



Strategic Plan

Appendices



South Suburban
PARKS AND RECREATION

Appendices

A. SWOT Analysis

Master Plan Analysis:

B. Top Ten Analysis

C. Opportunities for Improvement Analysis

SWOT Analysis

A.



Littleton Golf & Tennis Club
Photo: Corey Copas

SWOT Analysis

The items of the SWOT analysis were identified through previous plans, studies and reports reviewed during the planning process, interviews with staff, and community outreach meetings. This analysis will be used to inform the goals of the Strategic Plan, and to help make strategic recommendations for how SSPRD can bridge the gap between its current condition and what it seeks to be.

TABLE 1 STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong mission statement • Above average level of service for parkland compared to other Colorado Front Range communities • 98 percent of residents are within .5 mile or less of a recreation opportunity • Majority of objectives of the 2013-2015 Strategic Plan were completed • Variety of facilities boast vast and diverse offerings, with overall participation in programs increasing over the past three years • Improved online presence over the past three years, including the website and social media • Maintenance operations are organized in such a way to address SSPRD's size and spread (42.5 square miles) • Strong network of regional and local trails • Efficient water conservation practices that have received accolades from Denver Water • Has an active Sustainability Committee • Department supervisors meet regularly with each other • A variety of Parks department projects are coordinated with other SSPRD departments and outside partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aging equipment and vehicles • Facilities are aging and at capacity at peak times • Deferred maintenance (needed upgrades and general maintenance) cost is significant and growing • Risk of diminishing community perceptions when high standards of quality are not met • Difficulty with finding and retaining dynamic program instructors, part-time workers, and summer workers due to the competitive job market and providing affordable health care per recent health care laws • Staff may not be engaged across departments • Not all staff have electronic communication capabilities • Work that SSPRD does and what facilities and parks they maintain could be more broadly advertised • Recreation centers typically do not recover operating costs • Limited room remains in SSPRD for the additional development of large athletic fields, expanding recreation centers and parks • Current funding model is not very stable and is limited by funding cycles associated with mill levies • Some communities within SSPRD have high economic disparity or live further from recreation compared to others • Current agreements with partners lack consistency and have no common goals

OPPORTUNITIES

- Increased tax collection due to an improved economy with higher valuation in residential and commercial properties
- Establishing some mill levies into perpetuity
- Grant opportunities for proposed projects
- New technologies that can be leveraged to improve operations
- Fully utilizing the data collected by SSPRD to inform its work, and increase efficiency and effectiveness
- Better aligning culture of staff with SSPRD's mission, vision and values and creating a sense of community
- Realigning and/or expanding District boundaries
- New programming opportunities that engage the changing demographics of the population, e.g. Millennials and seniors, through collaboration with volunteers, SSPRD Youth Commission, etc.
- Collaborating with municipalities, HOAs, etc. for park maintenance where feasible
- Collaborating with partners for park and facility improvements and new parks and facilities
- Fully engaging communities so that they identify as part of the larger whole of SSPRD, e.g. utilizing incentive programming to help create a unified sense of community throughout SSPRD residents
- Support of the Master and Strategic Plans through staff training and other planning initiatives in and around SSPRD

THREATS

- The growing population risks overwhelming facilities and programs, as well as increasing wear and tear (and ultimately maintenance) as more people use facilities, parks, trails, and open spaces
- Potential for decrease or loss of tax revenue sources (several operating mills will expire within the next seven years)
- Difficulty in getting money for operations; money is more likely to go to new facilities, which puts an added strain on operations staff and budget
- More participation in programs puts more strain on already at- or near-capacity facilities, which can increase maintenance needs, user conflicts, and costs
- Having enough qualified staff and resources to meet demand
- Potential conflicts between different user groups/demographics/ programs
- There has been an increase in requests for large scale events at SSPRD parks, which may conflict with resident access and use
- Homeless encampments in parks have increased over the last few years
- Three (out of five) board members are reaching the end of their terms
- Competing needs from municipalities for limited funding



Canoe on Cooley Lake
Photo: SSPRD

Master Plan Analysis

Top Ten Analysis

B.



Softball at Cornerstone Park
Photo: SSPRD

Top Ten Opportunities

The top ten opportunities for improvement from the Master Plan highlight opportunities with highest community interest, moderate to low-impact on operations and maintenance/or high return on investment, and highest impact to address capacity needs. SSPRD will face some challenges in implementing each of the opportunities, but overall, each item implemented will have a positive impact on operations and user experience.

Opportunity	Level of Funding Needed	Challenges to Implementation	Effects of Implementation
Recreation Facility Improvements	High	Construction will impact current use of the facilities; finding funding; establishing a priority for improvements across the various recreation centers	Can address deferred maintenance; May be able to accommodate more users or different types of programs; May reduce maintenance needs and operating costs; however, may also increase usership which may require increasing staff and maintenance
Indoor Athletic Fields	Medium to High	Successful passage of a Bond measure	Additional facility for the District to staff, operate, and maintain; can generate some revenue through programs
Expand Nature Recreation	Low to Medium	Identifying where it is appropriate to expand nature recreation; creating programs; providing amenities to support expanded nature recreation	Additional staff may be needed for programs or to address maintenance needs associated with increased recreation; can generate some revenue through fee-based programs
Active Adult Amenity & Program Improvements	Low	Identifying locations for amenity and program improvements; communicating these improvements to the community	Some parks may see more use; amenities will require maintenance; will need knowledgeable instructors (additional staff) for programs, but can generate some revenue through programs

Opportunity	Level of Funding Needed	Challenges to Implementation	Effects of Implementation
Conservation of Open Space & Water Resources	Medium to High	Acquiring land and water will require funding; limited land available for sale at a reasonable price; limiting development on the land may face opposition	Resources will require management; may decrease maintenance through better erosion control and improved water management
Aquatic Facility Upgrades & Sustainability Improvements	High	Construction will impact current use of the facilities; deciding what sustainability improvements to achieve (improvements may vary by location)	May have increased maintenance needs and operating costs; may increase part-time/seasonal staffing needs and training
Community Park & Multi-Purpose Field Improvements	Medium	Identifying which parks and fields need improvements; prioritizing order of improvements	May have short-term reduced maintenance needs and operating costs; however, some parks and fields may be used more after the improvements, and thus maintenance levels may need to be adjusted to accommodate a higher volume of users
Playground Renewal	Medium, could be High	Identifying which playgrounds need renewal; prioritizing order of renewal	May have reduced maintenance needs and operating costs; increased playground safety; however, some playgrounds may see more use after renewal and maintenance levels will need to be adjusted based on the higher volume of users
Sustainable Energy for Recreation Centers	Medium to High	Finding sustainable energy sources; will also need to see if older recreation centers can support sustainable energy	Renewable energy costs may be higher (though they are becoming more competitive and cost comparable); meets mission statement
Trail Connections & Signage	Medium	Gold Medal Citizens Report & other plans identify potential connections and trail improvements; further study needed by staff to evaluate for importance and overall connectivity; some land may be difficult to acquire	Improved connections for residents; More users on trails, and thus more associated maintenance



Carson Nature Center Class
Photo: SSPRD

Opportunities for Improvement Analysis



Artificial Turf at Sports Dome
Photo: SSPRD

Meet or exceed current maintenance standards for parks, trails, open space and facilities.

CHALLENGES & IMPLICATIONS

Challenges & Roadblocks to Improvement Opportunity

- Ensuring funds are available for preventative maintenance, e.g. mill levy funding into perpetuity
- Ensuring funds and staff are available for maintenance at a higher level of service and that funds will continue to be available to support a higher level of service
- Getting community support for financing increased maintenance
- Finding resources to create and implement quality assessments for parks, playgrounds, trails, recreation facilities, etc. and ensuring assessments are re-taken in future years for data collection and comparison

Organizational Impact & Staff Implications

- Will need to train new staff and buy additional maintenance equipment (however, this represents opportunity to incorporate sustainability into future purchases and practices; see opportunity 4.1)
- Will need to develop new maintenance standards and staff training for new features

TRACKING PROGRESS

Performance Measures

- Improved and/or steady positive assessment of parks, playgrounds, trails, recreation facilities, etc.
- Achieving national accreditation through CAPRA
- Tracking the number of parks and facilities
- Tracking levels of volunteerism

Renew existing facilities and amenities with upgrades or new amenities to reflect the community's expectations, to expand capacity and to support the Master Plan guiding principles.

CHALLENGES & IMPLICATIONS

Challenges & Roadblocks to Improvement Opportunity

- Finding funding for upgrades and new amenities
- May have some conflict between municipalities within the District over how upgrades and new features are prioritized and located

Organizational Impact & Staff Implications

- Some upgrades may reduce maintenance needs
- New amenities will add to maintenance costs
- The upgrades and new amenities may bring more users to parks and facilities, requiring more staff and potentially increasing maintenance needs, but may also increase revenue and resident satisfaction

TRACKING PROGRESS

Performance Measures

- Number of parks, trailheads, facilities, etc. that need upgrades/new amenities versus number where upgrades/new amenities have been completed/installed
- Increased number of programs and/or increased number of program participants (due to increased capacity)
- Community opinion surveys to track how SSPRD is meeting their expectations
- Regular revenue increase from new facilities or programs

Invest in replacing assets that can lower long-term maintenance and operations, increase capacity and/or that have reached end-of-life usability.

CHALLENGES & IMPLICATIONS

Challenges & Roadblocks to Improvement Opportunity

- Finding funding for replacing assets
- May have some conflict between municipalities within SSPRD over how replacing assets are prioritized and where they are located

Organizational Impact & Staff Implications

- Upgrades will ideally address deferred maintenance and reduce maintenance costs

TRACKING PROGRESS

Performance Measures

- Increased efficiency in operations and maintenance
- Decrease in customer complaints regarding operations and maintenance needs
- Increase in capacity of facilities, etc.
- Development of long-term replacement needs inventory and accomplishing items on the inventory
- Reducing the time facilities are offline due to repairs

Reinforce parks, open spaces, trails and recreation facilities as destinations for physical activity and opportunities for all ages and abilities to practice healthy lifestyles.

CHALLENGES & IMPLICATIONS

Challenges & Roadblocks to Improvement Opportunity

- Raising community awareness of offerings and increasing participation rates
- Ensuring design of parks & open spaces will follow the guidelines presented in the Master Plan
- Finding funding for more trails and trail improvements
- Willingness of partners to collaborate, e.g. to improve sidewalk and bike connectivity
- Competing with private recreation facilities

Organizational Impact & Staff Implications

- Staff will need to continue partnerships with communities and municipalities
- Staff will need to establish new partnerships with other organizations
- Staff will need to be held to design and prioritization recommendations presented in the Master Plan

TRACKING PROGRESS

Performance Measures

- Results of community opinion surveys (desired amenities and programs, success of marketing, etc.)
- Comparing data of visitor/trail counts over time and/or number of trail events and program participation
- Tracking improvements in connectivity to parks/around parks and facilities
- Successful development of flexible spaces, trail loops, and a variety of trail surfaces

Emphasize accessible, diverse and engaging parks, open spaces, trails and programming for all ages.

CHALLENGES & IMPLICATIONS

Challenges & Roadblocks to Improvement Opportunity

- Getting the community involved/engaging the community
- Identifying suitable locations for different types of trails
- Finding funding for installing amenities
- Willingness of public entities to work with SSPRD to create safer crossings

Organizational Impact & Staff Implications

- Staff will need to partner with communities
- Staff will need to follow the long-term goals of the Master Plan
- SSPRD will need to work with other public entities

TRACKING PROGRESS

Performance Measures

- Tracking the percentage of households within a half mile walk and the percentage within a mile walk of a recreation opportunity
- Tracking the number of improved crossings completed
- Increased variety of trail programs / tracking the miles of each type of trail program
- Community opinion survey (program offerings)

Identify local health organizations, schools, employers, non profits, etc. working toward improved community wellness and collaborate with these current and/or potential partners to position parks, open spaces, trails and recreation programs as vital components to SSPRD's mission of healthy living.

CHALLENGES & IMPLICATIONS

Challenges & Roadblocks to Improvement Opportunity

- Will need cooperation from other organizations, companies, and municipalities; each may have different degrees of willingness or ability to working with SSPRD

Organizational Impact & Staff Implications

- Staff will need to collaborate with other organizations and local municipalities and counties
- SSPRD will need to establish a list of wellness indicators and evaluation metrics and tools to monitor progress (see Tracking Progress below for some potential metrics)

TRACKING PROGRESS

Performance Measures

- Tracking the number and success of “wellness” partnerships with various organizations - this may be done through community health surveys, having employees/members track the minutes and type of physical activity they perform each week, having employees/members track the number of miles walked, or tracking employees/members’ success toward achieving personal wellness goals (e.g. weight lost, eating healthier, able to lift a certain weight, able to run a mile, etc.)
- Increase in the amount of healthy food options within SSPRD parks and facilities
- Track both youth and adult health risk issues (e.g. obesity, no physical activity, poor mental health, etc.)

Improve access to nature for all people, seeking to overcome the challenges they experience to spend time in nature.

CHALLENGES & IMPLICATIONS

Challenges & Roadblocks to Improvement Opportunity

- Identifying appropriate locations for soft surface trails
- Finding funding for improvements and amenities, nature-based programming, and ecological sensitivity studies
- Expansion of public recreation may be limited in ecologically-sensitive areas (as determined by studies)

Organizational Impact & Staff Implications

- Some staff will need to be familiar with nature- and environmental-based education and activities, and may need more training
- Staff may need to be trained to operate new recreational amenities
- More staff may need to be hired to oversee expanded outdoor programming

TRACKING PROGRESS

Performance Measures

- Tracking the mileage of new soft surface trails installed
- Tracking the number of and size of (new) locations with public access to water
- Tracking the number of (new) nature-based and adventure play activities/amenities
- Community survey (success of marketing, ease of access to nature, time spent in nature, etc.)
- Increase in educational and interpretive signage

Encourage nature to thrive by providing green spaces throughout the suburban area and utilizing ecologically sound management practices.

CHALLENGES & IMPLICATIONS

Challenges & Roadblocks to Improvement Opportunity

- Limited opportunities for acquiring open space may exist with SSPRD, and funds will likely be needed to acquire and conserve the land
- There may be some opposition to increasing the amount of natural grassland areas in SSPRD (some may complain they are “messy” or “wild” in appearance)

Organizational Impact & Staff Implications

- Staff will need to be trained or new staff will need to be hired for stewardship activities
- Staff will need to develop and implement rating system of ecological improvements
- Staff across departments will need to support stewardship - maintenance staff may need to be trained in new skills in order to practice ecologically sound management/maintenance

TRACKING PROGRESS

Performance Measures

- Tracking the amount of open space (i.e. acres) and amount of open space conserved each year
- Measuring ecosystem improvements over time
- Tracking the number of successful restoration efforts

Provide programs that connect people to places to encourage discovery, exploration, stewardship, play, admiration and social opportunities.

CHALLENGES & IMPLICATIONS

Challenges & Roadblocks to Improvement Opportunity

- Finding funding for programs
- Will need cooperation from other organizations, companies, and municipalities; each may have different degrees of willingness to working with SSPRD

Organizational Impact & Staff Implications

- SSPRD will need trained staff to run new nature based programs and oversee volunteers and school groups
- Staff will need to work with other organizations

TRACKING PROGRESS

Performance Measures

- Amount of volunteerism (numbers and hours logged)
- Number of education and volunteer opportunities
- Track number of nature based programs and participants
- Number of schools that use SSPRD properties for educational opportunities
- Community survey

Identify and implement water and energy efficiency improvements to help parkland and facilities meet or exceed industry and peer standards.

CHALLENGES & IMPLICATIONS

Challenges & Roadblocks to Improvement Opportunity

- May need additional funding for efficiency improvements
- Water rights process may be time consuming and expensive
- Additional solar farms will require funding

Organizational Impact & Staff Implications

- Staff may need to learn new skills to operate and maintain new equipment
- Staff may need to adjust current maintenance practices for efficiency improvements

TRACKING PROGRESS

Performance Measures

- Tracking energy usage, electricity consumption, water use, and efficiency of irrigation systems
- Number of solar panels and amount of money they save SSPRD
- Number of pool energy efficiency improvements that need to be completed versus number of improvements that have been completed
- Acreage of conservation lawns (less frequently mowed lawns), low-water landscapes and gardens

Communicate and celebrate sustainability achievements.

CHALLENGES & IMPLICATIONS

Challenges & Roadblocks to Improvement Opportunity

- Sustainability programming may require additional funding

Organizational Impact & Staff Implications

- Depending on the degree of sustainability promotion/outreach, more staff may need to be hired
- Additional responsibility put on the Sustainability Committee
- May look to incorporate more volunteers to distribute sustainability information

TRACKING PROGRESS

Performance Measures

- Community survey to measure awareness of sustainability initiatives and improvements
- Amount of signage and number of posts on website/social media promoting sustainability



*Writers Vista Park
Dedication*
Photo: SSPRD



South Suburban
PARKS AND RECREATION

2017 Strategic Plan

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