

New Trends in Parks, Recreation and Leisure Services

Let's take a closer look

Why do we care about trends?

- Helps determine programming and facility needs
- Meets the demands of communities, regions, states
- Plans for the immediate and long range future
- Supports Mission Statement
- Positions Parks and Recreation Departments to be an essential service to a community
- Facilitates community problem-solving

Mission Statements

- What do your Mission Statements say about your departments?
- What role does Parks and Recreation play in recognizing and preparing for new trends?

What Indicates Future Demands?

- **Demographics of communities**
 - How is your community changing?
 - Aging Baby Boomers
 - Change in racial and ethnic diversity
 - Family size
 - Who are your current participants
 - Employers in area
 - Competition

■ **Environment**

- Growth in outdoor recreation
- Concern about environmental issues
- Preservation
- Global warming
- Water quality

■ Technology

- Interactive recreation opportunities through the web
- Home access to Internet
- Traditional activities vs. electronic activities
- Communication changes
- GIS to manage resources

■ Economics

- Larger split between the “haves” and have nots”
- Two income families
- High unemployment
- More competition for the household “dollars”
- More emphasis on value and “getting more for the buck”

■ Government

- Budgetary restraints
- Raising costs of “doing business”
- Competition between public, private and non-profit
- Doing “more with less”

■ Political Issues

■ The Impact of War

Some Michigan Trends

■ Reduction in funding

- Impacts maintenance and amenities in parks
- Impacts programs being offered/new ones being proposed
- Places emphasis on maintaining current facilities vs. building new facilities
- Not replacing full time employees
- Eliminating positions
- Using more part time employees
- Using more volunteers

■ High unemployment in MI

- Decrease in household income results in less spending on recreational activities
- Offering of low/no cost programs
- Doing more family oriented programs/special events
- More participation in one-day events; shorter classes
- Less participation in “higher cost” programs
- More walkers and bikers

■ Baby Boomers

- Looking for training for their “2nd career” (i.e.. lifeguard classes has more non-traditional students)
- More health related classes
- Adventure trips that include biking, hiking, kayaking, nature based trips
- Increased computer classes/technology training
- Younger baby boomers often want to “recreate” as they once did (i.e. adult sports)
- Often are being hired as part time employees

■ Obesity and Health Issues

- Offering programs/classes that attract participants to leave their homes and participate
- Providing parks that attract visitors to get out and get active
- Providing and maintaining facilities that provide a venue for active programs
- Educating the public on the risks and health problems possible with inactivity
- Offer information on nutrition and the rewards of healthy eating.

■ Environmental Sustainability

- Nature based education
- Neighborhood parks issues: old, vandalism, facilities that need updated for different uses
- New trails with connectivity desired
- Golf course saturation
- Value of preserving open space
- More access to inland rivers
- Concern over lose of contact with nature
- Programming more in parks
- Hard to keep parks/open space maintained

■ Accessibility

- Need for greater accessibility in facilities (renovating older facilities and insuring new facilities are ADA or greater in accessibility)
- Developing programs that can be available to all participants
- Financial assistance in updating facilities

■ Diversity

- Providing programs/facilities for the increasing diversity in communities
- Responding to the requests for “non-traditional” sports in communities

Actions being done today for current and future trends in Michigan.

■ Actions to trends:

■ Funding:

- Partner with other recreation departments (i.e. – smaller communities are joining forces not to duplicate services.)
- Partner with the competition – you are a valuable commodity – with the facilities, parks, participation levels
- Use your community connections (i.e. Chamber of Commerce) to gather potential sponsors); bring multiple groups to the table
- Corporate sponsorship (i.e. Walk Michigan)
- Maintaining current facilities, not building new facilities
- Restructure employee responsibilities; working more efficiently

Funding continued:

- Tell your “story” and be seen as a part of the community’s problem solution to enhance or maintain funding opportunities
- Use community foundation to establish a endowments for maintenance for new facilities
- Work with outside agencies for funding of new facilities to meet new demands
- Grant opportunities
- Evaluate user fees continuously
- Scholarship programs for lower income/multiple participant families

High Unemployment

- 8.9% in August 2008
- Household dollar is fewer; must have quality recreational experiences
- One day/weekend festival/special events are popular – no entry fee, choice what to spend \$\$\$ on
- Walking programs, 100 Days to Health programs are popular – free programs with free health information; structured program to get participants moving; nutritional information partnering with local medical facilities

High Unemployment continued:

- Parks in Michigan had higher attendance this last summer season
- Nature based recreation is popular
- Communities finding sponsors to offer free programs
- Scholarship programs made available for lower income/multiple participant families
- Increased vandalism in most community parks promotes Parks and Recreation partnering with neighborhood to develop “Watch Programs”

Baby Boomers:

- 2 types of “seniors” have emerged; very active 50’s, 60’s and 70’s that want adult sport leagues, biking, hiking, kayaking, including some competitions sports
- More traditional programming for older seniors that are looking for socialization, more passive forms of recreation
- Education for the 2nd career after retirement; skill building (i.e. computer classes)
- Health and wellness classes/information

Baby Boomers continued:

- Cooking classes – nutritional information
- Travel – adventure; eco-tourism; international
- Education for the 2nd career after retirement; skill building (i.e. computer classes)
- *Huge issue nationwide*
- References: www.opcseniorcenter.org
- www.aarp.org/internetresources
- www.michiganseniorolympics.org
- <http://trends/google.com>
- <http://www.google.com/intl/en/trends/about.html>

Obesity and Health Issues

- Offering programs such as “100 Days to Health”
- Doing pre/post screenings with exercise classes; provide information on health
- Walking Clubs – MI has partnered with BCBS
- Provide family opportunities to participate in activities – free “Twilight Ski”
- Youth Sports – changes in school’s “P.E.” classes
- One-day seminars on health issues
- Programs for women in outdoor settings – B.O.W.

Environmental Sustainability

- Neighborhood Parks – forming “Friends of Neighborhood Parks” groups to respond to issues
- Developing more nature based programs – MI State Parks
- Trails – connectivity – Oakland County – connecting communities
- More departments going “green”
- Promote MI “fall color” season
- Use of volunteer groups to clean up parks
- Clean up lakes

Accessibility

- Access to Recreation program
 - Funds for development/renovation
 - Education
 - Professional support
 - Promotion
- Mobility a huge issue with aging MI residents
- 13% of Michiganders are over the age of 65; 2% are 85 and older
- Recent lawsuits in MI

Diversity

- Community Art is raising awareness
- Request for more non-traditional sports
- Increase cricket fields
- More request for second language classes

**Let’s share what is
being done in
North
Carolina**

Marketing – How do we share our story?

- Tell your story – share with all of your employee; peers; city counterparts, Park Boards, and talk about the benefits your department offers
- Know the benefits – ask participants what they think of programs, facilities, events – good way to gather information on current wants/needs
- Your story is a “part of the solution” to some of the issues we have discussed here today – be seen as the essential service you ARE to your communities.

- Promote through your partnerships
- Use statistics when describing your classes/programs in your department’s brochure
- Use your local newspapers (especially free ones) to talk about what your department is doing to address issues
- Make sure staff is on board with talking in terms of benefits – especially front line staff
- Email promotions are being used in MI
- Flyers are still important (through schools, senior centers, etc.)

Marketing continued:

- Word of mouth is a powerful marketing resource
- Providing and talking about programs/events/facilities that address current day and future issues will position your department to be seen as part of the solution
- Branding – what is your image?

**How do you
tell your
story?**

Thank you

Pamela S. Kirbach
Kirbach *consultancy*
312 N. Harvey St.
Plymouth, MI 48170
pam@kirbachconsultancy.com
248 505 4572