



**CITY OF BOULDER
CITY COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM**

MEETING DATE: AUGUST 17, 2021

AGENDA TITLE

Consideration of a motion to accept the July 27, 2021 Study Session Summary regarding the Boulder Parks and Recreation Master Plan Needs Assessment Results.

PRESENTER/S

Nuria Rivera-Vandermyde, City Manager
Alison Rhodes, Director, Parks and Recreation Department
Jeff Haley, Planning, Design & Community Engagement Manager
Regina Elsner, Parks Planner
Morgan Gardner, Associate Planner
Eric Krohngold, Project Manager, Design Workshop
Sarah Horn, Planner, Design Workshop

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A study session was held with City Council on July 27, 2021. The primary goal of the session was to present the results of the Needs Assessment phase of the project and to solicit feedback from City Council on key issues. Staff and the consultant team presented the results of the research and community engagement, highlighting areas where policy guidance was needed from council. The presentation was structured using the key themes from the 2014 Master Plan to guide the discussion: Community Health and Wellness, Taking Care of What We Have, Financial Sustainability, Youth Engagement and Activity, Building Community and Relationships, and Organizational Readiness. Council provided guidance to continue to focus on taking care of existing amenities and facilities while striving to pursue equity in access for all the department's facilities, programs and facilities. Council acknowledged the struggle to maintain financial sustainability between static revenues and growing expenses and highlighted that this challenge is not unique to Boulder Parks and Recreation within the city.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION**Suggested Motion Language:**

Staff requests council consideration of this matter and action in the form of the following motion:

Motion to accept the July 27, 2021 Study Session Summary regarding the Boulder Parks and Recreation Master Plan Needs Assessment Results.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A – Summary of the July 27, 2021, Study Session on the BPR Master Plan Needs Assessment Results

Attachment A – Summary of the July 27, 2021, Study Session on the Boulder Parks and Recreation Master Plan Needs Assessment Results

PRESENT

City Council: Mayor Sam Weaver, Council Members Aaron Brockett, Rachel Friend, Mirabai Kuk Nagle, Adam Swetlik, Mark Wallach, Bob Yates, Mary Dolores Young

Staff: Nuria Rivera-Vandermyde, City Manager; Alison Rhodes, Director, Parks and Recreation Department; Jeff Haley, Planning, Design & Community Engagement Manager; Regina Elsner, Parks Planner; Morgan Gardner, Associate Planner; Eric Krohngold, Project Manager, Design Workshop; Sarah Horn, Planner, Design Workshop

OVERVIEW

The study session provided the opportunity for council members to hear the results of the Needs Assessment phase of the Master Plan Update and to provide guidance on issues facing BPR. The session also provided information about the upcoming process and approach for the implementation phase of the project that will provide a draft final plan early in 2022.

SUMMARY OF PRESENTATION & DISCUSSION

The presentation was broken into sections based on the key themes of the Master Plan Update, with a focus on Community Health and Wellness, Taking Care of What We Have and Financial Sustainability. The final section of the presentation provide council an update on the remaining three themes with no related questions for council, Youth Engagement and Activity, Building Community and Relationships, and Organizational Readiness.

The first section of the presentation provided a brief overview of the current status of the project and then focused on the key theme of Community Health and Wellness. Through extensive community engagement, this key theme has been identified as a continued priority for the department and a critical component to serve the community. Boulder's population is anticipated to grow by 2040 and without the addition of park lands, a key metric for BPR's level of service, acreage per capita, will fall. Council provided confirmation that purchasing additional land for parks is a lower priority than focusing on metrics related to proximity, quality of amenities and equity of access. Council also expressed a priority to look at partnering with other departments, agencies and municipalities to provide facilities or services not as equally distributed.

The second section of the presentation focused on the key theme of Taking Care of What We Have. Again, the community prioritized taking care of existing amenities and facilities, but also expressed a desire for specific new facilities to meet specific needs. Council strongly supported prioritizing maintaining and enhancing existing assets while providing new amenities only once funding opportunities become available.

The third section of the presentation focused on the key theme of Financial Sustainability. Since 2016, BPR's funding has stayed relatively flat with an annual growth rate of -0.4%,

while non-capital expenditures have grown at an average annual rate of 0.35%. Through 2026 BPR's expenditures are projected to increase on average 5.8%, while funding is only projected to increase on average 2.8%. This creates an imbalance which is accentuated when also considering an increase in budgeting for repair, replacement and operations and maintenance costs, as well as \$20.5 million in backlogged maintenance and \$177.9 million in identified unfunded capital projects. Council focused on how fees charged for programs and facilities could be one way to make up the gap in funding. Specifically, ensuring that the fees charged are appropriate, but continuing to focus on providing subsidies for access to those less able to pay or otherwise pricing them out of services. Council generally supported raising fees from non-residents as non-taxpayers but having exchange-type programs that facilitate access to specialty facilities or programs without duplicating them. Council also expressed interest in understanding revenue generating opportunities that might be pursued to provide subsidies and address equity.

The final section of the presentation quickly presented the outcomes from research and community engagement related to the key themes of Youth Engagement and Activity, Building Community and Relationships, and Organizational Readiness. Council was not asked to provide feedback on any issues related to these topics due to alignment with current direction and community input. Following the finalization of the Needs Assessment reports, the project will move into the Implementation Plan phase. During Implementation Plan, specific strategies and initiatives will be identified for the next 5 to 7 years, as well as the metrics that will be used to measure success. There will be a third window of community engagement to help prioritize which strategies and initiatives should be pursued. The project will come back to council later in 2021 or in early 2022 with recommendations and a draft plan for review and input.

Questions for Council

Community Health and Wellness

1. Is a lower number of acres of parkland per capita metric acceptable? Should BPR focus on metrics related to equity of access considerations?

Council Response:

- *Focus on access and proximity criteria rather than per capita. With Boulder's unique acreage of open space, as well as the fact that the city is in the median for current acreage, staff should measure based on access and proximity.*
- *Be sure to cover all five dimensions of accessibility: accessibility, availability, accommodations, affordability, and acceptability.*
- *Use other metrics beyond per capita (proximity, quality, etc.)*
- *Explore barriers to access and how those relate to equity.*

2. Which of the following options for providing new park amenities are the most impactful or the most beneficial to the community? Are there any that should not be prioritized?
 - a. Resilient existing facilities built to support higher use.
 - b. Partner with other public entities
 - c. Planning and constructing future phases at existing parks
 - d. Repurpose existing park sites
 - e. Partner with private organizations
 - f. Purchase additional land for parks

Council Response:

- *With land already in reserve, acquiring additional land should be lowest priority.*
- *A and C should be highly prioritized, with modifications to handle climate change and increasing population.*
- *Private organizations can include not-for-profits like BVSD and local entrepreneurs and should be leveraged to serve underserved parts of the community.*

Taking Care of What We Have

3. Should BPR continue prioritizing maintaining and enhancing existing assets first, while providing new amenities as funding opportunities become available?

Council Response:

- *Yes – maintaining is vital to ensure safe and accessible parks and facilities.*
- *How do we plan to handle funding maintenance as the costs increase?*

Financial Sustainability

4. To maintain financial sustainability, are there any options that should not be prioritized? Which should be explored further?
 - a. Re-evaluate subsidy provision and allocation determination
 - b. Reduce services
 - c. Increase fees for select programs or demographics
 - d. Seek a combination of new funding and fee adjustments
 - e. Implement high-fee programs or facilities
 - f. Increase fees for all
 - g. Other alternatives not yet considered

Council Response:

- *We have already taken advantage of any low-hanging fruit like the pottery lab's model and have modeled many other programs the same way.*

- *Consider charging non-taxpayers more and look into an exchange program with other cities nearby.*
- *Improve subsidies through increased fees, although raise them slowly and carefully. Tiers for the subsidies should be based more on ability to pay and less on demographics like age. Be sure to not exclude some groups like the “hidden middle”. High-fee programs and facilities can include things like golf simulators and ad campaigns to bring in more revenue.*
- *Don’t reduce services unless necessary.*
- *Staff wages should be livable and competitive – consider raising fees to fund this.*

5. Does City Council have recommendations or preferences of funding sources for initiatives that support city climate goals?

Council Response:

- *Look at costs related to heating pools and maintaining landscaping.*
- *We have a partnership with Xcel – can we contract renewable natural gas rather than fossil fuels?*
- *Heat pumps may be more financially feasible for facilities and water, and anaerobic digesters.*

6. Who is served/Equity –

- a. How should BPR consider serving those who do not live in the City of Boulder?
- b. How should BPR ensure increasing fees do not create additional financial barriers?

Council Response:

- *6a has been addressed in earlier conversations – investigate raising fees and exchange partnerships with other cities.*
- *Recquity Pass is a great program but investigate streamlining the application process more to reduce barriers. Try reaching out to existing participants for feedback on their experience.*