



VI. Plan Implementation



VI. PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

The development of Sheridan’s park and recreation system will require a coordinated and efficient organization to provide the type of park system and services desired by the community. This is a long-term plan, presenting a 15 to 20 year vision for parks and recreation. This chapter identifies key steps to take to maximize the success of the plan. This chapter considers the current political and financial realities and lays out a course of action to implement the recommendations and projects and assist in community decision-making over the long-term.

GOVERNANCE AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The organization of Sheridan’s park and recreation administration and management structure has an impact on the success of the park and recreation system. Ultimately, the organizational structure must function well and efficiently in order to implement the park and recreation master plan effectively. Currently, the provision of park and recreation services is divided between the City and the Recreation District with unclear identification of roles or responsibilities.

Sheridan does not currently have a park director or dedicated parks department assigned with overseeing park and recreation services or maintenance. The Public Works Department currently manages city parks and facilities as one of many departmental responsibilities. Management of recreation programming is the responsibility of the Sheridan Recreation District, which also shares some facility maintenance responsibilities with the City.

ORGANIZATIONAL ASSESSMENT

While it is not uncommon for a recreation district and city to share responsibility for park and recreation services, the roles and responsibilities of both providers are usually well-defined. In Sheridan, roles and responsibilities between the City and the Recreation District are unclear or overlapping in some cases, particularly around maintenance and operations. The perceived lack of efficiency and coordination was an issue brought up during the public involvement process. As part of the planning process, the consultant team prepared an evaluation of the organizational structure for service provision in Sheridan. The full assessment, contained in Appendix D: Organizational Structure Analysis, included the following findings:

- *Lack of System Management:* Sheridan’s park and recreation system lacks system-wide oversight and coordination. With two separate organizations responsible for park maintenance, there is potential for a lack of coordination and communication which can lead to inconsistent maintenance.
- *Uneven Accountability:* Although the Sheridan Recreation District has a governing board, the members are appointed and not elected. In the City of Sheridan, the Mayor and City Councilors are ultimately responsible, making them accountable to the voting public. However, Sheridan does not have a park commission or board to advise the Council on park matters.
- *Duplication of Resources:* There are inefficiencies and overlap, especially with regard to park maintenance. In some cases, both agencies have maintenance crews going to sites such as Kendrick and Thorne Rider Parks. In a relatively small community like Sheridan, the provision of park maintenance seems more complex than it needs to be or should be.

The provision of recreation program services is generally clear, with the Recreation District, School District, and YMCA coordinating recreation program services. The division of responsibilities becomes less clear for tasks that could be considered grounds or facility maintenance, such as field preparation and maintenance of the pool deck and locker rooms.

- *Difficult to Track Maintenance Costs:* Maintenance costs are incurred by both the City Parks Division and the Sheridan Recreation District, making it overly difficult to accurately track park and recreation expenditures.
- *Low Maintenance Expenditures:* The City of Sheridan’s maintenance allocation per acre of park land is among the lowest we have seen.
- *Cemetery:* The city devotes significant resources to the operation of the cemetery. Although a cemetery is not a recreation service, responsibility for a public cemetery often falls to a park and recreation department in smaller cities. In Sheridan, the budgeted cost per acre for the cemetery is one and one-half times more than that of the budget dedicated to park acreage at this time.

ORGANIZATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the analysis included in Appendix D, the recommended organizational structure is that of the City as the overarching coordinator of services, with the Recreation District continuing to focus on leagues, programs, and activities. The following recommendations are structured to move forward in that direction, and working toward a refined organizational framework that supports the community vision for parks and recreation, as described in this Master Plan.

This Plan envisions an eventual transition to a Parks Division within the Public Works Department that serves as the primary coordinator of parks and recreation services, working in partnership with other agencies and organizations to maximize efficiency. It is important to note that organizational structures are not static. Modifications may be necessary to meet the evolving demands of the community, as well as changing social, economic, cultural, and political environments.

ESTABLISH THE CITY AS THE PRIMARY COORDINATOR OF SERVICES.

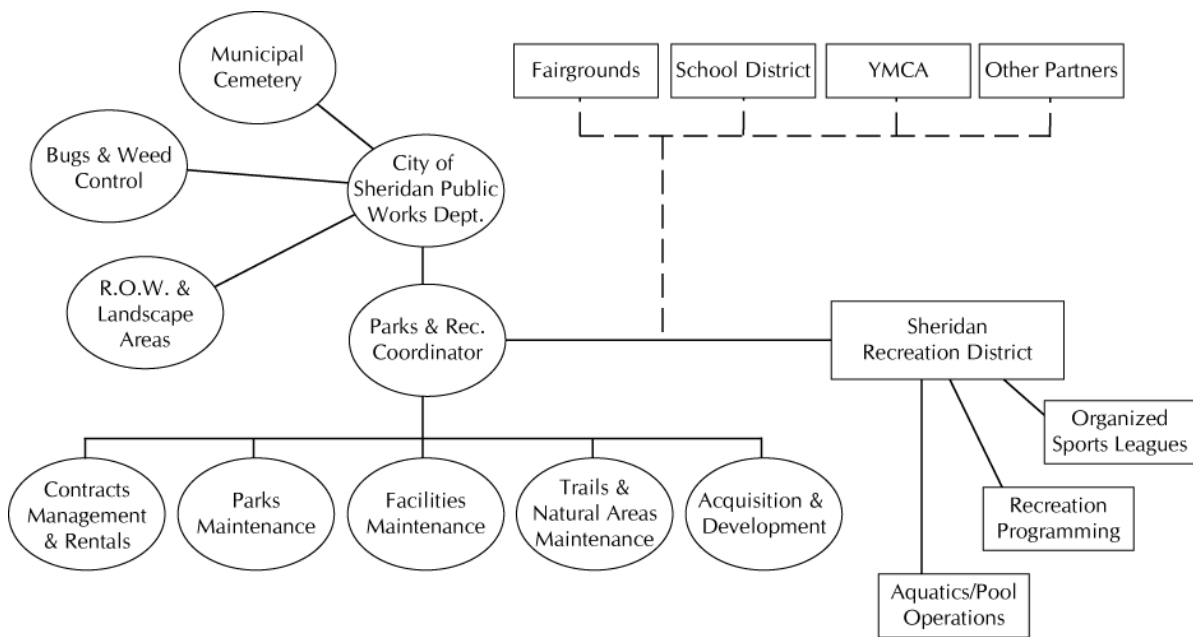
This Plan recommends increases in services in the future to meet community demand. As a result, the City needs to consider the most efficient and effective internal organization to provide those services. Currently, the Public Works Department is responsible for parks in Sheridan, but shares duties with the Recreation District, and the roles and responsibilities for maintaining the facilities are not clearly delineated between the two agencies. Sheridan should transition to an organizational structure that establishes the City as the primary coordinator of parks and recreation services, which is a common arrangement at many cities.

This organizational structure puts one agency in the lead, allowing for the consolidation of resources and consistent tracking of revenues and expenditures. In the recommended model, roles and responsibilities would be clearly defined between the City and Recreation District. The diagram in Figure 3 on the following page illustrates the recommended structure and division of roles and responsibilities.

The structure depicted in the diagram takes advantage of the strengths of the existing service provision model, while reducing some of the duplications and inconsistencies. The City has an existing comprehensive approach to the provision of public services and the provision of public funding. Having the City assume the role as the lead agency would allow for effective monitoring of the use of financial resources and tracking of expenditures for parks maintenance and services. Overlapping responsibilities between the

City and the Recreation District could be eliminated by defining and tracking responsibilities. The City would be able to focus energy on meeting community need for parks and recreation facilities and services, and coordinating the development of new parks and upgrades at existing parks.

Figure 3: Recommended Organizational Structure and Responsibilities



With the City as the primary coordinator, maintenance demands could be anticipated with population growth and development. The Recreation District would be able to focus on programming and expansion of their program offerings. Establishing this organizational structure would support the implementation of the Plan.

TRANSITION STEPS

The following are recommendations that will help the City transition into the role of primary coordinator services.

- **Designate the service coordinator.** This assignment can be given to an existing staff position, or new expertise can be brought on board.
- **Coordinate with County, state, and federal agencies on parks and recreation matters.** Sheridan is a major service provider for many County residents, and coordination with the County on service provision is needed to ensure that area needs are addressed. Coordination with state and federal agencies should address connections to state and federal land, and on identifying areas with local priorities align with state and federal recreation priorities.
- **Coordinate with partners on recreation program provision.** While this plan does not propose that the City of Sheridan engage in recreation program provision, the plan does envision the City taking on a coordination role, including convening the groups involved in the provision of recreation programs periodically to coordinate services and facilities. More information about the role the City should take with regard to recreation programming is contained in the section titled Recreation Programming.
- **Convene quarterly meetings of the organizations that contribute to parks and recreation services in the community.** The quarterly meetings should include the Recreation and School Districts, the YMCA, and potentially other providers of services, such as the County.
- **Prepare a parks and recreation policy manual.** As Sheridan increases its park and recreation services, a policy manual should be prepared that defines procedures, policies, and identifies how the City will react to given issues. This will help maintain a level of consistency and help staff render consistent decisions. For example, policies should address topics such as park hours of operation, restroom hours of operation, facility rentals, and rules about pets in parks.

- **Develop customer service policies as part of the policy manual.** The policy manual should include specific customer service policies that provide methods for collecting complaints, methods for seeking public input, and standards for response time to complaints. These policies should include ways to solicit positive comments, as well as complaints. The policies should spell out a specific procedure to notify the appropriate staff of maintenance-related comments, including standards and response times.
- **Expand and enhance the parks and recreation information on the city of Sheridan web site.** The City should expand on efforts to publicize its parks and recreation services and operations. To increase awareness of available parks and facilities, the City should expand the information provided on the web-site. The goal is to make this the one stop for information on parks and recreation in Sheridan. For example:
 - Include a park inventory and map.
 - Include information about picnic facility rentals.
 - Provide an opportunity for public comment, or to report issues in the park system.
 - Provide links to the websites of partner organizations, including the Recreation District and the YMCA.
 - Provide information about upcoming events and meetings held by partner organizations, as well as by the City.
- **Establish an annual work program and performance goals.** The City should establish an annual work program with performance goals for parks and recreation. At the end of the year, an evaluation should be made to measure performance.
- **Implement improvements to parks maintenance and operations.** As the City takes on the oversight of all parks maintenance, it will be important to ensure streamlined and efficient maintenance that meets the needs of park users. Specific initiatives to improve the maintenance of Sheridan's parks and trails are described in the section of this chapter titled Maintenance and Operations.

- **Streamline oversight of park planning, acquisition, and development.** Currently, the City carries out some capital improvements at parks. In addition, the Recreation District also carries out capital improvements, using some City funds and some District funds. The improvements aren't necessarily coordinated, and projects are not prioritized for implementation of a unifying goal or vision for the park system or even for individual sites. The City should take the lead on coordinating park acquisition and development, and managing its park assets. In addition the City should develop a process for improvements at City sites by other partners. All park capital improvements should contribute toward implementation of the vision and goals established within this Parks & Recreation Master Plan. Specific initiatives to streamline oversight of park acquisition and development are described in the section of this chapter titled Park Acquisition and Development.
- **Build revenue-generating capability.** To provide improved services within budget constraints, it is recommended that the City seek to build its revenue-generating capability. When budgets are tight, the first thought is usually to cut costs. However, increasing revenue can have the same net result while providing additional resources to provide park and recreation services. The planning process indicated a need for increased park and recreation services. The City currently provides a basic level of service primarily consisting of maintaining parks, with capacity to provide little, if any, revenue and the Recreation District manages the programs that generate the revenue. As the City transitions to the role as the primary coordinator of the services, revenue generation opportunities should be explored, including rental and user fees of facilities, such as the concession building and picnic facilities.
- **Move toward establishing a Parks Commission or Board.** As the City implements the Parks & Recreation Master Plan, a Parks Commission or Board should be established that would function as a review body for all parks-related issues and policies in Sheridan. The Commission should make recommendations to Council, similar to the relationship of the Planning Commission. The Parks Commission could make recommendations on policies related to parks and recreation, be responsible for review of park designs, and be a key player in the development of the parks and recreation annual work program.

- **Provide volunteer opportunities.** Volunteerism has many benefits. Volunteers can supplement paid staff in maintaining and improving the park system; they can be a major resource for recreation programs and events; and volunteer opportunities provide a recreation activity for some community members. In addition to adult volunteers, a variety of parks projects are suitable for completion by youth, such as Boy and Girl Scouts and high school students in need of community service hours. Specific opportunities should be identified, and publicized on the website and City publications. The lead service coordinator could be assigned the responsibility of coordinating volunteers.
- **Establish an adopt-a-park program.** To increase the sense of ownership, pride, and upkeep in local parks, the City should initiate an “adopt-a-park” program. In this type of program, agreements are made with private citizens, neighborhood groups, or service clubs to perform and assume certain responsibilities and duties at specific park sites, natural areas, and trail segments. Typically, volunteers will provide limited maintenance tasks, such as litter pick-up, watching for and reporting vandalism, or hosting neighborhood activities.

MAINTENANCE AND OPERATIONS

Maintenance of parks, trails, and facilities is a critical part of recreation service provision. These assets are important to Sheridan's community livability and contribute the community's sense of place. In order for Sheridan to maintain their parks at a standard that the community will value and enjoy, the City will need to efficiently manage the allocation of its available resources. The recommendations below are intended to help Sheridan manage park system maintenance as the City transitions into its primary coordination role.

- **Improve cost and revenue tracking for parks and recreation services.** One of the most important items in controlling costs and producing revenue is a good budget reporting system. At minimum, the City should be able to review the cost of maintaining its parks, trails, and natural areas on a per acre and per Full Time Equivalent employee (FTE) basis. Good budget tracking of service costs will allow the city to make management, marketing, or programming improvements. As an added benefit, accurate cost tracking also provides information for budgeting and for planning future facilities.
- **Separate cemetery operations from park operations in the budget.** Sheridan owns and operates the Municipal Cemetery, and Public Works Staff are responsible for maintenance, care, and internments at the cemetery. There is also a cemetery sexton who sells plots and operates the cemetery. The maintenance work load varies depending on the season and whether there are burials. At present, the cemetery maintenance costs per acre in the budget appear to be one and half times greater than that of the park facilities. A separate budget should be established within the city budget structure for the cemetery. All staff time spent on the cemetery should be tracked and allocated to the cemetery budget so that the actual costs associated with operating the cemetery are understood. This will also assist the city in defining the actual costs of operating the park system.
- **Track maintenance staff time in a more detailed manner.** Staff time should be tracked by major maintenance tasks and by site. This type of information can be used as an effective tool for budgeting, and also to help define the anticipated level of maintenance should budget cuts occur.

- **Track beautification and rights-of-way maintenance separately from park and facility maintenance.** This type of information can be used as a budgeting tool. The information can also be used for tracking maintenance tasks that maybe detracting staff time from parks maintenance.
- **Work with the Recreation District to assume responsibility of the bugs and weeds control program.** The Public Works Department currently sends crews throughout the City to maintain streets, rights-of-way, and landscaped areas. Adding this responsibility to the Public Works Department would eliminate the overlap of site visits between the City and Recreation District. It will also allow for more systematic and system-wide monitoring of pests and invasive weeds. Finally, if the Recreation District is able to delegate this task to the City, it will allow the District to focus more on recreation programming and activities.
- **Establish performance standards.** Performance standards should be established for each basic park maintenance task. This will clarify what tasks are expected and the general amount of time required.
- **Limit staff involvement in special tasks that pull staff away from regular park maintenance responsibilities.** The City has a tradition of providing maintenance where and when it is needed without tracking staff time. As the City more clearly defines its role as the primary coordinator of parks and recreation services, the City should track time for special tasks, such as set up for special events. Tracking time spent on these activities will allow for projecting future special task costs and possibly the identification of alternative means for completing these tasks.
- **Provide an adequate level of parks maintenance that preserves the City's assets and avoids costly crisis response.** Where budgets are inadequate, maintenance tasks are usually limited to mowing, trash pickup, and normal custodial duties. Time and money for addressing infrastructure needs within existing parks such as turf management (e.g. over-seeding and aeration) or repairing facilities is put off to another day. By repairing facilities on an ongoing basis and allowing time for preventive maintenance, park assets a can last for many years at a much lower cost than replacement.

- **Consider alternative maintenance arrangements to maximize efficiency and cost-effectiveness.** The City has been successful in contracting the services for the golf course. The same could be done for sports fields and turf maintenance as the City assumes the responsibility for all park land and facility maintenance. The City could also contract out work in specific areas, such as street beautification, fencing, tree maintenance, and construction.

PARK PLANNING, ACQUISITION AND DEVELOPMENT

The planning, acquisition and development of parks and recreation facilities is a critical element in the implementation of the Parks & Recreation Master Plan. The City must take a series of actions that will lead to the creation of the preferred park system. The following recommendations have been created to guide Sheridan toward the preferred park system recommended in this Plan.

- **Revise the City's park land and open space dedication regulation.**¹ At present, park land and open space dedication regulations provide insufficient requirements for implementing the design guidelines presented in Chapter IV and the system-wide park concept of the Parks & Recreation Master Plan. Overall, the regulation is unclear and allows applicants to choose less costly alternatives that don't maintain the City's level of park services. In order to make the regulation clear, objective, and defensible, the City should make the following revisions to meet the recommendations of the Parks & Recreation Master Plan:
 - Land dedication should apply to all residential land divisions, regardless of zoning district or type of review.
 - Dedication formula should be clearly based on the level of service standard, number of proposed units (average persons/unit), and average cost per acre of undeveloped land – not zoning district or percentage of total area.
 - Regulation should only allow two alternatives: land dedication or fee in lieu. The City should not allow reduction of land dedication or fee assessment with building permit.
 - Fee in lieu should be received prior to final plat approval.
 - Specify minimum required park improvements that reflect park design guidelines. Improvements should be completed or assured prior to final plat approval.
 - Open space should not be allowed in lieu of park land.

¹ Sheridan Municipal Code, Appendix B: Subdivision Regulations, Article 5: Requirements for Improvements, Reservations and Design, 507 Park Land and Open Space Dedication.

- Increase the minimum required park size to meet the minimum design guideline standard. If minimum standard cannot be met, then regulation should require fee in lieu.
 - The regulation should refer to recommendations contained in the Parks & Recreation Master Plan. Proposed parks should be reviewed by the Parks Commission or Board that will make a recommendation to the Planning Commission/City Council.
- **Evaluate parks and trails capital improvement projects to prioritize projects that align with the Parks & Recreation Master Plan.** The following criteria are recommended for prioritizing projects, but are not listed in a particular priority order:
 - Creates destinations or enhances the connections along the Sheridan pathways system.
 - Provides park services in an existing underserved area.
 - Results in upgrades and improvements that improve existing parks to meet community demand for facilities.
 - Acquires land for future park sites in accordance with the Parks & Recreation Master Plan.
 - Is eligible for matching funds and grants.
 - Reduces maintenance and operations costs, offering a return on investment.
 - Supports increased revenue generating capacity, in relation to the cost of the proposed improvement.
 - Is sustainable within available operating budget.
- **Coordinate with City of Sheridan planning staff on new development and park site locations.** Give the park services coordinator a review role on land acquisition, site suitability, funding, and site master plans for new and redeveloped park sites. Having this responsibility will allow for the overarching goals of the Parks & Recreation Master Plan to be advanced.
- **Develop a process for considering and evaluating partner requests for improvements at City parks and facilities.** The City's park system benefits from improvements provided by community partners, such as the Recreation District and Whitney Benefits. These types of improvements should be coordinated by the City to assure compliance with the park design guidelines and the goals of the Parks & Recreation Master Plan.

- **Follow the design guidelines in this Plan when renovating existing parks and facilities or acquiring and developing new ones.** City staff will be responsible for following design guidelines whenever renovating existing parks, developing new parks, and reviewing park land dedications.
- **Involve maintenance staff in the review of the design of new parks and facilities or the renovation of existing sites.** Review of park designs by maintenance staff will allow for the identification of potential maintenance issues that would require increased staff time. Review by parks maintenance staff allows for controlling maintenance costs and anticipating increases park land maintenance costs.
- **Evaluate the need for mowed and irrigated turf when designing new parks or renovating existing ones to efficiently utilize maintenance resources.** As the City identifies new sites for development the additional maintenance demands can be assessed and future maintenance costs and need for contracted work or use of internal resources.
- **Acquire park land and natural open space in advance of need to reduce land acquisition costs and to protect critical resources.** As the City continues to grow the value of the available property for park land will increase in its market value. The City should actively use the Park Land Dedication Fund and other available matching funds to purchase land in conjunction with areas of anticipated growth.
- **Develop park site master plans for parks before making major improvements.** As described in the design guidelines, a park's function is a signification factor in the provision of park facilities. Poorly sited park facilities and amenities detract from the park user experience and can result in unforeseen costs. Creating park site master plans for major improvements allows for the integration of park elements and input from the community.

RECREATION PROGRAMMING

The City does not directly provide recreation programs as part of its operations, but as the primary coordinator of parks and recreation services the City plays a key role in coordination of community-wide recreation programming and the facilities that support these programs. The organizational structure analysis indicated that the Recreation District could have more time dedicated to the provision of recreation programs with the division of park facility maintenance responsibilities. The following recommendations are intended to provide guidance for the City as it coordinates recreation programming with community providers.

- **Use the quarterly meetings to coordinate recreation programming.** Senior, youth, and organized sports programming is available through the Recreation District, the YMCA, the School District, and other providers. The City should coordinate with these providers to maintain the current recreation options and improve the programming available to Sheridan residents. The City should use the quarterly meetings to coordinate on programming services and community need. Such meetings will help eliminate redundancies in available programming, increase resource utilization, and establish a forum for addressing changing programming needs.
- **Work with multiple recreation program providers to ensure there are a variety of recreation programs options.** The City should ensure there are programs for different ages and abilities, a range of program formats, and an array of program types. Public input indicated a need for new types of programming, such as outdoor education. Programming should meet the needs of Sheridan residents, and there should be a diverse range of options to accommodate differing interests, time availability, and abilities.
- **Work with recreation providers to maintain website information.** The City should coordinate with partner organizations for the on-going maintenance and currency of recreation program information provided to the public.

CONCLUSION/FINAL MESSAGE

The Parks & Recreation Master Plan provides the vision and tools necessary for the City to make strategic choices on creating and expanding on its parks and recreation services. The City has a good inventory of parks, facilities, trails and natural areas to build on, but lacks the organization structure to efficiently take care of these sites. Nor does it have the resources to meet current or projected community recreation needs.

To be successful at implementing the community vision, the City will need to take action based on the guidance and framework of this Plan, evaluate progress, and make continuous adjustments in the coming years. The City must decide now the course it will take to provide adequate parks and recreation services for the next 20 years. These actions will help create a livable city and vibrant economy that attracts residents and businesses.

With adequate community and financial support, Sheridan has the potential to develop a high-quality park system. The vision for the parks and recreation system is achievable with the commitment of citizens, the Public Works Department, recreation partners, and City leaders. By working toward this common vision, the City of Sheridan can transform the park and recreation system into a signature asset for the City and the County.

