



Needs Assessment

Introduction

The purpose of the needs assessment done for this Plan is to identify the recommended Level of Service (LOS) to meet the recreation needs for the Anchorage Bowl. Using information and results obtained in the analysis of recreation demand, benchmarking, and public involvement, this needs assessment addresses LOS and recreation needs for park use classifications and individual recreation facilities.

The Anchorage Bowl LOS standards are a set of recommendations, which contain a minimum LOS and a high or preferred LOS standard for each park classification and facility type by geographic area and population. The standards provide guidelines for the Parks and Recreation Department to plan and build park and recreation facilities needed for the community so that a balance of facilities and services are provided uniformly to all districts within the community. To create accurate LOS standards, research and analysis was undertaken that included: recreation demand analysis, benchmark analysis, updating of the current park use classification system, and an

inventory of facilities. The resulting LOS standards allow Anchorage to equitably and logically improve the park, recreation and open space system as funding allows.

The application of LOS standards should not carry city regulatory status; rather the standards should be considered **guidelines** that express the desires of the community to provide a balanced and equitable distribution of facilities. Establishment of unrealistic LOS standards can have the impact of creating a system that cannot be achieved without substantial investment in land and new facilities.

Because the application of these LOS standards is directly impacted by the community's land supply, tax base and willingness to fund, as well as recreational demand, there must be flexibility built into the process. A range between the minimum level and preferred level of services is provided to allow some flexibility in the planning process based on budget constraints, limitations on resources, or changing community preferences over time. These need to be adjusted annually as required to reflect changing trends in recreation use.

A range between the minimum level and preferred level of services is provided to allow some flexibility in the planning process.

Recreation Demand Methods

Just as in producing a tangible product, if a customer's needs are not met, and there is no demand for the product, it will not sell. Such is the case with any parks and recreation agency. If the mission and vision of the agency are geared toward providing recreational opportunities to a community, it is necessary to understand what that community desires in order to provide those opportunities. Because of the wide variety of recreational opportunities available to Anchorage Bowl citizens, it was necessary to employ several methods to determine community recreation demand, including public engagement, public survey, facility demand analysis, and review of local and national participation trends.

The public engagement process was designed to incorporate multiple methods (stakeholder interviews, public meetings and workshops, and a random survey of Anchorage residents) to determine needs, desires, and attitudes of Anchorage Bowl citizens. To develop an even more accurate assessment, the planning team performed a recreation analysis for the Anchorage Bowl. This analysis used two different methods to determine current demand and predict future demand of facilities. A demand analysis was performed on facilities for which sufficient



data were available, and national participation trends for a variety of recreational activities were reviewed and analyzed.

To analyze facility demand, the project team, with the assistance of Anchorage Parks and Recreation and Anchorage School District staff, identified the types of facilities for which adequate data existed. The analysis of data measured current use levels by calculating the number of hours a facility type was scheduled for use and dividing that by the total number of hours the facility type was available. The number of scheduled hours is the current use level, while the number of available hours is the use capacity of the facility. The result is a percentage of capacity currently being used for each facility type.

Recreation demand was then calculated for a facility type by comparing current use data to data from the community recreation survey and local and national recreation trends. These comparisons allowed the planning team to make a prediction about the available quantity of a particular facility type and current and future demand.

Facility types for which there were sufficient data available to conduct a demand analysis included baseball, softball, Little League fields; soccer fields; swimming pools; and park picnic shelters. This analysis found that none of these facilities are being used to their full capacity based on current scheduling and availability set by Anchorage Parks and Recreation and ASD. Combined with the trends analysis, the predictions, listed in green box at right, were made about the future demand for facility types.

To determine demand for facilities for which there was insufficient data available to perform a detailed facility demand analysis, statistics from the **Superstudy® of Sports Participation**, published by the Sporting Goods Manufacturers Association (SGMA) were used. These statistics provide a glimpse into national participation trends for various sports and recreational

- No growth in the demand for baseball or Little League is anticipated in the Anchorage Bowl over the next several years.
- No growth in the demand for softball is anticipated in the Anchorage Bowl over the next several years.
- Overall demand for soccer in Anchorage will continue to grow over the next several years, with demand for indoor soccer continuing to grow steadily over the next several years, and demand for outdoor soccer continuing to grow over the next several years, but at a relatively slower rate compared to the rapid growth experienced during the past ten years.
- No growth in the demand for swimming pools is anticipated over the next several years.
- Growth in the demand for picnic facilities should remain closely tied to population changes.

activities. The national trends and participation rates along with data from the Anchorage community recreation survey and public participation assisted the planning team in projecting the future demand for recreation facilities in the Anchorage Bowl. (See Discussion Papers 5 and 6 for recreation-demand analysis.)

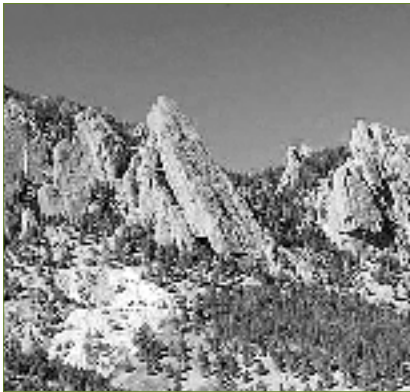
Boise, Idaho



Portland, Oregon



Boulder, Colorado



Spokane, Washington



Duluth, Minnesota



Vancouver, British Columbia



Benchmark Analysis

The purpose of a benchmarking analysis is to assist Anchorage in comparing its parks and recreation facilities, programs, and administration to six cities determined to be desirable comparisons. Goals can be set, standards re-defined, and priorities established. By maintaining a relationship with these six cities, Anchorage can continue to monitor benchmarking on an annual or semi-annual basis.

The 6 cities that were selected by 100 Anchorage stakeholders and included in the Anchorage benchmarking study were:

- Boise, Idaho
- Boulder, Colorado
- Duluth, Minnesota
- Portland, Oregon
- Spokane, Washington
- Vancouver, British Columbia

A large amount of information was gathered from the benchmark cities on a variety of parameters pertinent for comparison to the Anchorage parks and recreation system.

Discussion Paper Seven: Benchmark Cities provides a summary of the comparison parameters and results. In the majority of cases, Anchorage LOS fell within the average range and compared well against the benchmark cities. Anchorage was far above average when comparing parameters like park acreage, natural resource areas, and trails, yet significantly below average in areas such as number of staff members and recovery of operating costs through user fees and charges. The average comparison city recovered nearly 30 percent of its parks and recreation operating costs, while Anchorage recovers only 11 percent. In essence, this represents a loss of 20 percent of the total operating budget (approximately \$2.5 million based on the 2003 budget).

In order to recover such losses, the Parks and Recreation Department must adopt an activity-based cost accounting model. For this model, operating costs will be determined for each program, service, and facility, and then appropriate fees are calculated and charged based on the fee policy for the category of service.

Benchmarking is used extensively in private industry. This information allows Anchorage citizens to decide how they wish to compare with these other cities.

Figure 10. Benchmark Response
(Table 1 of 2)

General Features	Anchorage, AK		Boise, ID		Boulder, CO		Duluth, MN		Portland, OR		Spokane, WA		Vancouver, BC	
	Population	Median	Population	Median	Population	Median	Population	Median	Population	Median	Population	Median	Population	Median
Population	189989	194000	198000	113917	86000	538180	190000	547000	190000	1.95	1.10	278850	194000	
Trail Miles per 10,000 Population	12.63	4.93	12.63	10.53	5.93	3.93	1.95	1.10	3.93	1.95	1.10	6.01	4.93	
Natural Use Areas, acres per 1,000 Population	42.11	10.26	7.77	30.72	74.97	12.55	7.96	1.69	12.55	7.96	1.69	22.61	10.26	
Park Acreage per 1,000 Population	52.90	20.16	16.93	47.23	83.15	19.37	20.95	5.80	19.37	20.95	5.80	32.24	20.16	
Park Acreage as percentage of City Land Area	15.70%	11.21%	5.82%	30.24%	16.68%	11.16%	10.72%	11.26%	11.16%	10.72%	11.26%	14.31%	11.21%	
Baseball Fields	2.00	1.50	2.60	1.40	1.60	0.35	0.50	2.60	0.35	0.50	2.60	1.51	1.50	
Football Fields	0.10	0.20	0.80	0.17	0.11	0.22	0.10	2.30	0.22	0.10	2.30	0.62	0.20	
Golf Courses	0.42	0.09	0.05	0.08	0.23	0.01	0.20	0.11	0.01	0.20	0.11	0.11	0.09	
Outdoor Basketball Courts	0.60	1.55	1.70	1.40	1.90	1.00	1.20	3.90	1.00	1.20	3.90	1.85	1.55	
Soccer Fields	1.50	1.30	3.20	1.10	0.81	1.20	1.40	2.30	1.20	1.40	2.30	1.67	1.30	
Softball Fields	1.40	1.65	1.40	0.88	2.30	1.20	1.90	2.60	1.20	1.90	2.60	1.71	1.65	
Tennis Courts	2.10	3.05	3.90	2.70	3.60	2.20	1.90	3.40	2.20	1.90	3.40	2.95	3.05	
Volleyball Courts	0.60	0.69	0.30	1.10	0.69	0.32	0.80	N/A	0.32	0.80	N/A	0.64	0.69	
Amphitheater / Concert Area	0.20	0.05	0.05	N/A	0.02	0.07	0.21	0.02	0.07	0.21	0.02	0.07	0.05	
Arboretum / Botanical Garden	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.09	N/A	0.11	3.00	0.02	0.11	3.00	0.02	0.66	0.10	
Community Gardens	0.10	0.17	N/A	0.26	0.17	0.50	0.05	0.16	0.50	0.05	0.16	0.23	0.17	
Horseshoe Courts	0.80	0.70	0.76	0.70	0.47	0.35	2.10	N/A	0.35	2.10	N/A	0.88	0.70	
Picnic Shelter	1.50	0.77	1.26	0.70	1.00	0.17	0.84	0.15	0.17	0.84	0.15	0.69	0.77	
Play Structures	3.50	2.50	2.07	3.00	5.00	2.00	2.30	2.70	2.00	2.30	2.70	2.85	2.50	
Boat Dock/Ramp	0.40	0.25	N/A	0.43	0.47	0.07	0.00	N/A	0.07	0.00	N/A	0.24	0.25	
Campgrounds	0.10	0.01	N/A	N/A	0.01	0.02	0.00	N/A	0.02	0.00	N/A	0.01	0.01	
Swimming Beaches	0.20	0.05	N/A	0.09	0.01	N/A	0.00	0.16	N/A	0.00	0.16	0.07	0.05	
Recreation/Community Centers	0.16	0.42	N/A	0.26	2.91	0.24	0.47	0.42	0.24	0.47	0.42	0.86	0.42	
Indoor Swimming Pools	0.32	0.11	0.05	0.26	0.12	0.09	0.10	0.16	0.09	0.10	0.16	0.13	0.11	
Total Groomed Ice Sheets	0.50	0.15	N/A	N/A	5.50	N/A	0.05	0.15	N/A	0.05	0.15	1.90	0.15	
Groomed Natural Ice		2.73	N/A	N/A	5.46	N/A	0.00	N/A	N/A	0.00	N/A	2.73	2.73	
Sledding Hills	14.00	0.26	1.00	0.26	N/A	N/A	0.05	N/A	N/A	0.05	N/A	0.44	0.26	
Cross Country Ski Trails	75 miles	1.82	N/A	0.13	5.11	N/A	0.21	N/A	N/A	0.21	N/A	1.82	0.21	
Lighted Ski Trails	25 miles	0.01	N/A	N/A	0.02	N/A	0.00	N/A	N/A	0.00	N/A	0.01	0.01	
Skate Parks	0.11	0.10	0.15	0.09	0.23	0.04	0.11	0.05	0.04	0.11	0.05	0.11	0.10	
Dog Parks	0.26	0.21	N/A	0.26	N/A	0.06	0.00	0.53	0.06	0.00	0.53	0.21	0.16	

Figure 10. Benchmark Response
(Table 2 of 2)

General Features	Anchorage, AK		Boise, ID		Boulder, CO		Duluth, MN		Portland, OR		Spokane, WA		Vancouver, BC		Average		Median		
Staff and Financial																			
Total Parks & Recreation Operating Budget (2003)	\$ 12,307,950	\$ 13,508,063	\$ 21,371,242	\$ 5,657,283	\$ 51,975,287	\$ 8,769,907	\$ 78,565,170	\$ 29,974,492	\$ 17,439,653										
Total Parks and Recreation Operating Budget as Percent of City's Total Operating Budget	4%	11%	11%	4%	7%	7%	10%	8%	8%										
Average Expenditure per person for parks and recreation	\$ 65	\$ 68	\$ 188	\$ 66	\$ 97	\$ 46	\$ 144	\$ 107	\$ 90										
Total Revenues from Fees and Charges (2003)	\$ 1,324,280	\$ 3,924,465	\$ 8,526,756	\$ 1,699,200	\$ 14,620,055	N/A	\$ 31,894,420	\$ 12,132,979	\$ 8,526,756										
Percent of Parks & Recreation Operating Budget from Fees and Charges	11%	29%	40%	30%	28%	N/A	41%	34%	30%										
Total Maintenance Budget1	\$ 4,352,930	\$ 3,227,669	\$ 5,879,131	\$ 1,264,683	\$ 16,728,487	N/A	\$ 18,000,000	\$ 9,019,994	\$ 5,879,131										
Total Maintenance Budget as Percentage of Total Parks & Recreation Operating Budget	35%	24%	28%	22%	32%	N/A	23%	26%	24%										
Total Number of Maintenance Staff	97.00	171.00	55.00	48.00	84.00	109.00	340.00	134.50	96.50										
Total Full Time Maintenance Employees per 1000 Acres of Park Land	1.99	25.65	10.22	2.52	8.06	10.55	70.98	21.33	10.39										
Total Number of Parks & Recreation Employees (Non-Maintenance)	134.00	745.00	259.00	82.00	404.00	272.00	1760.00	587.00	338.00										
Average Total Park Staff per 1,000 population	0.71	3.76	2.27	0.95	0.75	1.43	3.22	2.11	1.74										

* Anchorage's maintenance budget includes horticulture, seniors, roadside landscapes as well as the traditional Park and Recreation maintenance

Park Needs

Parkland need is primarily based upon a series of recreation area standards or LOS. National standards for parks were developed by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) and adopted by the Municipality in the 1980s. In the mid-1990s, the NRPA revised their standards to reflect specific local needs such as climate, participation and community values. The Municipality has adopted LOS standards that reflect the current methodology recommended by the NRPA. The analysis and projections of future parkland needs are based upon these standards. It is important to remember that standards are based on a variety of methodologies that are subjective in nature. Ultimately, communities must reach a consensus as to how much parkland, natural resource, and recreation facilities are required to maintain the quality of life for the community that is desired.

The basic values and benefits underlying the creation of park standards include:

- They provide a systematic means to approach park acquisition and development;
- They help promote equal distribution of parkland and recreational facilities from one subarea to another;
- They help maintain a balanced system of parks, natural open space and a wide range of recreational opportunities while avoiding overuse of parklands and facilities in those cases where opportunities might be limited;
- They provides an opportunity to view system components within an overall context with measures for success;
- They allow for incremental and orderly improvements to the park and recreation system;

- They build community trust, support, and cooperation; and
- They are flexible and allow adjustments to meet changing community use.

Figure 11. Anchorage Bowl Parks Recommended Standard Level of Service per 1,000 Population

Park Classification	Anchorage Bowl Current LOS	Anchorage 1985 Standard	Benchmark Cities top 33%	Recommended Anchorage LOS Range
Neighborhood Use Areas	1.5	2.5	1.5	1.5 to 2.5
Community Use Areas	1.5	7.5	1.5	1.5 to 2.5
Special Use Areas	7.15	20.0	4.5	4.5 to 7.0
Natural Resource Use Areas	42.1	NA	30.7	No Standard Recommended

These recommendations reflect the fact that the standards set in 1985 were highly ambitious and have not been reachable. As a guideline for recommending LOS standards, a target was set for Anchorage to be within the top one-third of the benchmark cities. Anchorage met or exceeded this target in most park use classifications. Therefore, the recommended LOS standards include a range from maintaining current levels to increasing park acreage per capita. This is based on what the benchmark cities are providing as well as what the Anchorage community has indicated as important to them. (See Figure 11.)

Note that while current LOS is provided for Natural Use areas, this is for comparison only, and it is recommended that LOS should not be used for these areas because they are defined by their natural characteristics and are a limited and finite resource.

We must reach a consensus as to how much parkland, natural resource, and recreation facilities is required to maintain the quality of life for the community that is desired.

Recreation Needs

In addition to the previous LOS analysis, standards were also developed for a variety of recreation facility types frequently used by Anchorage Bowl residents. An inventory of facilities was conducted as a baseline for the recreation demand analysis and the benchmarking study as well as to determine current levels of service in Anchorage. (See Appendix A.)

The information and findings from this analysis provide a set of tools for determining the needs of the Anchorage Bowl parks and recreation system. The needs, in the form of an LOS standard, are then compared to the current inventory for each park type and facility to determine if the current LOS meets or exceeds the standard or if there is a deficit. If a deficit exists, the community would logically prioritize funding to create or enhance parks and facilities to relieve the facility deficit.

The determination of recreation need is applied system-wide as well as within the five Anchorage Bowl Parks and Recreation Service Districts (same as **Anchorage 2020** subareas) to determine if LOS standards are being met for the Anchorage Bowl as a whole, and within community districts and neighborhoods. Figure 11 provides a summary of the recommended LOS standards for Anchorage Bowl facilities. Figure 12 identifies the current and future needs based on the minimum and high LOS.

Establishing LOS needs is only the first step necessary to decide the types of development most needed and where they should be built. This information is intended to be used by park planners to help guide community development strategies and utilize limited resources to their maximum benefit. (See Figure 13.)

Figure 12. Recreation Facilities Recommended Level of Service Standard per 10,000 population

ACTIVITY	Anchorage Bowl Current LOS	Benchmark Cities Average LOS	Benchmark Cities top 33%	Recommended Anchorage LOS Range
Baseball & Little League	2.0	1.51	2.6	1.5 – 2.0
Softball	1.4	1.71	1.9	.75 – 1.25
Soccer	1.5	1.67	2.3	1.75 - 2.0
Outdoor Basketball	.6	1.85	1.9	1.0 – 2.0
Tennis Courts	2.1	2.95	3.4	1.5 – 2.0
Volleyball Courts	.6	.64	.8	.60 - .80
Golf Course (includes Military courses)	.42	.11	.2	.20 - .40
Playground Structure	3.5	2.85	3.0	3.0 - 3.5
Picnic Shelter	1.5	.69	1.0	1.0 – 1.5
Outdoor Swimming Beaches/Pool	.2	.29	.30	.20 - .30
Dog Park	.26	.21	.26	.20 - .26
Skateboard Park	.11	.11	.15	.20 - .25
Sledding Hill	.74	.44	1.0	1.0 – 1.5
Cross-country Ski Trails (miles)	3.95	1.82	.21	4.0 - 5.0
Lighted Ski Trails (miles)	1.32	.02	.02	1.0 – 1.5
Outdoor Skating Areas	.36	NA	NA	.36 - .70
Recreation Centers	.16	.86	.47	.16 - .26
Indoor Swimming Pools	.26	.13	.16	.16 - .26
Indoor Ice Skating Rinks	.32	NA	NA	.25 - .32
Trails	12.6	6.0	10.53	10.5 – 12.6

Figure 13. Recreation Facilities Needs Assessment

Recreation Facilities	LOS per 10,000 population	Existing Inventory	2003 Min. LOS	2003 High LOS	2020 Min. LOS	2020 High LOS
Little League & Baseball Combined	1.5 - 2.0	39	28.5	38	41.85	55.8
Softball Field	.75 - 1.25	19	14.25	23.75	20.925	34.875
Soccer Field	1.75 - 2.0	34	33.25	38.00	48.83	55.80
Football & Rugby Field	.25 - .5	8	4.75	9.5	6.975	13.95
Basketball Court Outdoor	1.0 - 2.0	11	19	38	27.9	55.8
Tennis Courts	1.5 - 2.0	42	28.50	38.00	41.85	55.8
Volleyball Court	.6 -.8	12	11.40	15.20	16.74	22.32
Golf Course	.2 -.4	4	3.8	7.6	5.58	11.16
Playground	3.0 - 3.5	74	57.00	66.50	83.7	97.65
Open Play Field	3.0 - 3.5	27	57.00	66.50	83.7	97.65
Picnic Area	3/0 - 3.5	74	57.00	66.50	83.7	97.65
Picnic Shelters	1.0 - 1.5	31	19.00	28.50	27.9	41.85
Horseshoe Area	.25 - .50	15	4.75	9.50	6.975	13.95
Skateboard Park	.20 - .25	1	3.8	4.75	5.58	6.975
Swimming Beaches	.2 - .3	3	3.8	5.7	5.58	8.37
Lakes/Boat Docks	.2 - .3	8	3.8	5.7	5.58	8.37
Camping	.1 - .15	2	1.9	0.285	2.79	0.4185
Dog Parks	.20 - .26	5	3.8	4.94	5.58	7.254
Paved Trails	5.25 - 6.3	110	99.75	119.7	146.475	175.77
Non-Paved Trails	5.25 - 6.3	110	99.75	119.7	146.475	175.77
All Trails Combined	10.5 - 12.6	220	199.5	239.4	292.95	351.54
Equestrian Trails	1.5 - 2.0	50	28.5	38	41.85	55.8
Motocross Track	0.05	1	0.95	0.95	1.40	1.40
Archery Area	0.05	1	0.95	0.95	1.40	1.40
Outdoor Ice Rinks	.36 - .70	3	6.84	13.30	10.04	19.53
Ice Skating Lakes	.36 - .70	4	6.84	13.30	10.04	19.53
Sledding Hill	1.0 - 1.5	19	19.00	28.50	27.90	41.85
Cross-country Ski Trail	4.0 - 5.0	75	76.00	95.00	111.60	139.50
Skijoring Trail	.5 - 1.0	12	9.50	19.00	13.95	27.90
Dog Sled Trail	.5 - 1.0	18	9.50	19.00	13.95	27.90
Indoor Ice Skating Rink	.25 - .32	6	4.75	6.08	6.98	8.93
Swimming Pools	.16 - .26	5	3.04	4.94	4.46	7.25
Recreation Centers	.16 - .26	4	3.04	4.94	4.46	7.25
Community Schools	NA	23	19.00	19.00	27.90	27.90

