

PARK & RECREATION
TRENDS

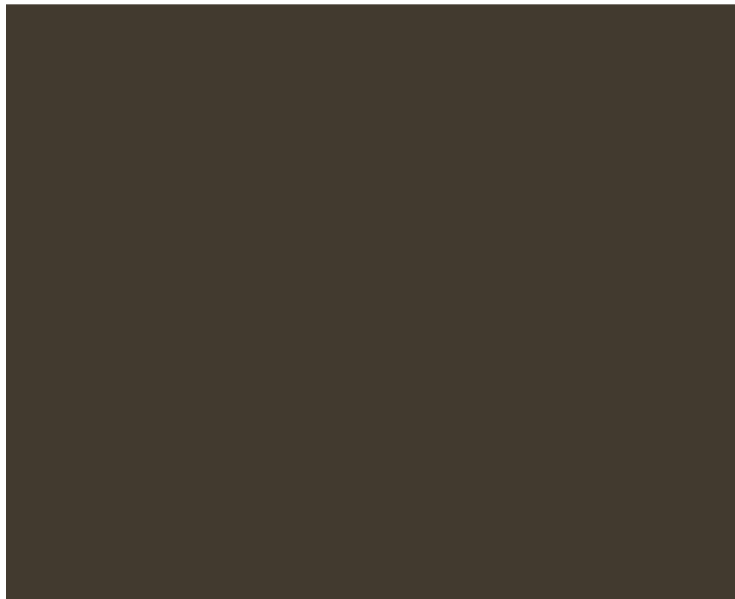


State and Local Participation Trends

As the least obese state in the country, Colorado residents are generally more active than the average American. Colorado may be the least obese, but the obesity rate has increased from less than 10% in 1990 to nearly 20% of the population today. One reason that Colorado may be deviating from national trends is that the state is known for its extensive recreation opportunities available to residents and visitors alike. Colorado's natural resources are preserved through thousands of acres of national forest, multiple National Parks, BLM lands and counties, and municipalities that have extensive collections of open space lands and parks. Additionally, trails (both paved and unpaved) abound throughout these lands, providing opportunities for people to walk, hike, bike, skate and horseback ride. The state's mountainous areas, specifically foothills regions draw rock climbing enthusiasts at not only natural climbing locations, but numerous indoor climbing walls in recreation centers and private companies throughout the state. Additionally, mountain biking, camping (RV and tent), and motorized off-road exploration are all common outdoor pursuits for Colorado residents. Winters in Colorado bring about snow and ice, making skiing (downhill and cross-country), snowboarding, sledding and snowshoeing popular activities during the winter months.

In 2008, Colorado State Parks and Colorado's Department of Natural Resources, in conjunction with a steering committee comprised of private, public-sector and non-profit stakeholders, prepared a five-year Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP). According to the executive summary of the SCORP, the report was created to "provide information on recreation trends and demands and offers strategies to ensure that Colorado's outdoor recreation heritage is maintained and improved." The most recently completed plan provides action strategies for 2008 to 2013; and many of the findings of that plan have been incorporated into this section of the report.

PARK & RECREATION TRENDS



In Colorado, recreation demand continues to increase, which impacts existing outdoor recreation lands and resources managed by federal agencies, the state, counties, cities and districts. Coloradans, as well as visitors to the state, use the public lands available to them year-round to hike or walk, camp, bicycle, picnic, ski and sled, to name a few. According to the Trends Section of the SCORP, the most popular outdoor activities in Colorado in 2006 were:

- Walking for pleasure (83%)
- Attend a family gathering (75%)
- View/photograph natural scenery (74%)
- Gardening or landscaping for pleasure (70%)
- Visit nature centers, etc. (69%)
- Picnicking (65%)
- Attend outdoor sports events (63%)
- Driving for pleasure (61%)
- Sightseeing (50%)
- View/photograph wildlife (50%)

According to a 2005 study by the Outdoor Industry Foundation (OIF) evaluating those who participate in “active” outdoor recreation, trail-related activities are the most popular among Coloradans; see **Table 8.1** for more information. The year-round nature of recreation in Colorado is also apparent when evaluating wintertime activities. Thirty-eight percent of Coloradans reported they participate in a snow or ice-based activity at least once a year (compared to only 26% of Americans). Twenty percent of residents spend time downhill skiing and 9% snowboarding, 17% go sledding (usually close to home), 8% snowmobile and 6% snowshoe.

Table 8.1: Participation in Active Outdoor Recreation Activities (2005)*

Activity	% of population participating
Trail Trail running on an unpaved trail Day hiking on an unpaved trail Backpacking Rock climbing (natural rock or ice)	41%
Bicycling (paved and off-road)	35%
Wildlife Viewing Bird watching Other wildlife	33%
Camping (RV, tent, and rustic lodging)	28%
Snow Sports Downhill skiing, including telemark Snowboarding Cross-country or Nordic skiing Snowshoeing	21%
Fishing (all types)	15%
Paddling (kayaking, rafting, and canoe)	11%
Hunting (all types)	4%

**Numbers taken from the 2008 SCORP report, page 66 as compiled from the OIF survey. Wildlife based numbers are based on residents in 2005 that were 16 years or older and non-wildlife numbers are based on those 18 and older.*

In regards to more local trends, the City of Boulder completed a Parks and Recreation Master Plan in 2006, which included a survey of residents and their use and activity interests in relation to Boulder’s facilities and programs. Similar to the Canyon, residents of Boulder are very active and place a high value on the parks and recreation facilities and programs. According to the survey, within the year respondents walked (98%), exercised (94%), jogged (91%), ran (90%), and bicycled (89%) the most, followed by relaxing at a park (86%), and swam, fished, relaxed, or socialized at a reservoir or lake (63%). Regarding program use, the most frequently attended activities were drop-in classes (53%) and fitness classes (51%).

National Park and Recreation Trends

Activity-Based Programming Trends

Less Time for Recreation – Americans have less leisure time now than ever before which has led to changes in recreation patterns. People have less unstructured time after taking care of their daily responsibilities, which means recreation activities are moving towards unstructured, individual, and drop-in programs. Participation in structured and commitment-based programmed activities has decreased, although fitness programs with both indoor and outdoor exercise continue to increase in popularity.

Passive Recreation - Passive outdoor recreation activities, such as picnicking, sightseeing or nature watching remain popular, with exercise walking being the number one activity for Americans. Walking is easily accessible, unstructured, inexpensive and can be done in groups of people of all ages and physical fitness levels. Most of these activities can be accommodated with parks, open space and trail facilities.

Cold-weather Recreation – Typically in the winter months Americans go inside and stay inside, specifically in colder regions of the United States. However, there are often a multitude of opportunities to recreate even during the coldest months of the year. However, only about 25% of Americans spent time recreating out in the snow or ice. Of those who are active outside during the snowy winter months, 14% went sledding and less than 10% participated in each of the remaining activities, such as skiing, snowshoeing or snowmobiling.

Arts and Culture - Art and cultural leisure experiences create a positive social environment and bridge differences in user groups. They also provide alternatives to traditional outdoor activities. Festivals offer opportunities to provide diverse cultural experiences to residents as well as tourists. According to the Americans for the Arts, arts, cultural and heritage tourists spend more and stay longer than other tourists.

Extreme Sports and Activities - Participation in recreation has shifted over the past couple of years and the demand for “extreme” sports has been increasing, especially with youth and young adults. Sports such as BMX, in-line skating, rock climbing, mountain biking, ATVing and skateboarding are favorites. Many of these types of opportunities can be accommodated within park and recreation facilities and programs.

Fitness and Obesity - Since we spend less time exercising and participating in outdoor recreation, the number of overweight and obese Americans has increased drastically. In 1990, there were only ten states where less than 10% of the population was obese and the remaining states had 10-14%. In 2008, not a single state has less than 15% obesity rate. In fact only Colorado has less than 20%, and 32 states have rates equal or greater than 25% and six states over 30% of the population are obese. These daunting statistics show the need for accessible parks and recreation facilities and for providing programs that teach and show our youth and young adults how to better integrate outdoor recreation and physical activity into their daily lives.



Demographic-Based Programming and Participation Trends

As illustrated in the Demographics and Community Profile Section of the report, when compared to the State of Colorado and the United States, the Coal Creek Canyon Park and Recreation District's population is projected to be significantly older than both. For example, the projected median age for the District in 2015 will be 43.8 years, which is 7.6 years older than the projected median age of Colorado, and 6.5 years older than the projected median age of the nation. This data indicates that the District needs to position its facilities, programs and services to accommodate an aging population. However, the District should not do so without also working to meeting the needs of the younger population, and as a means to keep younger residents in the area.

Youth - Participation in out-of-school activities and programs offer support for youth and working families, as well as benefiting youth socially, emotionally and academically. Youth involvement in recreation programs has been proven to decrease juvenile crime and violence, reduce drug use, cut smoking, and alcohol abuse and decrease teen pregnancy. According to the Sporting Goods Manufacturers Association, 63% of youngsters aged 6 to 17 participate in team sports, with about two-thirds of that number participating frequently. The most popular of these team sports include basketball, soccer and baseball (2010), but it is important to note that participation levels are declining. Team sports that are increasing in participation include ice hockey, indoor soccer and lacrosse. Non-traditional and individual activities such as extreme sports, as well as after-school arts, culture and fitness programs are also increasing in popularity and could fill the arts and fitness void that is growing wider in schools.

Favorite Outdoor Activities of American Youth (Age 6-17) by Number of Outings:

- Bicycling
- Running / Jogging / Trail Running
- Skateboarding
- Fishing
- Wildlife Viewing

Per the Outdoor Industry Foundation's (OIF) 2007 report, "The Next Generation of Outdoor Participants"

Although today's youth continue to participate in outdoor activities, they are still not meeting recommended weekly activity levels. Even with higher overall outdoor recreation participation and a higher percentage of participants that take part in an outdoor activity at least twice a week (37%) than other age groups, outdoor activity among youth makes up only a small portion of the CDC recommended "60 minutes of physical activity on most, preferably all, days of the week". Although the quantity of activity is low, the most popular types of outdoor activities that youth do participate in involve a vigorous amount of activity and often take place in community and regional parks, open space areas and on trails.

It is important to recognize that alternative providers provide the Canyon's youth with opportunities to participate in organized recreation opportunities, such as basketball, soccer and baseball over individual activities. However, more individual, non-traditional after-school activities, and outdoor recreation programs targeted to school-age children may be a gap in service that the District could fill to make up for the fitness void that is growing wider in schools.

Young Adults - Unfortunately, national trends for outdoor activity show that young adults are even less active than youth. The frequency of outdoor activity starts to drop off from youth to young adulthood (around age 18) – the percentage of young adults who take part in outdoor activities twice a week or more drops to 25% for young adults, a 30% decrease from youth rates. The types of activities young adults participate in are the same, but there is a drastic decline in the number of outings. Just as with youth participants, young adults are not meeting CDC recommended activity levels. Collaborations among state, county, local and community recreation providers in the Coal Creek Canyon area will be very important to engaging this portion of the population in healthy and active outdoor recreation opportunities.

Favorite Outdoor Activities of Young Adult Americans (Age 18-24) by Number of Outings:

- Running / Jogging / Trail Running
- Bicycling
- Fishing
- Skateboarding
- Wildlife Viewing

Per the Outdoor Industry Foundation's (OIF) 2007 report, "The Next Generation of Outdoor Participants"



Older Adults - Older Americans' leisure time is increasingly being spent doing physical activities, in educational classes, partaking in adventure travel and attending sporting events. These trends may be the result of the fact that for many, retirement is starting earlier than it has in the past. Approximately 70% of the current retired population entered retirement before the age of 65. These new retirees are younger, healthier, and have more wealth to spend for the services they want. These trends may explain the changing demands, nationally, from traditional low-cost social services to more active recreation experiences and programming for which older residents are willing to pay.

Those 65 and older are mainly interested in passive recreation activities (i.e. nature walks, bird watching), group social activities, and volunteering. In contrast, Baby Boomers (45-64) prefer small group or individualized active recreation opportunities (i.e. day trips, hiking, fitness). While older Americans leisure time is becoming more active, they are still the age group with the lowest percentage of people meeting the recommended activity levels. Therefore, targeted marketing and promotion of these types of activities should be considered when communicating with and working to engage older adults in outdoor recreation activities.

Marketing and Communications – As the result of the economic recession, most park and recreation agencies are facing tightening budgets and are looking for additional means to supplementing the revenue streams. Just like the private sector, it is important to strongly promote public programs and services so as to win customers as well as retain their loyalty. It is important to use effective marketing mediums as well as messaging to target various demographic and user groups. Following is a summary of some of the strategies to marketing to the different generational demographic groups within the District:

- The Matures/Silent Generation (born between 1921- 1945)
 - Mediums – direct mail, fliers, brochures, word of mouth and some email.
 - Messaging – simple, straight-forward and summarized communications.

- The Baby Boomers (born between 1946-1964)
 - Mediums – direct mail, email, web searches, word of mouth and print media.
 - Messaging – sell upscale facilities and programs, as well as unique experiences.
- Generation X (born between 1965-1980)
 - Mediums – sound bites, email, internet, texting, and word of mouth.
 - Messaging – straight-forward, interest and topic-based communications.
- Generation Y (born between 1981-1999)
 - Mediums – texting, social networking websites, internet, and through parents.
 - Messaging – sell trendy, exciting and adventurous activities.

Parks and Recreation Facility Trends

The current national trend is toward a “one-stop” facility with a wide variety of amenities to serve all ages. Large, multi-purpose regional parks and centers also help park and recreation agencies to manage costs, retain customers, and encourage cross-use. Facilities and amenities that are becoming more common include:

- Walking paths and trails
- Nature centers, outdoor recreation and education centers
- Regional playgrounds for all ages of youth
- Dog parks
- Skateboard facilities
- BMX tracks
- Cultural art facilities
- Multi-purpose, multi-generational recreation centers
- Leisure and therapeutic pools
- Weight and cardiovascular equipment
- Interactive game rooms
- In-line hockey and skate parks
- Indoor walking tracks
- Climbing walls
- Indoor soccer

The Trust for Public Land’s report, “The Benefits of Parks: Why America Needs More City Parks and Open Space,” makes the following observations about the health, economic, environmental, and social benefits of parks and open space:

- Physical activity makes people healthier.
- Physical activity increases with access to parks.
- Contact with the natural world improves physical and physiological health.
- Increases both residential and commercial property values.
- Adds value to the community and economic development efforts.
- Enhances the benefits of tourism.
- Trees are effective in improving air quality and act as natural air conditioners.
- Trees assist with storm water control and erosion.
- Provides recreational opportunities for all ages.
- Creates stable neighborhoods and strong communities.

A shift has occurred in urban planning from designing around the automobile to designing public spaces that encourage physical activity and engage a community. *The most significant amenity that a provider can offer residents is a public realm that creates a sense of community, “social capital,” and increases the quality of life, which in turn attracts and retains residents and businesses and strengthens a community’s economy.*



Key Findings

Americans are less active today than ever before. In order to decrease the astronomical obesity rates, the emphasis should be on promoting outdoor activities in addition to traditional forms of exercise. The activity levels for adults of all ages in Colorado generally reflect nationwide averages, including the trend of decreasing physical activity with age. This is particularly relevant to the District with its aging population. In 2010, 14.2% of the District is over the age of 55 and projections show this number will increase to 25.8% by 2015. The projected median age for the District in 2015 is 7.6 years and 6.5 years older than the projected median age of Colorado and the nation, respectively.

Given the Canyon's demographics, it is especially important to consider older adults, a group with physical fitness levels that vary greatly between individuals and have conditions that vary in type and severity. When promoting physical activity and outdoor recreation for this population, a range of activities beneficial to all abilities should be included. Additionally, activities that can help promote specific health, fitness and wellness benefits should be incorporated. Regular physical exercise is inexpensive and can prevent or improve the illnesses many Americans suffer from, including heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, obesity, back pain, osteoporosis and psychological problems.

These efforts should not result in the neglect of the needs of the Canyon's youth and families, who are at a critical stage, where it is important to instill life-long, healthy habits that include regular physical activity. Both parents and children should be targeted in an informational communications strategy explaining the current state of affairs of health and how outdoor activities can help remedy and provide a fun, enjoyable way for youth to stay fit and healthy. Schools and the internet should be the primary avenues for distributing information.

It is also important to consider that the residents of the District currently have access to a wide variety of Alternative Providers that offer a significant number of indoor recreation facilities and programs. The District should consider acting as a central clearinghouse to promote information, transportation and/or access to these recreation opportunities in reciprocation for discounted and/or shared use with partnering jurisdictions. Targeted marketing strategies and mediums should be used based on the program, activity and user group.

Colorado's foothill communities, such as Coal Creek Canyon, attract residents who are looking for an amenity-rich and meaningful outdoor recreation experience, which increases the demand for facilities, programs and infrastructure. Lands, programs, services and facilities should be expanded and developed, within the context of the community's values (see the **Community Survey Summary** section) to accommodate the significant number of avid park and recreation users. Facilities will need to be flexible spaces, programmed to meet the varying demands of users as well. Accommodating multiple age groups at once will provide for family-oriented and older adult populations. Additionally, adaptive facilities that can accommodate varying forms of recreation activity such as outdoor recreation (walking, hiking, biking, wildlife viewing, etc.), environmental and nature programs, and arts and cultural activities will meet the desires of the Canyon's divergent population. Additionally, based on national research and the Canyon's community values, the most significant amenity that the Canyon can offer residents is a public space that brings residents together, creates a sense of community, develops "social capital," and increases the quality of life.

