that covers some costs.

Examples:

- CRPD Catalog;
- Flier (distribution list for appropriate audience);
- Fax cover sheet promotion for one month;
- E-mail broadcast to developed distribution list;
- News release or public service announcement; and
- Listing in a newspaper column of weekend activities.

Level Three Marketing

Definition: Events that are medium in size, have a large capacity (e.g., day camps), and produce revenue for the department.

Examples:

- CRPD Catalog;
- Radio ad campaign;

CHAPTER 5: RECOMMENDATIONS

- Small brochure (one color);
- Mail distribution;
- E-mail broadcast to developed distribution list;
- Sponsorship package;
- News release or public service announcement;
- Listing in a newspaper column for park activities.

Level Four Marketing

Definition: High-end events (e.g., special events such as golf, trips, and tours), are bigger revenue producers for the department, and offer greater department recognition.

Examples:

- CRPD Catalog;
- Radio and newspaper ad campaign;
- Posters;
- Brochure or separate guide;
- Sponsorship package;
- News release or public service announcement;
- Television ad (if sponsored);
- Magazine ad; and
- Web page.

The Development Section should **have final approval** of all marketing materials, help plan distribution, and manage information on the Web site before release to the public.

■ **Recommendation 12: Create a market research position; capture pertinent data for the department.**

The CRPD could contract with a **market research professional** to conduct market research on customer satisfaction and service delivery on a more consistent basis.

CRPD SERVICE AREA: PARTNERSHIPS

The CRPD should clearly **define its partnerships and document these arrangements**. While the department's current partnerships are progressive in their design, they lack documentation of the value each partner brings to the arrangement.

There is room to **expand partnership agreements** to include areas of need where funds are lacking. Partners to be pursued include:

- Trail partners;
- Other parks and recreation departments;
- The Ohio State University;
- Neighborhood associations;
- Youth and adult sports associations;
- Communication partners (media resources);
- Internal city partners; and
- State and federal agencies (for grants, planning, and technical assistance).

The key principle to an effective partnership: **Partners share a vision**. Partners must develop measurable outcomes that can be benchmarked to demonstrate the effectiveness of the partnership to both partners' budgets and customers. Both parties need to work toward providing equity input into the project or program. Equity can include space costs, staff costs, marketing dollars, support services, maintenance, and equipment use. This equity input needs to be monitored for compliance at least twice a year.

Both parties need to identify **operational and capital costs** associated with the partnership agreement to demonstrate the equity each brings to the partnership.

Currently, the city could consider developing several types of partnerships, which include:

- **Investment partnerships:** Two partners share in developing a community-use facility.
- **Event partnerships:** Two or more partners create and manage a special event.
- **Contractual partnerships:** Contractual partners help the department manage a section of a sports-related business unit.
- **Non-profit partnerships:** Another agency can help the department provide a program service.
- **Inter-agency partnerships:** Departments within the city can share equipment and staff.
- **Product partnerships:** Partners provide in-kind products in lieu of cash.

CHAPTER 5: RECOMMENDATIONS

- **City/school partnerships:** Partners share indoor and outdoor facilities.
- **Sponsorship partnerships:** Partners provide cash for program enhancements.

The best partnerships are built by **communicating** what each party brings to the partnership. These items might include:

- Money, staff, equipment, facilities, and transportation;
- Available earned income;
- A philosophy for pricing of services;
- A process for how each agency trains and educates staff, part-time employees, and volunteers;
- An evaluation system used by an agency;
- A process for dealing with conflicts of interest;
- The manner in which an agency deals with politics; and
- Effective communication measures.

Vendors and Concessions

As stated in Chapter 1, partnerships are generally categorized into three types:

- Public/public;
- Public/private; and
- Public/not-for-profit.

■ Public/Public Partnerships

Schools can be approached to help plan programs and events and to inquire about use of their facilities. Partnership types and agreements can include the following:

- Sharing the planning, design, use, and capital costs of recreation facilities, both indoor and outdoor, such as pools, community-use spaces, and outdoor game fields.
- Developing a planning and scheduling priority for uses at either partner's facility. Neither party should charge for fixed or indirect costs associated with facility use; both should be charged for **direct costs** beyond the fixed costs that actually result in costs incurred for either party. Examples of indirect costs are heating and air conditioning costs. Examples of areas where actual costs should be charged are

for facility rental fees or staff to assist in facility operations.

- When funds are **leveraged**, a better overall facility could be provided to the community—at a reduced cost—compared to costs for constructing, operating, and maintaining two separate facilities.
- **Purchasing jointly** some quality equipment that both parties use.
- **Cross-promoting information** to the same users to save on mailing and distribution costs.
- Using **volunteers** for hosting programs and events; accessing the mailing or contact list for seeking volunteer assistance.

■ Public/Private Partnerships

Businesses in the area can be approached for **sponsorships, naming rights, and/or funding**. These include area employers such as Wendy's, The Limited, Nationwide, Worthington Industries, *Columbus Dispatch*, Bank One, etc.

A **preferred vendor listing** allows the CRPD to develop standards that each vendor must meet to conduct business at an event or tournament. These can include health department standards, insurance coverage, quality, etc. The CRPD can then list these vendors in its printed material or proposals—or identify these vendors during coaches' or players' meetings, receptions, and banquets—as those recommended to be part of an event or tournament.

Caterers can pay a fee to be on the list; this covers the cost of promotional material. Caterers can also pay the city a percentage of the business conducted at the event.

■ Public/Not-for-Profit Partnerships

As stated in **Chapter 1: Overview** (Partnership Trends), examples of public/not-for-profit partnerships might include:

- City Recreation and Parks/youth or adult sport associations (both develop the game fields, with the not-for-profit operating the organization).

CHAPTER 5: RECOMMENDATIONS

- City Recreation and Parks/hospital (the hospital provides the health and wellness services inside a multidimensional recreation center or fitness facility).
- City Recreation and Parks/environmental associations (often there is partnering on land trusts, environmental centers, and greenway development coordination).
- City Recreation and Parks/friends of specific attractions (the focus is on raising funds or assisting in managing the attraction).
- City Recreation and Parks/YMCA (or boys and girls clubs or a faith community).

All three types of partnerships allow a recreation and parks department to **leverage resources and build additional public advocacy** and support.

Objectives (Partnerships)

■ Objective I: Define Terms and Roles for Each Partnership Clearly.

A clear understanding of **roles** is needed, with responsibilities, dollar values associated with each responsibility, and an evaluation of the partnership after a **set period**.

■ Objective II: Ensure That Written Agreements Accompany All Partnerships.

Clear, written documentation of the equity each partner brings, and the roles and terms of the partnership, is critical to effective management and continuity of any agreement. The CRPD needs to develop a working agreement that both parties use as a guide.

■ Objective III: Monitor the Cost and Effectiveness of Each Partnership.

Regular and **consistent monitoring of any agreement** is necessary to ensure that all parties continue to meet the terms. Based

on this monitoring, agreements should be modified as necessary.

■ Objective IV: Document All Partnerships; Use a Database to Track Partnerships.

For agreements to be managed effectively, they must be **readily accessible** by those accountable for their monitoring and management. The CRPD will receive the best data storage and access by using one of several off-the-shelf database management products available today.

The **database** already established by the Development Section should be merged with all CRPD data on partners. The Development Section should manage this function by adding a support or clerical position.

Recommendations (Partnerships)

■ Recommendation 1: Define all existing partnerships, and develop supporting policies for each type.

The CRPD should evaluate the **status** of these partnerships and schedule an **evaluation period** and meeting with each partner.

■ Recommendation 2: Develop a database to track all partnerships.

■ Recommendation 3: Revise partnership documentation materials to include a more comprehensive form that captures the value of each partner's contribution and evaluation.

The document should be designed to capture the **operation and monetary value** each partner is providing. The benefits of each existing CRPD partnership should be evaluated to ensure each partnership is equitable. Each partnership arrangement should have an evaluation time, established during the creation of the agreement. At least annually, and in some cases twice a year, the CRPD and the partner should

CHAPTER 5: RECOMMENDATIONS

evaluate the performance achieved and goals accomplished.

■ **Recommendation 4: Provide guidelines to advisory groups and “friends” groups for recreation centers and parks to help them become more goal-oriented and productive**

The CRPD should provide **guidelines** to advisory groups and “friends” groups for recreation centers and parks to help them become more goal-oriented and productive.

The CRPD should **recruit volunteers** according to skills needed and projects anticipated.

■ **Recommendation 5: Develop partnerships with schools and universities.**

Schools offer a broad range of partnership opportunities to the CRPD.

■ **Recommendation 6: Continue to enhance relationships with Metro Parks, the Nature Conservancy, Ohio Historical Society, and other cultural non-profit organizations.**

■ **Recommendation 7: Establish a partnership with the Columbus Police Department.**

■ **Recommendation 8: Continue to enhance relationships with other city departments, especially the Columbus Planning Division.**

■ **Recommendation 9: Continue to seek other partnerships with private and public organizations.**

■ **Recommendation 10: Develop a public art partnership policy.**

ABOUT THE NEXT CHAPTER

Chapter 5: Recommendations outlined the new or enhanced programs, parks, and facilities that should be implemented. The recommendations listed under each CRPD service area begin to formulate the direction the department can take to meet the future challenges and needs of Columbus residents.

As Columbus continues to grow, the CRPD will play an important role in the quality of life for its citizens. However, the CRPD also will face mounting constraints and demands on its resources, staff, and services.

Chapter 6: Action Plan details how and when to implement the recommendations and lists staff responsible for implementation.