Recreation Report

Supplement D

MERCED
Parks & Community Services
Parks Make Life Better!

What's Inside

Supplement D – Recreation Report

Service Design & Delivery *Overview*

Today public park and recreation agencies are being faced with dynamic and ever-changing economic, social and environmental shifts that can lead to instability and uncertainty. Contributing to that are increasing internal and external expectations and demands that can cause organizations to veer off course and away from its purpose; for Merced, that's to enhance quality of life for all Merced residents through the provision of activities and facilities. Staying aligned with the Department's mission combined with intentional efforts can be the primary difference between mediocre and exceptional performance.

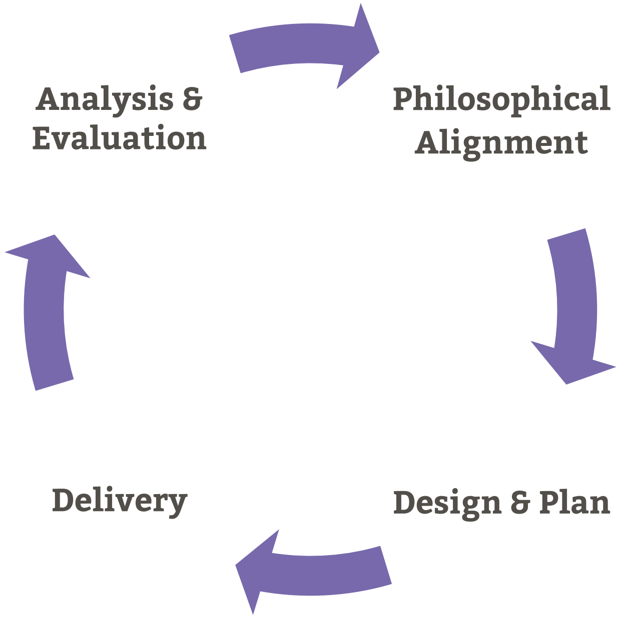
Methodology

A Service Design and Delivery Model is a way to ensure that the Department's on-going efforts that contribute to the quality of life in Merced are concentrated, consistent, and rooted in exceeding community and customer expectations.

The Service Design and Delivery Model, visualized in Figure D.1, consists of four key actionable stages for the Department to utilize in its service provision to the Merced community:

1. **Philosophy**: Ensures that a service aligns with the Department's mission and values.
2. **Design & Plan:** Detailed plan of action that connects a service's design and delivery with the intended outcomes.
3. **Delivery:** The actual provision of a service.
4. **Service Analysis & Evaluation:** Structured analysis and evaluation of a service to determine the next operational strategy.

Figure D.1: Service Design and Delivery Model



Service Design & Delivery *Model*

Stage 1: Philosophy

An organization's philosophy – which typically consists of mission statements, vision statements, core values, and/or guiding principles – is the distillation of its culture that direct its operational practices and guides staff decision-making.

The City of Merced's Parks & Community Service Department's Mission Statement is to plan, facilitate, promote, maintain, and develop activities and facilities that enhance the quality of life in Merced.

The Department's mission creates a logical philosophical framework intended to guide and direct decision-making efforts in both the short and long-term. Simply, they are the foundation for all organizational decisions and processes.

One of the biggest challenges of the Department today is capacity. As a small department, the approach to recreation service provision must balance aspiration – both internally and externally – with capacity. By focusing efforts on doing a few things exceptionally well before expanding. This means designing services that:

- Maximize the impact of limited staff and resources.
- Leverage partnerships with schools, nonprofits, and neighboring cities.
- Utilize contract instructors, volunteers, and shared facilities strategically.
- Prioritize quality and continuity over quantity and novelty.

When determining the provision of recreation service, whether that be the continuation of a current service or addition of a new one, services must first be filtered through the Department's philosophy to ensure fit and relevance.

Stage 2: Design & Plan

In actual operational practice, park and recreation services are not designed and developed in a linear fashion, rather, they are created in an iterative, interactive way requiring constant and continued review and adjustment. However, in order to increase the chances that a service will achieve desired results, it is incumbent upon staff to be responsible, thoughtful and intentional in efforts to produce relevant and effective services. The completion of a Service Design & Plan provides a means to this end via a straight-forward method for designing services.

Service Design & Delivery *Model*

A Service Design & Plan is utilized for a variety of reasons including but not limited to:

- Providing clear and concise connectivity to the Department's mission and to community and customer needs and interests
- Providing a record of the resources required to operate services
- Providing documentation of the intended outcomes of services
- Providing a comprehensive planning reference for use during operations

A Service Design & Plan requires staff to create a detailed plan of action that explicitly connects a service's design with the intended outcomes of meeting the Department's philosophy. This may include the following elements:

1. **Service Category**
    - Indication of which service category the service falls under.
    - A service category is the grouping of services that are alike in "purpose" and is important when it comes to justifiable and equitable allocation of subsidy, cost recovery levels, and assignment of budget and general ledger lines to account for a category's fiscal performance.
    - *NOTE: See the Financial Sustainability Strategy section in Supplement E: Financial Analysis & Strategy Report for more information.*
2. **Service Area**
    - Indication of which service area the service falls under
    - A service area represents the work unit within the Department that designs and delivers the service (e.g., youth sports, aquatics, etc.).
3. **Philosophical Alignment**
    - Affirming that the service meets the Department's philosophy.
4. **Interest/Need**
    - Inclusion of the interest and/or need for the service.

Service Design & Delivery *Model*

5. **Target Market**
   - Identifies those for which the service is being provided.
   - It is important to specify the exact population(s) rather than generic descriptions (e.g., “youth ages 12 – 15 interested in performing arts” rather than “youth of community”).
6. **Competition**
   - Identification of any and all primary competitors (within a 15-minute travel time) and secondary competitors (within a 30-minute travel time) that provide similar or like services for the attention of the same target market.
7. **Goals, Actions & Performance Objectives**
   - Statements about the service that are developed to identify the reasons and outcomes for offering.
     - Service Goal – broad based statement of intent (e.g., To increase performing arts opportunities for teens in Merced.)
     - Planning Action – specific statement about what the Department will do to satisfy the service goal (e.g., Develop a multi-week teen performing arts class to be offered in the summer of 2027.)
     - Performance Objectives – intended outcome of the service (e.g., At the conclusion of the class, all participants will create and perform one original five-minute performance).
8. **Operational Requirements & Considerations**
   - Detailed instructions and “how-to’s” for the implementation and operation of the service.
     - Resources – facility, staffing, budget
     - Structure – participation (minimums/maximums), day/time/term/length, pricing details
     - Management – equipment/supplies, inclusion considerations, marketing, registration, contingency plan, risk management plan

Service Design & Delivery *Model*

Stage 3: Service Delivery

When delivering a service, it is critical that staff recognize that every planned, staged and delivered experience includes three phases of participation - the anticipation of participation; the participation itself; and the reflection as a result of participation.

When a service is delivered, staff are actually directing and facilitating the participant's interactions as they participate in the activity, event, etc. The thoughtful completion of the Service Design & Plan creates the framework from which the Department influences whether a participant will have their needs and interests met, whether they have a satisfying experience, and whether the Department is efficient in the delivery of the service.

It is critical that staff understand during the delivery of a service that common assumptions of service delivery may be found to be untrue. First, the idea that staff know how an experience will be received is a significant unknown. A service may be delivered with the best of intention, yet, there is no guarantee that the individual participating will find it to be an enjoyable or rewarding experience as planned. Second, it is impossible to assess the effectiveness of the service as it relates to feasibility, market reach and impact, and other factors until the service has been delivered. This speaks to the importance of evaluating the service from both the perspective of the participant as well as from the perspective of the managing staff member(s) once it has been delivered.

Stage 4: Service Analysis & Evaluation

The expectation that services be evaluated during or at the conclusion of service delivery is often times not seen as a necessity, whether that be because of time commitments or because it can result in an adverse view of a service of a staff member's interests. However, it is important that there is recognition of the two primary benefits of a solid evaluation effort – the precursor to making decisions about the future of a service; and, to provide evidence that the organization is providing services that address and impact the needs and interests of the community. Both participant evaluations as well as staff evaluation and analysis contribute to a comprehensive evaluation system.

Internal Service Analysis

The Service Analysis is an evaluation of the effectiveness and efficiency of recreation programming and services, such as activities, courses, classes, events, and rentals. The analysis considers each service's relevance, alignment with purpose, market position, financial viability, and consideration of other providers which offer similar and like services. Analysis results can be used to develop recommended service delivery strategies, which can

Service Design & Delivery *Model*

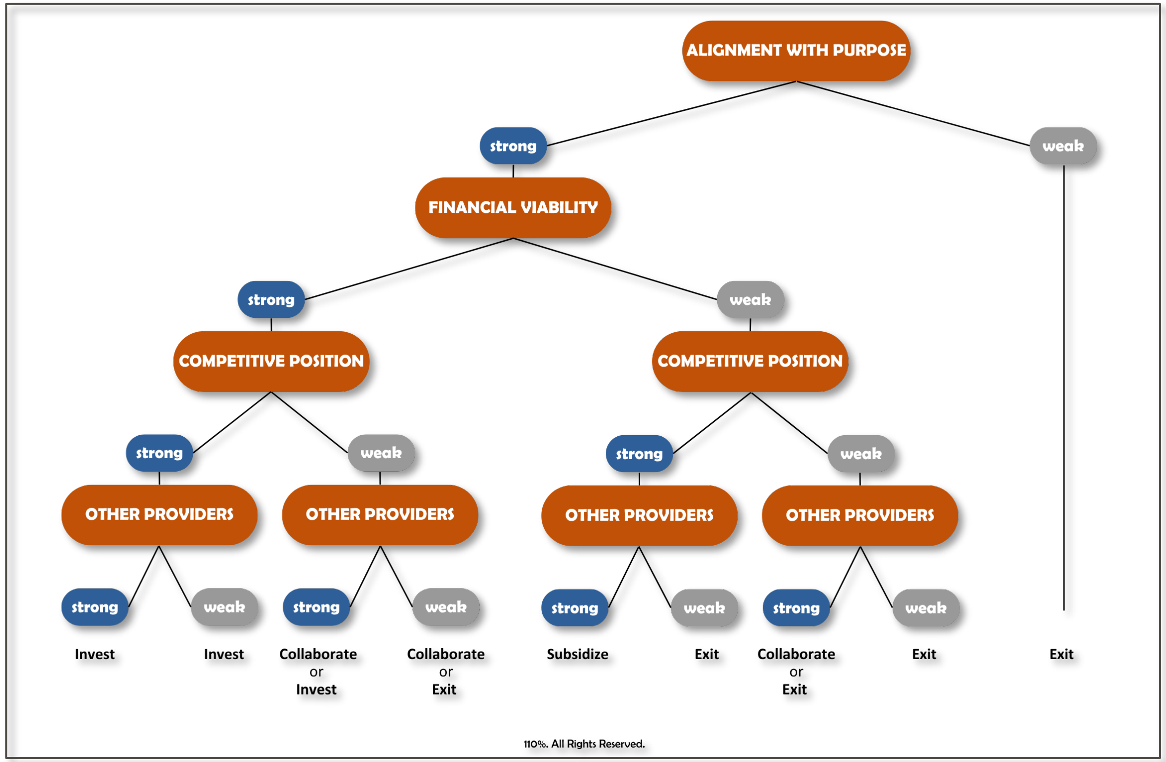
include either continued investment in the service, collaboration, subsidization, or divestment. The analysis utilizes 110%'s Service Analysis Tool, a valuable resource to help park and recreation professionals analyze their organization's service inventory and best define their service "lane". This analysis will help the Department deliver a more focused service menu, improve service quality, and most responsibly use finite financial resources.

Methodology

The Service Analysis Tool Decision Making Tree, shown in Figure D.2, is built around four criteria that guide the evaluation of services.

1. **Alignment with Organizational Mission/Purpose**: Does the service align with the mission/purpose of the organization?
2. **Financial Viability**: Is the service meeting its cost recovery or subsidy investment goals?
3. **Competitive Position**: Is the service currently or reasonably able to be provided at a high level of service given available resources (i.e., funds, staff, facilities)? Is the target market interested in the service and if so, to what degree?
4. **Other Providers**: Do other service providers exist in the community or region that provide similar or like services creating competition for market share? What is their reach and market share in contrast to that of the organization?

Figure D.2: Service Analysis Tool Decision Making Tree



Service Design & Delivery *Model*

After evaluating services, one of four recommended operational strategies are suggested as an implementation tactic. These include:

1. **Invest** provides an opportunity for revenue enhancement, thus, positing the organization to distribute excess revenues to subsidize "common good" services, or to enhance exclusive services that can increase financial return on investment.
2. **Collaborate** to eliminate unnecessary duplication of service is present. Collaboration results in efficient and effective use of finite resources.
3. **Subsidize** so that investments continue to be made to a greater "common good" producing broader, far-reaching benefits for the entire community.
4. **Exit** allows for the reallocation of savings to subsidize "common good" services or to enhance exclusive services that may provide for increased financial return on investment.

Questions to Guide the Analysis of a Service

Alignment with Purpose

- Does the service align with the organization's mission/purpose?

Financial Viability

- What is the cost to provide the service?
- Does the service meet its cost recovery goals/expectations?

Competitive Position

- What is the % of capacity registered for or using the service?
- To what degree are customers satisfied with the services?
- To what degree do staff have the skills and competencies to ensure high level of service?
- What is the quality of host facilities/parks? Does it lend itself to high level of service?

Other Providers

- Does the service align with the organization's mission/purpose?

Service Design & Delivery *Model*

Participant Evaluations

Satisfaction-based evaluations provide data about a participant's satisfaction with a service. The resulting data can be used to judge not only the worth of a service but also the degree to which the service has provided a positive experiences for participants.

To provide a valid measure of participant satisfaction levels of a service, the Department can develop evaluations based on the following steps:

1. Developing a list of questions directly linked to various areas of satisfaction.
2. Distribution of the participant evaluations.
3. Evaluate the collected evaluations and analyze the reported satisfaction levels with the service.

Consistency in questions asked across a system allows for valid measurement of satisfaction levels; however, it may be necessary to ask specific questions by service area. It is important to note that these additional questions should not be considered when measuring satisfaction between various services.

Also, in most surveys that provide closed ended questions, a Likert Scale is typically a five (or seven) point scale which is used to allow participants to express how much they agree or disagree with a particular statement. There continues to be varying perspectives on the number of options that should be made available.

Evaluating Goals & Objectives

Evaluating a service's goals and objectives intends to judge the worth of the service by examining the discrepancies between the service's initial design via the Service Design & Plan and its actual operation.

There are three steps in this evaluation that includes:

1. Defining service standards – defining acceptable performance based upon intended objectives
2. Determining whether a discrepancy exists between some aspect of service performance and the standards (goals and objectives) originally designed for the service; and
3. Utilizing resulting information to make adjustments as appropriate.

Service Design & Delivery *Model*

The features of this evaluation that make it distinctive include:

1. Goals and objectives are specified and include expected outcomes as a result of participation. This enables a comparison between intended outcomes and actual outcomes.
2. The operation of the service is compared with its design – requiring examination of outcomes as well as inputs and processes. This allows for the additional evaluation of possible causes of success or failure.
3. Service standards forming the basis for comparison in the evaluation of goals and outcomes are derived from staff and the participants being served.

This evaluation requires that the Service Design & Plan is well-written and that the goals and objectives established are valid. Further, it forces staff to take a comprehensive view of a service including inputs, processes and outcomes, rather than a narrow view of the service focusing on one feature or one viewpoint. Techniques to implement this evaluation are quite varied and depend on the intended objectives. Techniques used include observation of participant behaviors, evaluation surveys, attendance or other types of statistical analysis, data collection, interviews, etc.

Partnership Analysis *Overview*

Task Overview

The Partnership Analysis was centered on a comprehensive review and assessment of the terms, conditions, and provisions outlined in current Department partnership agreements. The primary reasons why the Department wanted to conduct this analysis include the following.

- **Clarifying Roles and Responsibilities:** Understanding the roles, responsibilities, and contributions expected from each partner to reduce ambiguity and potential conflicts.
- **Aligning Expectations:** Ensuring that the expectations of all parties involved are aligned as it relates to financial contributions, decision-making authority, and other important aspects of the relationship.
- **Risk Management:** Identifying and mitigating potential risks associated with partnerships such as disagreements over decision-making, financial liabilities, or exit strategies.
- **Optimizing Efficiency:** Streamlining operational processes, enhancing communication, and improving overall efficiency in achieving partnership objectives.
- **Facilitating Dispute Resolution:** Providing a clear reference point for resolving conflicts based on agreed-upon terms and conditions.
- **Strategic Alignment:** Ensuring that agreements are in alignment with the mission, values and vision of the Department and its priorities is crucial to success and sustainability.

Comprised of document review and discovery, the Department agreements were analyzed through the lenses of productivity, reciprocation, and efficiency. These agreements consisted primarily of Joint Use Agreements (JUAs). Generally speaking, the Department's agreements were well crafted and consistent in nature, but many are several years from their last updates and could use revisiting for potential updates.

Partnership Analysis *Evaluation Sheets*

Merced Community College District (MCCD)

Partnership Key Details

Original Agreement: Recreation and Educational Facilities Agreement
Amendment: Renewal of Recreation and Educational Facilities Agreement

Dates and Term

Date of Agreement (Original): February 1, 1988
Date of Agreement (Amendment): May 7, 1991
Term of Agreement (Original): One year and seven months ending June 30, 1989
Term of Agreement (Amendment): Expired June 30, 1992; but agreement renews at the beginning of every Fiscal Year

Agreement/Relationship/Arrangement Goal

For the provision for mutual use of facilities for the recreation and physical well-being of the people of the City of Merced.

Roles and Responsibilities

City:

- **Original**
    - Shared use of facilities: Allow MCCD access to certain City facilities
    - Supervision of facilities: City will provide adequate personnel to supervise at College facilities during use with first consideration given to employees of the College system employees
    - Portable facilities and equipment: supply all portable facilities and equipment necessary for community recreation programs at College facilities with all being available to use by the College for college purposes
- **Amendment:** no changes

Partnership Analysis *Evaluation Sheets*

MCCD:

- **Original**
  - Shared use of facilities: Allow City access to certain MCCD facilities
  - Supervision of facilities: MCCD will provide supervisory personnel whenever school-sponsored activities are being conducted on City property
- **Amendment:** no changes

Obligations of All Partners

- **Original:**
  - Time schedules: establish use schedules in advance as to avoid any conflict between the MCCD and City with MCCD having priority at MCCD facilities with City having second priority (and vice versa)
  - Use of facilities during working hours: when mutually beneficial activities are conducted on MCCD facilities during MCCD hours, employees of the City are subject to administrative supervision of the President of the MCCD.
  - Disputes: arbitrated by the Board of Trustees of Community College District and Recreation and Parks Commission of the City
  - Indemnification: adhere to agreement's terms
  - Damage to property: adhere to agreement's terms
  - Liability: adhere to agreement's terms
- **Amendment:** no changes

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

- **Original:** none
- **Amendment:** none

Partnership Analysis *Evaluation Sheets*

Financial Arrangements

- **Original:** City and MCCD shall agree upon a financial arrangement, if appropriate, for use of facilities
- **Amendment:** no changes

Out Clause

- **Original:** none
- **Amendment:** either party has the right cancel with at least 30 days written notice prior to the end of the fiscal year

Partnership Analysis *Evaluation Sheets*

Merced Community School District (MCSD)

Partnership Key Details

Original Agreement: Joint Use of Facilities

Dates and Term

Date of Agreement (Original): March 2, 1987
Date of Agreement (Amendment 1): February 1, 1993
Date of Agreement (Amendment 2): July 10, 1996
Term of Agreement (Original): One year with renewal from year to year
Term of Agreement (Amendment 1 & 2): No changes

Agreement/Relationship/Arrangement Goal

For the use of educational and recreation facilities for community recreation programs for the development of good citizenship and for promoting and preserving the health and general welfare of the people of Merced.

Roles and Responsibilities

City:

- **Original**
  - <u>Use:</u> City use shall not interfere with regular conduct of school activities, nor shall use be inconsistent with use for school purposes; all improvements shall be available for MCSD use for school purposes during normal school periods of supervised use
  - <u>Supervision:</u> City to provide adequate personnel to supervise facilities used and the recreation activities conducted on MCSD sites during non-school hours; first consideration of hire will be given to qualified school employees, and then to persons outside the school system; when City activities are integrated with MCSD school hours and for students, City employees are subject to the administrative authority of the principal of the school

Partnership Analysis *Evaluation Sheets*

- **Amendment 1:**
  - Supervision: in addition to the original, if MCSD employees are hired by the City, such person(s) shall be considered the employee and agent of the City for purposes of the agreement; comply with all requirements of Education Code Section 10911.5
  - List of organizations: the list of organizations that have registered with or coordinated by the City are included in Exhibit "B"
- **Amendment 2**: no changes

MCSD:

- **Original**
  - Installation and maintenance of equipment: MCSD will install and maintain all fences, play apparatus and facilities necessary for its school program and that on sites agreed upon said items may be used by City for community recreation purposes
  - Custodial services: provide all custodial services for school sites used by the City and MCSD
  - Supervision of facilities: MCSD will provide supervisory personnel whenever school-sponsored activities are being conducted on City property
- **Amendment 1 & 2:** No change

Obligations of All Partners

- **Original:**
  - Shared use: make available to each other the facilities described in Exhibit A for community recreation activities
  - Procedures: use of facilities shall be in accordance with the regular procedures of MCSD and the City
  - Time schedules: MCSD Superintendent and City's Director of Recreation and Parks will establish a scheduled use of facilities in advance to avoid conflict between schools and City
  - Priority use: MCSD shall have first priority of school facilities; City have second priority; use by other agencies or groups have third priority. City shall have first priority of City facilities; MCSD have second priority; use by other agencies or groups have third priority.
  - Dispute or differences: in the event any dispute or difference arises as a result of the recreation programs conducted on joint used sites, said dispute shall be settled and arbitrated by the MCSD Board of Education and the City's Recreation and Parks Commission

Partnership Analysis *Evaluation Sheets*

- **Amendment 1:**
  - Procedures: use of facilities shall be in accordance with the regular procedures of MCSD and the City that requires an application and agreement for use of school facilities form (MCSD facilities) or application for use of facilities (City facilities)
  - Dispute or differences: in addition to the original, arbitration procedures as established by the American Arbitration Association will be followed
- **Amendment 2:**
  - Addition: addition of Cruickshank School Gymnasium and Auditorium to Exhibit "A" of Amendment 1

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

- none

Financial Arrangements

- **Original:**
  - Facility use: agree upon financial arrangements, if appropriate
  - Custodial services: agree upon prior to use
- **Amendment 1**: Facility use: if no fee or financial arrangements have been established, the fee is $0
- **Amendment 2:** no change from original or Amendment 1

Out Clause

- **Original:** notification in writing no later than 30 days prior to the end of the yearly term that of its intention to terminate
- **Amendment 1 & 2:** no change

Partnership Analysis *Evaluation Sheets*

Merced Community School District (MCSD)

Partnership Key Details

Original Agreement: Development and Joint Use – Ada Givens School Park
Addendum: Funding for Ada Givens School Park

Dates and Term

Date of Agreement (Original): December 1, 1975
Date of Agreement (Addendum): September 8, 1998
Term of Agreement (Original): One year and seven months ending June 30, 1989
Term of Agreement (Addendum): Expired June 30, 1992; but agreement renews at the beginning of every Fiscal Year

Agreement/Relationship/Arrangement Goal

For the use of Ada Givens School ground and playfields for the conduct of community recreation programs and purposes.

Roles and Responsibilities

City:

- **Original**
  - Use: City use shall not interfere with regular conduct of school activities, nor shall use be inconsistent with use for school purposes; all improvements shall be available for MCSD use for school purposes during normal school periods of supervised use
  - Ownership: City has ownership rights for City completed improvements on school grounds and playfields, and has rights to remove at any time, except that the MCSD has the option to remove and purchase said items at a price mutually agreed upon or set by two independent appraisers
  - Maintenance and repair: maintain and repair all recreational facilities and equipment constructed by City upon school property including mowing and caretaking of turfed areas and irrigation system

Partnership Analysis *Evaluation Sheets*

- **Addendum:**
  - <u>Maintenance:</u> City to maintain and repair all recreational facilities and equipment which were improved

MCSD:

- **Original**
  - <u>Development:</u> develop, improve, landscape, and construct improvements of the Ada Givens School grounds and playfields
  - <u>Shared use:</u> grant City a license to use Ada Givens school ground and playfields
  - <u>Policing and Caretaking:</u> MCSD to maintain and repair the Junior Farm area, and perform all cleaning, policing, and caretaking of Ada Given school ground and playfield areas at a level equal to or greater than those areas of Ada Given that are not part of the agreement
- **Addendum:**
  - <u>Improvements:</u> make improvements to Ada Givens school grounds and playfields
  - <u>Ownership:</u> MCSD has ownership rights for MCSD completed improvements on school grounds and playfields, and has rights to remove at any time, except that the City has the option to remove and purchase said items at a price mutually agreed upon or to receive reimbursement

Obligations of All Partners

- **Original:**
  - <u>Meeting:</u> representatives of both parties shall meet periodically to consider and agree upon necessary maintenance
- **Addendum:** no changes

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

- **Original:** none
- **Addendum:** none

Partnership Analysis *Evaluation Sheets*

Financial Arrangements

City:

- **Original:** none
- **Addendum:** contribute $10,000 towards the construction of improvements

MCSD:

- **Original:**
  - Water use: MCSD shall pay for water in the amount equal to the prevailing rates from time to time charged for water being used for the developed park
- **Addendum:**
  - Improvements: make improvements to Ada Givens school grounds and playfields
  - Termination penalty: if MCSD terminates within 10 years of the date of the Addendum, City is entitled to reimbursement in amount decreasing by $1,000 for each year that the Agreement remains in effect
  - Ownership: if MCSD removes improvements, the City has the option to remove and purchase said items at a price mutually agreed upon or to receive reimbursement

Out Clause

- **Original:** none
- **Addendum:** if MCSD terminates within 10 years of the date of the Addendum, City is entitled to reimbursement in amount decreasing by $1,000 for each year that the Agreement remains in effect

Partnership Analysis *Evaluation Sheets*

Merced Community School District (MCSD)

Partnership Key Details

Agreement: Development of Lights and Joint Use for Ball Fields at Hoover and Rivera Middle Schools

Dates and Term

Date of Agreement: November 4, 2004
Term of Agreement: 10 years from the date of completion of the facilities (no date of completion indicated; presumed date of completion December 31, 2015)
Renewal of Agreement: automatically extended for successive five year terms (presumed date of renewal beginning on January 1, 2016 and ending on December 31, 2020; 2021 – 2025)

Agreement/Relationship/Arrangement Goal

For the construction of field lighting systems at Hoover and Rivera Middle Schools to provide educational and recreational opportunities for the children and the families residing near the schools.

Roles and Responsibilities

City:

- Project financing and construction: responsible for the financing, construction and renovation of the project at the schools
- Use of facilities: entitled to use of the facilities during non-school hours in including the fields, courts, and restrooms as indicated in schedule set forth on Attachment "B" of the agreement
- Community groups: City has the right to extend use to community groups authorized by the City; City is responsible for their appropriate use of the facilities and should charge a sufficient deposit for security and proper use

Partnership Analysis *Evaluation Sheets*

- Operational costs: contribute toward annual field maintenance and lighting improvements
- Supervision: during City use of facilities, provide sufficient staff members to ensure that the use of the facilities do not result in damages and includes clean up of facilities

MCSD:

- Grant of license: grant the City use of the facilities for public recreation programs during non-school hours as indicated in schedule set forth on Attachment "B" of the agreement; includes extension to community groups authorized by the City
- Operational costs: assume cost of routine and normal maintenance
- Maintenance: maintain and repair the schools and facilities including the interior and exterior buildings and structures, turfed areas, irrigation systems, and recreational equipment

Obligations of All Partners

- Meeting: representatives of both parties shall meet periodically to consider and agree upon necessary maintenance

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

- None

Financial Arrangements

City:

- Project financing: contribute an amount not to exceed $65,000
- Operational costs: contribute toward annual field maintenance and lighting improvements
- Damages: reimburse MCSD within 30 days of receipt of repair notice
- Deposits for community use groups: whenever possible and appropriate, charge a sufficient deposit as security for the proper use and clean-up of facilities

Partnership Analysis *Evaluation Sheets*

MCSD:

- Operational costs: assume cost of routine and normal maintenance

Out Clause

- After the first 10 years by written notice of at least 90 days before the commencement of the next five year automatic renewal term

Partnership Analysis *Evaluation Sheets*

Merced Community School District (MCSD)

Partnership Key Details

Original Agreement: Joint Use for Rivera Middle School Gymnasium
Amendment: Use of Public Facility Impact Fees for Joint Use

Dates and Term

Date of Agreement (Original): May 20, 2008
Date of Agreement (Amendment): October 3, 2001
Term of Agreement (Original): 40 years (May 19, 2048); automatically renews every five years
Term of Agreement (Amendment): no update

Agreement/Relationship/Arrangement Goal

To provide a new gymnasium facility to serve the students and community of Merced for community purposes.

Roles and Responsibilities

City:

- **Original**
  - Construction: with MCSD Superintendent, City Manager shall monitor the construction of the facility
  - Joint use: available for the maximum extent possible after regular school hours, but no less than 20 hours per week
  - Staffing: responsible for staffing, supervision, and security during facility use for City sponsored activities
- **Amendment**
  - Construction: original terms above are eliminated
  - Joint use: original terms above are eliminated
  - Staffing: original terms above are eliminated

Partnership Analysis *Evaluation Sheets*

MCSD:

- **Original**
  - Construction: MCSD is fully responsible for the construction of the facility including obtaining all necessary project approvals, and with City Manager, District Superintendent shall monitor the construction of the facility
  - Joint use: exclusive use and control of the facility from one hour prior to until one hour after regular school hours when school is in session
  - Scheduling: fully responsible for scheduling use of the facility; keep newly added events to a minimum
  - Staffing: responsible for staffing, supervision, and security during school hours and any non-City sponsored activities
  - Maintenance: responsible for all maintenance to building interiors, custodial services and supplies, floor re-finishing, painting, and maintenance of all electrical, plumbing, and mechanical components
  - Charges for facility use: will be determined by MCSD in accordance with MCSD's Master Joint Use Agreement with the City and billed to the user group; all charges will be determined in advance and agreed upon
- **Amendment**
  - Construction: in addition to the original but amends that the MCSD Superintendent shall monitor the construction of the facility and will keep City informed of the status
  - Joint use: the MCSD shall have sole and exclusive use of the facility except when MCSD allows other or outside groups and organizations to use the facility. Upon written request from the City to District to activate the joint use of the facility, parties shall enter good faith negotiations to facilitate a joint use of the facility on mutually acceptable terms; original terms above are eliminated
  - Staffing: MCSD shall be responsible for the day-to-day operations of the facility; original terms above are eliminated
  - Operational costs: MCSD shall be solely responsible for the operations and utility costs of the facility including water and sewer, electricity, gas, refuse disposal, and custodial maintenance; original terms below are eliminated
  - Maintenance: amended to MCSD being solely responsible for the above terms

Obligations of All Partners

- **Original:**
  - Scheduling: cooperate in coordinating programs conducted at the facility as to avoid conflicting use; on an annual basis, MCSD to provide the City a schedule of all MCSD events for year school year; the City will then submit a proposed schedule to MCSD

Partnership Analysis *Evaluation Sheets*

- Meeting: meet at least annually to discuss operations and scheduling of the facility
- Disaster relief areas: in the event of any federal, state, or local government agency determines a state of emergency in which the facility is designated to be a "disaster relief area", all rights are suspended until a reasonable time following the removal of the designation
- Operational costs: each are responsible for their proportionate share of operational and utility costs for the facility including water and sewer, electricity, gas, refuse disposal, and custodial maintenance; costs associated with the use by other community groups will be borne by the sponsoring party and are subject to the same costs
- Maintenance costs: each are responsible for their proportionate share of maintenance, repair, and replacement costs of the facility including materials and labor

➢ **Amendment:**
- Operational costs: MCSD; original terms are eliminated

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

➢ **Original:** none
➢ **Amendment:** City use of the facility: City Credit of $100,000

Financial Arrangements

Both:

➢ **Original:**
- ➢ Operational Costs: each are responsible for their proportionate share of operational and utility costs for the facility including water and sewer, electricity, gas, refuse disposal, and custodial maintenance; costs associated with the use by other community groups will be borne by the sponsoring party and are subject to the same costs

➢ **Amendment:** no update

City:

➢ **Original:**
- Funding: City shall contribute a local share of its eligible matching share of the project not to exceed 25% of construction costs

Partnership Analysis *Evaluation Sheets*

- **Amendment:**
  - <u>Funding:</u> amended to within 45 days of the agreement, City shall pay MCSD $950,000 towards the construction of the facility; original terms above are eliminated
  - <u>City use of the facility:</u> MCSD to provide the City with $100,00 credit for City's use of the facility; the amount for each use will be deducted from the City Credit until the credit amount is $0 or until five years from the date of the first amendment of this agreement, whichever occurs first

MCSD:

- **Original:**
  - <u>Funding</u>: MCSD shall provide all additional funding for the completion of the facility that is not covered by the City or State by using its local bond revenues
  - <u>Charges for facility use</u>: will be determined by MCSD in accordance with MCSD's Master Joint Use Agreement with the City and billed to the user group; all charges will be determined in advance and agreed upon
- **Amendment:**
  - <u>Operational costs:</u> District solely responsible for the operations and utilities costs of the Facility
  - <u>Maintenance:</u> District solely responsible for the maintenance and custodial services of the Facility

Out Clause

- **Original**
  - The agreement shall automatically terminate in the event the facility is not approved by the State Department of Education or the Division of the State Architect within one year of execution
  - The agreement shall automatically terminate in the event the facility is not approved for funding by the State Allocation Board within one year of execution
  - Either party may terminated by providing at least six months written notice prior to the end of each subsequent five year term
- **Amendment:** no update

Partnership Analysis *Evaluation Sheets*

Merced Community School District (MCSD)

Partnership Key Details

Agreement: Joint Use for Facilities (Multi-use Rooms) at Tenaya and Chenoweth Schools

Dates and Term

Date of Agreement: May 3, 2004
Term of Agreement: five years, expired May 2, 2009

Agreement/Relationship/Arrangement Goal

For the construction of multi-purpose facilities at Tenaya and Chenoweth Schools for future use for both District and the City.

Roles and Responsibilities

City:

- Proration of operational costs: responsible for any operational costs associated with use of the facilities (utilities, supplemental trash pickup, additional custodial services); damages due within 30 days of repair
- Supervision of facilities: City will provide sufficient personnel to supervise facilities during use; responsible for safety of use and clean up after use
- Authorized community groups: charge a sufficient security deposit to authorized community groups for use of facilities

MCSD:

- Construction of Multi-Purpose Facilities: MCSD to finance the construction of the multi-purpose facilities at the Tenaya and Chenoweth Schools
- Right to decline: MCSD has the right to decline use of facilities by any group(s) proposed by the City which have previously caused damages, or whose prior activities have resulted in disturbance, or have resulted in unlawful actions.
- Maintenance: assume cost of routine and normal maintenance to interior and exterior of facilities

Partnership Analysis *Evaluation Sheets*

Obligations of All Partners

- Shared use of facilities: MCSD shall have priority use for the facilities with the City entitled to the facilities when not used by MCSD
- Use schedules: coordinate schedules sufficiently in advance

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

- None

Financial Arrangements

City:

- Proration of operational costs: City responsible for operational costs associated with use of Facilities

MCSD:

- Maintenance: MCSD assume cost of routine maintenance
- Construction of multi-purpose facilities: MCSD fully responsible

Out Clause

- Either party has the right to terminate for any reason after providing 90 days written notice

Merced Union High School District (MUHSD)

Partnership Key Details

Original Agreement: Use of Facilities
Amendment: Joint Use of Joe Herb Park, Golden Valley High School Parking Lot, and Driveway

Dates and Term

Date of Agreement (Original): August 10, 1994
Date of Agreement (Amendment): January 5, 2005
Term of Agreement (Original): August 9, 1995; renewal year-to-year
Term of Agreement (Amendment): no update

Agreement/Relationship/Arrangement Goal

Original: Partner for shared use of facilities for the recreation and physical well-being of the people of the City of Merced.
Amendment: Partner for shared use of facilities for Joe Herb Park and Golden Valley High School parking lot and driveway for the recreation and physical well-being of the people of the City of Merced.

Roles and Responsibilities

City:

- **Original**
    - Shared use of facilities: Allow MUHSD access to City parks and facilities for community recreation activities to including all City parks (including play fields, ball fields, and tennis courts), all City buildings and facilities under jurisdiction of the Recreation and Parks Department, Memorial Plunge, North Campus swimming pool (summer), Ada Givens swimming pool, Stephen Leonard swimming pool, storage rooms and restrooms, all hard surface outside courts.

Partnership Analysis *Evaluation Sheets*

- North Campus Pool: when school is not in session (summer interval), pay operating costs, pay qualified personal for the operation of the pool; set an admission charge and collect and retain admission charges
- Portable facilities and equipment: supply all portable facilities and equipment necessary for community recreation programs at MUHSD sites with all being available to use by MUHSD for school purposes
- Custodial services: provide all custodial services for parks and park sites used by the City and MUHSD
- Supervision of facilities: City will provide adequate personnel to supervise at school facilities during use with first consideration given to employees of MUHSD employees

➢ **Amendment**

- Construction of full-size field: develop a full-size adult competition field in the percolation pond at Joe Herb Park, located north of the Golden Valley High School parking lot and east of Parsons Avenue
- Joint Use of Fields at Joe Herb Park: allow MUHSD access to Joe Herb Park facilities and driveway during school hours
- Clean up: complete litter clean up after each City sponsored event or use
- Parking lot: construct the Joe Herb Park parking lot and associated improvements
- Video surveillance: give consideration to the installation of free-standing video surveillance of the parking lot, laying conduit to the 110 voltage system, and provide a location for a video recorder.
- Funding: use the (then) current appropriations of funds for improvements at Joe Herb Park from the designated Capital Improvement Projects

MHUSD:

➢ **Original**

- Shared use of facilities: Allow City access to facilities at Merced High School, East Campus Education Center, and Golden Valley High School for community recreation activities including all gymnasiums, ball fields, soccer fields, track and field area, hard surface outside game courts, North Campus swimming pool, multi-purpose rooms, classrooms (general and specialized), storage rooms and restrooms (mutually agreed upon), Golden Valley High School theatre
- Installation and maintenance of equipment: install and maintain all fences, play apparatus and facilities necessary on MUHSD sites with all being available to use by the City for community recreation purposes.

Partnership Analysis *Evaluation Sheets*

- Custodial services: provide all custodial services for school sites used by the City and MUHSD
- Supervision of facilities: MUHSD will provide supervisory personnel whenever school-sponsored activities are being conducted on City property

➢ **Amendment**

- Golden Valley High School parking lot and driveway: allow the City access to use the Golden Valley High School parking lot and driveway during non-school hours for public recreation use only

Obligations of All Partners

➢ **Original:**

- Schedules: work out schedule of dates and times in advance with MUHSD having priority at school facilities with City having second priority (and vice versa)
- Damage to property: adhere to agreement's terms

➢ **Amendment**

- Coordination: coordinate events at Joe Herb Park on a calendar year basis
- Gates: keep gates to Joe Herb Park locked during all school hours; both parties shall hold keys to access gates
- Annual meeting: hold annual meetings to evaluate the agreement

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

➢ None

Financial Arrangements

Both:

➢ Use of facilities: agree upon a financial arrangement, if appropriate, for use of facilities

Partnership Analysis *Evaluation Sheets*

City:

- **Original:**
  - North Campus Pool: when school is not in session (summer interval), set an admission charge and collect and retain admission charges
- **Amendment:**
  - Funding: use the (then) current appropriations of funds for improvements at Joe Herb Park from the following Capital Improvement Projects: Project No. 102056 – Joe Herb Park Proposition 12 Funding ($311,038.83), Project No. 196018 – Well No. 2 Basin Expansion ($317,227,45), Project No. 104021 – Parsons Frontage/Joe Herb Park ($424,039.68)

MUHSD: none

Out Clause

One party must notify the other in writing no later than 30 days prior to the end of the yearly term

Merced Union High School District (MUHSD)

Partnership Key Details

Original Agreement: Joint Use of Between MUHSD and the City *(not available)*
Amendment: Joint Use of Bellevue Road Rym (El Capitan)

Dates and Term

Date of Agreement (Original): March 5, 2007
Date of Agreement (Amendment): October 15, 2011
Term of Agreement (Original): August 9, 1995; renewal year-to-year
Term of Agreement (Amendment): no update

Agreement/Relationship/Arrangement Goal

Original: Enter a joint use relationship relating to the use of the gymnasium at Bellevue Road Area High School (El Capitan High School).
Amendment: Continue the joint use relationship while modifying the manner in which construction, operation and maintenance of the gymnasium will be funded.

Roles and Responsibilities

City:

- **Original:** N/A
- **Amendment**
  - <u>Funding</u>: Contribute approved reduced amount to the contribution to the Facility project
  - <u>Use:</u> No longer utilize Facility for regularly scheduled programs.
  - <u>Maintenance and operations:</u> City will no longer contribute.

Partnership Analysis *Evaluation Sheets*

MHUSD:

- **Original:** N/A
  - Shared use of facility: Provide the City with shared use of the facility.
- **Amendment**
  - Facility management: amendment of Section 4, MUHSD shall be solely responsible for oversight and day-to-day operations of the Facility.
  - Use of the facility: amendment to Section 7, MUHSD shall have sole and exclusive use of the Facility except when MUHSD allows other outside groups use of the Facility, with City having first priority over other non-MUHSD users.
  - Maintenance of facility: amendment to Section 9, MUHSD shall be solely responsible for the safety, security and operations of the Facility, including performance of all maintenance
  - Maintenance and operation funding: amendment to Section 10, MUHSD shall budget and expend any and all funds necessary and appropriate for the performance of the maintenance and operation of the Facility
  - Operating policies: amendment to Section 14, MUHSD shall develop rules and regulations for operating guidelines for the Facility

Obligations of All Partners

- **Original:** N/A
- **Amendment:**
  - Meet: Meet within five years to revisit the issue of maintenance and operational costs

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

- **Original:** N/A
- **Amendment:** none

Financial Arrangements

Both:

- **Original:** N/A

Partnership Analysis *Evaluation Sheets*

- **Amendment**: none

City:

- **Original:**
  - City use of the facility: Contribute $1,576,004 to MUHSD
- **Amendment:**
  - City use of the facility: amendment to Section 8.2, reduce original contribution to $951,670 to MUHSD and pay within 45 days for the date of the First Amendment

MUHSD:

- **Original:**
  - City use of the facility: Contribute $1,576,004 to MUHSD
- **Amendment:**
  - Charges for use: District will determine and bill user group, in accordance with the Master Joint Use Agreement with the City
  - Credit: amendment to Section 8.2, provide a credit of $100,00 to the City for use of the Facility until the amount of the City Credit is reduced to zero or 5 years from the date of the First Amendment, whichever occurs first
  - Maintenance and operation: MUHSD shall budget and expend any and all funds necessary for maintenance and operation of the Facility

Out Clause

- **Original:** N/A
- **Amendment:** N/A

Partnership Analysis *General Guiding Principles*

What's a Partnership?

The term "partnership" has become a bit of a buzzword over the past few decades and is an umbrella term and can include relationships such as *strategic alliances, cooperative ventures, and collaborations*.
The logical premise of a partnership seems as though it would be irresistible, right? Not so fast. The harsh reality is that some organizations feel that when they hold hands with a "partner", it can be threatening to their territory (or silo), their image, or their bottom line. However, the reality is that given today's competitive landscape and finicky and ever-changing markets, a thoughtfully constructed and managed partnership can be a beautiful thing.

Partnerships can be advantageous collaborations that position participating organization(s) to efficiently utilize resources leading to cost effective and efficient service delivery, bridging of markets, reductions in duplication of services and fragmentation of resources, and cooperative capital development and/or improvements.

Partnership Considerations

1. ***Reciprocal benefit…***any organization that has something your organization might want or need is a potential partner provided you have something they want or need as well. However, there has to be a reciprocal benefit for both parties or the relationship is likely to be unfair favoring one party over another. The expectation of reciprocal benefit is a must when preventing one organization from simply becoming a granting body to another. Identifying the value of the contributions brought forth from all participating organizations helps ensure that there is equal value and benefit to each all. *For any governmental organization, receiving fair and just value on behalf of taxpayers in return for any resource investment and commitment must be paramount.*
2. ***Don't settle…***an alliance should be beneficial in some way to your organization and ultimately got your community and taxpayers. This can be in terms of the bottom line, enhanced image, or some other benefit. If there is no advantage to the partnership, don't go there.
3. ***Think long-term…***partnerships are strategic relationships that should be meant to benefit those involved for a minimum of three to five years. Try to project whether a would-be partner will provide a net benefit in the distant future. Partnerships should be strategic with an interest in the long term.

Partnership Analysis *General Guiding Principles*

4. ***Relationships are key...***partnerships are business relationships and the people behind the business are the ones that will make or break the partnership. Just like in a marriage, it is hard to recover if you pick the wrong partner or spouse. You can bring a relationship to its knees if you make a bad choice or cannot maintain a healthy and productive relationship.
5. ***Shy away from those with a questionable reputation...***it is important to research any prospective partner. Are they credible? Do they have honest dealings with others? What is their reputation? What are perceptions about their service and standards? If their values are not in sync with your organization's values, it is best to stay away.
6. ***Are your eyes on the same ball...*** potential partners must have the same or similar fundamental purpose (mission) or the alliance is likely to fail if motives and intentions are vastly different.

Creating Momentum

Once prospective partners have been identified, it's time to initiate contact via a phone call or email and schedule a time to meet and discuss the potential partnership or collaboration.

In many respects the most important moment in any partnership may be the one when you and a prospective partner sit down to discuss the opportunity at hand. A meeting does not oblige either party to sign on the dotted line, but it is a logical way to get the conversation started. This is your chance to lay the foundation for a productive future relationship and to expose potential barriers or challenges. The goal of this initial conversation is to determine whether the partnership is worth your and your organization's time and effort, (as well as theirs).

Creating a Partnership Agreement

As you get closer to cutting a deal with a prospective partner, the list below includes a series of tasks that should be considered in order to move through discussions, deliberations, and negotiation of a partnership agreement.

Partnership Analysis *General Guiding Principles*

- ❑ Schedule a meeting (or meetings) with the prospective partner to lay a foundation for an agreement.
- ❑ Discuss the "big picture" – will both parties interests lead them where they want to be in the next year? 3-5 years? Beyond?
- ❑ Uncover potential challenges and obstacles which may get in the way, and how they will be managed. Essentially, discuss what could go wrong and consider contingencies.
    - ❑ Craft a draft agreement that includes parameters such as those listed below that are mutually agreeable to all parties.
    - ❑ Scope and management details of the partnership
    - ❑ Goals – what are you trying to accomplish or achieve?
    - ❑ Roles and responsibilities of all partners including decision making authority – be specific
    - ❑ Obligations of all partners – again, be specific
    - ❑ Milestones – identify dates for accomplishment(s)
    - ❑ Term of the agreement – be cautious to avoid "lifetime agreements" and make sure there is a review period defined encouraging evaluation and assessment on a periodic basis.
    - ❑ Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) - financial KPIs outline the monetary value of the partnership to each party while strategic KPIs may be less tangible but still important when defining intended partnership impacts such as engagement, branding/image, customer satisfaction, etc.
    - ❑ Financial arrangements – Who gives what? Who gets what? Under what terms?
    - ❑ "Out clause" – this allows for an exit strategy in the event of poor performance, unforeseen circumstances, etc.
- ❑ Establish an agenda for formal negotiation – absolutely, under no circumstances, should there be a "handshake agreement". Everything should be in writing.

Creating a Partnership Agreement

As you get closer to cutting a deal with a prospective partner, the list to the left includes a series of tasks that should be considered in order to move through discussions, deliberations, and negotiation of a partnership agreement.

Partnership Analysis *General Guiding Principles*

Managing the Partnership Moving Forward

Once an agreement is signed it is time to *implement*, which is when the heavy lifting starts. Access to the right team members is the difference between a partnership that yields results and one that is simply documented. Identifying the people, departments, or divisions involved in implementing and managing the partnership will simplify things, allow for a direct link to those who can evaluate its effei5veness or identify improvements to be made, and ensure connection to the people who will actually being doing the work expected of the partnership.

Consistent and open communication is the backbone of any effective partnership. Each party depends on the other to stay informed. This can be achieved by offering status reports and/or scheduling a regular touch point (e.g., quarterly) to simply connect and check in or to address any concerns that may affect the health and well-being of the relationship.

When done right, partnerships are advantageous collaborations that position participating organizations to efficiently utilize resources leading to cost effective service delivery. This is of critical importance in all sectors today as resources are more often than not, scarce and sacred.

Trends

Trends can be a source of inspiration for park and recreation organizations and the professionals who serve their communities. Whether it be an innovation, idea, or something related to pop culture, trends tend to influence human behavior. While reports on parks and recreation trends often focus on popular programs and services or ways to respond to the next technological innovation, the project team chose to instead identify five key issues affecting the department to explore the industry trends on how to they are being addressed.

Technology in the Parks

Technological trends in parks and recreation have grown, especially since the emergence of artificial intelligence-assisted software. Merced can explore the feasibility of integrating an Esports recreation room in a community center that not only serves tech-savvy youth and younger adults, but can also offer virtual reality fitness games. Using parks and technology in the same context may seem counterintuitive to the benefits of being outdoors, but it does create an opportunity to strengthen community and socialization.

Other opportunities to explore are the integration of technology are Wi-Fi-enabled smart parks that not only keep the community connected but also help bridge the digital divide, the unequal access to information or resources due to a lack of access to technology. Incorporating technology into parks and recreation can assist with the promotion of programming though digital kiosks and mobile apps that can reach a larger audience to increase participation.

The use of digital kiosks also offers a space for the incorporation of local art. Art can be periodically displayed that features local artists and shares the rich culture and history of the Merced with residents and all who visit the parks. Accommodating technology can reduce the carbon footprint of traditional printed material often used for promotional purposes and increase efficiency. Merced can explore offering digital art and videography classes to increase participation of the younger population but also offer a career opportunity to older generations.

Unhoused & Safety in Parks

According to the National Alliance to End Homelessness, nearly three quarter of a million Americans were unhoused in 2024, with California accounting for nearly a quarter of that amount. Public spaces, parks in particular, are frequently the places of retreat for the unhoused. Municipalities continue to face the challenge of properly supporting this population, and both their leisure and physiological needs, alongside traditional user groups and the organization's mission to provide community services and gathering spaces.

Trends

Several organizations such as Safe Routes Partnership, 8 80 Cities, and The Trust for Public Land have published resources on the approaches and actions that municipalities across the country are taking to address this issue.

- Support resources:
  - Creating public education resources that use person-first language to humanize individuals experiencing homelessness
  - Cultivating partnerships with organizations that offer social support services
  - Establishing transportation services to local shelters and other social support organizations
- Operational modifications:
  - Modifying park hours for earlier closures
  - Revising ordinances to strengthen consequences of crime
- Security investments:
  - Staffing increases to better monitor public spaces
  - Installing gates and barriers to manage access of parks
  - Installing monitoring systems that utilize updated technology (e.g., security cameras, trail cameras, license plate readers) to most effectively monitor users
  - Installing lighting for added and enhanced visibility

Parks & Recreation and Economic Development

It is no secret that parks and recreation provides a positive impact on our communities through the provision of services – parks, facilities, amenities, and programs. More than that, parks and recreation promotes economic activities that make communities more prosperous.

The most recently available figures, as revealed in NRPA's 2023 report titled "The Economic Impact of Parks", indicated that local public park and recreation agencies in the U.S. generate more than $200 billion annually in economic activity and is supported by over 1 million jobs that boost labor income by more than $63 billion from their operations and capital spending.

Trends

The study also examined the economic impact of local park recreation spending at the state level. Figure D.3 shows California's economic impact compared to the national total.

Figure D.3: Impact of Local Park and Recreation Agency Spending - 2021

	Employment *(jobs)*	Labor Income *(billions)*	Value Added *(billions)*	Output *(billions)*
California	105,185	$7.02	$9.85	$20.61
Nationally	1,065,832	$63.03	$96.82	$201.39

Source: National Recreation and Park Association

NOTE: Output measures the value of the resulting transactions. Employment is the number of headcount jobs, both full and part-time. Labor income includes salaries, wages and fringe benefits. Value added is the measure most equivalent to GDP and includes property income, dividends, corporate profits and other measures.

The NRPA report continues to highlight the five critical economic impacts public parks and recreation has that include:

Health and wellness: improved physical and mental health can lower individuals' medical and insurance costs

- Conservation and resiliency: effective natural resource management and green infrastructure investments can reduce disaster recovery and insurance costs
- Property values: homes and properties located near parklands have higher values than those located farther away, which add to the tax base of local governments
- Economic development: the increased quality-of-life is a top factor of corporate executives when choosing a location for a headquarters, factory or facility
- Visitor spending: park and recreation amenities spur tourism to their respective communities including increased sales at restaurants, stores, and hotels.

Furthermore, a 2024 Trust for Public Land (TPL) report titled "Parks Investment and Economic Vitality" analyzed park investment and economic vitality in a select number of U.S. cities and drew a number of conclusions based on the study's findings.

- Cities experiencing economic growth, regardless of size or location, are investing more in parks and open spaces.
- Cities that invest in parks and open spaces attract and retain a diverse workforce.
- Growing, diverse workforces attract companies to start and expand their businesses in these cities.
- The concentration of businesses and growing residential population generates real estate market activity, spurring private investment to build and redevelop housing and commercial space.
- Targeted investments and strategies to promote inclusivity and mitigate displacement are critical to ensure equitable growth in cities.

Trends

Call to Actions (CTAs) for park and recreation agencies include:

- Increase public sector investment: local governments should continue to invest in their park systems in part for their important role in broader economic development goals
- Convene a coalition of public and private sector actors: in order to augment public funding
- Accompany population and economic growth with amenities: sustain momentum over the next economic cycle
- Embrace a range of park types: to meet different community needs
- Enact policies to promote inclusivity and mitigate displacement: alongside investment in parks and other amenities

Serving Families

Parks and recreation agencies across the country are seeking ways to improve their service provision for community-wide benefit. One of the largest demographic groups that benefit from these types of services are families.

The 2023 NRPA article "Favorite Park and Recreation Activities According to the Data" highlighted the trending changes why people are utilizing parks and recreation services and what kinds of services they want.

- The top three most popular reasons people are visiting park or recreation facility include being with friends, stress relief, and being closer to nature.
- Additionally, the top three rising reasons people are visiting parks include connecting with their community, learning a new skill, and childcare.

This information can help draw the conclusion that people are visiting parks and facilities to increase their sense of community and connecting with nature for their overall wellbeing. With that being said, research from leading industry organizations reveal several relevant family-related trends:

- Events: The most commonly offered recreation program and service in 2025, according to Recreation Management Magazine's "2025 State of the Industry Report" were holiday events and special events (63.1% offering). Building on this trend, Rec Technologies reported that parks and recreation agencies are expanding these types of family-oriented offerings through family-fun nights, seasonal festivals, and intergenerational programs.

Trends

- Outdoor programming: According to the Outdoor Industry Association (OIA), 2024 outdoor recreation participation in the U.S. grew 3% to 181.1 million participants (or 58.6% of the U.S. population ages 6 and older). The Sports and Fitness Industry Association (SFIA) corroborated high intergenerational interest in outdoor activities, reporting that outdoor activities are the second most popular activity type for the Boomer generation, Generation X, and Millennials, and the most popular amongst Generation Z with each cohort showing over a 45% participation rate.
- Flexible design: From a parks and facilities standpoint, one relevant building trend, according to F.H. Paschen report titled "2026 Trends in Parks & Recreation Construction", is multi-use amenities and facilities that can serve multiple populations and host various uses. Doing this allows maximized flexibility in regard to potential use for various user groups. One example F.H. Paschen cites are vertical tower playground structures that appeal to toddler to tweens.

Sources: Trust for Public Land, National Recreation and Park Association

Improving Community Health

Perhaps the most fundamental purpose of public parks and recreation is to promote the physical, mental, social, and environmental health of a community through the provision of services – programs, events, parks, facilities, trails, etc. Physical activity helps participants reduce health risks, including obesity. Immersion in nature improves mental health, with evidence that doing so helps reduce anxiety and depression. Connecting with others bolsters social connections and a sense of community. And parks, trails, and open space environments balances community development, and can help address climate-related issues.

A 2023 TPL special report on parks promoting health examined what park systems are doing to promote community health and shared practical takeaways for communities.

- Ensure Inclusive Access
  - Over a quarter of U.S. citizens, including 28 million kids, don't have a park within a 10-minute (half-mile) walk from their home. And many residents do not have access to reliable transportation, which provides a barrier to access. By providing increased and safe access to these outdoor and indoor opportunities, park and recreation systems provide a higher likelihood of activation of community members.

Trends

  - Traditionally speaking, capital improvements and community outreach to marginalized communities have not always been prioritized. By engaging with these areas and residents within a community, parks and recreation agencies can identify how to best invest resources in order to provide overall equitable capital investments.

- Make Parks “Health Promoting”
  - Within every community are residents who have varying interests and lifestyles that influence their expectations out of their local parks and recreation opportunities. As community providers, it’s on the organization to not only provide services to meet the wide-ranging interests of their community, but also to communicate that they have something for all.
  - Potential ideas include offering all-ability and/or “try before you buy” services in order to breakdown various participation barriers, provide spaces for differing health goals, work with community groups to utilize parks and recreation facilities, and develop engaging built and natural environments.

- Build Partnerships
  - Parks and recreation agencies aren’t the only organizations that promote community health. Institutions in health care (e.g., hospitals, insurance agencies), education, religion, non-profits, etc. all have interests in promoting a healthier community. Communities across the country have been and continue to work together to incorporate public parks and recreation into cross-promoted health opportunities.
  - “Park-prescription” and insurance-covered activities with hospitals and health insurance agencies can increase activation and participation in health-promoted activities.
  - Co-investments in the development or re-development of parks and facilities can support health-focused infrastructure.
  - Health education initiatives with education institutions and public health organizations can address health needs and services.