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CITY OF LARAMIE
PARKS, TRAILS & RECREATION MASTER PLAN AD HOC ADVISORY COMMITTEE
AGENDA

MEETING DATE: September 25, 2013

TIME: 11:30 am

LOCATION: Recreation Center large conference room – 920 Boulder Drive

Consent Agenda

1. Approval of the minutes from the September 4, 2013 meeting.

Motion by _____, seconded by _____, that the consent agenda be approved and that each specific action on the consent agenda be approved as indicated. (Items listed on the consent agenda are considered to be routine and will be enacted by one motion in the form listed above. There will be no separate discussion of these items unless a Committee Member or citizen so requests, in which case the item will be removed from the consent agenda and will be considered on the regular agenda.)

Regular Agenda:

1. Review of Introductory chapter and Service Area 8
2. Review of Table of Contents

New business:

1. Public Comments

Upcoming Meeting Dates: October 16, 2013 and October 30, 2013 @ 11:30am
Next Meeting: Review of standards and classifications, select appendices

CITY OF LARAMIE
PARKS, TRAILS & RECREATION MASTER PLAN AD HOC ADVISORY COMMITTEE
September 4, 2013
Minutes of Meeting

MEMBERS PRESENT: Amber Travsky, Bill Gribb, Evan O'Toole, Joe Lord, Mike Moeller, Peggy McCrackin, Vicki Henry

MEMBERS NOT PRESENT: Amy Williamson, Dave Hammond, Nadia Kaliszewski

CITY OF LARAMIE STAFF PRESENT: Paul Harrison, Parks & Recreation Director; Derek Teini, Senior Planner; David Derragon, Assistant City Manager; Eric Jaap, Civil Engineer; David Schott, Parks Manager; Jodi Guerin, Recreation Manager; Mel Owen, Administrative Assistant

GUESTS: None.

The regular meeting was called to order by Vice Chair Joe Lord at 11:35 a.m.

Consent Agenda:

1) Approval of the minutes from the June 26, 2013 meeting.

Motion by Moeller, second by Travsky, that the consent agenda be approved. Motion carried 6-0 (Henry absent).

Regular Agenda:

1) Presentation and review of introductory chapter.

Teini presented the first draft of the Master Plan introductory chapter to the Committee. The Committee noted that the introductory chapter should further clarify that the Monolith Ranch requires a separate long term plan specific to that property and will only be briefly addressed within the Master Plan. The Committee recommended the overall mission and goals should be placed at the beginning of the introduction chapter in order to set the tone and lay out the guiding vision of the Master Plan. After the mission and goals a concise yet broad overview of the Master Plan as a whole should be given. The Committee requested that an executive summary be developed for the plan as well.

2) Presentation and review of Service Area 8.

Teini presented the design and layout of Service Area 8 and stated that once the Committee reviews and approves the layout it will be used as a template for the rest of the Master Plan document. The Committee noted that some fine tuning will need to be done, including larger maps embedded within the text, the use of a lighter color for the subheadings of graphs and captioning all graphs and pictures within the document.

3) Consideration of an editing / review sub-committee.

The Committee was asked if there would be any interest in developing a sub-committee to edit the rough drafts of the plan. The Committee as a whole could focus on editing and reviewing the content within the drafts; while the editing sub-committee addressed grammar and usage issues. The Committee agreed to establish an editing sub-committee.

Concurrence to appoint Gribb, McCrackin and Henry to said sub-committee, with Travsky appointed as an alternate member.

New Business

1) Public Comments: None.

Meeting adjourned at 12:13 pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Mel Owen

Administrative Assistant

Parks and Recreation - City of Laramie

Introduction

Laramie's Plan

Laramie has developed a Parks and Recreation Master Plan (PRMP) in order to implement and achieve the desired long range vision of the community. Additionally, the passage of the plan demonstrates the commitment of the Laramie community to the goals, ideas, and benefits of the PRMP. .

The legislative authority given to the City to adopt a comprehensive plan is in Wyoming Statutes Sections 15-1-501 through 15-1-512, authorizing the City to prepare and adopt a master plan for the physical development of the City.

For this plan the city has chosen to encompass areas both inside and outside of the City limits (Map 1 City boundary and ETZ). Two distinct areas exist within the plan: areas inside City limits and areas outside of City limits but within the one mile boundary from City limits. Based on the planning legislation provided by the State, any planning done outside of the City limits requires the concurrence of the county, if the plan is to be applicable and enforceable in the areas outside of the City limits. Staff has recommended to the Albany County Board of County Commissioners to concur with this plan, however, if the County does not concur, it is recognized by the City that planning elements shown outside of City limits will only be applicable if the areas are brought under the jurisdiction of the City.

It is important to note that elements of the plan are limited in applicability and enforceability. However, long range planning for the Laramie community remains of paramount importance; particularly as the City continues to grow it will likely annex new areas into the city. A long range plan, forty years, will allow for a well thought out and future-driven park system to develop over time. Without this long term vision in place, there will be little guidance for property owners, developers and the City on matters involving the park and recreation system that will well serve future populations. [Furthermore, a plan should be in place for the properties the City does own outside of City limits. This plan provides important planning elements for these properties as well as how the properties will be accessed by trails and bike lanes in the future.] may not be needed, it is assumed that reference to the City includes city-owned properties.

General Parks, Recreation, Trails and Open Space Issues and Visions

As with any plan, public input plays a substantial role in how a plan captures the vision of the community. Some of the main public comments received during the development of the 2007 **Laramie Comprehensive Plan** centered on parks, recreation, trails and open space. Because of the amount of comments received during that process, it was recognized that the community's involvement would play a major role in the development of this plan. In addition to the comments received during the development of the **Laramie Comprehensive Plan**, parks and

recreation related comments are often the most discussed during other long range planning processes such as the Turner Tract Area Plan and the Cirrus Sky Technology Park Master Plan. This topic is also discussed at length in other more current planning items such as plats and code development. Because of the continuing interest in the topic of parks and recreation, development of this plan became paramount.

In order to capture the public's vision for the plan, the Laramie City Council created an Ad Hoc Advisory Committee made up of citizens from Laramie and the surrounding area in an effort to help staff work on the development the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. One of the main directives given to the Ad Hoc Advisory Committee was to capture the vision of the community. The Ad Hoc Advisory Committee acts as a sounding board not only for the public, but for staff as well. By incorporating public comments into the process, a more unified community park and recreation vision was captured.

Public Process

For this plan, public participation was encouraged in a range of different opportunities which included public meetings, stakeholder groups, a community survey as well as unsolicited phone conversations and letters to the City, just to name a few. No matter the type of public meeting, any public comment received was considered by the Committee and integrated into the planning process. In the following section, the major methods of citizen participation are described along with the information received and compiled that was used in the development of the plan.

Public Meetings

Public meetings are typically one of the primary ways in which the public is given an opportunity to comment on a plan. During the development of this plan, the public meeting process took many different forms. The most traditional form that was used with this plan was a public open house. Over the course of the development of the plan, four public open house meetings were held. At each meeting a short presentation was given that provided background information on the current status of parks and recreation areas and the needs for future development. Maps were then reviewed by the public after the presentation. Following the presentation the public was given an opportunity to interact with staff and the Ad Hoc Advisory Committee members and encouraged to discuss any topic or concerns and provide written comments, fill out surveys and/or comment on a series of maps that were made available which contained all existing and future parks, trails, recreation areas and natural areas. These meetings were held on the 27th and 28th of February 2013, at the Laramie Recreation Center, Fire Station #2 and the Lincoln Community Center. Noon and evening meeting times were scheduled on these two days for the convenience of the public.

Another type of public meeting which was used to garner public participation was through official governing bodies, committees or commissions. Although much more

formal of a setting, participation in these meetings allowed staff to present information directly to a group and receive official feedback as well as a position related to the plan. At these meetings the public was also allowed to comment and provide feedback to the governing body, committee or commission. . Some of the different public groups included: the Parks, Trees and Recreation Advisory Board, the City of Laramie Planning Commission, the Laramie City Council, the Albany County Planning & Zoning Board, the Albany County Commissioners, the Laramie Traffic Commission, the Albany County Ranch Advisory Committee, City of Laramie Environment Advisory Committee and the Laramie Beautification Committee Meetings.

Finally, one of the most consistent ways in which the public had the opportunity to comment was through participation in the bi-weekly or sometimes weekly Ad Hoc Advisory Committee meetings. Of the public meetings listed, the Ad Hoc Advisory Committee meetings were a consistent way in which the public could get involved. The meetings, held every other Wednesday of the month, some off Wednesdays, as well as some weekends, allowed any member of the public to attend, listen or participate on scheduled agenda items.

Stakeholder Groups

Based on previous planning processes done within the Laramie community, Stakeholder Groups have been identified as a highly effective way to capture public comment. In past planning processes the comments received during these meetings provided valuable information. In contrast to comments heard during public meetings, through surveys or general public comments, Stakeholder Groups can help provide a focused look at specific issues related to specific interests and goals, in this case parks, recreation and trails.

On March 23, 2012, Stakeholder Group letters and emails were sent out to eighty groups requesting their input on issues specific to their group in relationship to parks, recreation, trails and natural areas. Each Stakeholder Group was given the opportunity to sign up for a 20- minute time slot (many of which ran longer than 20 minutes), during the week of April 16-20, 2012. During this time the Stakeholder Group was asked to answer six questions provided prior to the meeting and speak to any issues the questions did not address. The Stakeholder Groups were also given the opportunity to respond in writing if attendance was not desired or if the group was unable to attend. The letter, stakeholder questions and responses can be found in Appendix E.

Overall, a total of 21 groups responded to the City's stakeholder questionnaire, with 15 groups attending an in- person meeting. Additional groups that participated provided a written response or set up meetings at a later date to discuss the questions. Overall, participation was considered good, however not as many groups participated as

anticipated, despite follow-up calls and reminders sent by staff in an attempt to improve participation.

The Stakeholder Groups who did attend provided invaluable information that would have been difficult to attain otherwise. The participants who attended ranged from local bike groups, sports clubs and leagues, local food growing clubs, state agencies to members of the development community. A list of Stakeholder Groups and their comments can be found in Appendix E.

Of the groups who did participate, their comments varied widely. Because of the different interests that each group represented, very specific comments were provided based on the stakeholder group's interests. Through the diversity of interest groups, however, many common themes were noted:

Access to the east of town to the National Forest is extremely important to the community. In addition to the access, preservation of this area for recreation, wildlife, aquifer protection and improved livability in our community is desired. When access was discussed, the idea of access took many different forms; ranging from an all out purchase and open access, to conservation areas with possible limited access, to the creation of easements that would allow connection to the National Forest.

The desire to clean up and put to use the former BP Amoco refinery site located at Cedar and Curtis Streets as a future community park, greenbelt access, fishing area and sporting complex. All of these uses are highly desired and advantageous due to its central location for the West Laramie community. Typically these facilities are located on the outskirts of town due to lack of space. Laramie has a unique opportunity to capitalize on its central location.

Trails that connect Laramie to culturally important places are desired. Access to such locations as the Wyoming Territorial Prison or Depot Park as well as places located outside of town as the old Railroad beds or the Plains Lakes west of town are important to preserve. The "Rails-to-Trails" concept was extremely important to many different groups. (Insert Map)

The "Greenbelt Loop" concept, a loop around the community that incorporates the existing Laramie River Greenbelt and the Spring Creek Channel Greenbelt, was highly desired. The loop would also include routes north and south of town that would provide a continuous loop "around" and through the City. Such a loop would be instrumental in providing connectivity across the community. The walking and bicycle routes would provide access to parks, recreation facilities and natural areas for those who do not have cars, those who can't afford cars or those

who choose not to use motorized transportation to access the variety and types of uses. (insert greenbelt loop map)

Provide for parks, natural areas, trails and recreational opportunities within walking distance (one-quarter mile or four blocks) of residents. Recreational opportunities should be close to development, easily accessible, have parking and way-finding signage. Future and existing sites should attempt to provide user-friendly access by improving intersections, adding crosswalks, installing shared use paths and bike lanes. It is also of great importance to improve access through integrating the parks with the public transportation system. Stops on the Albany County Transit Authority bus route should be at or near available and future parks, recreation and trail facilities.

Riparian areas in and around Laramie should be protected and accessible to the community through shared use paths. Specifically, the Laramie River and the Spring Creek Channel should be preserved and protected as important wildlife and storm water management areas and still be accessible to the public.

Laramie's parks and natural areas should provide educational opportunities when available. Opportunities such as preserved natural areas, rivers and streams, ponds, et cetera, can provide a myriad of educational situations for educator or the public to use. Additionally, community gardens, xeriscaping demonstration gardens, or edible landscapes can provide other opportunities for someone to learn or simply grow some of their own food for a nutritious diet.

Largely undeveloped natural areas were deemed important to the community. Having places near the community remain undeveloped and "as is" is desired. Natural and undeveloped areas provide opportunities for more passive recreational activities, for example, wildlife and bird watching, photographic expression, or landscape art.

Providing locations within parks, natural areas or any other place for community gardens was identified as very important.

Many specialized groups expressed the desire to have a "place" in our parks system for specific facilities. Specialized groups such as the Barnstormers, BMX, Cyclo-cross, bocce ball and The Laramie Colts baseball club are just a few examples of the types of groups requesting inclusion in the parks system or more access to facilities or improving their existing access.

Improving the health a of Laramie residents through access to parks, recreation, trails and natural areas is a goal of many groups. General exercise in parks, walking/bicycling/jogging to and inside parks, etc. as well as opportunities for

local gardens, contribute to an overall improvement in the health and nutrition of the community..

Most developers believe that providing for parks is beneficial to their development, but reducing the cost to the developer providing the land or fee is important. Any change in the development approval process that can make it easier for developers is important in the effectiveness of the requirements, this would include; donations, improvements and payments in lieu of dedications. It is also important that any fees, payments or lands contributed stay within the Recreation Service Areas for use by those within the RSA or nearby. A “build and dedicate” option should also be considered for fulfilling parks requirements.

In addition to the common themes presented by Stakeholder Groups, many specific comments were provided that have been considered or incorporated into the plan:

A common signage plan should be considered for Historic sites in and around Laramie such as the Overland Trail, Ft Sanders site or the Railroad Wye on the West Side.

Help improve the public’s understanding of what parks, trails, recreation areas and natural areas are available through the use of maps and informational publications.

Water conservation/xeriscaping should be considered for all parks and facilities. Additionally, non-potable water sources for irrigation should be considered.

Flood control through parks and natural areas should be considered in development of any of these areas.

The City should consider a large production garden/farm, at least 5 acres in size for production of food for individuals, businesses or local organizations. For instance, the pivot sprinkler system at the Monolith Ranch should be considered as a future garden/farm location when water rights are transferred.

More off-street parking should be provided at parks; specifically community and neighborhood parks.

The creation of “park volunteer groups” similar to the existing group “Friends of Undine Park” should be considered for all parks as a way to maintain, provide feedback to city staff and give a sense of ownership to nearby residents or community members for each park.

Issues surrounding dogs, such as those that are off leash, leaving dog poop and other problems need to be addressed, e.g., reduced or eliminated through enforcement.

Access between the University of Wyoming Campus and the Downtown needs to be improved for pedestrians and bicyclists. The use of Ivinson Avenue as the main route is preferred.

Depot Park should remain largely open on the north side with the railroad centric portion of the park remaining on the south side.

The use of alternative energy should be considered in all our parks. Use of solar or wind power to generate the needed electricity, pump water or light the park at night should be evaluated with new parks or when updates are made to existing parks.

More soccer fields and general recreation fields are needed across the community.

Education for the public is needed regarding trespassing on private property to access public recreation areas and facilities. .

Continue cooperation with the Wyoming Territorial Prison regarding trails, access and education opportunities associate with the site. The proximity of the Prison in relation to the greenbelt and nearby parks creates a unique opportunity for the city and the State.

Based on the above comments, it is apparent that common themes as well as many specific ideas were provided buy the stakeholder groups for consideration. Although many issues were noted, not all issues raised were listed above, however, the major issues brought up were addressed or incorporated into this document by staff and the Ad Hoc Advisory Committee. In addition, the staff and Ad Hoc Advisory Committee did have access to all comments and they were considered in drafting the plan in one form or another.

Surveys

A community-wide survey was another way in which both staff and the Ad Hoc Advisory Committee felt it was necessary to engage the public. In the spring of 2012 the Wyoming Survey and Analysis Center (WYSAC) was hired to conduct a survey of Laramie and county residents within 1 mile of city limits regarding parks, recreation, trails and natural areas. The survey was developed by City of Laramie staff, the Ad Hoc Advisory Committee and WYSAC personell to assess preferences and attitudes about various Parks and Recreation related issues. The survey process was completed during July and August of 2012 and a final report was provided in October of 2012.

Overall, the survey data collected was helpful in understanding how area residents felt about parks, recreation, trails and natural areas. In some cases new information was gained through the survey, such as low satisfaction with on-street bike lanes, a lower priority for natural areas (except for east of town) compared to other amenities such as parks, trails and recreation facilities and that people would like more parks in Service Area 6.

In other cases presently known issues, conditions, attitudes and the direction of our parks, recreation, trails, and natural area were reaffirmed such as the need for more restroom facilities/being opened all year around, usage of our parks (times and specific parks) and desired amenities citizens wish to see such as trails, dog parks and shelters.

A summary of the survey and results, as well as any other information related to the survey such as response numbers, process and write-in answers can be found in Appendix C. The full survey and results can be obtained from the City.

Other

Aside from the traditional means such as the Stakeholder Groups, public meetings or surveys other methods were employed to gather comments and encourage participation. Many times these methods were less formal (i.e. not a meeting), but provided a way to acquire information from the public.

A web site was specifically set up for the development of the plan, which provided, agendas, maps and other information related to the process was developed. Additionally the website served as a way for draft documents to be made available to the public for review and comment throughout the process. Through information provided on this site, mailed and emailed comments were provided by citizens as well as in person inquiries and phone calls, many of these comments may not have been generated through traditional means. Other social networking techniques, such as Facebook and Twitter were used to disseminate information such as meeting times, agendas and information.

Staff also made available the questionnaire survey on the web site. Those who responded to the survey through the web- site were not counted in the WYSAC statistical analysis; however, the responses, 321 received, were reviewed and recorded as overall responses and considered extremely valuable. These surveys have been incorporated into the overall public comments we have received on this project.

Newspaper ads were also used throughout the process to inform community members of events and meetings and new information. In this day and age the internet plays an increasing role in informing the public, however, in an effort to be as inclusive as possible, it was recognized that not everyone uses or has access to the internet so reaching these groups through the newspaper is key.

Appendix contains the individual public comments, survey results, and background on the public process that helped provide the essential elements and visions for the plan. .

Visions for the Plan

Based on the public comments, background information, other plans and codes and the Ad Hoc Advisory Committee's expertise, the Ad Hoc Advisory Committee developed a vision for the Plan. The vision is intended to provide the inspiration and framework for the plan, which includes generalized goals and direction. The following vision was approved by the Ad Hoc Advisory Committee:

1. To provide equitable parks and recreation services and opportunities to all areas and people of the community.
2. Develop a parks, trails, recreation and natural areas system that is specific to Laramie and the surrounding community.
3. Establish new parks in conjunction with future development or in areas of park deficiency; parks should be considered no different than other vital infrastructure, such as streets, sidewalks and utilities.
4. To improve the visual appearance of our community through beautification of areas owned by the city by improving their recreational and natural area qualities.
5. To provide for the future needs of the community in relationship to parks, recreation, trails and natural areas through sound planning and visionary foresight.
6. Establish a funding mechanism that provides for parks, recreation, trails and natural areas that adequately serve the population, based on population growth and development pressures.
7. Provide for a continuous loop around (and throughout) the community for off street bike and pedestrian paths that allow users to access parks, recreation and natural areas.
8. Secure permanent access to the east of town to ensure preservation of the natural areas, and at a minimum access to the National Forest.

Chapter Two

Planning

Why Have a Parks and Recreation Master Plan?

The City of Laramie's **Parks and Recreation Master Plan** was developed from a community vision that believed parks, recreation, trails and natural area components of our community are important and require the long range planning vision that only a comprehensive plan could provide.

Throughout the adoption and development of the **1982 Parks Master Plan**, the **1995 Land Use Element** (Laramie's first master plan), and the **2007 Laramie Comprehensive Plan** one common theme was present: parks, recreation, trails and natural areas are the number one priority for community residents.

All three of these important planning documents also present consistent recommendations, visions and goals that relate to the further development of parks and recreation resources. The support of the community, as exemplified in the development of the plans noted above, was the impetus for the development of a long term master plan for parks, recreation, trails and natural areas. The development of this document is simply the first step in achieving the high, but warranted, community expectations for parks, recreation, trails and natural areas.

Parks, recreation, trails and natural areas are an afterthought for some communities; while these amenities are desired by the community development they are unfortunately not a high priority. However, Laramie is different and is not willing to consider this need as an afterthought. Laramie is a community that is willing to commit to a **Parks, Recreation, Trails and Natural Areas Master Plan** so that these opportunities are at the forefront of decision making. This plan is necessary so the community and its leaders can work towards achieving the high expectations, visions, goals and standards established and outlined by the community through this process.

Benefits of a Plan

Although a community's desire may differ as to why a plan should be developed, almost all well-developed plans have inherent benefits for the community. The most apparent benefit a parks master plan can provide is the long term, community-wide, planning needed to provide facilities for the entire community. In this case, the Laramie plan for parks, recreation, trails and natural area has examined the community needs for the next 40 years. Although this timetable may seem daunting, this long term approach will help ensure that the overall goals and vision of the community are attainable. A long term approach aids in planning, budgeting and acquisition of parks, recreation, trails and natural areas as well as many other benefits that reach beyond providing for just parks and recreation facilities.

Aside from good general planning practice, one of the specific benefits of a plan is to help aid in budgeting. In any budgeting situation, especially in a government setting, short term budgeting often leads to inefficiencies in the way money is expended. Short-term planning can result in duplication and fiscal inefficiencies of the funds. Although the community has traditionally shown a commitment to these facilities, Laramie is not alone in feeling the difficulties of budget cuts. Many times when budgetary cuts are being made parks and recreation facilities are targeted first since they are seen as “non-essential”. Long term planning and the benefits it provides makes this plan an essential component of good stewardship, managing the budget received year-to-year while keeping the long term vision within grasp.

Another benefit of the Plan is the economic impact of a well-developed park, recreation, trails and natural areas system to a community. The perception that parks are “non-essential amenities” within a community is no longer a reality. Across the country these “amenities” are now essential services and, in fact, can act as an economic booster to the community. Parks, recreation, trails and natural areas have all been shown to increase property values in all types of neighborhoods, including commercial and residential areas (cite references). However, for a community to reap these benefits financial resources must be budgeted and the park, recreation, trails and natural areas viewed as essential and no different than other general services such as streets, water and sewer.

Continuing on the topic of economics, numerous studies have shown that these facilities are now a key factor related to economic development in a community (cite references). Companies looking to locate/relocate or those deciding if they should remain in a community are making decisions to stay or go based on the local amenities and the quality of life the community can provide to their employees. Companies that consider these factors typically employ well-educated individuals, with higher paying jobs, that ultimately create a higher tax base within a community. By having a long term vision and parks and recreation plan substantial economic benefit can be realized that is far beyond the amount of money budgeted to create and maintain these facilities. In addition to bolstering the local economy, parks, recreation, trails and natural areas have become a significant tourism opportunity especially for those communities who make their facilities a high priority and create unique visitor experiences. Ultimately, all of these economic considerations result in one conclusion: a higher tax base for the community and increased visitor dollars, which in current difficult economic times, is highly desired and sought after.

Similar to the reasons why businesses are looking to communities with a well planned parks, recreation, trails and natural areas system, residents look at these same amenities as creating a “community” or “place” that is a desirable place to live, raise a family and retire. Good parks, recreation, trails and natural areas play an important social role as a gathering place for leisure, recreational opportunities or community events. Parks and recreation amenities help to *create community* and they are often cited as a reason to put down roots. Although these amenities do

not stop attrition, they do slow it and the benefits gained from long term residents staying in a community is invaluable.

Beyond just providing places to play and recreate, better physical and mental health is also cited as an additional benefit to having parks and an integrated path system. As communities become more urban fewer areas are available and easily accessible for play and recreation. Because of this situation parks are playing an increasing role in providing locations for general physical activity. National trends indicate a lack of physical activity as a major health issue across the nation. The lack of physical activity is attributed to premature death, heart disease and most notably, obesity. This lack of physical activity is often attributed to having minimal recreation opportunities. However, communities who provide accessible parks and recreation areas, see increased physical activity and a lowering of these life-shortening conditions.

Another significant benefit, especially for Laramie and surrounding area, is general environmental improvements. Parks and recreation initiatives and programs promote the urban and surrounding rural environment by providing improvements that might not otherwise be accomplished by a community on their own. From the Laramie River Rehabilitation project (which Laramie recently completed), the improvements to the Spring Creek Channel, to possible future protection of natural areas east of town and the Casper aquifer, the general environment has been improved in a way that contributes to the overall health and betterment of our Parks and Recreation system as well as our community as a whole.

The benefits of a parks, recreation, trails and natural areas plan are widespread, thus it is important for the citizens and leaders of the community to understand the essential components of the plan. A well planned and maintained parks, recreation, trails and natural areas system provides a wide range of benefits to a community. These benefits include physical improvements to the community, efficient utilization of fiscal resources, improved physical and mental health and possible expanded economic base. In addition, parks are important in creating better places to live, work and recreate for the city and surrounding community as they provide free recreation opportunities for citizens at all income levels. Laramie will receive these benefits through the implementation of this plan. .

Relationship to Other Plans and Codes

Parks, Recreation, Trails and Open Space goals and recommendations have been outlined in many previous plans adopted by Laramie and its surrounding community over the years. The plans and the goals, visions, action statements, and recommendations of those plans have been summarized below and more specifically in Appendix A.

Laramie Bikeway Study (December 1978)

The Laramie Bikeway Study provides the citizens of Laramie and its surrounding community with a comprehensive framework for the on-going planning and implementation of a city-wide

bikeway system. The system is meant to provide Laramie with an urban transportation alternative to be integrated with pedestrian, automobile, and public transit systems. Ultimately, it should significantly increase bicycle rider usage and reduce reliance on the automobile.

Comprehensive Plan: Parks, Recreation and Open Space (June 1982)

Developed as a policy guide for providing leisure services and parks to the citizens of Laramie, the plan was based on the needs and practical ability of the city to deliver those services. Reasonable levels of service for parks, leisure and recreational services were identified and planned throughout the community. The ultimate goal was a “complete system” of parks for current users as well as the future needs of the growing community. This plan was the first Parks Plan adopted by the City of Laramie and provided the guidance and vision of the park system the City has today.

Land Use Element (February 7, 1995)

Laramie’s first comprehensive community development plan was adopted on February 7, 1995. The plan analyzed existing conditions of the community and identified land use trends and factors anticipated to affect future land use. Typical of most Comprehensive Plans, a forecast for lands to be developed was given and management policies developed for those areas possibly affected by growth. Furthermore, specific guidelines were recommended that adequate park and open space be provided as development occurs and the community grows.

Laramie Bicycle Facility Master Plan (May 28, 1998)

Recognizing the need to develop alternative forms of transportation, the City of Laramie developed and adopted the *Laramie Bicycle Facility Master Plan*. The Plan’s main vision, was to “...accommodate current bicycle use and promote and encourage the increase use of the bicycle as an alternative form of transportation and for recreation, within the fiscal constraints of the City of Laramie.” By providing transportation routes connecting key places in the community and identifying further and existing system needs, a complete bicycle system can be provided.

Laramie Comprehensive Plan (August 21, 2007)

The *City of Laramie Comprehensive Plan* was adopted on August 21, 2007. Developed over an approximate two year process that involved over 60 stakeholder groups, hundreds of citizen participants and countless hours of community involvement, the plan was adopted. The *Laramie Comprehensive Plan* was adopted to coordinate decisions involving planning, land use, infrastructure and natural resources throughout the community. The plan is designed to be dynamic while respond to changes of the community and its environment. Specific to the development of the Parks, Recreation, Trails and Open Space Master Plan a wide variety of goals, visions and action statements were identified specific to the development of parks,

recreation, trails and open space. Furthermore, the most common comments received during the development of the Plan related to parks, recreation, trails and open space and development of a Master Plan for these facilities.

The *Laramie Comprehensive Plan* developed the following goals, objectives and action items that directly relate to the visions and recommendations put forth in this plan.

Parks and Recreation System Goals and Action Statements

In this section the goals and action statements for each element of the plan are set forth. The goals and action statements are to be used as a starting point to achieve the overall vision of this plan.

New Parks and Facilities Goals and Action Statements

To enhance the system of neighborhood and community parks that will adequately serve the existing and projected future parks and recreational needs of the whole community, the City will need to acquire and develop parks within identified deficiency areas. Proposed parks, trail system expansions, bikeways, and open space preservation areas are shown in *Map 4.3, Proposed Park Facility Expansion Areas, Figure 4.3, Trail Development to the East and Map 4.4 Bicycle and Trails Master Plan, Map 4.5 South and East Laramie Trails Master Plan*. These improvements will help to achieve full service area coverage of community parks and an even distribution of neighborhood parks. Goals and action statements specifically include:

1. Completion of a Parks, Trails and Recreation Master Plan. Within the plan the goals and action statement in the Laramie Comprehensive Plan shall be further developed. Development of this plan should not inhibit any of these goals or action statements from being developed but should further plan and aid these goals and action statements. Additional and more specific goals shall be developed with the completion of the new Parks, Trails and Recreation Master Plan (*Map 4.4 Bicycle and Trails Master Plan, Map 4.5 South and East Laramie Trails Master Plan*).
2. Establish new neighborhood parks and open space in conjunction with future developments. Parks should accommodate new residential development as well as supplementing those areas that are lacking parks service. The City of Laramie should attempt to achieve a standard equal or higher than the national standards for parkland acreage and recreational facilities.
3. Acquiring and developing new parks can be difficult. Achieving a system of neighborhood and community parks that is uniformly distributed may be accomplished in several ways, including:
4. Pre-development acquisition. The City should continue to identify opportunities to acquire desirable tracts that are favorably situated to accommodate expansion of the park system.
 - a. Land donation requirements concurrent with subdivision approval. Developers should be required to set aside five percent of an intended residential development site's area for improvement as a future park that would serve the newly established neighborhood. At the Preliminary Plat stage of the project, planning for a park should be explored by looking at location as well as other factors. Requiring the dedication of park land concurrent with a

final plat or a development site plan is a sound method to assure adequate park areas consistent with the demand and impact placed on the public parks system by new development. For overall project sites smaller than 100 acres (i.e., the resulting park site would be smaller than five acres), a fee comparable to five percent of the site's market value should be provided to an established City trust fund, and earmarked for future land acquisition in the vicinity of the proposed development.

- b. **Developer impact fees.** In addition to the land donation requirements stated above, developers should be required to pay an impact fee based on new residential units in order to fund the actual improvements of parkland. Collection of this impact fee would occur during the building permitting process, prior to issuance of a certificate of occupancy.
 - c. **Public/private partnerships, donations, and other strategies.** Just as universities, hospitals, and cultural institutions systematically pursue individual and corporate donations, the City of Laramie should promote opportunities to receive donations and bequests of land. An excellent example of such a bequest is the "Turner Tract" property, which was donated to Laramie two generations ago. As with the Turner property, however, it is important that properties be received with "few or no strings attached" to enable flexibility in development planning and possible sale of less-favorably situated parcels.
 - d. **Development Code Updates.** Use of the new development code to establish processes to address acquisition of park land and trails.
 - e. **Funding Sources.** The City will need to rely on other funding measures for full development of a parks system. Donations, bonding, taxes and capital budgeting must be evaluated and considered in an effort to develop a parks system set out in this plan.
5. Reuse of existing brownfield sites as public open space or as some other recreational site.
 6. Develop standards that aid the City of Laramie and other entities such as Schools, Private Companies and others in an attempt at shared facilities. These standards can increase recreational opportunity without high costs.
 7. Identify a location for a new city cemetery site. Capacity at the existing site will be up in 10-15 years (*Map 4.3, Proposed Park Facility Expansion Areas*). Sites identified are only possible locations. Only one location would need to be selected depending upon the size.
 8. Work with local interest groups and volunteers in helping develop, maintain, improve and extend our local Parks and Trails.

New and Extended Trails Goals and Action Statements

The Laramie Greenbelt should be extended to encompass the entire City and provide access to outlying open space resources in addition to improving the walkability and connectivity of the community. Proposed goals and action statements include:

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1. Acquire and develop trail locations shown on *Map 4.4, Bicycle and Trails Master Plan* and *Figure 4.3, Trail Development to the East, Map 4.5 South and East Laramie Trails Master Plan*.
2. Extension of the Greenbelt eastward from the intersection of the Laramie River and Curtis Street along Reynolds and Harney Streets to the athletic fields complex.
3. Connect greenbelt and trails to adjacent neighborhoods and parks as well as provide more trailheads.
4. Extension of the Greenbelt westward from the intersection of the Laramie River and Curtis Street to Welsh Lane and Route 130.
5. Continuation of the Greenbelt along the Laramie River southwest to the Monolith Ranch river access point and further to the end of the Monolith Ranch property.
6. Extension of the Greenbelt along the river northward from Curtis to the Union Pacific rail road crossing.
7. Tie in locations for the Greenbelt to the BP Amoco site should be considered, especially if this site is developed for parks or open space land in the future.
8. Completion of the Spring Creek trail.
9. A new trail built in conjunction with the Bill Nye Avenue corridor street project. This trail will serve as a major east west pedestrian and bike route from the future Turner Tract development to 3rd Street.
10. Continued maintenance of the east-west abandoned railroad right-of-way that goes under I-80 near Van Buren. This site could provide necessary access under I-80 for Bike or trail.
11. A new trail developed south of Interstate 80, along a creek bed, linking to the existing Valley View, Country Meadows, Sherman Hills, Laramie Plains, and Imperial Heights neighborhoods at the far southwest edge of the City. Limitations on linear expansion to the south and west are imposed by I-80, the railroad tracks, and the Laramie River. As new crossings are exceptionally costly, continuing attempts must be made to secure separated trail/walkway rights-of-way or easements for all current and future crossings.
12. Maintenance/Improvement of Adams Street trail.
13. Development of trails found in *Figure 4.3, Trail Development to the East*.

Bicycle Lanes and Bikeways Goals and Action Statements

Pedestrian and bicycle facilities serve not only as alternative modes of transportation, but also as important forms of recreation. Therefore, in addition to the greenbelt and trail system improvements recommended above, the City should develop a series of marked bikeways or bicycle lanes along the existing street system. These routes, are shown in *Map 4.4, Bicycle and Trails Master Plan*.

1. Completion of a Parks, Trails and Recreation Master Plan. Within the plan the goals and action statement in the Laramie Comprehensive Plan shall be further developed. Development of this plan should not inhibit any of these goals or action statements

from being developed but should further plan and aid these goals and action statements.

2. Mark and stripe bike lanes throughout the city along with extra wide curb lanes on local, arterial and collector streets. Laramie's exceedingly wide residential streets present an ideal opportunity for reconfiguration and striping.
3. Routine maintenance such as repainting, snow removal and sweeping for debris must be incorporated so bike lanes and trails are safe and useable throughout the year.
4. Continued assessment of trails system should be done. The remaining components of the trail and bike network should be based on actual usage of the system.
5. The system of off-street bike and walking trails should be designed and constructed in compliance with the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Further information on pedestrian and bicycle facilities is provided in *Chapter 8, Transportation*.

Open Space Goals and Action Statements

1. Portions of the BP/Amoco brownfield site near the Curtis Street crossing of the Laramie River should be evaluated for its potential for open space or as a recreational opportunity.
2. Identify if the Mountain Cement and Union Pacific sites south of Interstate 80 at the Laramie River could provide areas of open space near the Laramie River Greenbelt.
3. Undeveloped area along Spring Creek immediately east of the 3rd Street entrance to Laramie. Acquisition of this land would enhance the greenbelt along Spring Creek and would improve the appearance of this important gateway to the City.
4. Areas along and at the top and bottom of the ridge at the northern border of Laramie should be protected through easements, strategic land acquisitions, and the adoption of zoning amendments that would establish greater yard restrictions and development standards on ridgelines. This would preserve existing clear sightlines to the Laramie Mountains.
5. Areas within the one mile boundary should continue to have undeveloped open space so preservation of the rural atmosphere of this area can be preserved. Having undeveloped area within the one mile boundary should help keep the small town and independent feel of the community while discouraging sprawl.
6. Areas considered to be "sensitive" (i.e. aquifer protection area, floodplains, ridgelines, unique features, etc.) should be protected or reserved as open space when these areas are contained within developments or should be set aside before development occurs through purchase, transfer of development rights, overlay zones or through other methods.
7. Provide and Identify areas on the Monolith Ranch property for open space and recreational activities (*Map 2.1, Monolith Ranch*).

Casper Aquifer Protection Plan & Ordinance (June 3, 2008)

Adopted June 3, 2008, the *Casper Aquifer Protection Plan* provided a needed update to an adopted 2002 plan. The plan added enhanced protection of the aquifer and its recharge area through recommendations of increasing the area that was to be protected, updated information and protection measures and specific regulations. In conjunction with the plan, the city adopted a regulation that required development within the Aquifer Protection Area to complete a process called a Site Specific Investigation (SSI). The SSI details the specific impacts a development may have on the aquifer in relationship to the Aquifer Protection Plan. The Casper Aquifer Protection Plan and Ordinance exemplifies protection of sensitive areas, which is noted as a goal of this plan.

Albany County Comprehensive Plan (August 2008)

In 2008, Albany County adopted their first master planning document which serves as a guide for future land development in Albany County. As a foundation for land management in the county, one of the seven primary public goals of the plan was to provide for recreational opportunities in the County. Furthermore natural and environmental resources, cultural resources and open space and public lands were also noted as important land development factors that should be considered. This plan provides a vision for what the county believes is important when it comes to providing for Parks and Recreation needs now and in the future. This plan has been relied on by the City for areas located near Laramie, within the one mile extra territorial zone boundary.

Unified Development Code (March 2, 2010; effective July 1, 2010)

A long awaited update to the City of Laramie's municipal code occurred in the 2010. The code, which regulates all forms of development, included many provisions which apply to the current park master plan. Most significantly, the adopted code requires new residential development to provide either parks, trails or open space as part of the development proposal or the option for the City to consider in-lieu fees in exchange for land. This provision is the first time the City of Laramie has required development to do this and it is the first time the Parks and Recreation Department has had a funding mechanism to reasonably provide for parks in the City.

University of Wyoming Long Range Development Plan (January 2010)

The University of Wyoming created the Long Range Development Plan (LRDP) as an update to the 1991 Master Plan and the 2002-2007 Campus Facilities Plan. The plan is a guide for campus growth that integrates policy and land use. The plan "...identifies the physical development, principles, guidelines and processes needed to support the academic goals of the University." Because the University provides recreational opportunities not only to their students, but to the community as well, their plan, goals and vision plays an important role in how the community plans for its parks, recreation, trails and open space needs.

A Downtown Development Plan for Laramie Wyoming (February 19, 2012)

Although parks are not typically a major focus for Downtown Plans, the Laramie community has noted that parks and recreation needs should be addressed in our downtown. The plan not only identifies the importance of existing parks such as Depot Park and the new completed 1st Street Plaza Park, but also notes the importance of new areas for recreation and leisure through the establishment of plazas and green areas. In addition, the plan emphasizes the importance of solidifying/creating/improving key connections to our bicycle pathway network.

Management Plan for Water Rights on Monolith Ranch (May 2004)

Need to fill in this portion of the Plan.

Monolith Ranch Agricultural Management Plan (May 2004)

Because the Monolith Ranch is one of the largest and richest City land holdings, in terms of size and resources, review of the property in the context of parks and recreation is significantly important. However, special consideration must be given to the primary role the Monolith Ranch plays; a future source of water for the City of Laramie, based on water surface and groundwater water rights associated with the ranch. Although the current role of the ranch is related to water rights, future consideration, following transfer of the rights to municipal uses, must be given to how the ranch will integrate into the parks and recreational needs of the community. Intermediate steps in using the ranch for parks and recreation should be explored, keeping in mind that these uses must not jeopardize water rights.

Medicine Bow National Forest Revised Land and Resource Management Plan (December 29, 2003)

Because of the recreation importance the Medicine Bow National Forest, especially to the east of Laramie, this plan provides information related to how the forest is managed and what the future of this forest is anticipated to be. Although much of the information may be beyond the scope of this plan, the information can provide valuable insight into the National Forest's goals and how they can align with Laramie's recreation goals.

Wyoming Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan 2009-2013

In addition to reviewing local planning documents, regional planning documents such as the *Wyoming Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan* play an important role in understanding, coordinating and complementing statewide goals. Many times, local and state goals and resources can be combined to create an overall better product when it comes to providing for the recreational needs of the community and state.

Chapter Three

The Laramie Community Profile

Community Setting

Laramie is located within Albany County in southeast Wyoming. Known as the “Gem City of the Plains”, the community is nestled in the Laramie Valley and surrounded by the Medicine Bow National Forest with the Snowy Range Mountains to the west and Laramie Mountains to the east. Laramie is considered a high plains steppe and has an elevation of 7,200 feet. The Laramie River flows through the community providing drinking water and abundant recreation opportunities. (insert map)

Home to the University of Wyoming, the state’s only four-year higher-education institution, Laramie is renowned for its bustling school semesters and quiet mountain summers. The city is intersected by the Union Pacific Railroad route and US Interstate 80. Interstate 80 spans the southern half of the state providing access to Cheyenne, fifty miles east, and numerous Wyoming communities to the west. Laramie could be considered a northern anchor to Colorado’s Front Range with Denver located approximately two hours south.

Laramie is a quintessential western community that serves as a great example of Wyoming’s beauty. The community attracts outdoor enthusiasts as it is surrounded by recreation opportunities that include skiing, mountain biking, hiking, camping, fishing, and nature/scenic viewing and photography. In addition, the Historic Downtown Laramie area attracts both a vibrant day and night life. Laramie has preserved its western Wyoming feel while also attracting an eclectic mix of education and recreation interests and opportunities.

Population & Demographics

According to the 2010 US Census, the population of Laramie is 30,816 people. Laramie’s population has continued to grow at a steady linear rate since the 1930’s. Based on this steady growth, population is projected to increase by 6,629 people over the next thirty years, and 10,000 over the next forty years, bringing the Laramie population to a total of 37,445 people by 2040 and 40,000 by 2050. (insert population graph)

Using 2010 US Census Data, staff analyzed the distribution of population across the community. When analyzing the community’s Park Service Areas, the highest populations are clearly located in the core of the community; generally east of 1st Street, west of 30th Street, south of Reynolds and north of I-80, and situated centrally around the University of Wyoming Campus. The higher populations correspond to Service Areas 5, 6, 8 and 9. The majority of the remaining population was found around the core or in the developed areas of Laramie with population numbers decreasing further from the core.

When looking at the census block data, a more detailed picture of population distribution can be seen. Higher population numbers can be found in mobile home communities, twin homes developments, multi-family development and the college dorms, as well as higher density single family development within the older parts of the community.

Service Area Map, Population Map, Etc in this section

Future Growth Predictions

Laramie’s future growth cannot be precisely predicted but can be reasonably estimated. Generally speaking, there are areas where residential development is more likely to occur than others. Factors such as the availability of infrastructure, topography, land availability, soils and geographic location all play a role in possible future residential development. Other factors impacting future growth are existing plats, development proposals, and future development plans. Estimating future growth areas is important because it can provide for long-term guidance in planning for parks and budget priorities based on projected population.

Based on the projected 10,000 person growth over the next 40 years, staff has estimated where growth is likely to occur. Although this information is only an estimate, the information is helpful in guiding prioritization for acquisition of park land in and around the City.

Service Area	Population per Service Area	Staff Estimated Population Increase (10,000 in 2050)	Type of Development
1	3019	150	Residential Development
2	1147	100	Residential Development
3	1749	1000	Residential Development, Vacant Land
4	1077	100	Residential Redevelopment, Some Vacant Properties
5	4549	100	Residential Redevelopment, Other Area Limited (?)
6	5017	2000	Student Housing, Residential Development
7	1915	500	Grove, Other Area Limited
8	4371	500	Multi-Family Residential Development
9	4442	500	Residential Development
10	371	1500	Multi-Family Residential Development & Residential Development
11	586	500	Limited County Residential Development

12	1961	100	Residential Development
13	302	500	Residential Development & County Residential Development
14	259	500	Residential Development & County Residential Development
15	102	100	Limited County Residential Development
16	252	50	Limited County Residential Development
17	725	100	Multi-Fam. Residential Development, Limited
18	379	25	Residential Development, Limited
19	25	100	Residential Development, Limited, C.C.
20	18	250	Residential Development & County Residential Development
21	1	250	Residential Development
22	11	25	Limited County Residential Development
23	2	25	No Residential, Data Park
24	1	25	No Residential, Data Park
25	0	1000	Residential Development
		10000	

Laramie’s population is unique. Laramie is home to the University of Wyoming, the only four-year higher education institution in the state. Additionally, a branch of Laramie County Community College and Wyoming Technical School (WyoTech) are also located in Laramie. These institutions change the demographic makeup of the community in a manner that is not typical of most towns in Wyoming. Based on 2010 US Census data, a third of Wyoming’s population is between the ages of 25-54 years old. In Laramie over half of the population is between the ages of 15 and 34 years old. Cohorts within this age range are more frequent users of parks and recreation facilities, thus providing an even greater need for development of these amenities.

Climate

Due to Laramie’s high elevation of 7,200 feet the community experiences long winters and relatively cool summers. The average annual high temperature is 54°F and the average annual low is 25°F. The Laramie area receives an average of eleven inches of rain per year and has a short growing season lasting an average of ninety days. One persistent characteristic in Laramie is the presence of clean air and clear, sunny, blue sky days. The community records an average of 260 to 300 sunny and clear days per year.

History

Laramie was established as a railroad town in the mid-1860s due in part to the abundance of water needed for steam engines. The Laramie River and a local aquifer provided this important resource which allowed the town to grow and prosper during the burgeoning days of the railroad. As the railroad's importance lessened through the years, Laramie continued to grow and transformed itself from a lawless railroad town into a more modern and progressive community. Laramie was not only the first Wyoming town to hold a municipal election, but was also the first place a woman cast a legal vote in the United States.

Laramie further shaped its identity as a progressive community by establishing itself as the education center of Wyoming with the founding of the University of Wyoming in 1886. The newly transformed town was known as an education center for Wyoming and for the entire western United States. As the educational aspect of the community grew, business also grew. Laramie was home to mills, tie treatment plants, a brickyard, icehouses, a brewery and a plaster mill. Many of these industries do not exist today but proved essential to the community's growth. Over the years Laramie has transitioned from a western railroad town to an educationally centered community and home to 30,816 residents.

History of Parks, Recreation, Trails and Natural Areas in Laramie

The City of Laramie has a solid and rooted history in parks, recreation, trails and natural areas. With the creation of Undine Park in the 1880's, the Laramie River Greenbelt corridor, and the recent Laramie Community Recreation Center it is clear that the City and community have a commitment to keep parks, recreation, trails and natural areas a high priority.

Undine Park was established in the 1880s when Laramie was part of the Dakota Territory as the community's first park and continued to be the only park in the area until 1929. The property was later sold to the City of Laramie for \$100 dollars by the original homesteaders of the property. The land was thought to be worthless because the Spring Creek channel flowed through the site creating a swampland. Laramie's City Park was founded in what is now the University of Wyoming campus. The University of Wyoming's "State Park" is located between 9th Street, Hoyt Hall, and Ivinson Street. The City offered the site as an incentive to establish the University in Laramie in 1886 (?) and it has remained a park. The park was officially set aside by the Wyoming Legislature from development at the same time a development restriction was put on Prexy's Pasture, also located on the university campus.

Following Statehood in 1890, the City of Laramie acquired two additional parks, LaBonte Park and LaPrele Park in 1929. LaBonte Park is Laramie's largest community park at 32 acres and now comprises a skate park, baseball fields, paved walking trail, and two playgrounds. LaPrele Park serves as green space and natural area with a youth fishing pond, and contains a disc golf

course and a playground. The Spring Creek channel cuts through the park often serving as a watering hole for antelope and other wildlife.

In 1947, Washington Park was established and now serves as one of Laramie's most notable and heavily used parks. The 13-acre park has a nearly one-mile paved walking path around the perimeter of the park. Washington Park also contains many mature cottonwood trees in what Laramie residents call the "Tree Area".

In 1950, the City was able to obtain a section of land next to the Laramie River which is now the location of Optimist Park. The site was envisioned as an access point for a future trail system adjacent to the river. The Laramie Greenbelt corridor was acquired piece by piece and now extends over six miles in length containing a paved multi-use path which follows the Big Laramie River. The paved multi-use path is heavily used by a wide array of community members for a variety of recreational activities including walking, running, skating, and cycling. Additionally, the path plays host to numerous community fundraising 5K races. Acquisition of this land provided the community exceptional recreation and wildlife viewing activities near the Big Laramie River. During dawn or dusk it is common to see deer, fox, beaver, and otter. On occasions the stray moose or mountain lion wanders in for a visit. The paved multi-use path offers additional scenic views of the meandering river, Medicine Bow National Forest, and open prairie. Optimist Park is currently home to an off leash dog park which was redesigned, relocated and improved in 2013.

As parks increased and recreation activities became more important to the community, the City of Laramie established the first Parks and Recreation Advisory Board in 1957. The board was tasked with establishing and planning future parks and recreation opportunities in the community. By 1960 this board had established the first year-round recreational event programming which was, at the time, on the cutting edge for a western community this size.

In 1963, the City of Laramie leased the park areas surrounding the Union Pacific Railroad Depot and over the years has developed this downtown park into not just a recreation space but a living history of the railroad's influence on the development of Laramie.

Kiwanis Park, west Laramie's only park, was established in the 1980's. The park is comprised of nine acres of developed turf with soccer fields, picnic shelter, and playground equipment. It also has a City of Laramie entrance sign and parking lot that welcomes travelers from Highway 130.

Multiple outdoor sport fields have been created in Laramie including soccer fields, and two (only two???) softball backstops. In 2001, the City acquired the indoor ice arena originally built by the Laramie Amateur Hockey Club; which later became the Laramie Community Ice and Events Center. The facility is used for a variety of recreation and spectator activities, including ice skating and roller derby. The city's most recently created facility is the Laramie Community Recreation Center that serves as a public place for indoor/outdoor swimming, basketball,

weightlifting, running, child care, health fairs, sports competitions, and general health and recreation services.

The rich history of Laramie's parks and recreation system demonstrates this community's commitment to parks, recreation, trails and natural areas. From the establishment of Laramie's first park prior to Wyoming statehood and the continued dedication being shown today; Laramie has made parks and recreations facilities a priority. The majority of Laramie's parks and recreation facilities have been developed with community input and citizen grass roots efforts, which should continue into the future through the development of this master plan.

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- List of Tables
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