



# BOULDER PARKS AND RECREATION Master Plan Update

2021 NEEDS ASSESSMENT REPORT



*Restore | Connect | Sustain*

This Needs Assessment Report represents subject-specific research findings that will ultimately inform the content of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan Update. The information contained in this report does not necessarily constitute the final narrative that will be presented in the plan.

During the process of conducting research for this report, a number of other issues and questions were uncovered that merit additional discussion in the Needs Assessment phase of the planning process. The final content of the Master Plan may reflect significant portions of this report but will not consist entirely of it.

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## Needs Assessment Inputs

### Introduction

Nationally, regionally and within Boulder, communities recognize that parks, trails and natural areas and recreation are unifying amenities that improve quality of life. Boulder Parks and Recreation (BPR) facilities are where community members exercise, spend time with family and friends, and connect with nature. These amenities must meet the diverse needs of community members and visitors while balancing limited available resources and continuing to build key partnerships to help deliver high-quality services.



Accurately assessing the needs of the community is a fundamental part of a planning process, and the methods for evaluating the needs of each community are tailored to the needs of the study, the local community and the data available. A needs assessment establishes level of service (LOS) standards to evaluate amount of parkland, facilities and how a community’s recreation demands are being met. The 2014 Master Plan established a triangulation approach using quantitative and qualitative data to determine recommendations. The three inputs, or sides of this ‘triangle’ include 1) research, 2) community and stakeholder engagement, and 3) policy direction.

The methods highlighted in Table 1: Needs Assessment Methods, are used to synthesize and assess accomplishments since 2014, to understand current and future needs, and to help lay the groundwork for prioritizing future efforts. The needs assessment looks within the community and compares Boulder’s parks and recreation facilities, programs and administration to other regional and national communities of similar population size (benchmarking).

Measuring the quantity and quality of existing parks, parkland, indoor and outdoor recreation facilities, programs and services, and touching on maintenance and operations will help Boulder decision makers support policies that maintain, enhance and in some cases, improve the parks and recreation system.

Table 1: Needs Assessment Inputs

| Needs Assessment Inputs              | Parkland | Indoor Rec Facilities | Outdoor Rec Facilities | Programs |
|--------------------------------------|----------|-----------------------|------------------------|----------|
| Trends Research (White Papers)       | ✓        | ✓                     | ✓                      | ✓        |
| Related Plans Review                 | ✓        | ✓                     | ✓                      | ✓        |
| Financial Analysis                   |          | ✓                     | ✓                      | ✓        |
| Engagement Feedback                  | ✓        | ✓                     | ✓                      | ✓        |
| Per Capita Level of Service Analysis | ✓        | ✓                     | ✓                      |          |
| Benchmark Community Comparison       | ✓        | ✓                     | ✓                      | ✓        |
| Facility Assessments                 |          | ✓                     |                        |          |
| Supply and Demand Analysis           | ✓        | ✓                     | ✓                      | ✓        |
| Gap Analysis-Distribution Analysis   | ✓        |                       | ✓                      | ✓        |

## Trends Research & Related Plans and Reports Review

### *Trends Research (White Papers)*

White papers prepared for the 2014 Master Plan were reviewed and updated to reflect changes that have occurred since then. These white papers were used as the foundation for building the Needs Assessment. Related Plans & Reports Review

BPR has completed several related plans and reports – some based on recommendations from the [2014 Boulder Parks & Recreation Master Plan](#). For this needs assessment, the following were reviewed with a specific focus on policy and project recommendations. These are highlighted in the relevant sections of this document.

- [2020 Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan](#)
- [2020 BPR 5-Year Progress Report](#)
- [2018 Urban Forest Strategic Plan](#)
- *2018 Asset Management Program Plan*
- [2017 Public Participation Working Group Report](#)
- *2015-2026 Capital Investment Strategic Plan*
- [2015 Aquatic Feasibility Plan](#)
- *2015 General Maintenance Management Plan (GMMP)*
- [2012 Boulder Reservoir Master Plan](#)
- *2010 Recreation Programs and Facilities Plan*

The *2020 Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan* and the *2020 BPR 5-Year Progress Report* provide overarching direction, which has been incorporated throughout this master plan update process.

“[City] Parks and recreation programs and facilities will continue to provide for a well-balanced and healthy community by providing a range of activities that support mental and physical health through high-quality programs and services that meet the needs of the community. Such facilities and services will be designed in a manner that responds to the needs of the intended users.”

2020 Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan

### **2020 BPR 5-Year Progress Report**

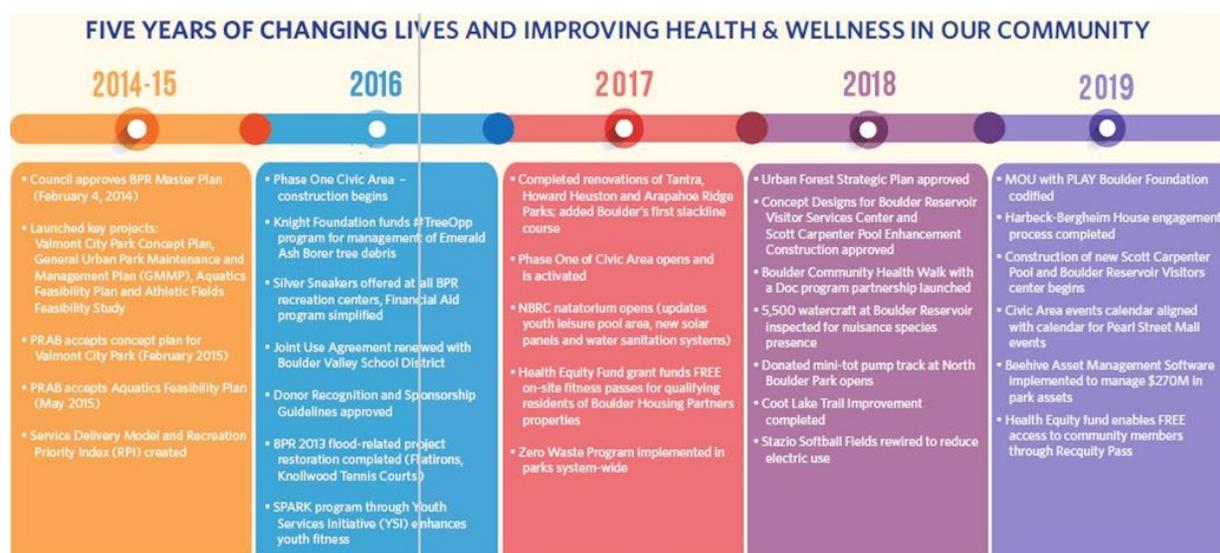
Since the 2014 Master Plan was completed, six key themes that resulted from engagement, research and the prior needs assessment have been carried through all BPR’s work. The recent 2020 BPR 5-Year Progress Report summarizes progress made under each of these areas of focus. A restructuring of the

recreation pass, a 60% decrease in backlog repairs, construction of the new Scott Carpenter Pool and the Boulder Reservoir Visitors Center are key highlights.

**Key Themes:**

- Community Health and Wellness
- Taking Care of What We Have
- Financial Sustainability
- Building Community and Relationships
- Youth Engagement and Activity
- Organizational Readiness

*2020 BPR 5-Year Progress Report Accomplishments*



Benchmark communities research, and local, regional and national demographic trends along with parks and recreation related trends were also used to inform this report.

**Financial Analysis**

As part of the Needs Assessment process, an analysis of BPR’s financial position was performed and documented in the attached *Financial Overview and Funding Strategies Memorandum*, included as Appendix C. The analysis provides a brief outlook of the Department’s existing financial situation, including cost recovery, subsidization and fund management, its capital budget as it relates to the Department’s portfolio of assets, as well as recommending funding and policy strategies to achieve the identified Master Plan outcomes.

The intent of the analysis is to provide background and information on the Boulder Parks and Recreation Department’s current and projected funding sources, Departmental policies and management strategies, and financial outlook. In addition to providing an assessment of the

Department's current and projected operating state, the memorandum evaluates alternative funding and revenue generating strategies that may be employed to support BPR's overall financial position.

## Community and Stakeholder Engagement

Community and stakeholder feedback is incorporated throughout this Needs Assessment Report to highlight community needs and begin to develop initiatives and recommendations for the Master Plan update. Several methods were used to collect community feedback, including four stakeholder focus groups, a statistically valid online survey and open participation survey (related to the statistically valid survey), weekly Be Heard Boulder online questionnaires/polling and staff engagement. An open house was held June 24, 2021, to get feedback from the community regarding Needs Assessment findings. A virtual version of the open house presentation and activities were available for community members who were unwilling or unable to attend in person. Several targeted micro engagement opportunities targeted feedback from specific community groups including low-income populations, people experiencing homelessness and Spanish-speaking community members.

### *Stakeholder Focus Groups & Staff Discussions*

These focus groups were held to dive into topics around equity of access to recreation, programming, parks, indoor facilities and outdoor amenities.

Attendees came together from across Boulder and the surrounding areas to discuss parks and recreation trends. Most stakeholders were those that provide similar services and programs to BPR and others that frequently partner with BPR. This included stakeholders from underrepresented groups including aging adults, youth program providers, affordable housing and homelessness advocates, and nonprofits that work mainly with the Latinx community and other communities of color.

With the diversity of stakeholders and topics, it was important to see several main themes rise to the top. Overall, everyone involved feels that equity of access is important and all those using BPR spaces should feel welcome and included. The variety of stakeholders also agreed that diversity of program providers is valued and although some overlap is necessary, it is important to communicate with partners and competitors to make sure they are best serving the community members of Boulder. Participants in all groups cited the importance of partnerships for future viability and sustainability of all Boulder program providers. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the fact that organizations must help each other in times of uncertainty. Strengthening existing relationships with private providers, nonprofit advocates, and other public partners like the school district is also important. Many groups brought up the increased use of BPR outdoor parks and amenities and the need for increased maintenance, while at the same time, sharing pent-up desires for more courts/amenities and big ideas for large-scale new facilities (e.g., pool, tennis center). Participants also acknowledged the issue of a limited BPR budget coupled with demands for increased maintenance for existing facilities and the desire for new facilities.

### *Statistically Valid Survey*

Polco's National Research Center conducted a statistically valid survey on the City's behalf. A total of 284 survey recipients completed the survey, for a response rate of 7%. The margin of error for this survey, with 284 respondents, is  $\pm 5.8\%$ .

The fitness and recreation opportunities in Boulder are highly regarded by residents. About 8 in 10 residents rated the fitness and recreation opportunities as excellent, and nearly all rated them as at least good. About 9 in 10 felt that Boulder has excellent or good public places where people want to spend time and considered the city an excellent or good place to live. Ratings of the fitness and recreation opportunities were somewhat more positive on this survey than had been observed on the general community survey in 2018, when about two-thirds of respondents gave excellent ratings.

Most residents were satisfied with all aspects of the services provided by the Parks and Recreation Department employees. Nine in 10 respondents were very or somewhat satisfied with all aspects rated, including the ability of employees to provide quality programs and services and to care for the parks and recreation facilities. More detailed results from the statistically valid survey and open community survey are available on the [project website](#).

#### Survey Results Highlights

- Fitness and recreation opportunities in Boulder are rated highly – with 82% of respondents rating fitness and recreation opportunities as excellent (82% and 77% respectively).
- The priority is to take care of what we have – while many user groups would like to see more or new facilities, survey respondents and focus group participants feel it is extremely important to take care of existing amenities.
- Nearly all survey respondents reported visiting a public park in the last 12 months before the pandemic and over 76% have used a Boulder recreation facility or service.
- A little more than half of respondents reported that lack of time was a barrier to using parks and recreation facilities.
- It is important to ensure sustainability of the system, especially with increasing climate change impacts.
- Community members are generally satisfied with all aspects of services provided by BPR staff – 9 in 10 statistically valid survey respondents are very or somewhat satisfied.

### *Public Open House*

Staff hosted the first public open house June 24, 2021, as pandemic restrictions were lifted. The format included an informational presentation followed by several stations for engagement activities. The presentation was recorded, and the activities were recreated in a digital format on BeHeardBoulder for community members who were unwilling or unable to attend in person, available through July 12, 2021. The open house was used to gather input regarding research validation and needs assessment. More detailed results from the open house are available in Engagement Window 2 Summary available on the [project website](#).

### Micro Engagements

Micro engagements are small, targeted opportunities for the project team to interact with specific groups from the community. Generally, this includes meeting these groups where they already are, rather than having them come to the project team. During the Needs Assessment phase, micro engagements were held with low-income individuals, people experiencing homelessness, Latino communities, as well as the general public at previously scheduled events. For these micro engagements, a sub-set of the activities from the open house were utilized, allowing staff to compile cumulative results, as well as compare those sub-communities with the general responses. More detailed results from the micro engagements are available in Engagement Window 2 Summary available on the [project website](#).

### Weekly Quick Polls

During the timeframe the statistically valid survey and open community survey were available, the project team attempted a new method for quick engagement opportunities with the community. A series of several short polling questions were posted to BeHeardBoulder and left open for approximately one week. The intent to allow the community to provide input without having to commit to participating the longer survey instrument. The number of participants each week was relatively small, so the results are not considered representative of the population. More detailed results from the weekly quick polls are available in Engagement Window 2 Summary available on the [project website](#).

### Public Open House, Micro Engagement and Weekly Quick Polls Results Highlights

- The core functions of BPR are to provide free parks and facilities, as well as offer financial aid for programs and services.
- The community continues to support the key theme of Taking Care of What We Have, preferring to maintain and renovate existing facilities and amenities over acquiring and building new.
- The community prioritized access and inclusion, as well as flexibility in spaces to ensure that parks are for everyone to use respectfully. Safety and cleanliness are key to access for all community members.
- BPR should promote community health and wellness by engaging and encouraging community to increase their activity through improved parks and programming.
- Partnerships, especially with other public entities, are critical to closing gaps in services provided by BPR.
- Teens and youth are critical groups within the community for BPR to serve, but each are unique in their needs and desires. Teens in particular are a group that historically has lacked programming and facilities provided by BPR.

### Youth Engagement

Since early 2021, the project team has been working with Growing Up Boulder (GUB) and the Youth Opportunities Advisory Board (YOAB) to get specific feedback from youth and teens in Boulder. For the full process, analysis and related charts for GUB's work, refer to the [Parks and Recreation Master Plan](#)

[Update Report: Growing Up Boulder's Summary of Findings Published May 2021](#). More detailed results from YOAB are available in Engagement Window 2 Summary available on the [project website](#).

### Needs Assessment Analysis

This report combines previous research and an evaluation of per capita Level of Service, benchmark community comparisons, facility assessments, supply and demand, gap and distribution analyses for the entire community and a gap analysis based on a Boulder Subcommunity Level of Service comparison.

The needs assessment analysis helps establish a set of standards to measure the current provision of parks and recreation services. It primarily addresses needs and layers in findings from community and stakeholder engagement and research to triangulate preliminary conclusions of BPR's park and recreation needs for the next five to seven years, and in some cases beyond.

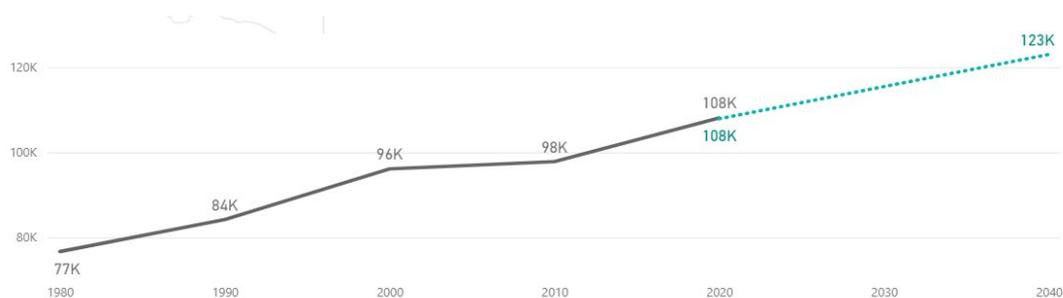
## Demographic Trends

Level of service and benchmarking analysis begins with establishing current and projected demographic trends. Reports of both the historical and projected population for the City of Boulder can vary depending upon the source of information used for analysis. On several occasions in past years, the city has questioned the findings of the U.S. Census bureau, claiming an undercount of both people and housing units. This report utilizes the 2020 Boulder Community Profile and the 2020 Boulder Economic Council's (BEC) Market Report (unless otherwise noted), which synthesizes the best available information from the U.S. Census bureau, the State Demographer's Office, and city data.

### Current and Projected Population Growth

BPR currently provides recreation to a city population of **108,091** (including the CU Boulder student population)<sup>1</sup>, but mirroring statewide growth, the City of Boulder is expected to grow to about **123,000 by 2040** (see Table 2). The needs assessment must describe how BPR can prepare for serving this anticipated increase in population. Not only is the population within city limits expected to increase, but about 1 million additional people are expected to move to the Denver region, with another 1 million moving to the north Front Range, which includes Fort Collins, Longmont and surrounding areas, by 2040. As an employment center drawing from both areas, Boulder is expecting an additional 14,000 employees traveling into the community by this time.<sup>2</sup>

Table 2: Boulder Population Estimate and Projection. Source: 2020 Boulder Community Profile



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*The growing population of Boulder and surrounding communities will more than likely result in increased need for services, parkland and programming. This in turn will result in increased strain on the parks and recreation system.*

### Aging Adults

Understanding community trends, like the impact of COVID-19 or the age distribution of the population, provides insight into how programs and offerings can be tailored to meet the needs of Boulder community members today and tomorrow. Boulder is facing an aging population. By 2040, Boulder County community members aged 60 and older will nearly double to 28% of the county's total population.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> State Demographer's Office, 2020 Boulder Community Profile

<sup>2</sup> State Demographer's Office, City of Boulder, 2020 Boulder Community Profile

<sup>3</sup> State Demographer's Office, Boulder County Population Projections 2040

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*With increasing numbers of aging adults, and feedback from the stakeholder focus groups, BPR will likely see an increased demand for senior programs that have observed appeal from review of national and regional trends (e.g., Medicare health and wellness programs for adults 65 and older including Silver Sneakers programs among others and facilities such as warm-water aquatics pools and pickleball courts). According to city data, those over the age of 65 make up 23.3% of the population, whereas the percentage of respondents in that age group to the Be Heard Boulder questionnaire respondents was 12% and the percentage of total respondents to the statistically valid survey was 15%. This is an area BPR should do further analysis on – targeting this age demographic specifically in outreach to understand needs and desires for the future.*

### Proportion of Renters and Homeowners and Affordability

Another interesting community trend is the makeup of renters proportional to homeowners. The 2020 BEC Market Report found that owner-occupied housing makes up 48% of occupied housing in the city, whereas renter-occupied housing represents 52% of occupied units. While this is split almost in half, percentages across Boulder County, the state and the nation lean more heavily toward owner-occupied versus renter-occupied, generally with an approximate 60% to 40% split (see Table 3). Renters tend to rely on public services and amenities like city parks and recreation departments more so than homeowners because they often lack private outdoor space like yards and homeowners are more likely to join private fitness clubs.

With a median single-family home price of \$940,000 (compared to \$592,000 for the county, \$394,600 for the state, and \$240,500 for the nation) the City of Boulder’s high-income sector of the community can afford increasing housing costs while lower-paid service and retail workers commute from more affordable communities along the Front Range. *These high housing prices have also resulted in middle income families being priced out of the Boulder market. More workers, including those at the lower and middle ends of the pay scale are therefore commuting into Boulder for work and leaving the city after work.*

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*The high renter population, shown in Table 3: Housing Occupancy Type, 2019, and increases in costs of living will likely maintain demand or increase demand for low-cost to no-cost recreation options in Boulder.*

*Table 3: Housing Occupancy Type, 2019. Source: 2020 Boulder Economic Council Market Report*

|                        | City of Boulder | Boulder County | Colorado  | U.S.      |
|------------------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------|-----------|
| Overall occupancy rate | 92.4%           | 93.8%          | 90.7%     | 87.91%    |
| Owner-occupied         | 48.0%           | 61.6%          | 65.9%     | 64.1%     |
| Avg household size     | 2.22            | 2.38           | 2.52      | 2.61      |
| Median value           | \$795,000       | \$592,000      | \$394,600 | \$240,500 |
| Vacancy rate           | 1.2%            | 0.4%           | 1.0%      | 1.5%      |
| Renter-occupied        | 52%             | 38.4%          | 34.1%     | 35.9%     |
| Avg household size     | 2.28            | 2.35           | 2.32      | 2.44      |
| Median gross rent      | \$1,659         | \$1,637        | \$1,369   | \$1,097   |
| Vacancy rate           | 3.4%            | 3.2%           | 4.6%      | 6.0%      |

Source: US Census, 2019 American Community Survey.

## Race and Ethnicity

According to the U.S. Census American Community Survey, the majority of Boulder’s population is White (87.7%). The city has a higher percentage of Asian community members (7%) than the county, the state and even the nation. Black or African American community members make up 1.3% of the population, 0.2% are American Indian or Alaska Native, and 1.6% are other races. In terms of ethnicity, approximately 10% of community members are of Hispanic or Latino origin (of any race). Most community members were born in the United States (91.2%), which is higher than the percentage for community members of Boulder County, Colorado or the U.S. (see Table 4).

Table 3: Race and Ethnicity Distribution, 2019 Source: 2020 Boulder Economic Council Market Report

| Ethnicity                        |                 |                |          |       |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|----------------|----------|-------|
| Race*                            | City of Boulder | Boulder County | Colorado | U.S.  |
| White                            | 87.7%           | 89.5%          | 83.7%    | 72.0% |
| Black or African American        | 1.3%            | 1.2%           | 4.2%     | 12.8% |
| American Indian or Alaska Native | 0.2%            | 0.3%           | 1.0%     | 0.9%  |
| Asian                            | 7.0%            | 5.0%           | 3.3%     | 5.7%  |
| Other                            | 1.6%            | 2.4%           | 4.5%     | 5.6%  |
| Hispanic or Latino (of any race) | 10.1%           | 13.9%          | 21.5%    | 18.1% |

Source: US Census, 2019 American Community Survey. \*Race alone or in combination with one or more other races.

### Place of Birth by Nativity and Citizenship Status

| Place of Birth         | City of Boulder | Boulder County | Colorado | U.S.  |
|------------------------|-----------------|----------------|----------|-------|
| Born in United States* | 91.2%           | 89.7%          | 90.5%    | 86.3% |
| Foreign born           | 8.8%            | 10.3%          | 9.5%     | 13.7% |

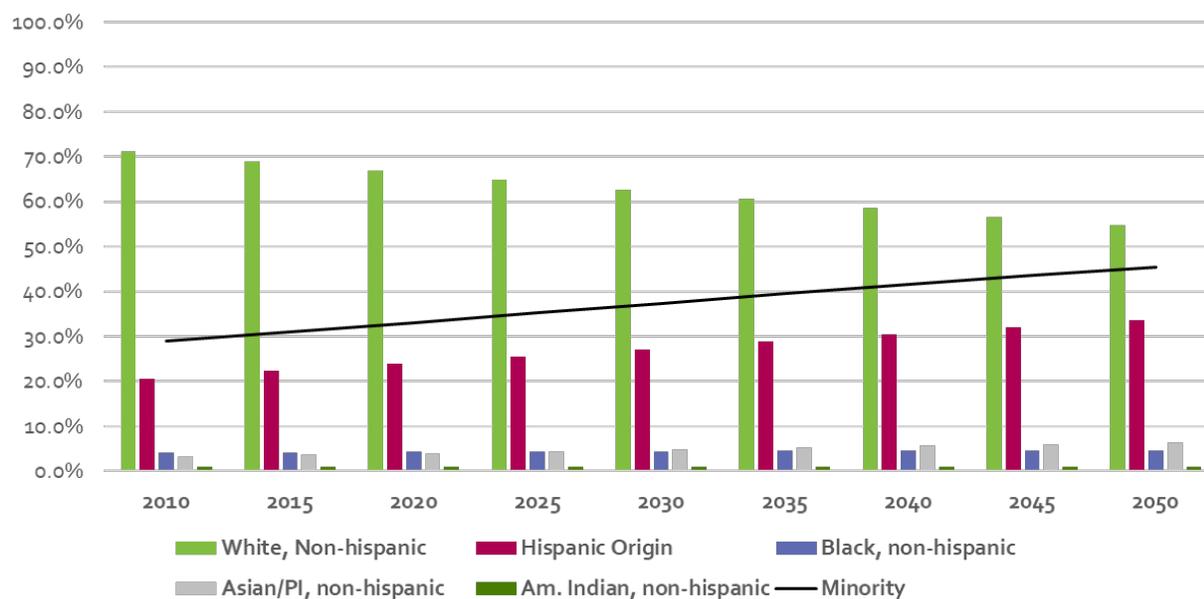
Source: US Census, 2019 American Community Survey. \*Includes Puerto Rico, U.S. Island areas, or born abroad to American parent(s).

Projections for changes to the composition of the population by race are not calculated for counties or municipalities; however, the Colorado State Demography Office developed a statewide forecast in October 2011. Table 5 presents ethnic groups’ share of the Colorado population through 2030. Populations of Black, Asian/Pacific Islander, and American Indian remain relatively stable in proportion to all other races. The share of individuals of Hispanic origin grows noticeably, outpacing the growth of all other races, including White/non-Hispanic. The same trend may not unfold in the same way in Boulder, but the nationwide trend of a burgeoning Hispanic population is undeniable and will very likely influence the city and BPR amenities, facilities and programs.

Table 4: Race/Ethnic Distribution Forecasts, Share of Total Population, State of Colorado, 2010-2050. Source: Colorado State Demography Office

| Share of Total Population Group | 2010  | 2015  | 2020  | 2025  | 2030  | 2035  | 2040  | 2045  | 2050  |
|---------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| White, non-hispanic             | 71.1  | 69.0  | 66.9  | 64.8  | 62.7  | 60.6  | 58.5  | 56.5  | 54.7  |
| Hispanic Origin                 | 20.6  | 22.3  | 23.9  | 25.5  | 27.1  | 28.8  | 30.5  | 32.1  | 33.5  |
| Black, non-hispanic             | 4.1   | 4.1   | 4.3   | 4.4   | 4.4   | 4.5   | 4.5   | 4.5   | 4.5   |
| Asian/PI, non-hispanic          | 3.2   | 3.6   | 3.9   | 4.4   | 4.8   | 5.2   | 5.6   | 5.9   | 6.3   |
| Am. Indian, non-hispanic        | 1.0   | 1.0   | 1.0   | 1.0   | 1.0   | 1.0   | 1.0   | 1.0   | 1.0   |
| Total                           | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| Minority                        | 28.9  | 31.0  | 33.1  | 35.2  | 37.3  | 39.4  | 41.5  | 43.5  | 45.3  |

*Boulder Racial & Ethnic Demographics Projections*



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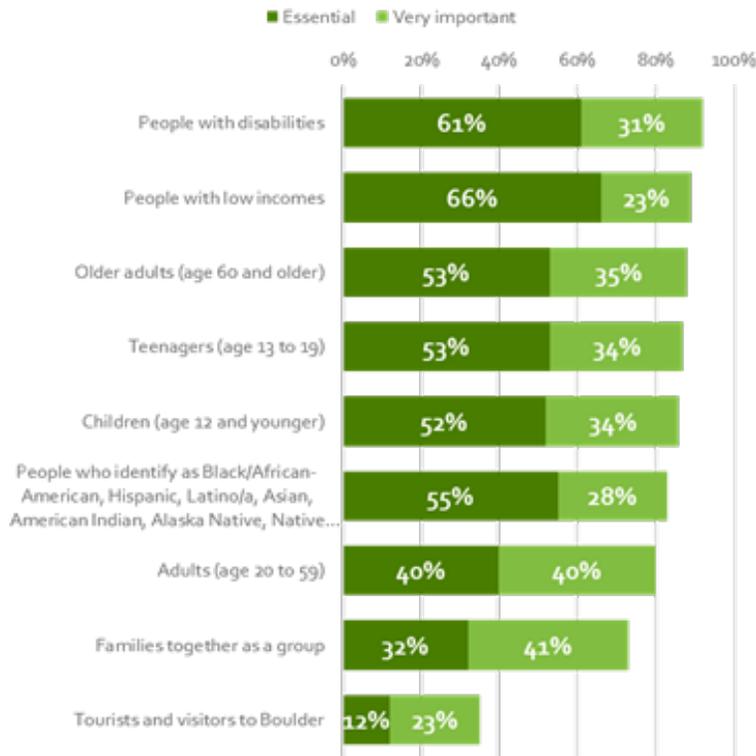
*Based on the demographic data above and considering the 2020 Boulder Racial Equity Plan and international best practices for parks and recreation equity, BPR could consider doing a more thorough analysis of how services are or are not provided differently to different racial/ethnic groups and prioritizing ways to deliver more resources in areas of historic inequity. With Boulder’s high percentage of white, non-Hispanic community members and the limitations of current racial distribution data, this is an area for further study beyond the timeframe of this master plan.*

*Stakeholders believe that incentivizing permits and scholarships for underrepresented group involvement is important to promote. Programs like the Out Boulder softball team have proven successful in bringing new populations to BPR facilities. Stakeholders recommended offering programs with representation and bilingual communications opportunities.*

*Approximately 46% of statistically valid survey respondents have lived in Boulder five years or less with 21% living in the city for over 25 years. This may suggest that BPR needs to continue focusing on activities that satisfy the needs of older community members and those who have lived in the city for some time. It is also important to understand what newer community members want to see in terms of parks and recreation services and facilities.*

*Focusing on programming for people with disabilities, older adults and low-income individuals and families with children were common themes throughout the engagement process.*

*Statistically Valid Survey Results Importance of Providing Recreation Programs for Various Population Groups*



*Notably, BPR is following the city of boulder’s award-winning engagement standards that promote a bottom-up approach to understanding the needs of typically underrepresented groups (e.g., micro engagement with community connectors) as well as a statistically valid survey that can potentially cross-tabulate needs data by demographic factors.*

## Inventory and Levels of Service Analysis

### BPR System Overview

Boulder Parks and Recreation (BPR) promotes the health and well-being of the entire Boulder community by collaboratively providing high-quality parks, natural areas, facilities and programs (see Figures 1 and 2). BPR manages more than 1,800 acres of urban parkland and 138,000 square feet of recreation center space, plus many other recreation facilities, including the Boulder Reservoir, Valmont Bike Park and the Flatirons Golf Course. Several of these resources are historic and culturally relevant districts, buildings/structures, rolling stock (train cars), and an archaeological site. The Parks and Recreation Department owns and manages 12 culturally relevant and historically designated resources. Currently, BPR is preparing the Historic Places Plan (HiPP), which will include needs assessments and management recommendations for these resources that will provide outcomes aligned with the Master Plan update. The HiPP will include research and assessments to provide a base of information that will be used to evaluate each resource with strategies and initiatives to make financially sustainable and data-informed decisions.

For this report, the BPR system is analyzed in four major categories:

1. Parkland
2. Indoor Recreation Facilities
3. Outdoor Recreation Facilities
4. Programs

BPR is one of many providers of recreation programs in the Boulder community. Before the 2020 pandemic, BPR partnered with recreation and sports enthusiasts to provide over 2,500 different types of programs. Users pay fees for certain programs to support program and facility costs and some programs are provided in a way that supports the City’s values of equity and service, ensuring all members of the community have access to parks and recreation.

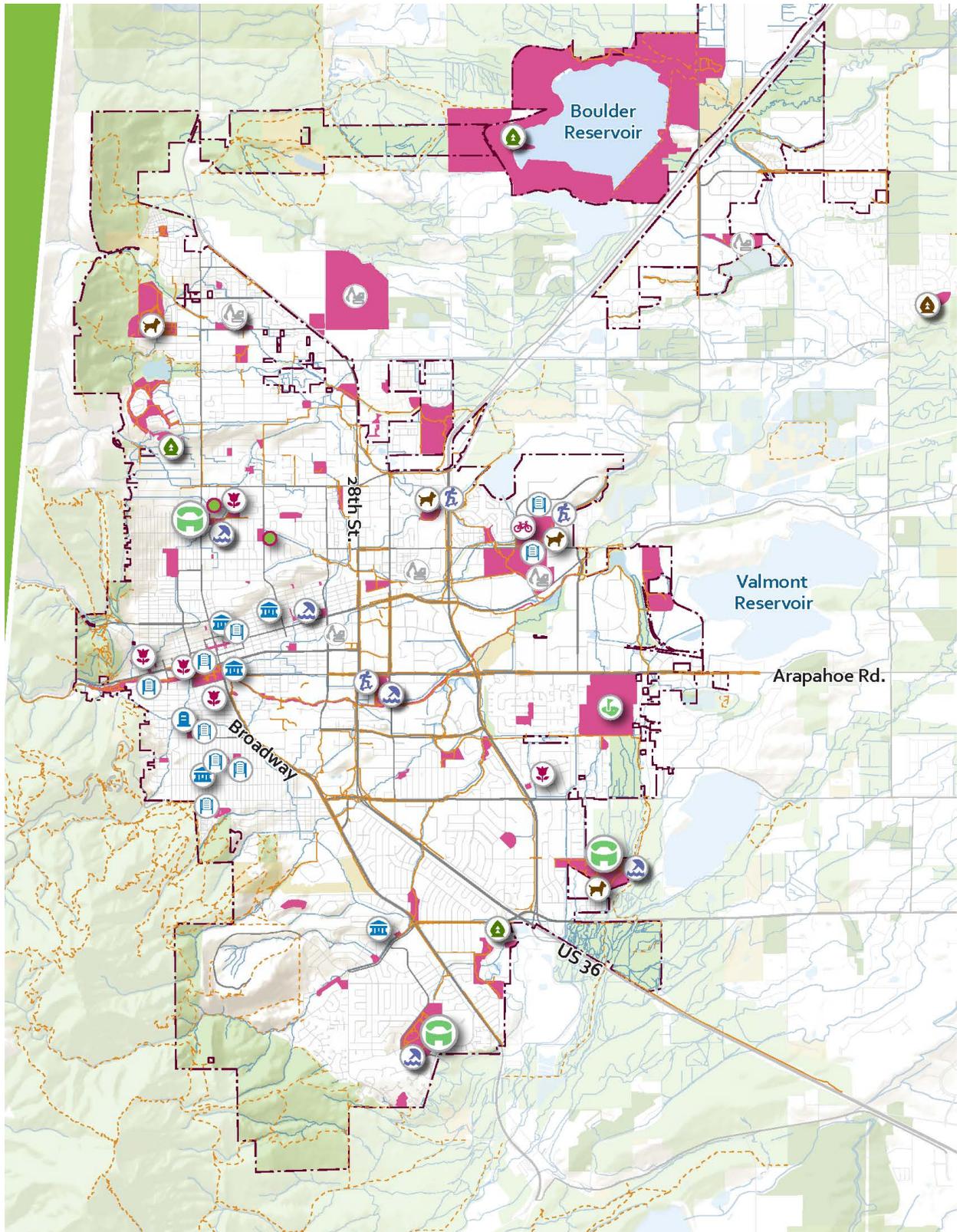
*BPR System Overview Inventory. Source: BPR 2021*

Boulder Parks and Recreation manages:

|   |           |  |   |           |  |
|---|-----------|--|---|-----------|--|
|  | <b>1</b>  | <b>Cemetery</b>                                  |  | <b>3</b>  | <b>Recreation Centers</b>                      |
|  | <b>6</b>  | <b>Civic Spaces</b>                              |  | <b>46</b> | <b>Athletic Fields</b>                         |
|  | <b>4</b>  | <b>Gardens</b>                                   |  | <b>5</b>  | <b>Indoor &amp; Outdoor Pools</b>              |
|  | <b>1</b>  | <b>Golf Course</b>                               |  | <b>4</b>  | <b>Dog Parks</b>                               |
|  | <b>9</b>  | <b>Natural Areas including Boulder Reservoir</b> |  | <b>3</b>  | <b>Skate Park</b>                              |
|  | <b>55</b> | <b>Parks</b>                                     |  | <b>1</b>  | <b>Bike Park</b>                               |
|  | <b>43</b> | <b>Playgrounds</b>                               |  | <b>36</b> | <b>Tennis Courts &amp; Other Sports Courts</b> |
|  | <b>7</b>  | <b>Undeveloped Properties</b>                    |  | <b>44</b> | <b>Historic &amp; Cultural Resources</b>       |
|   |           |  |   | <b>9</b>  | <b>Historic &amp; Cultural Resources</b>       |

*Includes three dog parks and one off-leash area at Howard Heuston Park.*

BPR System Overview Map



## BPR Parkland Level of Service

Level of service (LOS) establishes the standard by which parks and recreation facilities are provided, operated and maintained over time to best meet the needs of the community. LOS evaluates current state as well as an aspirational standard for the future, each of which is defined through qualitative and quantitative measures such as number of amenities, distribution of amenities, access or public satisfaction. How it is defined varies depending on the type of amenity or service. Level of service standards also enable evaluation of progress over time. Numeric LOS metrics are most used when analyzing parkland and recreation facilities to express acreage or availability in per capita terms. However, effective assessments of recreation programs often rely more heavily on other factors, such as trends and community input. In 2019, BPR prepared the Boulder Parks & Recreation Design Standards Manual which, among other things, lists common BPR system assets, which helps to inform new park development in the future. The manual standardizes assets to manage maintenance and lifecycle expectations more easily and efficiently. The inventories in this section are taken from this document.

### Parkland Inventory

Table 6: Parkland Inventory reflects BPR’s park type categorization overall as of 2021, per the Boulder Parks & Recreation Design Standards Manual. In addition to the designated park type Natural Areas, many existing developed parks have areas that are in their natural condition or are adjacent to natural landscapes. This acreage is included in that specific park typology (e.g., Neighborhood Park), not the Natural Areas park type.

Table 5: Parkland Inventory. Source: BPR 2021\*

| Park Type               | Current Acreage | Undeveloped Acreage | Total Acreage |
|-------------------------|-----------------|---------------------|---------------|
| Neighborhood Parks      | 213             | 8                   | 221           |
| Community Parks         | 264             | 188                 | 451           |
| City Parks              | 47              | 83                  | 130           |
| Civic Spaces            | 26              | 0                   | 26            |
| Recreational Facilities | 116             | 0                   | 116           |
| Specialized Facilities  | 254             | 0                   | 254           |
| Natural Areas           | 615             | 7                   | 622           |
| Community Use Areas     | 41              | 0                   | 41            |
| <b>Totals</b>           | <b>1576</b>     | <b>285</b>          | <b>1861</b>   |

\*Parkland was classified differently in the 2014 Master Plan. Any discrepancies are attributed to changes in how BPR designates and counts properties.

## RELATED PLANS

### 2019 BPR Design Standards Manual (DSM)

The DSM outlines how park projects are coordinated, developed and built, creating efficiency and predictability for staff and other users. It documents BPR’s design process, common assets and establishes consistency for materials, products and construction methods. It also outlines implementation steps to realize Master Plan goals. The goal of standardizing these is “not only to delineate a park aesthetic that is unique to Boulder, but also to standardize park assets for maintenance and life-cycle expectations.”.

### 2018 Urban Forest Strategic Plan

The UFSP documents “long-term management goals for increasing community safety and preserving and improving the health, value, and environmental benefits of this natural resource.” Key items relating to policies and projects include:

- Develop/implement 20-year planting plan for public trees to support 16% urban tree canopy cover by 2037
- Integrate ecosystem protection and monitoring across urban, agricultural, wildland systems
- Create Urban Forest Emergency Response Plan
- Preserve and grow tree canopy
- Develop citywide and neighborhood planting plans
- Set minimum requirements for species diversity/large trees
- Plant 600 public trees/year, monitor gains and losses
- Assist in planting 2,2025 trees per year on private land

*Parkland Level of Service*

To assess how BPR is meeting the recreation needs of the entire Boulder community with its parks, it is important to understand what level of service (LOS) the city is providing currently and to anticipate future needs based on demographic trends and the desires of community members. Table 7: 2014 Master Plan Parkland LOS for Comparison, provided for reference, shows the LOS comparison between the 2014 Master Plan and the analysis completed for 2006. Table 8: 2021 Parkland LOS, offers a comparison between current LOS and benchmark levels of service that were included in the 2014 Master Plan.

It is important to note the following:

- An apples-to-apples comparison between LOS from the 2014 Master Plan and 2021 data cannot be made here because the parkland classification system (park typologies) was changed via the 2019 Design Standards Manual. This yields lower or higher LOS for certain park typologies.
- The 2014 population projection for 2020 is roughly on point but the 2040 projection (123,000) is 7,000 more people than the 2014 future projection point. This yields a lower LOS in some park type areas for the future projection point.

*Table 6: 2014 Master Plan Parkland LOS for Comparison*

| Park Type           | Level of Service (LOS)<br>(Acres per 1,000 residents) |                              | Acres Needed by 2030<br>to Maintain 2006 Standard |                      |
|---------------------|---|------------------------------|---|----------------------|
|                     | 2006 LOS Standard<br>in<br>Benchmark Cities           | Current LOS<br>in<br>Boulder | 2030 Projection<br>(Full Development)             |                      |
| Neighborhood Parks  | 3.00  | 3.15                         | 2.71  | +21.84 acres         |
| Community Parks     | 1.50  | 1.54                         | 1.45  | +5.34 acres          |
| City/Regional Parks | 1.00 - 3.00   | 7.36                         | 8.55  | -643.56 acres        |
| <b>Total</b>        | <b>5.50 - 7.50</b>                                    | <b>12.05</b>                 | <b>12.71</b>                                      | <b>-616.38 acres</b> |

*Table 5.2 Parkland LOS. Given existing undeveloped parkland, BPRD will continue to provide more than enough parkland to meet demand through 2030.*

*Table 7: 2021 Parkland LOS. Inventory and Demographic Sources: BPR 2021 and 2020 Boulder Community Profile.*

| Park Type<br>(By BPR DSM<br>Classification*) | Level of Service (LOS)<br>(Acres per 1,000 Residents) |                        | Acres Needed by 2040 to<br>Maintain Current Boulder LOS |  |
|--|---|------------------------|---|--|
|  | 2014 LOS<br>Benchmark<br>Standard                     | 2021<br>Current<br>LOS | 2040 LOS<br>Projection                                  | 2040 Projection<br>Acres Needed to Maintain 2021 Standard<br>(including acreage already in system) |
| Neighborhood Parks                           | 3   | 2.04                   | 1.80  | +27  |
| Community Parks                              | 1.5   | 4.17                   | 3.67  | +55  |
| City/Regional Parks                          | 1.00 - 3.00   | 1.44                   | 1.27  | +19  |
| Other Parkland**                             | n/a   | 9.56                   | 8.40  | +125   |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                                 | <b>5.50 - 7.50</b>                                    | <b>17.21</b>           | <b>15.13</b>  | <b>-226 additional acres</b>   |

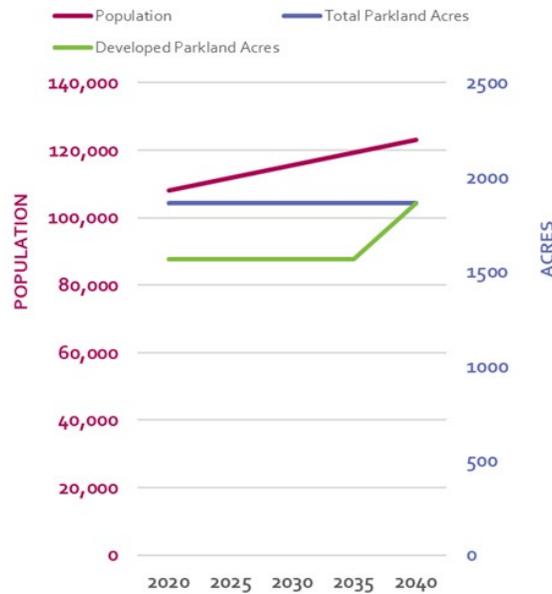
\* Developed and undeveloped acres are included in the 2040 projection for acres needed to maintain 2021 LOS standard

\*\* Examples include Natural Areas, Recreational and Specialized Facility green space, Community Use Areas.

*Population Growth and Parkland Acres Comparison*

Comparing Boulder 2021 to Boulder 2040, BPR would need to add 226 more acres after developing currently owned but undeveloped acreage, or close to two parks the size of Valmont City Park (127 acres), to provide the same amount of parkland per 1,000 community members if 2040 population projections are realized. Given the high price of land in Boulder and the growth boundary, adding new parkland is currently not feasible.

*Comparison of Projected Population Growth to Total Parkland and Developed Parkland Acres LOS*



When compared to the national benchmark communities and the Trust for Public Land (TPL) overall<sup>4</sup> ParkScore® median, Boulder is keeping pace in parkland per capita, as seen in Table 9: Urban Park Acres per 1,000 Residents Comparison. The surrounding 45,000 acres of Open Space and Mountain Parks lands are also an important contextual asset of access to public lands and nature.

*Table 8: Urban Park Acres per 1,000 Residents Comparison. 2019-2020 Data*

| Entity                                       | Urban Parkland per Capita LOS |
|--|-------------------------------|
| Trust for Public Lands Overall Median (2020) | 13                            |
| <b>BPR Urban Parkland*</b>                   | <b>18</b>                     |
| All Benchmark Median                         | 17                            |
| Regional Benchmark Median                    | 20                            |

\* BPR Urban Parkland includes all parks operated and maintained by BPR. There are two types of natural areas in the BPR system. BPR manages designated Natural Areas (620 acres) and urban forests along stream corridors and on open parcels that are either preserved as natural lands to blend in with the surroundings or are undeveloped and reserved for future park sites. These areas vary in size but are typically larger than 100 acres. In addition to these, many of the existing developed parks have areas that have been left natural or are adjacent to other natural landscapes. These allow parks to incorporate passive recreation, habitat for wildlife, sustainable landscape treatment, water use reduction and a cohesive border with either native landscape or Boulder OSMP lands. (BPR DSM)

<sup>4</sup> TPL breaks out median by overall as well for 2020 data as high (6.7 LOS), medium (10.8 LOS), medium-low (13.4 LOS) and low (27.6 LOS) density cities. Using the TPL methodology, Boulder would be considered close to Arlington, TX in density and be classified as medium-low density city.

## NEEDS ASSESSMENT IMPACT

*BPR continues to provide equivalent to above average amounts of urban parkland compared to benchmark communities. Given the projected population growth, each park will need to work harder (will most likely see an increased use due to more people living in Boulder and recent pandemic trends that have ignited higher use of outdoor parkland in Boulder and across the country) and require renewal and higher levels of maintenance.*

*Anecdotally, Boulder is one of the most popular cities in the state of Colorado. As home to the University of Colorado's main campus, and a place people come to play outdoors, the number of visitors is likely to have an impact on system usage and maintenance.*

*In most of the recent engagement processes related to park design, considerations and concerns about attracting unhoused people is always a key factor with the community. BPR has seen continuous encampments and illegal use of parkland, which strains limited resources. Certain types of unwelcoming or threatening behavior are having an impact on the community's use of parks and public spaces as welcoming. While this is the case, only 7% of survey respondents said they do not use parks and recreation facilities because they do not feel safe.*

*According to Longwoods International, a travel and tourism market research industry leader, Colorado welcomed 86.9 million visitors in 2019. Tourism also saved every Colorado household \$707 a year in taxes – the amount residents would have to pay if visitors did not spend \$1.5 billion in state and local taxes. [Tourism Pays | VISIT DENVER](#)*

*"The economic impact of tourism in the City of Boulder topped half a billion (\$515.4 million) in 2015. The estimated number of jobs in the City of Boulder attributable to tourism is 7,105, including 5,731 jobs directly tied to the tourism industry. Estimated visitor-days (nights) totaled nearly 3.3 million in 2015, including 1.4-million-day visitors and 1.9 million overnight visitors, in 2015."*

[2020 Boulder Chamber Boulder Winter Market Profile](#)

## BPR Recreation Amenities and Facilities

The recreation amenities and facilities listed in Table 10 provide a current inventory of the diverse recreation amenities the Boulder community enjoys. Several of these numbers are used in the Benchmark Communities Comparison section and may be divided into further detail in that study (e.g., ball fields divided into baseball fields and softball fields). While many of the recommendations of the 2010 Recreation Programs & Facilities Plan are still priorities, 11 years later, BPR may need to shift to and/or add focus areas including: older adult programming, teenage programming and offering a more diverse set of activities that focus on cultural meaning. In addition to recurring operational and capital costs, BPR has over \$90 million in unfunded capital projects.

Table 9: BPR Active Recreation Amenity Inventory

| Recreation Amenities   | 2020 Inventory |
|--|----------------|
| Recreation Center  | 3              |
| Programmable Studios   | 2              |
| Historic District  | 3              |
| Historic Sites   | 6              |
| Premier Diamond Fields   | 11             |
| Standard Diamond Fields  | 11             |
| Premier Rectangular Field  | 12             |
| Rectangular/Multi-Use Fields   | 16             |
| Tennis Courts  | 36             |
| Pickleball Courts (dedicated, non-dedicated)   | 7              |
| Basketball Courts, outdoor   | 14             |
| Sand Volleyball  | 19             |
| Disc Golf  | 3              |
| Roller Sport   | 3              |
| Slacklining, # of allowed sites  | 9              |
| Aquatic - Indoor Facility  | 3              |
| Aquatic - Outdoor Facility   | 3              |
| Skate Park   | 3              |
| Bike Park  | 1              |
| Dog Park   | 4              |
| Playgrounds  | 39             |
| Exercise Course  | 2              |
| Picnic Shelters  | 58             |
| Community Garden   | 4              |
| Total Miles of Paths, Sidewalks, Trails Maintained by BPR (40%, or 21 miles, of these are multi-use paths) | 53             |
| 40% of paths maintained by BPR are multi-use – 21 miles of multi-use path                                  | 45             |
| Number of Properties Managed by BPR  | 105            |
| City Trees**   | 50,000         |
| Trees on Park Land**   | 14,000         |

Notes: Updated per BPR staff June 2021 - AmenitiesSubCommunity2021

\*Multi-Use/Shared-Use paths provide low stress environments for biking and walking, entirely separated from motor vehicle traffic (Boulder Transportation Master Plan)

\*\* City trees - approximate # - fluctuates given ongoing removals and plantings

## RELATED PLANS

### [2012 Boulder Reservoir Master Plan](#)

This plan provides a vision for the future of this facility. With increasing visitation and demand for recreational services facilities, several areas of focus were highlighted:

- Address conflicts among users, increase parking lot capacity
- Maintaining adequate water quality and protecting plant and wildlife habitats, aquatic nuisance species management
- Meeting needs of increased demand for high quality services and facilities
- Coordination between OSMP, BPR and other City departments for land management
- Manage undesignated trails and access
- Support city sustainability objectives

### [2015 Aquatics Feasibility Plan](#)

This plan explores options for enhancing existing aquatic facilities, building new facilities and increasing the variety of programming. Ideas considered include maximizing utilization of lap pools, increasing entertainment offerings, increasing warm water wellness opportunities, creating an efficient and sustainable delivery system, and creating a more balanced schedule. The plan also looked at funding options to implement certain projects, including the recently completed Scott Carpenter Pool.

### [2020 Skate Park Improvements & Pump Track Project](#)

To address the need for skating and biking in Boulder, BPR staff have been working to design and build new skate and pump track features at Scott Carpenter Park. As of June 9, 2020: new skate and main skate areas at Scott Carpenter Park are open and construction started on the bike pump track and new skate feature at Valmont City Park.

*Recreation Level of Service*

Table 11 mirrors similar analysis as that conducted for the 2014 master plan and includes the 2014 level of service numbers for comparison to 2021 current numbers. In most cases, the 2021 numbers are slightly lower than 2014 numbers due to increase in Boulder population. Also of note:

- Two additional facilities have been included in 2021 that were not included in 2014: the Valmont Bike Park and dedicated and non-dedicated pickleball courts (on existing tennis courts).
- Trust for Public Land (TPL) data typically represents cities slightly larger in population to Boulder.
- Natural discovery areas and nature play are becoming increasingly popular and important activities for users of BPR facilities, especially for younger populations.

*Recreation Facilities Inventory*

|  | Central Boulder | Central Boulder - Uni Hill | Colorado University | Crossroads | East Boulder | Gunbarrel | North Boulder | Palo Park | South Boulder | Southeast Boulder | Outside Subcommunities | TOTALS |
|--|-----------------|----------------------------|---------------------|------------|--------------|-----------|---------------|-----------|---------------|-------------------|------------------------|--------|
| Recreation Center                                  | 1               | 0                          | 0                   | 0          | 0            | 0         | 0             | 0         | 1             | 1                 | 0                      | 3      |
| Programmable Studios                               | 2               | 0                          | 0                   | 0          | 0            | 0         | 0             | 0         | 0             | 0                 | 0                      | 2      |
| Historic District                                  | 1               | 2                          | 0                   | 0          | 0            | 0         | 0             | 0         | 0             | 0                 | 0                      | 3      |
| Historic Sites                                     | 2               | 2                          | 0                   | 0          | 2            | 0         | 0             | 0         | 0             | 0                 | 0                      | 6      |
| Premier Diamond Fields                             | 0               | 0                          | 0                   | 4          | 7            | 0         | 0             | 0         | 0             | 0                 | 0                      | 11     |
| Standard Diamond Fields                            | 2               | 0                          | 3                   | 0          | 0            | 4         | 0             | 0         | 1             | 1                 | 0                      | 11     |
| Premier Rectangular Field                          | 0               | 0                          | 0                   | 0          | 0            | 0         | 0             | 10        | 0             | 2                 | 0                      | 12     |
| Rectangular/ Multi-Use Fields                      | 2               | 0                          | 0                   | 0          | 1            | 1         | 4             | 1         | 4             | 3                 | 0                      | 16     |
| Tennis Courts                                      | 8               | 1                          | 0                   | 0          | 0            | 4         | 8             | 2         | 6             | 7                 | 0                      | 36     |
| Pickleball Courts*                                 | 2               | 1                          | 0                   | 0          | 0            | 0         | 0             | 0         | 4             | 0                 | 0                      | 7      |
| Basketball Courts, outdoor                         | 4               | 1                          | 0                   | 0          | 0            | 1         | 2             | 1         | 0             | 5                 | 0                      | 14     |
| Sand Volleyball                                    | 2               | 0                          | 0                   | 0          | 0            | 0         | 0             | 0         | 4             | 4                 | 9                      | 19     |
| Disc Golf  | 0               | 0                          | 0                   | 0          | 1            | 0         | 0             | 0         | 1             | 0                 | 1                      | 3      |
| Roller Sport                                       | 0               | 0                          | 0                   | 0          | 0            | 0         | 2             | 0         | 0             | 0                 | 1                      | 3      |
| Slacklining, # of allowed sites                    | 1               | 1                          | 0                   | 1          | 0            | 0         | 1             | 1         | 3             | 1                 | 0                      | 9      |
| Aquatic - Indoor Facility                          | 1               | 0                          | 0                   | 0          | 0            | 0         | 0             | 0         | 1             | 1                 | 0                      | 3      |
| Aquatic - Outdoor Facility                         | 1               | 0                          | 0                   | 1          | 0            | 0         | 0             | 0         | 0             | 0                 | 1                      | 3      |
| Skate Park   | 0               | 0                          | 0                   | 1          | 1            | 0         | 0             | 1         | 0             | 0                 | 0                      | 3      |
| Bike Park  | 0               | 0                          | 0                   | 0          | 1            | 0         | 0             | 0         | 0             | 0                 | 0                      | 1      |
| Dog Park   | 0               | 0                          | 0                   | 0          | 1            | 0         | 1             | 1         | 0             | 1                 | 0                      | 4      |
| Playgrounds  | 7               | 2                          | 1                   | 2          | 2            | 1         | 9             | 4         | 5             | 5                 | 1                      | 39     |
| Exercise Course                                    | 1               | 0                          | 0                   | 0          | 0            | 0         | 0             | 0         | 1             | 0                 | 0                      | 2      |
| Picnic Shelters                                    | 6               | 0                          | 0                   | 1          | 7            | 2         | 18            | 5         | 4             | 14                | 1                      | 58     |
| Community Garden                                   | 2               | 0                          | 0                   | 0          | 0            | 0         | 1             | 0         | 0             | 1                 | 0                      | 4      |
| # of Properties Managed by BPR with Multi-Use Path | 8               | 0                          | 8                   | 6          | 6            | 1         | 3             | 5         | 2             | 5                 | 1                      | 45     |
| # of Properties Managed by BPR                     | 29              | 5                          | 9                   | 7          | 6            | 3         | 13            | 7         | 9             | 8                 | 9                      | 105    |

\*Dedicated and non-dedicated pickleball courts (on tennis courts)

Table 10: Recreation Facility Level of Service.

(Orange fill shows LOS comparable standards that exceed BPR current LOS; green fill shows where BPR exceeds comparable LOS standards).

| Facility Type                | LOS per | Existing Quantity | BPR 2021 LOS | BPR 2014 LOS | Colorado LOS Median | National LOS Median | TPL LOS Median |
|------------------------------|---------|-------------------|--------------|--------------|---------------------|---------------------|----------------|
| Diamond Ball Field           | 10,000  | 22                | 2.04         | 2.46         | 2.89                | 2.45                | 1.55           |
| Picnic Shelter               | 10,000  | 58                | 5.37         | 3.49         | 4.73                | 2.71                | n/a            |
| Playground                   | 10,000  | 39                | 3.61         | 4.11         | 3.96                | 3.96                | 2.60           |
| Rectangular Field            | 10,000  | 28                | 2.59         | 2.05         | 5.22                | 1.32                | n/a            |
| Tennis Court                 | 10,000  | 36                | 3.33         | 4.11         | 2.44                | 2.44                | 1.70           |
| Aquatic Facility (Outdoor)   | 100,000 | 3                 | 2.78         | 2.05         | 1.79                | 2.49                | n/a            |
| Aquatic Facility (Indoor)    | 100,000 | 3                 | 2.78         | 3.08         | 2.08                | 1.94                | n/a            |
| Community Garden             | 100,000 | 4                 | 3.70         | 4.11         | n/a                 | 1.22                | n/a            |
| Dog Park                     | 100,000 | 4                 | 3.70         | 5.13         | 1.56                | 1.54                | 1.20           |
| Golf Course                  | 100,000 | 1                 | 0.93         | 1.03         | 2.08                | 1.4                 | 0.72           |
| Recreation Center            | 100,000 | 3                 | 2.78         | 3.08         | n/a                 | n/a                 | 3.50           |
| Skate Park                   | 100,000 | 3                 | 2.78         | 1.03         | 1.33                | 1.24                | 0.60           |
| Bike Park*                   | 100,000 | 1                 | 0.93         | n/a          | n/a                 | n/a                 | n/a            |
| Pickleball Court (Outdoors)* | 20,000  | 3                 | 0.56         | n/a          | n/a                 | n/a                 | 0.60           |

\*Previously not included in LOS analysis for 2014 Master Plan

## NEEDS ASSESSMENT IMPACT

Stakeholders who offer similar services to BPR highlighted the need for specialized areas like dog parks, nature areas and mountain bike parks. This group also suggested shared facilities between providers to split up maintenance costs. This would be especially beneficial for management of multicourt facilities or large softball and baseball complexes. Due to increased use of the pottery facilities, increasing the duration of lease for pottery lab providers could free up more staff time. Overall, stakeholder focus group participants communicated that parks play a crucial role in reconnecting the community during recovery from the COVID 19 pandemic.

Given the growing population in Boulder, the flat level of funding (discussed in the Financial Analysis), and resource draw to address stressors like storms and pandemic recovery, the level of service (quantity) and quality (from staff and stakeholder interviews) is at threat to decrease over time. Coupled with the generally increasing demand for recreation in Boulder (as observed anecdotally, from Google Earth data, and from staff and stakeholder interviews), the facilities and amenities within the parklands are extremely valuable to the community and are well-used and well-maintained given the system's age and facilities' condition. Ongoing conversations with the community and decision-makers will help shape how BPR responds to falling levels of service based solely on per capita numbers of parkland. A more nuanced approach that factors in a variety of metrics may be worth exploring. This will help determine appropriate aspirational LOS for areas that need improvement and identify strategies and next steps to achieve short and long-term goals that meet community needs and department financial scenarios. The following are potential options to inform aspirational LOS targets:

- **RENEWAL:** increase the frequency of renewal (e.g., playgrounds, tennis courts). In many cases, the same number of amenities will have to accommodate more people and expanded use. Increasing the rate of renewal for some amenities will help balance the increased wear and tear that results from increased intensity of use.
- **RESILIENCE:** build amenities that have higher capacity and tolerance for intensive use and can weather the impacts of climate change. (e.g., artificial turf fields). Maintenance budgets need to increase to keep pace with the intensity of use but building to a higher standard is also an important factor for ensuring the needs of the community are being met in terms of capacity and quality.
- **EQUITABLE ACCESS:** improve equitable distribution and access. Improving equity means improving access for those who need it most, improving the balance of services across the city, and being proactive in planning for future population increases and demographic changes.
- **REPURPOSE:** change what is being provided based on trends and demand (e.g., increased demand for pickleball). BPR is managing a system that is, for the most part, built out so adding to the overall inventory may not always be an option. Moving forward, this may mean conversion of existing spaces and amenities to accommodate new uses and increasing multifunctionality of existing parks and facilities.

## Benchmark Communities Comparison

### *Purpose & Methodology*

Benchmarking allows parks and recreation agencies to compare various areas of operation with other agencies. The previous consultant team collected 93 data points from which the Boulder Parks and Recreation Department (BPR) could draw comparisons. The previous consultant analyzed a list of 93 questions and came up with 12 key benchmarks. For purposes of this Needs Assessment, we are focusing on five of the original 12 – for facilities and parkland comparisons. Key benchmarks are those data points that have been selected as most important to focus on during the planning process to inform the Level of Service analysis (LOS) and future of BPR’s facilities, which in turn will have an impact on programs and services. These 5 key indicators, or benchmarks, include:

1. Form of organization
2. Urban parkland acres per resident
3. Urban parkland acres as percentage of total service area
4. Key facilities
5. General facilities & operations

Typically, cities use benchmarks to compare aspects of the organization (e.g., FTEs, park acreage per capita, facilities, etc.), and they choose a ranking (e.g., selecting a desired quartile to be in for each category) that they can use to assess current performance and to plan for the future. The data included in the following tables are derived from the previous white paper, research to date, including stakeholder interviews, National Recreation & Parks Association (NRPA) reports, city website research, benchmark city personnel, and parks and recreation master plan reviews. Of these sources, the one providing the most current information was used to populate the tables.

### *Key Benchmark #1: Form of Organization*

Table 12 lists the form of organization for parks and recreation services for the benchmark cities used for the analysis. Most of the parks and recreation services reviewed, including Boulder’s, fall under municipal government (nine) with Tempe’s services and facilities divided between three departments. Four cities’ parks and recreation service and facilities operate as Parks & Recreation Districts. These districts are created by state law and act as quasi-governmental bodies or agencies with their own taxing authority. They can provide services to newly developed areas or in some cases offer specialized services higher levels of quality in some cases than those already provided by other agencies.

*Table 11: Form of Organization. Source: US Census 2019, city websites, Parks & Recreation staff*

| Municipality           | Scale    | Population Served | Form of Organization  |
|------------------------|----------|-------------------|---|
| <b>Boulder, CO</b>     | --       | <b>105,673</b>    | <b>Municipal department</b>   |
| Broomfield, CO         | Local    | 67,886            | Municipal/County Department   |
| Foothills PRD, CO      | Local    | 93,000            | Parks & Recreation District   |
| Fort Collins, CO       | Local    | 170,243           | Municipal Department  |
| South Suburban PRD, CO | Local    | 157,000           | Parks & Recreation District   |
| Westminster, CO        | Local    | 113,166           | Municipal Department (Parks, Recreation & Libraries)  |
| Ann Arbor, MI          | National | 119,980           | Municipal Department  |
| Asheville, NC          | National | 92,870            | Municipal Department  |
| Bend, OR               | National | 100,421           | Parks & Recreation District   |
| Berkeley, CA           | National | 121,363           | Municipal Department (Parks, Recreation & Waterfront)   |
| Bloomington, IN        | National | 85,755            | Municipal Department  |
| Naperville PRD, IL     | National | 147,100           | Parks & Recreation District   |
| Tempe, AZ              | National | 195,805           | Community Services provides recreation; Public Works provides urban parkland; open space provided by other agencies |

*Key Benchmark #2: Urban Parkland Acres Per Resident*

Urban parkland is developed and includes neighborhood, community and regional parks. Bloomington Parks and Recreation has 29 acres for every 1,000 citizens in the community (Table 13). Westminster Parks and Recreation and South Suburban Parks and Recreation District each have 25-26 acres of urban parkland per 1,000 community members in their respective service areas. Boulder ranks 5 out of 12, suggesting that the parkland per 100 residents is about average in the benchmark study. Berkeley Parks and Recreation has only 2 acres of parkland for every 1,000 community members in the city. It should be noted that Ann Arbor has, by far, the most square miles for total land area served.

Table 12: Urban Parkland Acres Per 1,000 Residents (in rank order). 2019 Data.

| Municipality           | Urban Parkland Acres                                     | Population of Service Area | Per 1,000 Population |
|------------------------|--|----------------------------|----------------------|
| Bloomington, IN        | **2,273.32   | 85,755                     | 29.13                |
| Westminster, CO        | *2,826.75  | 113,166                    | 26.52                |
| South Suburban PRD, CO | natural areas: 2,513.9<br>total developed land: *1,610.5 | 157,000                    | 26.50                |
| <b>Boulder, CO</b>     | <b>1,861</b>   | <b>105,673</b>             | <b>18.59</b>         |
| Foothills PRD, CO      | *1,600   | 93,000                     | 18.53                |
| Broomfield, CO         | *678   | 70,465                     | 18.13                |
| Naperville PRD, IL     | *2,419   | 147,100                    | 17.66                |
| Tempe, AZ              | 1,519.7  | 195,805                    | 16.78                |
| Asheville, NC          | 869  | 92,870                     | 10.42                |
| Ann Arbor, MI          | **2,109.8  | 119,980                    | 6.07                 |
| Fort Collins, CO       | *1,268   | 170,243                    | 5.82                 |
| Berkeley, CA           | 235  | 121,363                    | 2.00                 |

Sources: \*City of Westminster, SSPRD, City of Tempe, Foothills PRD, City of Broomfield, City of Naperville staff.

\*\*Parks & Recreation Master Plans.

*Key Benchmark #3: Urban Parkland as Percentage of Total Service Area*

Table 14 shows urban parkland as a percentage of the total service area. Bloomington reported the highest percentage of parkland of total service area with 15.2%. Ann Arbor claims only 0.5%. Boulder ranks near the middle, with 11.0%.

Table 13: Urban Parkland as Percentage of Total Service Area (in rank order). 2019 Data.

| Municipality           | Urban Parkland Acres | Total Land Area of Area Served (sq. miles) | Total Land Area of Area Served (acres) | Percentage of Total Service Area |
|------------------------|----------------------|--|--|----------------------------------|
| Bloomington, IN        | **2,273.32           | 24   | 15,360                                 | 15%                              |
| South Suburban PRD, CO | *2,513.9             | 41   | 26,240                                 | 14%                              |
| Westminster, CO        | *2,826.75            | 33.7                                       | 21,568                                 | 13%                              |
| Foothills PRD, CO      | *1,600               | 21.5                                       | 13,760                                 | 12%                              |
| <b>Boulder, CO</b>     | <b>***1,810</b>      | <b>25.8</b>                                | <b>16,512</b>                          | <b>11%</b>                       |
| Tempe, AZ              | *1,519.7             | 40.1                                       | 25,664                                 | 11%                              |
| Naperville PRD, IL     | *2,419               | 41   | 26,240                                 | 9.5%                             |
| Broomfield, CO         | *678                 | 34   | 21,760                                 | 5%                               |
| Berkeley, CA           | ***235               | 18   | 11,520                                 | 2%                               |
| Ann Arbor, MI          | **2,109.77           | 710  | 454,400                                | 0.5%                             |
| Asheville, NC          | ***869               | unavailable                                | unavailable                            | unavailable                      |
| Fort Collins, CO       | *1,268               | unavailable                                | unavailable                            | unavailable                      |

Sources: \*City of Westminster, SSPRD, City of Tempe, Foothills PRD, City of Broomfield, City of Naperville staff.

\*\*Parks & Recreation Master Plans.

*Key Benchmarks #4 & #5: Key Recreation Facilities & General Facilities and Operations*

BPR has identified specific facilities for benchmarking analysis – key facilities (Table 15) and general facilities and operations (Table 16). BPR ranks #1 when it comes to dog parks and #3 for indoor pools, but the number of softball fields is low compared to comparable communities. However, Boulder’s 20 multiuse fields are around the median number benchmarked. Overall, BPR ranks higher in number of general facilities when compared to benchmark communities, and lower overall for key recreation facilities.

*Table 14: Key Facilities (in rank order). 2014-2019 Data.*

| Playgrounds     | Baseball Fields | Softball Fields* | Rectangular or Multi-Use Fields | Skate Parks     | Dog Parks      | Outdoor Swimming Pools | Indoor Swimming Pools | Recreation Centers | Outdoor Tennis Courts | Outdoor Pickleball Courts     |
|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------|----------------|------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|
| Ann Arbor**     | South Suburban* | South Suburban*  | South Suburban*                 | Fort Collins**  | Boulder        | Westminster*           | Fort Collins**        | Ann Arbor***       | Tempe**               | Naperville**                  |
| 79              | 80              | 80               | 162                             | 6               | 4              | 5                      | 6                     | 14                 | 51                    | 12                            |
| Naperville*     | Fort Collins**  | Fort Collins**   | Naperville*                     | Tempe*          | Tempe          | Foothills*             | Foothills*            | Asheville**        | South Suburban**      | Tempe**                       |
| 75              | 37              | 37               | 64                              | 4               | 6              | 4                      | 4                     | 10                 | 50                    | 12                            |
| Berkeley**      | Broomfield*     | Broomfield*      | Fort Collins**                  | South Suburban* | Fort Collins   | South Suburban*        | Boulder               | Fort Collins**     | Fort Collins**        | Asheville*                    |
| 64              | 35              | 35               | 50                              | 4               | 4              | 4                      | 3                     | 10                 | 46                    | 10                            |
| Broomfield*     | Naperville*     | Westminster*     | Tempe*                          | Westminster     | Westminster    | Berkeley*              | South Suburban*       | Berkeley*          | Boulder               | Fort Collins**                |
| 64              | 31              | 31               | 45                              | 4               | 3              | 4                      | 3                     | 7                  | 36                    | 8                             |
| South Suburban* | Westminster*    | Ann Arbor**      | Foothills*                      | Naperville      | Broomfield     | Tempe*                 | Broomfield*           | Westminster*       | Naperville**          | Foothills*                    |
| 62              | 31              | 30               | 42                              | 3               | 3              | 3                      | 2                     | 7                  | 36                    | 6                             |
| Tempe*          | Foothills*      | Foothills*       | Broomfield*                     | Foothills*      | Ann Arbor**    | Ann Arbor**            | Ann Arbor**           | Tempe*             | Ann Arbor**           | South Suburban*               |
| 44              | 24              | 24               | 40                              | 2               | 2              | 3                      | 1                     | 6                  | 31                    | 6                             |
| Fort Collins**  | Tempe*          | Naperville*      | Berkeley*                       | Boulder         | Berkeley       | Asheville**            | Tempe*                | South Suburban*    | Bloomington**         | Berkeley*                     |
| 44              | 20              | 20               | 34                              | 2               | 2              | 3                      | 1                     | 4                  | 26                    | 5                             |
| Foothills*      | Asheville**     | Tempe*           | Boulder                         | Asheville***    | Asheville      | Boulder                | Westminster*          | Boulder            | Asheville*            | Boulder                       |
| 40              | 17              | 17               | 30                              | 1               | 2              | 3                      | 0                     | 3                  | 24                    | 7 (dedicated + non-dedicated) |
| Boulder         | Bloomington**   | Asheville**      | Westminster*                    | Berkeley*       | South Suburban | Bloomington**          | Berkeley*             | Foothills*         | Westminster*          | Westminster*                  |
| 39              | 16              | 17               | 29                              | 1               | 1              | 2                      | 0                     | 3                  | 22                    | 3                             |
| Bloomington**   | Boulder         | Bloomington**    | Ann Arbor***                    | Bloomington**   | Bloomington    | Broomfield*            | Asheville**           | Bloomington**      | Berkeley*             | Ann Arbor                     |
| 26              | 12              | 16               | 15                              | 1               | 1              | 1                      | 0                     | 3                  | 21                    | N/A                           |
| Asheville**     | Berkeley*       | Boulder          | Bloomington**                   | Broomfield*     | Foothills*     | Naperville*            | Naperville*           | Broomfield*        | Foothills**           | Bloomington                   |
| 22              | 7               | 10               | 8                               | 1               | 0              | 1                      | 0                     | 2                  | 20                    | N/A                           |
| Westminster     | Ann Arbor**     | Berkeley*        | Asheville***                    | Ann Arbor**     | Naperville*    | Fort Collins           | Bloomington           | Naperville*        | Broomfield*           | Broomfield*                   |
| N/A             | 3               | 9                | 7                               | 1               | 0              | N/A                    | N/A                   | 2                  | 12                    | N/A                           |

Notes:  
 \*Fort Collins does not clarify data on how many indoor/outdoor pools and baseball fields they have. Foothills does not specify softball fields.

\*\*South Suburban and Foothills Softball Field Data: It has been noted that softball fields may have been recorded with baseball fields in original data (denotes "N/A" responses as well).

\*\*\*Includes three dog parks (one at Howard Heuston off-leash area).

Sources: \* Map Asheville Park Finder Map (ashevillenc.gov), websites of City of Berkeley, Foothills, SSPRD, City of Westminster, City of Broomfield. \*\*Parks & Recreation Master Plans.

Table 15: General Facilities and Operations (first 6 columns in rank order). 2014-2019 Data.

| Hard-Surface Trails (miles)   | Soft-Surface Trails (miles)  | Recreation Centers         | Community Centers   | Total Area of Recreation/Community Centers (sq ft) | Programs Offered   | Joint-use or Maintenance of Facilities with Schools?   | Joint-use or Maintenance of Facilities with other Entities? |
|---|--|----------------------------|---|--|--|--|---|
| <b>Broomfield*</b><br>103 (multi-use paths) + 102 (8-foot detached sidewalks) + 83 (On-Street Bike Lanes) = 288 miles | <b>Fort Collins**</b><br>181   | <b>Ann Arbor***</b><br>14  | <b>Asheville**</b><br>11  | <b>Fort Collins***</b><br>231,243                  | <b>Naperville*</b><br>Over 7,500 recreational classes, teams, events and performances annually | <b>Boulder***</b>  | <b>Boulder***</b><br>No                                     |
| <b>Berkeley***</b><br>105   | <b>Boulder***</b><br>93 (maintained by several city agencies, 146 (OSMP), 110 (Boulder County Open Space | <b>Asheville***</b><br>12  | <b>Berkeley***</b><br>6 + 3 senior centers                      | <b>S. Suburban***</b><br>228,862                   | <b>Broomfield***</b><br>6,900  | <b>Broomfield</b><br>JUA with two school districts- maintain 12 acres of parkland at 4 school sites as part of this          | <b>Broomfield***</b><br>No                                  |
| <b>S. Suburban**</b><br>100+ linear miles of local/regional trails  | <b>Ann Arbor***</b><br>38 (Nature Trails)  | <b>Westminster***</b><br>7 | <b>Tempe</b><br>Included in Recreation Centers                  | <b>Westminster***</b><br>228,225                   | <b>Westminster***</b><br>4,741   | <b>Foothills***</b><br>Yes   | <b>Foothills***</b><br>Yes                                  |
| <b>Ann Arbor**</b><br>70 (Multi-Use Paths)  | <b>Broomfield*</b><br>28   | <b>Berkeley**</b><br>7     | <b>Fort Collins</b><br>4  | <b>Foothills**</b><br>213,500                      | <b>Boulder***</b><br>2,500   | <b>Fort Collins**</b><br>Partnerships with Poudre and Thompson School Districts and Colorado State University                | <b>Fort Collins***</b><br>Trails with Larimer County        |
| <b>Westminster***</b><br>63   | <b>Foothills***</b><br>3.41 (1.4 lighted trails)   | <b>Tempe*</b><br>6         | <b>Broomfield*</b><br>3 - 1 is Mental Health Service Center     | <b>Broomfield*</b><br>176,300                      | <b>Foothills***</b><br>2,000   | <b>South Suburban**</b><br>District planning partners - Southeast Metro Stormwater Authority and 4 other school districts    | <b>South Suburban***</b><br>Yes                             |
| <b>Naperville*</b><br>57.63   | <b>S. Suburban</b><br>Included in Hard-Surface Trails data   | <b>Fort Collins**</b><br>4 | <b>Bloomington</b><br>Included in Recreation Centers            | <b>Tempe***</b><br>152,000                         | <b>Bloomington***</b><br>1000, 12 category programs**)   | <b>Westminster***</b><br>Yes   | <b>Westminster***</b><br>Yes                                |
| <b>Fort Collins**</b><br>44   | <b>Westminster**</b><br>*not designated  | <b>S. Suburban*</b><br>4   | <b>Boulder***</b><br>2 Senior Centers managed by Human Services | <b>Boulder***</b><br>139,000                       | <b>Fort Collins**</b><br>10 Core Programs  | <b>Ann Arbor**</b><br>Ann Arbor Parks and Recreation Services/ Ann Arbor Public Schools Community Education and Rec. program | <b>Ann Arbor***</b><br>Yes (non-profits)                    |
| <b>Bloomington**</b><br>35-39   | <b>Asheville***</b><br>Included in Hard-Surface Trails data (1)  | <b>Boulder***</b><br>3     | <b>Ann Arbor***</b><br>2  | <b>Bloomington***</b><br>135,000                   | <b>S. Suburban***</b><br>No Programs   | <b>Asheville***</b><br>JUAs with city and county school systems and University of North Carolina at Asheville                | <b>Asheville***</b><br>No                                   |
| <b>Boulder***</b><br>35 (maintained by BPR)   | <b>Berkeley***</b><br>Included in Hard-Surface Trails data   | <b>Foothills*</b><br>3     | <b>Foothills*</b><br>1  | <b>Naperville*</b><br>103,665                      | <b>Ann Arbor***</b><br>No Programs   | <b>Berkeley**</b><br>Berkeley Unified School District JUA with City  | <b>Berkeley**</b><br>Yes                                    |
| <b>Foothills***</b><br>14-9, 1.06 looped trail**  | <b>Bloomington*</b><br>Included in Hard-Surface Trails data  | <b>Bloomington</b><br>3    | <b>S. Suburban**</b><br>1                                       | <b>Asheville***</b><br>58,000                      | <b>Asheville***</b><br>No Programs   | <b>Bloomington**</b><br>Indiana University/Monroe County Parks and Recreation Department                                     | <b>Bloomington***</b><br>Yes (with other service providers) |
| <b>Tempe***</b><br>13 miles / 170 miles of bikeways   | <b>Naperville*</b><br>21.43  | <b>Broomfield*</b><br>2    | <b>Naperville*</b><br>1   | <b>Berkeley***</b><br>47,000                       | <b>Berkeley***</b><br>No Programs  | <b>Naperville*</b><br>Yes  | <b>Naperville*</b><br>Yes                                   |
| <b>Asheville***</b><br>14 (6.78 Greenway Network miles)**   | <b>Tempe***</b><br>14.5  | <b>Naperville*</b><br>0    | <b>Westminster***</b><br>0                                      | <b>Ann Arbor***</b><br>501.56                      | <b>Tempe***</b><br>No Programs   | <b>Tempe</b><br>Yes*   | <b>Tempe*</b><br>Yes  |

Sources: \*City of Broomfield and City of Naperville staff.

\*\* Parks & Recreation Master Plans \*\*\* Data from BPR 2014 Master Plan. \*Pre-COVID-19 restrictions

*BPR Facilities LOS Over Time & Compared to Benchmarks***Increases**

- Picnic shelters LOS has increased and is above the state, national and TPL median LOS. According to survey respondents, the current LOS is generally satisfying community need. Sixty-two percent of survey respondents feel there are enough group picnic shelters and 85% expressed satisfaction with these amenities.
- Rectangular fields LOS has risen slightly and is above the national LOS median, but well below the state median. However, a majority of survey respondents felt there were enough rugby fields, lacrosse fields, football fields and soccer fields, and expressed overall satisfaction with these facilities

**Decreases**

- Level of Service for diamond ball fields has decreased slightly and is below the state and national LOS median, but above the TPL median.
- Playgrounds LOS has decreased slightly since 2014 but is similar to the state and national median LOS and higher than the TPL median LOS.
- Tennis court LOS has decreased, yet is still above the state, national and TPL LOS medians. A majority of survey respondents found there were enough tennis courts and expressed satisfaction with them. The LOS for pickleball courts (which were not considered in the 2014 Master Plan) is slightly lower than the TPL median. While some community members feel BPR needs more of these facilities, a majority of survey respondents feel there are enough courts.
- Outdoor aquatic facilities LOS has decreased and is slightly higher than the state LOS median and lower than the national LOS median. About 59% of survey respondents feel there are enough swimming pools, and the majority expressed satisfaction with these facilities. Indoor aquatic facilities LOS has also decreased yet is higher than the state and national medians. Survey respondents are roughly split between feeling the city has enough swimming pools for laps and open swim, and thinking the community needs more. About 39% of respondents were very satisfied with these facilities and 43% of respondents were somewhat satisfied.
- The LOS for community gardens has decreased yet is higher than the national LOS median. Survey respondents were least satisfied with these facilities. A majority feel there is a need for more of this facility type.
- Dog parks have been increasing in popularity throughout the country. The dog park LOS for Boulder has decreased, but is higher than the state, national and TPL medians.
- The golf course LOS has decreased and is lower than the state and national medians for this type of facility, but higher than the TPL median.
- Recreation center LOS has decreased and is lower than the TPL median LOS.
- Skate Park LOS has decreased and is lower than both the state and national median LOS. BPR LOS is higher than the TPL median and roughly 83% of survey respondents are satisfied with what is available, and a majority feel Boulder has enough skate parks.

## Engagement Findings

Stakeholders and staff are seeing the following trends when it comes to facilities in Boulder:

- Courts: Tennis has risen in popularity for the first time in many years and there is more staking up (waiting) for court time. Some courts are in poor condition. Pickleball is also rising in popularity, both locally and nationally - 3.46 million people played pickleball in 2019 (the average age of these players is 43.5). Of this player population, 1.3 million were “Core” players who play 8 or more times a year and 2.2 million were “Casual” players who play 1-7 times a year. The average annual growth rate for all players from 2016 to 2019 was 7.2%, for a total growth rate of 23% over three years<sup>5</sup>.
- Aquatic Facilities: There has been an increased demand for more access to family time in pools, and warm water pools are very popular with Boulder’s older adult population.
- Dog Parks: Use is high and growing. Additional dog parks are a continually requested facility especially in more urban areas and for those living in multifamily housing. Some community members are becoming increasingly frustrated with the amount of dogs off-leash on trails and in parks.
- Valmont Bike Park: Fees (for groups, events and rentals) are helping to balance taking care of the park, providing new amenities and completing ongoing maintenance.

Community members who responded to the Master Plan survey had the following to share regarding BPR facilities and parks:

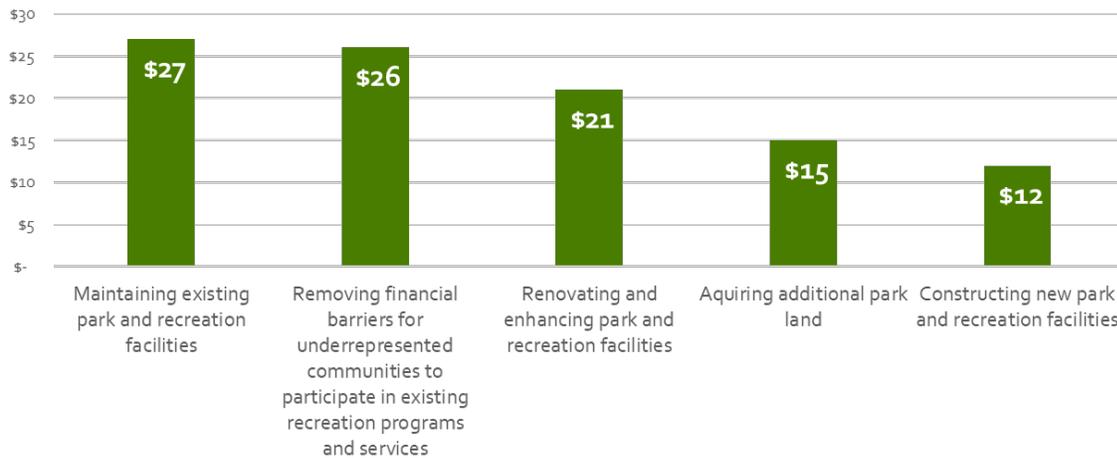
- Respondents agree that BPR’s focus should remain maintaining existing facilities and renovating and enhancing existing facilities. Purchasing additional parkland and developing new facilities is not a large priority currently. There is a desire for BPR to partner with other municipalities, school districts or nonprofits to develop joint use recreational facilities or programs and a perceived need for BPR to design and maintain facilities to a higher degree to accommodate enhanced use.
  - Community members consistently cited safety and cleanliness as key priorities for maintaining existing facilities.
- Fitness and recreation opportunities in Boulder are rated highly – with 82% of respondents rating fitness and recreation opportunities as excellent (82% and 77% respectively). They also feel that activities and programs at parks and facilities be mostly available for drop-in use as opposed to having to pre-register. Multi-use areas and flexibility were prioritized by community members to facilitate greater access and inclusion.
- Over 2/3 of respondents were somewhat or very satisfied with each type of recreation facility BPR manages. The most highly regarded facilities include paved paths, soft surface paths, fields, natural areas and lawns.
  - When asked about importance of specific amenities in local parks, community members indicated that shade and bathrooms were the most important. Only programmed fields were considered unimportant to at least 50% of those responding about their local, neighborhood park.

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<sup>5</sup> Sports & Fitness Industry Association’s 2020 Pickleball Participant Report

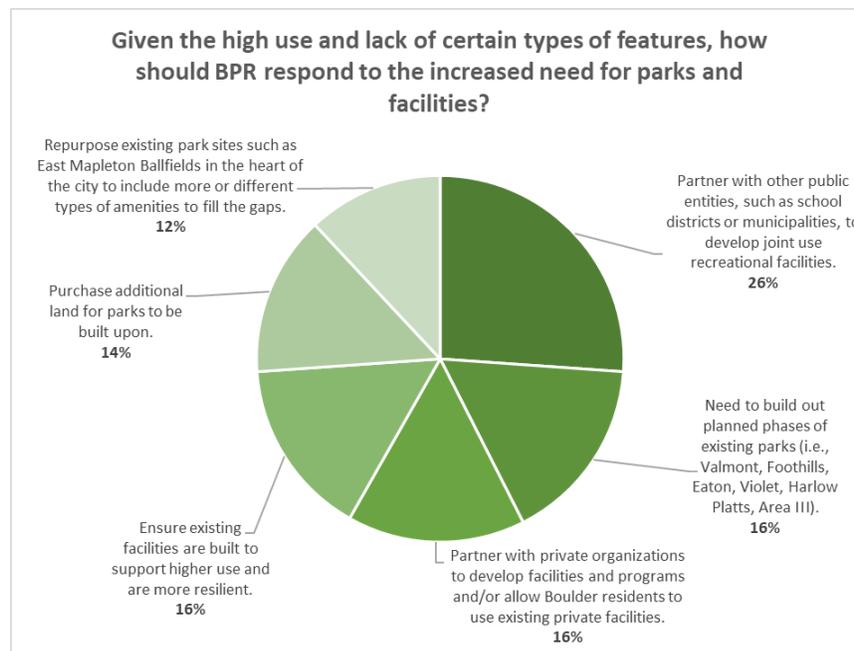
- While Boulder’s LOS for diamond ballfields is below other benchmarks, and stakeholders expressed dissatisfaction with field quantity and quality, a majority of survey respondents expressed satisfaction with softball fields and Little League and baseball fields.
- Respondents expressed interest in balancing youth and adult programming at the Stazio and Mapleton complexes.
- Given a \$100 budget, survey respondents would allocate the funds as follows:

*Statistically Valid Survey: Average Dollars Allocated Across Five Competing Priorities with Hypothetical \$100 Budget*



- Some user groups want more or new facilities, even though a majority of community members participating in the feedback opportunities preferred other alternatives for meeting these community needs. This desire for new facilities is due to crowded or inaccessible locations rather than the quality of existing facilities.

*Community Engagement: Preference for How to Respond to Increased Need for Parks and Facilities*



- Over 50% of respondents would like to see more community gardens, scenic gardens, indoor ice arenas and natural areas.
- BPR fluctuates with how it stacks up with its peers in relation to certain metrics, but the community feels that BPR is adequately providing many of these resources.
- 67% of survey respondents felt that programming should include some popular sports and fitness activities, but also include diverse options like arts and crafts, and a variety of classes.

## NEEDS ASSESSMENT IMPACT

*When considering the data, engagement finding and benchmark communities, Boulder's facilities LOS is higher or lower in some cases and on par in others. While comparisons can be made to get a general idea of how parks and recreation departments are doing, each community is so unique, understanding which metrics really matter and best reflect the needs of the Boulder community, is something BPR should be re-evaluating regularly.*

*The LOS for most facilities has slightly decreased since 2014. At the same time, a majority of survey respondents are generally satisfied with the quality and number of facilities. Population increase has had an impact on LOS and user desires can change over time. These factors reinforce the reality that developing LOS standards to measure how well BPR is serving the community is a complex process. BPR needs to understand how best to assess and monitor LOS in the future. Especially with the increasing inclusion of equity and resilience in all aspects of operations, new metrics with built-in flexibility may be worth exploring. While national standards and benchmark comparisons are generally accepted, BPR must address the needs of the Boulder community by tailoring LOS standards and metrics specifically to all Boulderites.*

## Supply and Demand Analysis

### Purpose & Methodology

This portion of the need's assessment report will help inform recreation supply and demand for the next five to seven years. Findings are collated from indoor facility assessments conducted by Barker Rinker Seacat Architecture (BRS), trends, research of local, regional and national information, BPR staff interviews, review of registration data (where applicable and for this study 2020 numbers fluctuated wildly due to impact of pandemic restrictions), stakeholder focus groups, community polling and a statistically valid community survey. The previous level of service and benchmarking also can help provide perspective to recreation demand trends and how other organizations are providing services comparably.

### BRS Existing Facility Observations & Opportunities Report Highlights

As part of the Master Plan update process, Barker Rinker Seacat (BRS) Architects were engaged to provide an Indoor Recreational Facility Assessment Report which provided a conceptual overview of BPR's primary indoor recreation facilities. The report focused on the following facilities:

- East Boulder Community Center
- South Boulder Recreation Center
- North Boulder Recreation Center
- Iris Studio
- Salberg Community Center
- Boulder Pottery Lab

The report is in part based on a review of previously completed assessments, a review of existing facilities with members of BPR staff, and an in-person visual assessment of each facility. While the report was not an exhaustive assessment of each facility, it identified conceptual infrastructure improvements and provided recommendations for potential renovations and expansion for each facility. The following section summarizes key data and findings from the Indoor Recreational Facility Assessment Report. The full report can be viewed in Appendix A.

#### *CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS METHODOLOGY*

The capital improvement opportunities identified in the report were not vetted through a community outreach effort that would be required for meaningful prioritization, nor have they been evaluated by a cost estimating professionals. For the purposes of the report BRS categorized each of the observed capital improvement opportunities according to a conceptual estimate of anticipated funding requirement defined as follows:

- \$** Make the most of existing resources through targeted, fiscally restrained upgrades that address maintenance issues.
- \$\$** Characterized as an 'extra' service or capital improvement that will likely exceed funding outside typical maintenance.
- \$\$\$** Represents a fiscally unconstrained goal meant to fully address community needs and desires.

### East Boulder Community Center

#### Overview

The East Boulder Recreation Center consists of recreation and aquatics facilities. This includes a gymnasium, weight room, fitness rooms for dance, yoga, spin and other activities. It also includes administrative offices and an attached area that is temporarily being used as a day care center. The facility generally appears to be in good condition, clean and well maintained. The Facility Strategic Plan of 2016 identified a number of deficiencies that are in various states of repair. Based on conversations with staff, a significant number of those deficiencies have been addressed and there is a plan in place to address those that remain.

#### Architecture & Space Deficiencies

BRS notes the following deficiencies based on visual observations made during their site visit and comments provided by staff.

- *Front Desk:* Location and configuration of the front desk does not allow for adequate access control. When entering the building from the main entry, the desk is set off to the left which allows visitors to easily access the corridor in front of the pool, the child watch area, and the 'age-well' area, without having to check in and in some instances without being seen by staff. Staff mentioned that the configuration of the desk leaves them feeling vulnerable as there is not clear 'escape' path from behind the desk should there be a need to do so.
- *Finishes:* While the facility overall is clean and well maintained, the material finishes, furniture and lighting are dated, giving the space a feeling or sense of being from an earlier era.
- *Meeting Space:* There is inadequate meeting space for Rec Center Staff.

- **BREAK ROOM:** Staff break room is too small for the number of people who use it. This is further exaggerated by use of the space for staff meetings and temporary summer staff.
- **Storage:** The Center has inadequate storage, especially as it relates to the gym and summer program equipment. The awkwardly located storage in the pool area shares space with pool equipment and a makeshift office space.
- **Rock Climbing:** This feature is largely unused. Staff suggested there may be a better use for the space.
- **Fitness Spaces:** The Facility Strategic plan noted that EBCC has the largest dedicated fitness area of Boulder's three recreation centers. Use levels vary by season, with winter use (pre-Covid) requiring a sign-up sheet for equipment, but staff confirm it is inadequate to meet year-round peak demand times. Customer requests include an enhanced functional fitness area, more cardio equipment, and an expanded free weight area. The climbing wall, tucked into the east corner of the fitness area, is underutilized, and generally limited to youth attending summer camp. While removal would minimally increase floorspace, the lowered floor and angular walls do not support a simple expansion of the fitness area. Staff confirmed to BRS that these space deficiencies persist.
- **Gang Showers:** Private showers are preferred by contemporary users.
- **Lifeguard Room:** Room is undersized though there is no obvious way to expand.
- **Pool:** Is well used and programming could support additional lanes if space were available for expansion. Staff noted that boilers are old and gas dependent.
- **Pool Slide:** There are signs of corrosion on the stair access to the slide.

| Conceptual Infrastructure Improvement Opportunities   | Cost to Implement |
|---|-------------------|
| BPR may consider conducting a feasibility study of the Community Center to evaluate current offerings, and opportunities for how the 'age-well' area may best be utilized, and other spaces reconfigured to address the needs and desires of the community.   | \$                |
| A study of the front desk's relationship to the building entry may be undertaken to address security concerns. While the space available at the building entry is adequate, there doesn't appear to be an obvious way to relocate the front desk for optimal visual control of the building. It appears an addition to the front of the building may be a good option to enable this change. The space currently used for the front desk may be reconfigured to address other needs such as staff meeting spaces and storage. | \$\$              |
| Convert gang showers to private showers   | \$                |
| Look for opportunity to switch older gas boilers to electrical system   | \$\$              |
| Outdoor play area associated with child-watch area could be enhanced to better support outdoor play.  | \$                |
| The rock-climbing area may be converted to another type of space like an eSports gaming area. These kinds of spaces offer opportunities for members of the community who may not otherwise come to the center to use the space, and because of their popularity generate revenue for BPR.   | \$\$              |
| The existing catering kitchen is underused. Partnering with a catering company to provide services to the center, or for rental events may be considered. The benefit of such use could lead to generation of revenue for BPR.  | \$                |

## North Boulder Recreation Center

### Overview

Located in the densely populated downtown district, North Boulder Recreation Center (NBRC) was originally constructed in 1974. An addition completed in the early 2000s doubled the size of the facility to roughly 62,000 square feet. The addition boasts an 8-lane competitive pool and 3,300-gallon spa which were built adjacent to a large family-friendly leisure pool with waterslides, interactive features and zero-depth access. At that time, the center's popular gymnastics area was expanded, and yoga and multipurpose rooms were added. A family locker room was created, and existing showers and locker areas refurbished and expanded. Additional staff offices were built, and the center's entrance and drop-off area were redesigned to improve pedestrian and traffic flow. Notably, NBRC was the first community recreation center in the country to receive LEED Silver certification by the U.S. Green Building Council.

### Architecture & Space Deficiencies

BRS notes the following deficiencies based on visual observations made during their site visit and comments provided by staff.

- *Front Desk:* The size and configuration of the front desk are good, and the supporting administrative offices and meeting spaces meet the needs of the center's staff. The challenge is access control of visitors. There are two corridors that run alongside the front desk. The corridor to the south makes it possible for visitors to walk by the front desk without checking in. In fact, there are many visitors who stop in simply to use the bathrooms, which creates a security risk to both the staff and the users of the facility.
- *Gymnastics Viewing:* The corridor outside the gymnastics area is used by spectators. Because there are only a couple windows into the space, the movable bleachers are full beyond capacity. While the corridor is large some parts of it go unused.
- *Tot Lot:* No shading for children outside – the space gets full sun and is at times hot.
- *Hot Tub:* The hot tub has visibility issues. It is difficult for lifeguards to monitor the space from their stations, and there have been instances of inappropriate behavior in the space.
- *Weight Room & Cardio:* The capacity of the weight room and cardio area is inadequate. There is work currently underway to combine the space with the existing dance room. This will provide additional area for fitness equipment. At the time of our visit, machines were spaced for Covid-19 related social distancing requirements. The adequacy of the space will be better known once restrictions are lifted.
- *Gang Showers:* Private showers and more cabanas would be preferred by users.
- *Parking:* There is inadequate parking for the users of the building. The center and its gymnastics program are so popular, the facility could support an expansion, but such a change would likely not be possible as there is no room for the center to grow.
- *Fitness Programs:* Space constraints limits the types of programming possible at the center. Staff noted that more dance, fitness, and Zumba classes would be popular, but cannot plan for them because of parking. The spaces themselves also do not lend to the kind of atmosphere that would support these classes. Opportunities for indoor-outdoor style classrooms with better acoustics, lighting, and a sound system are desired.
- *Acoustics:* Sound is a challenge in the corridor between the gymnastics area and yoga room. A lot of excited noise is generated in the corridor which on occasion interrupts yoga classes.

| Conceptual Infrastructure Improvement Opportunities   | Cost to Implement |
|---|-------------------|
| To solve the issue of control at the building entry, particularly at the south corridor, it may be possible to close the corridor and use it to capture some additional space for weights and cardio. A corridor could be continued through the center of the building. This would require that all visitors pass by the front desk at the control point.   | \$\$              |
| The tot lot would benefit from some protective shading.   | \$                |
| Additional viewing opportunities in the corridor outside the gymnastics area would help ease crowding around spectator seating. The unused space in the corridor may be used to accomplish this.  | \$                |
| The Boulder Parks and Recreation Department may consider conducting a full feasibility study with public outreach to identify whether an off-site gymnastics facility would best serve the community. If gymnastics were relocated to another facility, the space at NBRC could be repurposed to meet the demand for dance and group fitness programming that is desired by the community. Some aspects of the gymnastics space do not meet the standards of high-level competition, existing HVAC is challenged - filters replaced constantly due to chalk, the program continues to grow, making parking a bigger challenge. These issues may give further support to the idea of a dedicated off-site gymnastics facility. | \$\$\$            |
| BPR Staff suggested a low sensory room for work with children with ADHA and spectrum disorders is desired.  | \$                |

## South Boulder Recreation Center

### Overview

The split-level South Boulder Recreation Center (SBRC), constructed in the early 1970s and partly renovated in the 1990s, is situated in Harlow Platts Community Park. Despite its age and numerous accessibility issues, the center is clean and staff report that customers view it as the heart of their surrounding community. The facility consists of aquatics, a gymnasium, weight rooms, a multi-purpose room for dance, yoga and other activities, a racquetball court, Pilates studio and office and administrative areas. Overall, the facility is clean and well maintained. The 2-story building has been expanded and remodeled over time.

### Architecture & Space Deficiencies

BRS notes the following deficiencies based on visual observations made during their site visit and comments provided by staff.

- Circulation:** The South Boulder Recreation Center has a number of challenges with circulation throughout the facility. When visitors first arrive to the center, they encounter a large open stairwell that separates them from the front desk. They must navigate around the stair opening to get to the reception counter. Although staff has good visual control of the upper floor, it is relatively easy for visitors to move into the space without checking in. The most common challenge is visitors who stop in solely to use the restroom. This is a security concern for both the staff and members. Additionally, because the center was designed before the implementation of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), accessibility is not ideal even in spite of good efforts to provide access. Visitors to the center must return to the vestibule to use the elevator after retrieving a key from front desk staff. Even with the accommodations that have been made, including an elevator, lift and accessible ramps, a person in a wheelchair may find wayfinding difficult or circuitous. In the pool area, circulation is not laid out in a way that requires patrons to pass through the locker/ shower rooms before entering the aquatics area

which creates opportunities for potential health risks for those using the pool as well as congestion and noise.

- *Front Desk:* The location and configuration of the front desk does not allow for adequate access control. When entering the building from the main entry, the desk is set behind a large stair well opening which both demands that visitors navigate around it and prevents staff from adequately controlling the coming and going of visitors to the center.
- *Meeting Space:* There is inadequate meeting space for Rec Center Staff.
- *Office Space:* There is inadequate office space for Rec Center Staff.
- *Break Room:* Staff break room is a sink with a small cabinet set within the laundry room and shared with janitorial equipment. There is no area to sit or store personal items.
- *Finishes:* While the facility overall is clean and well maintained, the building overall, including ceiling heights, window units, and construction details are dated and of a different era.
- *Program Spaces:* Most program areas are undersized and oddly configured.
- *Water Infiltration:* Issues with water infiltration that appear to be related to the building’s proximity to the adjacent Viele Lake. The elevation of the lake water is said to be higher than the elevation of the recreation center’s gymnasium, racquetball court, aerobics room, locker rooms and aquatics area. There have been past occurrences of water entering the building at the floor level of the racquetball court/ gymnasium. While BRS was on-site, remediation work was being done in the racquetball court. Staff noted that water with a chlorine smell had damaged the floor such that it needed to be replaced. The smell of chlorine suggests the pool itself may be leaking, though no source has been found. The concrete masonry wall of the natatorium adjacent to Viele Lake is painted. The paint on this wall regularly spawls due to moisture infiltration and is repainted as part of regular maintenance cycles.

| Conceptual Infrastructure Improvement Opportunities  | Cost to Implement                         |
|--|---|
| <p>SBRC has served the Boulder community for nearly 50 years, a long-life for a recreation facility that Implement has not seen significant financial re-investment. The HVAC system appears to be failing and pool water is infiltrating the lower level of the building. Poor circulation and lack of accessibility for differently abled individuals creates an exclusive facility. The front desk is not designed to sufficiently serve as a control point, creating security concerns for both customers and staff. Given these visible deficiencies, the city may explore anticipated costs to begin addressing them. However, the most economical path forward with a facility of this age is generally replacement rather than renovation. This presents an opportunity for the city to re-engage the community surrounding this long-standing resource and determine the appropriate needs and architectural program to serve them for the next 50 years.</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">\$\$\$</p> |

## Iris Studio

### Overview

The Iris studio is a single dance space that accommodates roughly 20-25 students depending on the style of class. The studio currently occupies a space within the BRP administrative offices on the same site as the NBRC. The room has mirrors and barres on two sides. It has access to restrooms and a small storage space that is shared with HVAC equipment. Staff noted that the space is inadequate for the desired programming and level of interest, and it is difficult to maintain a comfortable room temperature. The flooring is not ideal for dance activities.

### Architecture & Space Deficiencies

In keeping with the recommendations associated with the NBRC, the popularity of the dance program may support adding more dedicated space. A feasibility study that includes public outreach is recommended to identify the needs and desires of the community as well as the appetite for expansion, and how that may best be accomplished.

### Salberg Community Center

#### Overview

Located in a neighborhood park, Salberg Community Center (SCC) consists of a medium-sized, 285 occupancy room with a prominent stage at one end. At one time, Pilates were programmed in the studio but currently the space supports a summer drama camp. The building has some nice interior elements, such as the ceiling, but the remainder of interior finishes lack coherence and are of low quality. The kitchenette is too small to support catered events or events with minimal preparation. The bathrooms and flooring are outdated, making the space less desirable for potential renters. There is also no internet access or dedicated office-space, and storage is limited. The location of Salberg creates opportunities and challenges. To enhance and utilize the space, an expansion may be considered to include office space, storage and a kitchenette. Updating the finishes and upgrading the entry to enhance the curb appeal may attract private rentals. BPR would need to dedicate a staff person to oversee rental check-in and install internet access to have registration and check-in capabilities. The parking area limits the number of occupants if the building is used as a private rental.

### Architecture & Space Deficiencies

BRS notes the following deficiencies based on visual observations made during their site visit and comments provided by staff.

- **Office Space:** There is no office or administrative space in the building. This limits ability to rent to a dedicated program or check-in temporary rentals for events.
- **Kitchenette:** The kitchenette is very small and does not have a sink. This limits the usability of the space for rental events like parties.
- **Finishes:** Although the space has some nice elements, ad hoc renovations and alterations to the space diminish appeal. The VCT flooring is not suitable for all activities such as dance or fitness.
- **Service:** Wi-Fi or internet service are currently not available in the building.
- **HVAC:** There is no vestibule to building, which makes it subject to the condition of outside air.
- **Parking:** Limited parking space will limit the size of events that may take place.

| Conceptual Infrastructure Improvement Opportunities  | Cost to Implement |
|--|-------------------|
| Consider expanding facility to provide areas that support proper use such as check-in area, offices, additional storage and a functioning kitchenette.               | <b>\$\$\$</b>     |
| Consider opening south side of building for indoor/outdoor experience and support with new/modernized playground area, to create appeal for small events or parties. | <b>\$\$</b>       |
| Addition parking capacity of 6-8 spaces appears possible to accommodate expansion.   | <b>\$\$</b>       |
| Upgrade all interior finishes to provide comprehensive color/materials palette. Upgrade flooring to accommodate dance and fitness activities.                        | <b>\$</b>         |

## Boulder Pottery Lab

### Overview

The historic old firehouse has long served as a pottery studio and continues to meet the community's needs through this service, which is now operated by a local nonprofit. The nonprofit tenant is expanding to a new space to meet demand but remains committed to continuing programs in the historic building. They serve 225 adults and 60 youth per week from the space. As a pottery studio, every inch of space is utilized, and programming operates seven days a week.

A large door on the main floor opens to allow for ventilation. The HVAC system is inadequate for the kinds of activities occurring in this space, e.g., lots of particulates and kilns off-gas. The building does not have a sink or storage in the youth activity room on the second floor. Staff are constantly moving pieces in and out of rooms as programs and activities change. The building is not ADA accessible. The outdoor kilns need to be covered to prevent corrosion and the exterior exit stairs along the side of the building are rusting through, dangerous and in need replacement. From a programming standpoint, the Pottery Lab is achieving a primary BPR goal to target and serve youth 18 years and under. The partnership with the nonprofit appears to serve both parties and the pottery programming needs of the community.

### Conceptual Infrastructure Improvement Opportunities

Pottery Lab has plans in progress for the construction of a new facility to accommodate high demand for the services provided. Once that is complete it is recommended that a careful look at program offerings at the existing site be evaluated to ensure the public's needs and desires for program offerings are being met. The existing fire exit stair is rusty and worn, prompt replacement is recommended.

## NEEDS ASSESSMENT IMPACT

*In several cases (East Boulder and North Boulder Recreation Centers), BRS recommends further planning that could include feasibility studies, market analysis, public outreach and program space prioritization for future expansion and possible renovation. Alternatively, the report recommends replacement of South Boulder Recreation Center as the most economical option moving forward.*

*Future recreation center trends noted in the report include indoor adventure track for running/walking and fitness activities, indoor/outdoor fitness flexible spaces to accommodate functional fitness and shared games/eSPORTS, and indoor elevated walk/jog track.*

## Recreation Trends & Impacts on Supply and Demand

Over 2020, BPR has seen firsthand the impact of COVID-19 on their parks and facilities, their budget, but more importantly their community. BPR had to make on-the-fly operational changes and rely on the community for their support and commitment to stewardship. At the same time, the demand for park space and outdoor recreation was unparalleled during this time, as community members of all demographics sought outdoor experiences that were socially distant but allowed them to continue to enhance their quality of life.

### COVID-19 Operational Impacts & Trends

#### Usage

Generally, staff have seen an increase in outdoor activities including golf (college age through older adults), biking at Valmont Bike Park, swimming at both outdoor pools, and passive recreation in

Natural Areas. The exception to this is sports activities, which were paused for most of 2020. Boulder Reservoir small watercraft permit requests are up – in 2020 BPR increased the number of permits available by 20% and sold out by mid-June. For 2021, they sold approximately 60% in the first two weeks they were made available and were completely sold out by mid-April. There is also increased interest in booking pool space (partly due to limited user allowance) and dance classes for middle schoolers. Youth and family programs are continually requested and special events like the Halloween Drive-In Movie have been popular. These higher usage rates may be artificially high due to COVID-19, so it will be important to monitor changes in the next few years to fully understand trends.

Because many facilities throughout the region have been closed, people who would not otherwise come to Boulder have been visiting BPR facilities because they are open. Conversely, some people who are now working from home do not use BPR facilities as often as they did, or not at all.

Since the vaccine roll-out, staff are seeing slow growth in visitation each month. Adults are the first group coming back to facilities and the older adult population is coming back faster than anticipated. While this is the case currently, in 2020, senior visitation was at 10% of total visitation (historic rates of participation are 20-30%). Youth numbers are still down because BPR does not have many youth activities back online (e.g., family leisure swim, children' drop-in activities, etc.).

### Programming

Many programs and services were halted during most of 2020, some have switched to a virtual platform, and some have been stopped altogether. While data from 2020 will be skewed, it is still important to look at what happened to programs during this time to help BPR understand if the department should bring them all back, only some or none. It will also be important to explore options for involving the community in helping to make these decisions, rather than just looking at the numbers.

In 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Age Well Center at the East Boulder Community Center (run by City of Boulder's Housing and Human Services department) was consolidated to the West Boulder Community Center. As resources allow and the community continues to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, the city is committed to evaluating the needs of the community that could be met in that space.

A bright point is the fact that, even given limitations of registration software, virtual programming has done far better than anticipated. Staff have worked to simplify the registration process and the user base is slowly growing (300-400 current registrations). While many people can take advantage of virtual programming, some population groups, including older adults and low-income households, may not have the means to access these programs and/or the understanding of technology to easily move through the process.

### *NRPA Agency Performance Review Highlights*

The 2020 NRPA Agency Performance Review reports that the typical parks and recreation agency:

- Registers ~225,000 contacts each year
- Offers 187 programs each year (120 being fee-based)
- Generates 15,000 contacts per programming alone
- 83% offer summer camp programs, teen programming and after-school care
- 78% offer programming for older adults and 62% for those with disabilities

- 54% of parks and recreation agencies deliver STEM programming.

The top five key programming activities offered by cities include:

1. Themed special events (88% of agencies)
2. Team sports (87%)
3. Social recreation events (87%)
4. Fitness improvement classes (82%)
5. Health and wellness education (81%)

In terms of targeted programming, the NRPA reports that for cities with populations from 100,000-250,000, the top three include summer camps, senior programs and teen programs. As the statistically valid survey revealed, over 50% of respondents feel teenagers are a critical population in Boulder and BPR may need to increase programming for this population group to meet community needs.

Table 17: NRPA Top Programming Activities by Jurisdiction

| Town                          | Percent of Agencies | City                          | Percent of Agencies | County                                  | Percent of Agencies |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------|---|---------------------|
| Social recreation events      | 94%                 | Themed special events         | 92%                 | Social recreation events                | 79%                 |
| Themed special events         | 92                  | Team sports                   | 91                  | Themed special events                   | 78                  |
| Fitness enhancement classes   | 88                  | Social recreation events      | 89                  | Natural and cultural history activities | 78                  |
| Team sports                   | 87                  | Fitness enhancement classes   | 85                  | Health and wellness education           | 75                  |
| Health and wellness education | 86                  | Health and wellness education | 83                  | Team sports                             | 73                  |
| Safety training               | 79                  | Aquatics                      | 78                  | Fitness enhancement classes             | 68                  |

Table 18: NRPA Targeted Programs for Children, Seniors & People with Disabilities (% of agencies by jurisdiction population)

|                                       | Percent of Agencies | Population of Jurisdiction (Percent) |                  |                  |                    |                   |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
|                                       |                     | Less than 20,000                     | 20,000 to 49,999 | 50,000 to 99,999 | 100,000 to 250,000 | More than 250,000 |
| Summer camp                           | 83%                 | 61%                                  | 89%              | 92%              | 88%                | 90%               |
| Senior programs                       | 79                  | 68                                   | 79               | 86               | 87                 | 78                |
| Teen programs                         | 67                  | 49                                   | 64               | 74               | 76                 | 79                |
| Programs for people with disabilities | 62                  | 38                                   | 56               | 70               | 81                 | 78                |
| After-school programs                 | 58                  | 40                                   | 48               | 67               | 69                 | 73                |
| STEM programs                         | 57                  | 51                                   | 48               | 59               | 63                 | 71                |
| Preschool                             | 36                  | 26                                   | 38               | 44               | 38                 | 36                |
| Before-school programs                | 20                  | 14                                   | 21               | 24               | 19                 | 23                |
| Full daycare                          | 8                   | 6                                    | 7                | 11               | 6                  | 13                |

*BPR Performance & Participation and Use Analysis*

The following analysis looks at the main BPR program areas through activity department and category, rather than individual course types (activity name). According to the NRPA’s 2021 Agency Performance Review, the top three programming activities for cities include themed special events, team sports and

social recreation events. BPR has seen growing popularity in special events recently. The top three activities for cities may see increasing popularity as people are able to gather in groups and no longer need to socially isolate as COVID-19 vaccines increase the ability of community members to recreate together again. When looking at enrollment numbers for BPR programs from 2017-2020, special events were more popular in 2017 and interest remained relatively steady for 2018-2019. 2020 numbers may have been higher if the COVID-19 pandemic had not become a factor in enrollment and attendance in events throughout the world.

Table 19: Program Area Enrollment shows that from 2017-2019, BPR experienced a decline in program enrollment overall. Two areas in particular, Gymnastics and Special Interest programming saw steady decline over these three years. This is due in part to the fact that BPR stopped providing competitive level gymnastics directly, and instead using Go Flyers to provide this service. Around this time, BPR switched the platform used to track teams. Even so, Gymnastics programming makes up 70% of the 3-year average enrollment numbers, which is the highest program percentage. This is followed by the Youth and Family Services Youth Services Initiative (YSI) programming at 53% and Aquatics at 50%. All remaining program areas were at 42% or below of the 3-year average.

Table 19: Program Area Enrollment

| Program Area           | 2017          | 2018          | 2019          | 2020*<br>COVID |
|------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|
| Aquatics               | 2,551         | 2,843         | 2,748         | 786            |
| EXPAND                 | 2,359         | 2,211         | 2,341         | 1,575          |
| Facilities             | 242           | 167           | 177           | 133            |
| Gymnastics             | 4,961         | 4,023         | 2,499         | 1,131          |
| Health and Wellness    | 885           | 1,019         | 955           | 315            |
| Mind Body              | 1,066         | 1,218         | 1,024         | 279            |
| Partnership Programs** |               |               |               | 53             |
| Special Events***      | 242           | 167           | 177           | 154            |
| Sports                 | 2,222         | 2,104         | 2,214         | 920            |
| YSI****                | 2,825         | 3,240         | 2,668         | 639            |
| <b>Grand Total</b>     | <b>17,353</b> | <b>16,992</b> | <b>14,803</b> | <b>5,985</b>   |

Notes:

1. Drop-in programs such as Health and Wellness, Mind Body, Facility programs are captured in membership usage or daily admission fees.
2. The numbers reported are participants registered for the program/activity. The numbers are not multiplied off the number of classes offered for the registration. (Example of that would be 1 registration x8 class program = 8 total visits for the patron to participate in the program.) The numbers reported here are 1 registration for that patron in that program.
3. All Reservoir programming now falls under EXPAND or camps.

\*2020 enrollment numbers are not representative of an average year for BPR programs and services. They were heavily impacted by COVID-19 and subsequent state requirements and public concern relating to the pandemic.

\*\* Partnership program enrollment data is managed outside of BPRs enrollment system. Program managers and partners can be called on to help collect this if needed.

\*\*\*It is interesting to note that 2020 Special Events (Facilities and Special Interest Programs in table above) enrollment was higher than any of the previous three years – coming in at 287.

\*\*\*\*YSI offers after-school and summer programs to youth (6-18) living in low-income housing. The initiative also offers special events and trips.

*BPR Program Enrollment Number Decreases: 2017-2020*



Even with decreasing enrollment, BPR’s Gymnastics and Aquatics programs have the highest enrollment numbers, closely followed by EXPAND, YSI and Sports programs. While gymnastics and sports programs and services can be considered recreational and exclusive activities that should produce more revenue than programs like EXPAND and YSI, which are considered Community Benefit services.

**Engagement Findings**

BPR staff and stakeholders are seeing the following in terms of desired community programming:

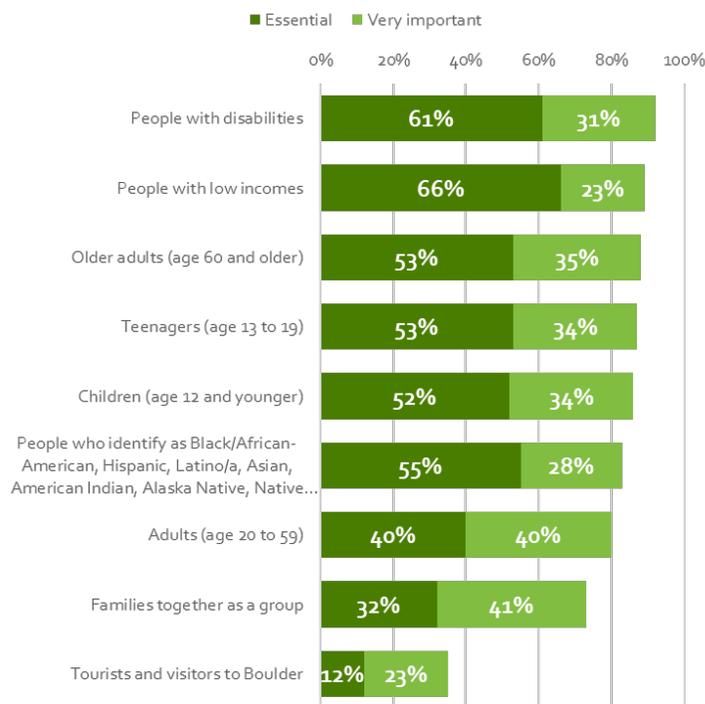
- Youth sports teams that have had flat participation are seeing increases
- Indoor fitness classes were on the rise before COVID-19
- During the COVID-19 pandemic, staff saw large demand for outside programs, especially youth sports
- Families were “begging” for things for children to do outside (e.g., baseball and other youth sports) during the COVID-19 pandemic
- Day and resident camps filling up fast
- High demand for small watercraft permits
- Childcare demand strong
- Pottery lab and arts program seeing high, growing demand pre- and post-COVID
- Increasing duration of lease for pottery lab provider could free up more staff time
- Demand is high for everyday activities within walking distance of community members and for youth outdoor recreation and sports with noncompetitive or recreation level options

- Since the vaccine rollout, facilities staff have slowly seen growth in users, however the pools have seen a lot of interest, and an increase in the popularity of warm water pool activities for older adults.
- Noticeable rise in tennis popularity for the first time in many years along with increased wait times at the courts.
- Pickleball is rising in popularity both nationally and locally.

*Priorities*

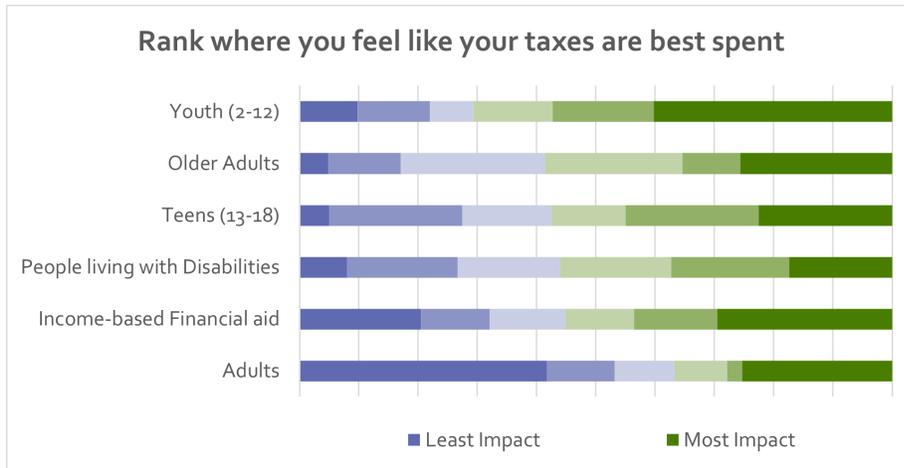
Survey respondents feel that serving low-income populations and people with disabilities should be priorities. Approximately 50% consider older adults, teenagers, and children as essential groups to serve. Only about 1/3 of respondents feel it is essential or very important to provide programs for visitors and tourists.

*Statistically Valid Survey: Population Groups and Importance of Providing Programming for Each*



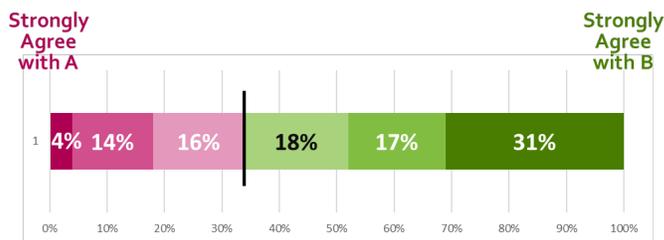
When asked where they felt spending their tax dollars made the most impact, community members indicated that youth and older adults continue to be priorities. Spending tax dollars to support teens, people living with disabilities and income-based financial aid were also supported by community members.

*Community Engagement: Impact of spending tax dollars for various groups within the community*



Programs that serve a variety of skill levels rather than specific skill levels are preferred. Diverse program opportunities are also important, as well as drop in use of facilities (over classes with registration requirements). Even if facilities and programs may be offered by other providers, respondents prefer that BPR also provide comparable facilities and programs.

*Statistically Valid Survey Responses: Program Offerings Focus*



**A.** Parks and recreation program offerings should focus mostly on popular sports and fitness (e.g., Pilates, yoga, softball, soccer, etc.)

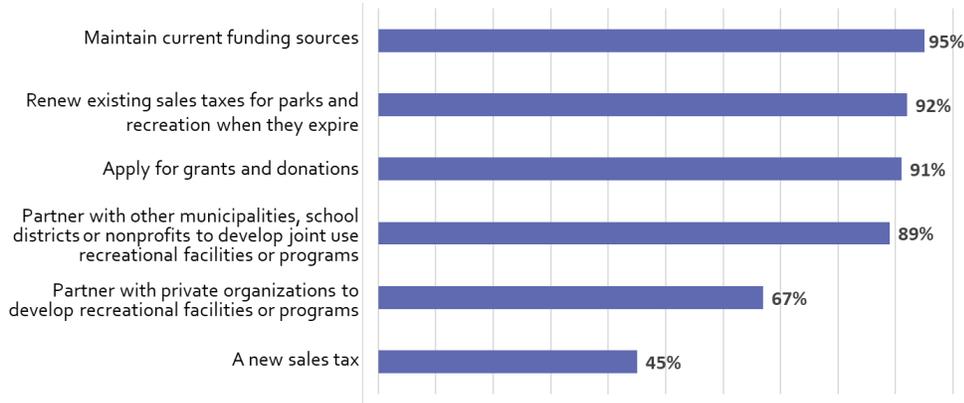
**B.** Parks and recreation program offerings should offer some popular sports and fitness activities, but also include diverse opportunities like arts and crafts, and classes (e.g., cooking drawing, etc.).

*Funding*

Survey respondents support the use of taxes to fund programs for children, low-income individuals and people with disabilities. Resident user fees were preferred to fund sports programs, general introductory classes, and special or advanced programs.

More respondents oppose a new sales tax to support BPR facilities and programs than those who support an increase. Yet, 9 in 10 respondents support renewal of existing sales taxes to support parks and recreation. About 95% support maintaining current funding sources to provide programs and services. Nine in 10 respondents also support partnering with municipalities, school districts, or nonprofits to develop joint use of programs and facilities. About 2/3 of respondents support forming partnerships with private organizations for development of recreational facilities or programs.

*Statistically Valid Survey: Support for BPR Funding Options*

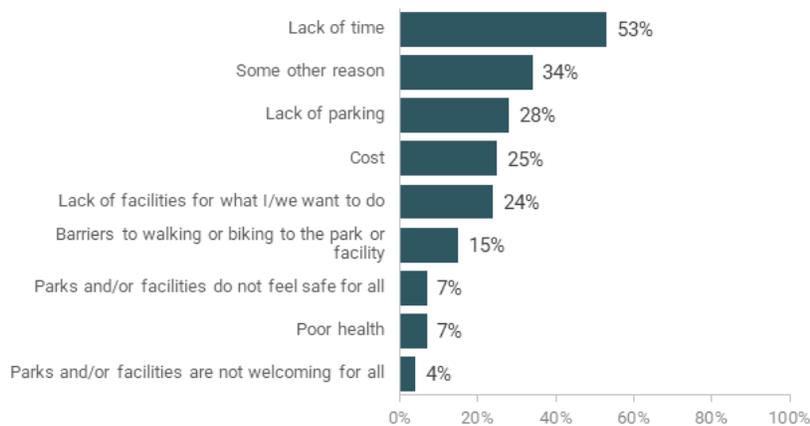


*Facility Access*

BPR offers users a variety of ways to access facilities and services. Community members can purchase memberships, punch passes, participate in online offerings or just drop-in to one of the three recreation centers and certain classes. Survey respondents prefer that non-residents who work or own a business in Boulder pay resident fees, instead of higher non-resident fees. However, respondents are split on what nonresidents should pay (more or the same as residents).

The most common reason given for not using parks, recreation facilities or services was a lack of time. However, lack of parking and cost were each cited by about one-quarter of respondents.

*Statistically Valid Survey: Barriers to Access*



Renters and those living in multi-family housing units were more likely to cite lack of time as a barrier than owners and those living in single family homes. Cost, lack of time, lack of parking, and lack of facilities for what they want to do were most often mentioned as a barrier by renters compared to owners.

Hispanic respondents were more likely to mention cost, poor health, lack of parking, and barriers to walking or biking to a park or facilities compared to White respondents. Those who identify as something other than White, or Hispanic were more likely to say parks and facilities do not feel safe for all than White or Hispanic respondents.

Cost was more often mentioned as a barrier by respondents in households with children under age 12 than in households without children, while lack of parking was more often cited by respondents in households without children than by respondents in households with children.

#### *2020 Recreation Activity Fund Facility Pass Changes*

In 2020, a new facility pass structure was introduced, focusing on financial sustainability, simplicity and providing a wide service reach to ensure accessibility. It includes age-based subsidies for youth (40%) and older adults (25%), financial aid, worker fees in alignment with resident fees, and higher non-resident fees for those who do not live or work in the city. The department also instituted entry fee increases (average of 9%), and the continued inclusion of seasonal facilities in annual, monthly and punch card entry options. The number of punch card pass options was also reduced, and a more flexible monthly access option is now offered. It will be important to monitor the success of this program in the coming years. With only three months of normal usage and corresponding data (due to the COVID-19 pandemic), it is difficult at this time provide a full picture of membership versus drop-in visits based on these changes. Participation during 2020 was mostly reservation based due to COVID-19 related capacity restrictions.

#### *Drop-Ins & Rentals*

In addition to providing regular programming through memberships, BPR offers users alternative ways to use facilities. Users or user groups can rent facilities or drop in at recreation centers or for certain types of programming. It is increasingly difficult for some individuals to participate in regularly scheduled recreation activities due to personal reasons. Drop-in programs provide users the opportunity to come when it works for them. Facility rentals are available throughout the year.

## NEEDS ASSESSMENT IMPACT

Programming continues to be an important component of the services BPR offers. Looking to the future, a reevaluation of targeted programming with a focus on teen programs could help BPR engage a portion of the Boulder population considered very important to community members based on survey feedback. BPR could also look at competitive and dance program fee increases to help support more community benefit programming. While community members are generally satisfied with BPR programming, more feel BPR should provide facilities and programs residents desire, regardless of whether they are provided by other entities. This has implications for how BPR prioritizes and selects programming moving forward, in terms of how contracted programming and in-house programming is offered and prioritized.

*Statistically Valid Survey: Average Dollars Allocated to Competing Priorities with Hypothetical \$100 Budget Program Offerings*



**A.** The Parks and Recreation Department should provide facilities and programs that complement others in the community and not replicate them.

**B.** The Parks and Recreation Department should provide facilities and programs identified by residents, regardless of whether they are provided by others in or near Boulder.

Recquity and play pass programs have been essential to social service providers and the public during the stressful period of the covid-19 pandemic. The focus group mentioned that recreation incentives were helpful for volunteer benefits. BPR internships and career development for underrepresented groups were recommendations from the meeting, along with providing information on how volunteers can participate in creating a welcoming and active community.

Statistically valid survey results suggest preferences for resident pricing for non-residents who work in Boulder. Findings also suggest that program funding should be split between tax revenue and fees, depending on the demographics of users and the type of program. Programs for children, low-income individuals, and people with disabilities should be subsidized through tax revenue while sports programs, general introductory classes, and other advanced programs should be funded through program fees.

When it comes to barriers to access, community members from different ethnic backgrounds, ages, subcommunities and those who rent versus own their own housing consider different barriers most limiting. BPR will need to continue to build a comprehensive approach to increasing equitable access for all community members based on a variety of demographic, socio-economic and health related factors.

Additional takeaways include offering programs for various user groups that are important to the community, especially with regards to opportunities offered for low-income populations and people with disabilities and continuing to expand programming related to themed special events for the community. From what the community has been saying, a key role for BPR is to engage and encourage activity through improved programming.

## BPR Recreation Programs and Services Moving Forward

Keeping the six Master Plan Key Themes in mind, along with Equity and Resilience, will help the department successfully move forward by offering the most meaningful programs and services to the Boulder community that adhere to these values.

### *Cost Recovery/Budget/Viability*

BPR is a Social Enterprise and must remain financially viable. If only community benefit programs were offered, the Recreation Activity Fund would not be sustainable. It is important to communicate to the public that some programs, while popular, do not achieve cost recovery goals based on benefit provided. While BPR benchmarks programming and services and then takes community benefit services to the public for input, staff expertise should play a larger role in helping to determine what is working and where there is room for improvement. It is also important for BPR to develop a fuller understanding of program and service alignment to ensure the department stays competitive and its programming and services remain financially viable.

BPR has diversified its programs and services portfolio over the last several years and has made accomplishments in increasing cost recovery for recreation programs and facilities by intentionally designing and delivering program offerings. The department now needs to work on better capturing revenues from contracted services by managing registration of these and sharing partner customer data to better promote BPR programming.

### *Monitoring & Evaluation*

Based on recommendations from the previous Master Plan, in 2012, BPR created the Recreation Priority Index (RPI) to establish a systematic formative evaluation process to help policymakers, programmers, planners and decision makers decide which programs should be implemented and what programs need to be modified or discontinued. The RPI places programs into one of three categories and then assigns a cost recovery range for these programs. Service Category definitions and where they fall on the benefit and subsidy spectrums are illustrated below. The index helps recreation staff and officials compare recreation programs to identify the relative importance of each. It uses a scorecard approach to determine the value of programming and helps make the case for setting certain fee structures and cost recovery rates based on collected data.

### *BPR Service Categories*

| Benefit   | Service Categories   | Subsidy Targets   |
|---|--|---|
|  | <p><b>Community:</b> Services that enhance the health, safety and livability of the community and therefore require minimal obstacles to participation.</p> <p><b>Recreational:</b> Services that benefit a broad range of users and are targeted to promote physical and mental well-being.</p> <p><b>Exclusive:</b> Services targeted to specific individuals or user groups with limited community benefit.</p> |  |

Currently, the RPI is a good complement to the Service Delivery Model and seems to be working well. Coordinators take their programs through the index on an annual basis. One issue is that the RPI is only used to prioritize to assign subsidy value. It does not prioritize how space should be allocated, or how contracted programs should be handled. This sometimes results in imbalance. The RPI might suggest that every program should be subsidized at 20%, but BPR only has 10% to distribute. While it is a good tool, it focuses so much on the granular that the bigger picture can sometimes get lost. The Service Delivery Model is also used regularly by staff. While it is effective in most cases, facility staff agree that they need the ability to adapt the service delivery model to operate facilities based on preference, historical data, revenue generation, user profiles and programming (e.g., certain programs priorities at certain times). All these need to be flexibly integrated into operations. It would also be beneficial to understand how BPR can integrate flex space into operations based on usage.

### *Registration, Programming & Usage*

Currently, activity registration (Seasonal Guide programs) starts at 8:30 a.m. online the day registration opens. While accessing registration online is convenient for many users, the ACTIVE Net system can be hard to navigate and if users are signing up for contracted programs, they often must visit more than one site to complete the registration process because ACTIVE Net is not used across the board for all partner programs. This increases the learning curve for newer or infrequent users and in some cases, may represent a barrier to access.

Historically, people want all services at all recreation centers, and they go to the center closest to them. BPR staff feel it would be beneficial to see how the community would want time divided for programming. For example, if BPR had 10 hours of space, how would users like time and money spent in relation to their access as well as other programming, even if the other activities do not serve them directly or take away from programming they use. Having a better understanding of which programs and services people are using (not just those who report about their usage) would help staff organize programming and services more effectively.

During the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak and since, BPR staff has seen an increase in outdoor activities including golfing, biking, swimming and increased participation in youth dance classes. There is also high demand for small watercraft permits at Boulder Reservoir. BPR pool facilities have also been extremely popular in recent months. Conversely, recreation centers have not seen as much use as before. This can be attributed to a variety of factors, including state restrictions and an increase in the number of people working from home. Since the COVID-19 vaccine rollout, facilities have slowly started to see growth in user numbers.

### *Equity/Access*

BPR offers several options for community members who cannot afford to pay entry fees for through the Health Equity Fund (HEF). The scholarship program offers a 50% subsidy, along with grant funding from the HEF to provide 100% of fee for entrance into BPR facilities for those that qualify based on income. The Recquity Pass program is available, through Play Boulder, for households with children. This income-based option provides subsidies for program registration.

The Recquity Pass and scholarship programs are relatively successful, but the process for users and staff is complex. BPR needs to more fully understand if these offerings, along with the PlayPass provide enough of a reduction in multiple barriers to allow entry to all community members. Cultural barriers, transportation issues, lack of time to enjoy parks and recreation services are areas that financial aid

does not fully address. Also, ensuring staff look like and understand community members who use facilities, programs and services can help to improve equity and not just provide access, but promote it through action. BPR could also look at how the scholarship awards are allocated to see if some of the subsidy could be redistributed if an original recipient does not use the full amount.

**“The Recquity Pass program initiative exceeded expectations both in terms of enrollment as well as attendance.”**

2019 City of Boulder Health Equity Fund Recquity Pass Program Final Report

Participants visited 3 times more often (**300% increase**) than those who participated in the financial aid program.

Enrollment surveys revealed that:

- **29%** of participants had never visited the recreation centers before this program; **42%** had not visited for over one year.
- **69%** of participants were unaware that the department had a financial aid program.
- **44%** of participants anticipated utilizing the recreation centers 3-4 times per week; **37%** anticipated 0-2 times per week, **9%** anticipated 5-6 times per week, **9%** anticipated 7-8 times per week, and **1%** anticipated using the recreation centers more than 8 times.

Reaching out to populations that are not regularly using BPR facilities and services and those who could participate in programming that serves low-income community members but are not taking advantage of their options is extremely important. According to the HEF report, participation and physical activity increase significantly if the financial barrier is removed for low-income residents.

The 2020 City of Boulder Health Equity Fund End of Year Report reveals that COVID-19 had an impact on the Recquity Pass program, but enrollment numbers were higher than expected.

- As of Dec. 31, 2020, there were **3,458 active enrollees** (1,394 youth, 326 older adults, 1738 adult passes) accounting for 15,933 total visitations.
- The program was expanded to include those who qualified for unemployment insurance benefits given the large community economic impacts due to the pandemic.
- Average visits per month per person: **3.05** for Jan through March 13 for 1142 unique individuals; **1.07** for the entire year for 1246 unique individuals. An increased number of individuals were not comfortable attending a gym during this timeframe due to the pandemic. Restrictions also limited gym use to reservation basis only.
- **Visitation took a significant hit with gyms closed for a portion of the year. The target visitation number was 37,452 and the actual number of visitations was less than half at 15,933.** This is higher than staff expected, considering the pandemic impacts.

Staff made it easier for current participants to move through the enrollment process by auto-extending expired passes through the end of the year, and through April 2021 for the re-application process. Community members who were receiving unemployment insurance during the early phases of the pandemic were able to qualify for the Recquity pass program. This was allowed to support immediate needs of residents. In terms of equity and access, the program application is now available online and it

is available in Spanish and English, helping to remove potential barriers for current and future participants.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic skewing data, and decreased staffing and service levels, no year-end enrollment surveys were distributed. BPR only received partial HEF funding and lost approximately 4% of semi-enterprise fund revenues. Even with the surreal events of 2020, BPR is making operational decisions based on utilization data. This data can be reviewed biweekly to inform changes to the Recquity program. It helps the department better understand how best to serve pass holders and can look at reasons usage fluctuates at any given time.

Results from the community survey suggest preferences for resident pricing for non-residents who work in Boulder. The findings also reveal that respondents think funding should be split depending on demographics of users and types of programs. For example, programs for children, low-income individuals, and people with disabilities should be subsidized through tax revenue while sports programs, general introductory classes, and other advanced programs should be funded through program fees. Another key takeaway is that offering programs for various user groups is important to the community, especially regarding opportunities offered for low-income populations and people with disabilities.

Another group that has received attention recently is the “missing middle” population is not adequately served by BPR’s options. For example, some community members may not qualify based on income, but might struggle to pay entry fees for all family members. If they had an opportunity to apply for a subsidy for this, more families may use BPR facilities, programs and services. There is also no way to reallocate/redistribute fund balances to other programs if all funds for specific financial aid programming is not used.

### *Competition*

Since 2014, several large employers have moved to Boulder and several apartment complexes have been built. BPR should look at what facilities and programming they offer. There has also been an influx of super low-cost gyms (e.g., Crunch, Planet Fitness) popping up. Some of these gyms are open 24 hours/day. Competitors also include smaller yoga studios, Orange Theory, Pure Barre, etc. According to staff, there is leakage of users to this competition. There has also been an increase in home gym usage, the purchase of fitness equipment for personal use and online classes offered by other providers since the COVID-19 pandemic limited gatherings. While BPR faces competition, these other providers have been affected by COVID-19 also. BPR can reevaluate the best way to offer programming and services in this new landscape, adjusting now to how services are offered, when, what types to be more competitive in the future.

### *Partners/Contractors*

Contracted services are considered an extension of BPR’s services – offering a breadth of more specialized services to allow the city to provide all types of recreation opportunities without having to become too specialized internally. The department should look at the feasibility of handling registration under one system for all partner programs, as the percentage split of fees is 70/30 if partners take it, and 40/60 if BPR does it. The user experience would also be streamlined. Currently, users may go to the BPR website to sign up, but then must go to a partner website to register. More oversight and control are needed to capture data that could be used for future marketing and to ensure level of revenue generated by partner services is tied to how visibility for these services is determined.

## NEEDS ASSESSMENT IMPACT

*Throughout the country, the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak and subsequent vaccine rollout have impacted the way people use recreation resources. People have rediscovered the outdoors. Four Boulder, this means they are spending even more time in BPR outdoor facilities, which were already well loved before the pandemic. This increase in use impacts wear and tear on parks and can increase staff time dedicated to operations and maintenance. The recent decrease in use of indoor recreation centers impacts operations and gives BPR and the community an opportunity to reevaluate how these spaces are used for programming.*

*In terms of equity and access, continuing to partner with community organizations to build awareness of the Recquity Pass program and other aid options is key to ensuring BPR reaches the widest audience of community members. Ensuring staff members that speak Spanish or other languages are available to translate helps support community members who want to start using these options. Partnering with other organizations and having BPR employees who share commonalities with all user groups will help build the strength and success of these programs and all community members.*

*For contracted and partner services, BPR must insist on standard, simplified reporting methods, ideally under one system, to efficiently track and maintain records of these services to inform future decisions.*

## Gap Analysis

### Purpose

The purpose of this gap analysis is to discover any physical gaps in access or quantities of neighborhood parks and playgrounds – key recreation amenities. Gap areas can be further evaluated to understand if prioritized effort is 1) feasible to close the barrier to access neighborhood parks and playgrounds and/or 2) if further study is warranted. These types of maps are also recommended by the National Recreation and Park Association for evaluating if there are locations of access inequity within a community's parks and recreation offerings.

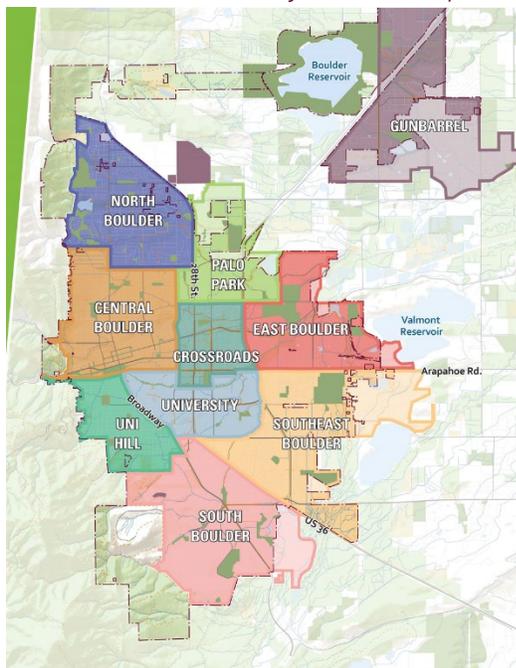
### BPR Distribution Gap Maps Methodology

Distribution maps utilize geographic information system (GIS) mapping to measure how much of the population can easily access at least one park on foot or by bike by using sidewalk data and park access points. Additional questions to dovetail to this analysis include does transportation infrastructure (sidewalks, greenways, bike lanes) provide adequate and accessible connections to parks? Are these routes safe?

These maps can show any gaps, or physical areas in a community, where parks or recreation amenities managed by BPR are not within the distance standard. While some public amenities might not meet this standard, there are school playgrounds and private parks (HOA sponsored) to help fill any gaps. BPR staff, guided by park distribution metrics included in the Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan, have conducted GIS analysis mapping of the following metrics that also align with national standards of park access endorsed by the Trust for Public Lands and City Park Alliance: provide neighborhood parks a minimum of 5 acres in size within one-half mile of the population to be served; provide playground facilities for school-age children up through 12 within one-quarter to one-half mile of community members.

### Boulder Subcommunity Equity Gap Analysis Methodology

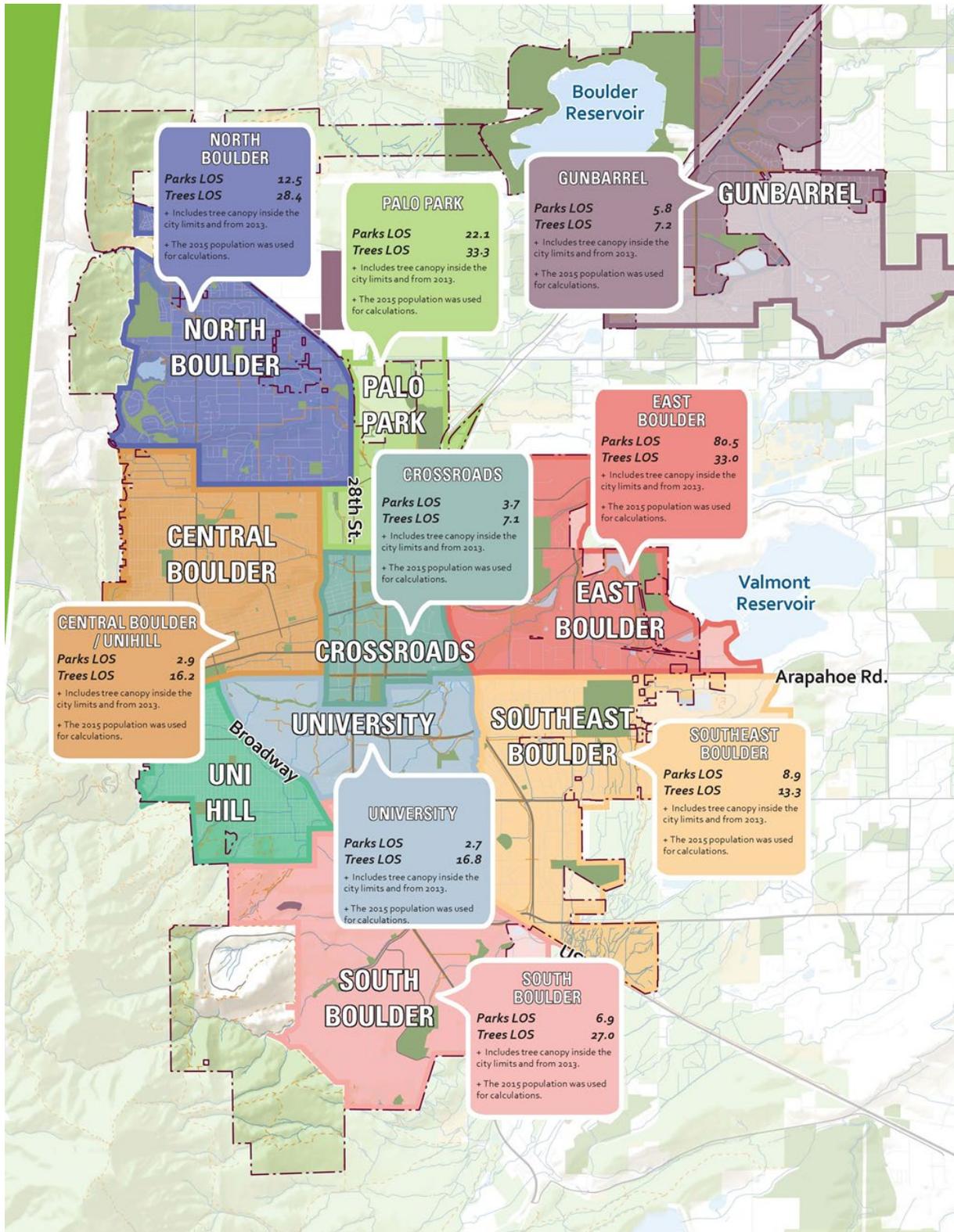
#### *BPR Lands and Subcommunity Boundaries Map*



The 2021 Master Plan introduces a new gap analysis to see if there is any difference in the level of service for neighborhood parks within Subcommunities.

The Subcommunity LOS map on the next page is the first step in identifying spatial inequity in terms of parks LOS and trees LOS. From an initial analysis, East Boulder has the highest LOS for parks and is tied with Palo Park for highest trees LOS. Central Boulder/Uni Hill and the University Subcommunities have the lowest parks LOS, while Gunbarrel and Crossroads Subcommunities have the lowest trees LOS.

BPR Subcommunity LOS Map



*Neighborhood Parkland Level of Service Comparison by Subcommunity*

The Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan (BVCP) includes the following parks service metric for neighborhood parks:

“Provide neighborhood parks of a minimum of five acres in size within one-half mile of the population to be served.”

2020 Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan

BPR manages 45 neighborhood parks that each average approximately 7 acres. Table 17 compares each Boulder subcommunity amount of neighborhood parkland LOS to each other. The following preliminary findings can be made:

- East Boulder, Colorado University and Central Boulder have the lowest neighborhood parkland LOS. Other factors influence this analysis, including the low population of East Boulder, employment and industrial centers in these subcommunities, other types of park classifications).
- It should be noted that the 2021 systemwide LOS for neighborhood parkland is 2.04 (please see Table 8). Six of the subcommunities fall under this systemwide LOS.
- Gunbarrel, Crossroads and North Boulder subcommunities have the highest LOS for neighborhood parks.
  - The LOS for Gunbarrel includes the entire population, but only city parks within city limits. It does not include amenities managed/owned by other entities (e.g., HOA, private, County owned)

*Table 16: Subcommunity Neighborhood Parkland LOS Comparison. Source: GIS 2021 Data Layers and 2017 City of Boulder Subcommunity Population Data (2019 East Boulder Inventory & Analysis Report).*

| Boulder Subcommunity              | Neighborhood Parkland Acres within Subcommunity | Population of Subcommunity | Neighborhood Parkland LOS Per 1,000 People |
|-----------------------------------|---|----------------------------|--|
| East Boulder                      | 0   | 466                        | 0  |
| Colorado University               | 10.21   | 17,820                     | 0.57                                       |
| Central Boulder - University Hill | 16.53   | 10,550                     | 1.57                                       |
| Southeast Boulder                 | 24.80   | 15,330                     | 1.62                                       |
| Central Boulder                   | 35.49   | 19,200                     | 1.85                                       |
| Palo Park                         | 21.39   | 11,450                     | 1.87                                       |
| South Boulder                     | 47.16   | 15,440                     | 3.05                                       |
| Gunbarrel                         | 60.78   | 11,750                     | 5.17                                       |
| Crossroads                        | 18.48   | 3,550                      | 5.21                                       |
| North Boulder                     | 76.82   | 12,590                     | 6.10                                       |

*All Types of Parkland Level of Service Comparison by Subcommunity*

To test how the subcommunity parkland level of service looks when other types of parks (i.e., community and city parks, as well as neighborhood parks less than 5 acres in size) are included, another LOS was calculated to compare and is shown in Table 18: Subcommunity All Parkland LOS Comparison.

- In this analysis, Colorado University and Central Boulder have the lowest parkland LOS.
- North Boulder continues to have a high LOS and Southeast Boulder and East Boulder move from mid-low to high LOS for all types of parkland.
- While East Boulder’s LOS is low when looking strictly at Neighborhood Parks, when considering total parkland, it ranks very high.
- While East Boulder does not have neighborhood parks, Valmont City Park is in this subcommunity, and once developed, will include neighborhood types of amenities, like playgrounds and community use areas
- Additional analysis for projected population growth in subcommunities (especially East Boulder that has very low residential population) could help provide more clarity on the comparison of LOS between subcommunities.
- It should be noted that the 2021 systemwide LOS for urban parkland is 18 (see Table g).

*Table 17: Subcommunity All Parkland LOS Comparison. Source: GIS 2021 Data Layers and City of Boulder Population Data (2019 East Boulder Inventory & Analysis Report).*

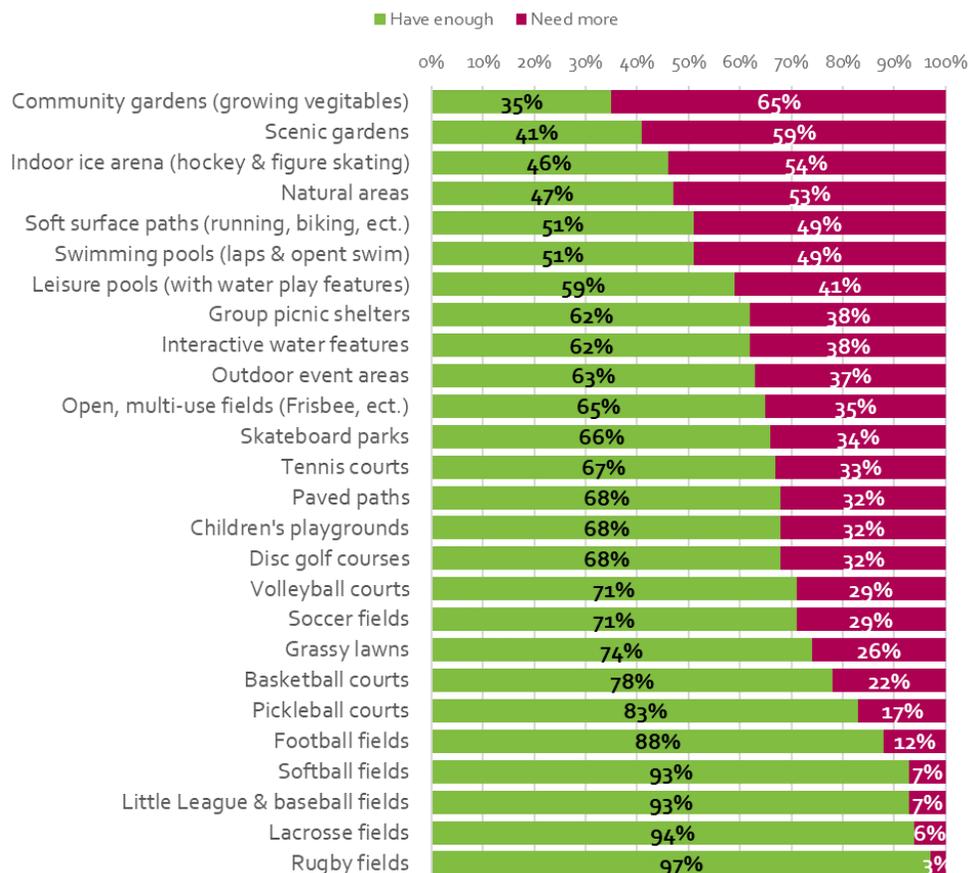
| Boulder Subcommunity              | Total Parkland within Subcommunity | Population of Subcommunity | Total Parkland LOS by Subcommunity |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Colorado University               | 25.77                              | 17,820                     | 1.45                               |
| Central Boulder - University Hill | 27.22                              | 10,550                     | 2.58                               |
| Central Boulder                   | 83.63                              | 19,200                     | 4.36                               |
| Gunbarrel                         | 60.78                              | 11,750                     | 5.17                               |
| South Boulder                     | 104.05                             | 15,440                     | 6.74                               |
| Palo Park                         | 79.74                              | 11,450                     | 6.96                               |
| Crossroads                        | 34.04                              | 3,550                      | 9.59                               |
| North Boulder                     | 144.89                             | 12,590                     | 11.51                              |
| Southeast Boulder                 | 202.76                             | 15,330                     | 13.23                              |
| East Boulder                      | 182.33                             | 466                        | 391                                |

## Engagement Findings

### Facilities

Overall, most survey respondents (over 50%) feel satisfied with existing facilities and think there are enough of most types of facilities. However, there may be need for more swimming pools, community gardens, soft surface paths, natural areas, and outdoor event areas and an indoor ice rink.

#### Statistically Valid Survey: Perceived Need for More Recreation Facilities



When cross-tabulated, some differences between various demographic groups reveal themselves. For example, renters were more likely to feel more community gardens were needed than were those who owned their home, while those who owned their home were more likely to feel an ice arena was needed than those who rented their home.

Females were more likely to think more community gardens, scenic gardens, an ice arena, swimming pools, and leisure pools were needed than were males (see Table 94). Those who identified as something other than White were more likely to feel more swimming pools and leisure pools were needed than those who identified as White.

Those in households that did not have older adults or in households that did not have teenagers were more likely to feel there were not enough community gardens compared to households with older adults or households with teenagers (see Table 114). Households with children aged 12 or younger were more likely to identify a need for leisure pools than were households without children.

While generally, most respondents overall are satisfied with facilities, there were also differences between responses sorted by subcommunity. Less than 50% of Gunbarrel respondents feel the city has enough swimming pool, community gardens, soft surface paths, natural areas or outdoor event areas. Less than 50% of North Boulder and Palo Park respondents think there are enough natural areas, indoor ice arenas, interactive water features, community gardens or scenic areas. Under 50% of Central Boulder respondents feel there are enough open/multiuse fields, indoor ice arenas, community gardens, scenic gardens or natural areas. For Crossroads and East Boulder respondents, less than half feel there are enough interactive water features, community gardens, scenic gardens or indoor ice arenas. Less than half expressed satisfaction with football and rugby fields or pickleball courts. Less than half of South Boulder respondents feel there are enough soft surface paths.

Poor health is considered as a barrier by 37% of Crossroads & East Boulder respondents, which is a larger proportion than all other subcommunities. Lack of parking is the barrier that 55% of Southeast Boulder respondents feel keeps them from using facilities. This is a larger percentage than all other subcommunities. Cost and poor health were more likely to be cited as reasons for not using recreation parks and/or facilities or using them more often by those living in Crossroads & East Boulder compared to those in other subcommunities. Lack of time was most likely to be cited by those Crossroads & East Boulder and University Hill & University than in other subcommunities.

#### *Programming*

In terms of programming, Gunbarrel respondents are more interested in programs that focus on skill development at the beginning and intermediate levels than other subcommunities. South Boulder, and North Boulder and Palo Park respondents indicated strong support of partnering with private organizations to develop recreational facilities or programs. This support is significantly higher than support from Gunbarrel, Central Boulder, Crossroads and East Boulder and the University and University Hill respondents.

#### *Funding*

Of a theoretical \$100 budget, Gunbarrel respondents were more likely on average to allocate more of their budget (\$36) to maintaining existing park and recreation facilities than the other subcommunities. University Hill and University and North Boulder & Palo Park respondents allocated \$24 to renovating and enhancing existing park and recreation facilities, which is more than Gunbarrel and Central Boulder respondents who allocated \$16 of a \$100 budget.

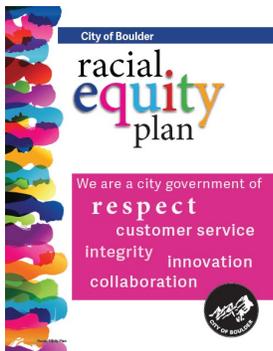
## NEEDS ASSESSMENT IMPACT

BPR could look at additional data and create GIS layers to analyze this information if it is deemed helpful in understanding gaps in service. For example, passive recreation is popular in Boulder and understanding where this is taking place could help better focus the importance of different types of amenities in city parks. Understanding actual usage on a deeper level will continue to help inform BPR's understanding of parkland use and how best to address equity and level of service gaps throughout the system.

To meet the city's climate goals, all aspects of BPR's day to day operations need to be monitored to measure and mitigate for the carbon footprint associated with parking, transportation, irrigation, turf versus natural grass treatments and energy use of facilities.

The barriers to access vary by subcommunity, but lack of time was cited by most survey respondents as one of the main barriers. Cost, poor health, not feeling safe and welcomed were also cited by several subcommunities based on ethnicity and being renters versus owners. This reinforces the need to revisit metrics based on new mapping data, quantitative and qualitative data that provides a more comprehensive understanding of how BPR meets the needs of all community members. This will help ensure services, facilities and programming do not fall under a "one size fits all" parkland per capita approach.

### Considerations for Future Equity Mapping in Boulder



*The Racial Equity Plan also includes a short-term objective:*

*"City staff will collect relevant data, coordinate data systems to understand and track needs and impacts."*

BPR's accomplishments in providing services more equitably range from existing efforts like the Youth Services Initiative to close collaboration and participation with city departments on the ongoing Racial Equity Plan.

The community affirmed this is an important hope/concern for the master plan update to explicitly address. Coupled with the distribution gap maps/ analysis, citywide level of service standards, and community engagement, BPR can build off an existing equity framework that includes:

- Equity and resilience are already woven into BPR's operations and financial plans and practices. The department is guided in these areas through citywide efforts: Boulder's Racial Equity Plan and the City Resilience Framework.

- The National Parks and Recreation Association (NRPA) defines several categories of systemwide metrics to utilize when considering equity within a parks and recreation master plan: 1) systemwide metrics, 2) distribution metrics, and 3) population and outcome indicators.
- The Racial Equity Plan also includes a short-term objective that "*City staff will collect relevant data, coordinate data systems to understand and track needs and impacts.*" BPR intends to participate in those conversations to ensure that data will help the department continue to hone an approach to equity within the department.
- BPR has committed to take the Department Equity Assessment outlined in the Racial Equity Plan.



**Health Equity Outcomes** - Health and racial equity are closely linked. Some aspect of parks and recreation services, facilities and programs impact all social determinants of health and health equity outcomes. Analyzing health equity outcomes throughout the city will ensure BPR is meeting, and in some cases, hopefully exceeding racial and other equity goals. Doing this will also help the department focus efforts in areas with the most critical needs. Opportunities and resources impact community members' behaviors, choices, stress levels, feelings of safety, which in turn impact physical and mental health. Having active living, fitness and passive recreation options is a crucial component to the health of the entire Boulder community. Parks, trails, paths and open spaces that accommodate everyone lifts us all.

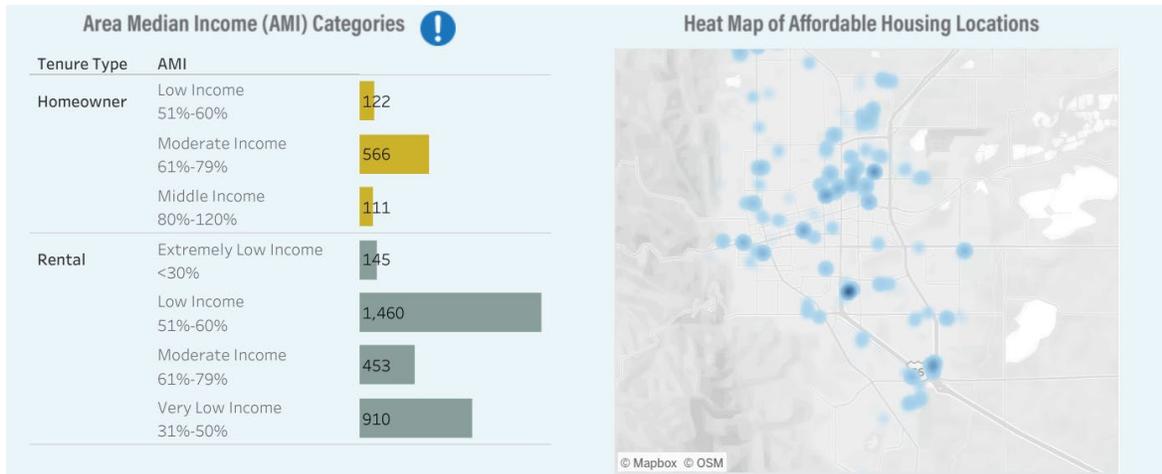
In alignment with NRPA-endorsed equity metrics, the following data and mapping sources are recommended for further exploration and potential inclusion in future equity mapping layers the City of Boulder determines (timing currently outside this master plan effort).

- **Affordable Housing Hot Spots<sup>6</sup>**
  - Communities like Vancouver, B.C. have concluded through demographic analysis that there is a correlation between populations facing systemic barriers to resources and low-income.
  - The City of Boulder defines Area Median Income (AMI) through a federal calculation and the current 2019 AMI for a household of three in Boulder is \$102,300.
  - Boulder is smaller than many North American communities implementing equity mapping in their parks and recreation master plans and location-based data on low-income households could be extremely variable over time.
  - A potential way to still identify areas of the city with lower income is to look at affordable housing "hot spots" through existing heat mapping (see Figure 5).
  - These hot spots could be layered with other gap analysis mappings for a 1.0 version of an equity map to identify areas of overlapping gaps. These gap areas could be

<sup>6</sup> [Affordable Housing in the City of Boulder](#) information provided by Boulder Housing and Human Services Department.

categorized as equity initiative zones with attendant policy actions and resources to augment parks and recreation services. Additional consideration to “the missing middle,” or middle-class demographic areas within Boulder should also be made as the cost of living and home ownership in Boulder continue to rise.

- An alternative to this data is to track and map ZIP codes for Recquity, EXPAND, YSI and/or other unrepresentative group(s) who already use BPR and evaluate if that highlights an area of the city or demographic group that needs more resources to access parks and recreation; or an area of the city that is not using these services but could be.



Boulder AMI Categories and Heat Map of Affordable Housing Locations. Source: Boulder Housing and Human Services.

### Low Canopy Coverage Indicators<sup>7</sup>

Tree canopy coverage has been proven to decrease air temperature, air pollution, ultraviolet radiation and carbon dioxide. Trees also offer humans and animals higher quality oxygen to breathe. According to a 2010 NRPA study<sup>8</sup>, trees in US urban parks provide:

- Structural value = \$300 billion
- Air temperature reduction = unknown, but likely in the billions of dollars per year
- Air pollution removal = \$500 million per year
- Reduced ultraviolet radiation = unknown, but likely substantial
- Carbon storage (trees): \$1.6 billion
- Annual carbon removal (trees): \$50 million per year

In an article titled *Measuring Equity Through City Trees*, published in March 2020 by Yes! Solutions Journalism, Leslie Berckes, director of programs for Trees Forever notes that “Nationally, there’s a trend for trees to follow wealth.” She also shares those neighborhoods with more trees are often healthier. Without good canopy cover, impervious surfaces, namely concrete, create urban health islands with soaring temperatures. Utility bills are higher in these areas and more people get sick from heat related causes. Vancouver B.C. and other parks and recreation departments that manage urban

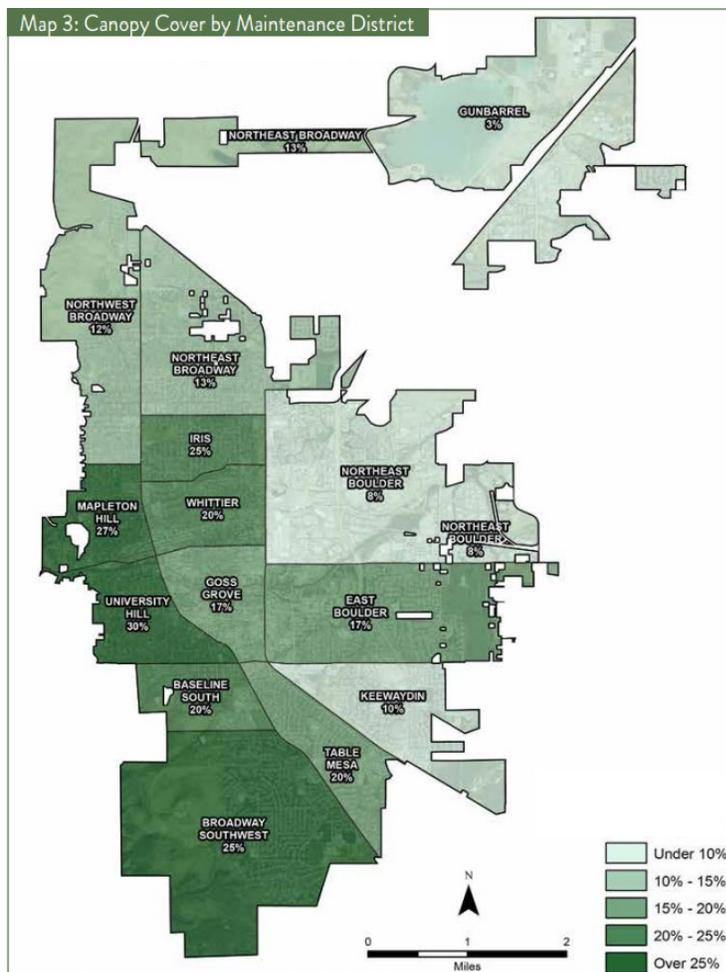
<sup>7</sup> City of Boulder Urban Forest Strategic Plan [Boulder\\_UFSP\\_v2018\\_o6\\_o6-1-201806111602.pdf \(bouldercolorado.gov\)](#)

<sup>8</sup> Air Quality Effects of Urban Trees and Parks. NRPA Research Series 2010. [nowak-heisler-research-paper.pdf \(nrpa.org\)](#)

forests or collaborate in that management, have found value in using tree canopy coverage as a data layer in identifying historic inequities within urban areas.

- The average tree canopy coverage for the City of Boulder is 16%. This analysis is further broken down by the recent Urban Forest Strategic Plan by Maintenance District (see Urban Forest Strategic Plan Canopy Coverage Comparison Map below) and shows a finer level of detail with canopy coverage ranging from 3% in Gunbarrel to 30% in University Hill.
- Creating a metric for minimum tree canopy coverage (e.g., start with the city’s average of 16%) and mapping areas where that coverage is lower could be layered with other gap analysis mappings for a 1.0 version of an equity map to identify areas of overlapping gaps. These gap areas could be categorized as equity initiative zones with attendant policy actions and resources to augment parks and recreation services.
- Growing trees in the arid Front Range takes significant resources. Additional consideration to open space habitat characteristics (that may not support robust trees and urban forests) and other ecological considerations for increasing tree canopy or using tree canopy as an equity measure should be evaluated carefully in the future. Certain types of trees can also reduce overall landscape water usage, so this should also be considered as an equity initiative.

*Urban Forest Strategic Plan Canopy Coverage Comparison Map by Maintenance District*



“A map of tree cover in any city in the United States is too often a map of race and income. Addressing socioeconomic and racial disparities in tree cover is one of the reasons to calculate your neighborhood’s Tree Equity score.”

[Tree Equity Score Project - American Forests](#)

Source: Analysis completed using 2013 LIDAR data.

### Additional Community Findings Related to Evaluating Equity within the BPR System

Over half of statistically valid survey respondents (55% and 53% respectively) think it is essential to provide recreation programs for people who identify as a non-White and teenagers (ages 13-19). The percentages were similar for older adults (53%) and children (52%).

While BPR provides programs for adults and children, exploring specific programming that attracts people of different ethnicities, teenagers and older adults will be critical for the future, especially considering the projected increase of these demographic groups.

Parks and recreation departments throughout the country need to understand what prevents community members from using parks and other recreation facilities or inhibits them from using them more often. Over half of Boulder survey respondents (53%) noted that lack of time is the major issue. While BPR cannot create time, looking at ways to make access to parks and recreation facilities easier and faster could potentially help increase usage. Also understanding how long it takes and by what means most people get to BPR parks and facilities could help staff understand how department operations and larger policy issues could help with this.

Mapping spatial disparities in parks and recreation amenities is extremely important to ensure future investments are made in the most critical locations. While the location of parkland and amenities is one of the pieces of the equity puzzle, it is also crucial that analysis goes beyond infrastructure.

To ensure BPR properties are welcoming to all, other factors must be taken into consideration. Factors including what is available in parks, how staff interact with and relate to community members, transportation options and many more. BPR will need to continue to refine strategies to broaden the lens of equity.

## Key Issues & Observations



The following list of key issues and observations related to Community Health and Wellness has been prepared based on research, feedback from the public, input from stakeholders, staff participation, and PRAB and City Council direction.

- BPR is doing very well in providing the community with accessible, flexible and safe parks, facilities and programming across the city, engaging community members and encouraging physical activity and positively impacting social determinants of health.
- BPR is currently exceeding both national and Colorado median LOS for most parks and recreation asset types.
- Boulder is growing. With this growth comes continuously dropping levels of service as they relate to an acres/facilities per capita analysis. Because growth boundaries limit the ability to add parkland, Boulder must decide how to continue to best serve current and future community members. While there is limited ability to add land, there are 43,000 acres of OSMP recreational space surrounding the city that should be considered.
- Older adults represent a growing segment of Boulder's population, and community input indicates that BPR should serve this group in specific ways related to their unique needs.
- BPR has recently seen high levels of increased use, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as increased use from surrounding communities. Throughout the country, most public lands are seeing high visitation and at times, overcrowding. This, coupled with Boulder's popularity as an outdoor activity mecca for tourists from around the world, adds complexity to how BPR properties are used and how to ensure safe and accessible public spaces.
- O&M resources and capacity are constantly strained due to high usage and certain behaviors. Illegal activities and use of parkland for camping are also issues. At times parks facilities must be closed due to misuse and vandalism. These stressors on the system impact BPR's ability to provide core services.
- Current O&M levels of service are not keeping up with existing needs. BPR relies on volunteerism to bridge this gap through the Park Champs program. Even with this help, many parks have unmaintained areas due to lack of capacity and resources.
- Reassessing how LOS is measured and what metrics are used to determine LOS, are issues parks and recreation departments throughout the country face. Using a clear methodology that weaves equity and resilience into each standard is key and a more nuanced approach could serve the diverse needs of the community in a more meaningful way.
- Expanding existing partnerships and looking at innovative ways to address trends within the community can help BPR support equity of access to parks, facilities and programs and help ensure Boulder remains a physically and mentally healthy community with a high quality of life.



The following list of key issues and observations related to Taking Care of What We Have has been prepared based on research, feedback from the public, input from stakeholders, staff participation, and PRAB and City Council direction.

- Overall, community members feel BPR parks and facilities are in good condition and staff are doing a great job given constrained resources. They also feel that “taking care of what we have” is a high priority. Desires for any new facilities are due more to crowded or inaccessible locations as opposed to the quality of existing facilities. They also think there is room to repurpose or recreate spaces to accommodate shifting needs in real time.
- While community members are generally happy with facilities, current O&M levels of service are not keeping up with existing needs in parks and public spaces. BPR relies on volunteerism to bridge this gap – especially when it comes to general park maintenance and cleanup projects through the Park Champs program. Even with this help, many parks have unmaintained areas due to lack of capacity and resources.
- While BPR is currently meeting the goal set by the 2016 Capital Investment Strategic Plan of spending between 2-3%, or \$4-6 million, annually on capital repairs and replacement, when updated to account for the Department’s total 2021 CRV of \$298,476,655, BPR is falling behind targeted capital spending. Based on BPR’s updated 2021 total asset CRV, the Department should be spending between \$6 million and \$9 million annually on capital repairs and replacement.
- Recent policy direction and feedback from City Council and PRAB indicates that BPR should continue to focus on maintaining and enhancing existing assets to ensure safe and accessible parks and facilities while providing new amenities as funding opportunities become available.
- Operations and capital costs continue to rise, creating an ever-larger gap in BPR’s budget and ability to take care of assets for their complete life cycles.
- Taking Care of What We Have includes the natural systems in the city and making strides to manage native ecosystems, especially the urban tree canopy, and make facility upgrades that help the city meet climate goals are critical for the future and community members indicate this is important.



The following list of key issues and observations related to Financial Sustainability has been prepared based on research, feedback from the public, input from stakeholders, staff participation, and PRAB and City Council direction.

- While cost recovery has been improved, revenues from the Department's funding have remained relatively flat. Revenues from BPR's funding sources have remained mostly constant between 2016 through 2021 with an average negative annual growth rate of -0.4%. The lack of revenue increases creates a challenging operating environment for BPR as departmental overhead and expenditures rise on a near annual basis due to inflation. The trend of fund revenues outpacing expenditures is projected to continue, with BPR's fund revenues project to grow on average 2.8% through 2026 while expenditures are projected to grow 5.8% during the same period.
- Between 2016 and 2020, BPR experienced financial shortfalls in O&M expenditures and capital improvement and renovation expenditures. In order to meet the recommended level of spending established by the 2016 Capital Investment Strategic Plan, BPR would have required an additional \$1.9 million spent on capital improvements annually to reach its targeted expenditure level of \$7.5 million, or 2.5% of CRV. In order to meet the industry standard of 4% of CRV spent on O&M or ongoing preventative maintenance, BPR would have required an additional \$3.3 million to reach its targeted expenditure level of \$11.9 million. Given the greater historic gap in O&M expenditures versus capital expenditures, BPR must prioritize increasing funds available for O&M expenditures.
- BPR must understand how the community wants to take care of what they have. Ninety-five percent of survey respondents support maintaining current funding sources, while only 45% support implementing a new sales tax. As is the case throughout the country, BPR will need to continue to try to find ways to creatively achieve financial sustainability.
- Closing the gaps in recommended funding levels for operations & maintenance and capital improvements, is key to the department's long-term financial sustainability and ability to fulfill its mission.
- The department will have to fully evaluate new and existing revenue sources to maximize the ability to continue to provide priority parks, facilities, programs and services to the community.
- Parks are having to work harder to serve a growing, diverse population as well as users from surrounding communities. This means that amenities are being used more often and by more people than their planned for life cycles.
- The implementation of the Recreation Priority Index (RPI) and Service Delivery Model allow the Department to prioritize the relative importance of programs and includes data that help set fee structures and cost recovery rates, setting clear goals for cost recovery that have boosted the recovery ratio overall. Since the implementation of the RPI BPR has been able to increase cost recovery significantly, from an average cost recovery of 83% between 2007 and 2011, to an average of 90% between 2017 and 2019.



The following list of key issues and observations related to Building Community & Relationships has been prepared based on research, feedback from the public, input from stakeholders, staff participation, and PRAB and City Council direction.

- Boulder community members believe partnerships help build community relationships, increasing understanding and support for everyone in Boulder.
- Partnering with municipalities, school districts or nonprofits to develop joint use facilities or programs is seen as a way to fill current gaps in services and facilities. Community input reveals that people are highly supportive of partnering with private organizations to develop recreational facilities or programs.
- Partnership opportunities with community organizations are becoming increasingly important, especially when considering BPRs increased focus on equity and resiliency.
- BPR has great relationships with community volunteers who are excited about helping maintain and improve the parks and recreation system.
- Maintaining a resilient parks and recreation system is more difficult today with decreasing or flat budgets, less staff doing more work, climate change impacts and population growth. BPR cannot keep the system healthy alone. Community relationships and partnerships are critical to creating a truly resilient and equitable system.
- In the last five years, 2,424 volunteers contributed 19,130 hours to parks and recreation efforts (which equates to over \$500,000 according to the current estimated national value of each volunteer hour<sup>9</sup>).
- Comparable parks and recreation organizations interviewed as part of this planning process indicated that a full-time staff member is charged with continuously applying to private and public grant programs to cultivate these types of partnerships.

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<sup>9</sup> <https://independentsector.org/value-of-volunteer-time-2021>



The following list of key issues and observations related to Youth Engagement & Activity has been prepared based on research, feedback from the public, input from stakeholders, staff participation, and PRAB and City Council direction.

- Boulder community members understand that it is important to have opportunities for youth to interact with each other and learn to value the outdoors, be good stewards, appreciate their community, and learn and discover through various experiences.
- Youth and teens are important, but teens identify as a separate group with unique needs within our community that BPR's parks, facilities and programs should strive to serve.
- There is a gap in service for teens (14-18) who desire more volunteer and leadership opportunities through BPR services with their peers.
- Youth and teens desire play equipment that offers more adventure and opportunities for increasing challenges.
- The impacts of COVID-19, increasing anxiety and depression among Boulder teens and youth is a trend that is being seen across the country. The mental and physical health of teens are equally important. Parks and recreation systems have the potential to help mitigate negative impacts on both fronts.
- Access to nature is an important aspect of Boulder's parks and recreation system, especially for youth and teens. Since 2014, BPR staff have developed programming that better connects children to nature. This is a good step. Even so, while Boulder is known for its outdoor lifestyle and amazing natural landscape, there continues to be a gap in connecting to nature "close to home" here and across the country due to limited access, safety and other factors.
- Despite Boulder's and Colorado's leadership in appreciating nature and active lifestyles, no community is exempt from the concerns regarding childhood inactivity and limited access to the outdoors. According to recent studies, Colorado has the fastest growing rates of inactivity and obesity in the nation.



## Organizational Readiness

The following list of key issues and observations related to Organizational Readiness has been prepared based on research, feedback from the public, input from stakeholders, staff participation, and PRAB and City Council direction.

- BPR has implemented a variety of initiatives to ensure staff are ready as an organization to meet operations, maintenance and programming needs. New software, service delivery models and asset management tools and training have been good steps to ensure the department is ready to meet current needs and is proactively looking to the future. The department has also been using capital investment strategies that are proving successful in managing assets more efficiently and effectively and investing in capital projects more strategically.
- The department needs to build in the ability to adapt models and facility operations based not only on data collected over time, but holistically, based on data, user preferences, revenue generation, and programming options to better integrate flexibility into day-to-day operations of programming and facilities.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has had a huge impact on staff, including reductions in staffing levels, capacity and funding. With the pandemic impacts, keeping an engaged and motivated workforce is more challenging but remains a top priority.
- BPR does a great job of delivering high quality parks, facilities and services to the Boulder community. Internally, there are many disparate resources that staff rely on, which at times are hard to find or provide conflicting information. This is in part due to recent staff reductions and retirements, creating an institutional knowledge gap that should be addressed.
- Community members and staff have expressed interest in more flexibility in terms of scheduling classes, utilizing certain portions of rec center facilities as flex spaces and creating more targeted programming in real time as user interests change.
- Utilizing business management practices that leverage the use of data driven and collaborative decision making, as well as new technology is important.
- Evaluate service delivery methods, such as registration and engagement, to ensure the focus is on current customer experience and technology.
- Staff have expressed interest in continuing education and more alignment across divisions.
- Team building exercises, continued learning opportunities and skill development are important to keeping staff engaged in and excited about their work.

## Equity & Resilience

The following list of key issues and observations related to Equity & Resilience has been prepared based on research, feedback from the public, input from stakeholders, staff participation, and PRAB and City Council direction.

- There are many barriers to access. These barriers can shift based on population demographics and can change over time. Currently, the most common reason given for not using parks, recreation facilities or services is a lack of time.
- Offering programs for various user groups is important to the community, especially for low-income populations and people with disabilities.
- There is agreement within the community that subsidies should be provided for older adults, low-income community members, people with disabilities and underrepresented communities. In fact, older adults are now a prioritized service group due to their increasing proportion of the overall city population.
- There is growing concern that programming is out of reach for lower- and middle-class families who may need just a bit of help to access programs and services. Public sentiment is that the “missing middle” population is not adequately served by BPR’s options due the high price of certain programs.
- The cost of living in Boulder is high. While equity is critical to the department’s mission, if affordability and accessibility are not meaningfully addressed at a higher level, many community members, including the “missing middle,” that are not currently being served adequately will continue to be underserved.
- While BPR is a leader in sustainability, climate work and ecosystem services, the department needs to look even more holistically at programming, facilities, internal operations and transportation options to continue to lower the collective impact of these on climate change.
- Resilience was identified by community members as important for adaptability and preparedness for inevitable change and improving recovery.
- Equity of access, quality of amenities and types of amenities offered need to be further assessed/addressed in all subcommunities.
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### Next Steps

Based on research completed for this Needs Assessment, community input, and PRAB and City Council feedback and policy direction, through the Implementation Plan update, BPR will now focus on preparing long-range goals and initiatives to address many of the key issues and observations noted for each Key Theme.