

## TRENDS

### *Overview*

Parks and Recreation professionals are committed to improving their community's health, stability, beauty and quality of life. Planning for the leisure needs of a community is influenced not only by analyzing past participation levels and observing what leisure activities citizens currently participate in, but also by anticipating their future needs.

Recreation trends are influenced by a continuous change in marketing, demographics, technology, education and economics. Understanding influences that lead to future trends provides a gateway for embracing change and the opportunities presented.



Stephens Lake Park

The purpose of this chapter is to identify recreation and leisure trends that may impact programming and facility needs for Columbia's diverse population. Potential revenue resources, as well as enhanced services to citizens, could be overlooked if both national and local trends are not identified in a timely manner. More in-depth analysis is sometimes required when comparing national trends to those occurring locally. For example, national demographics identify a surge in the 50 and older population – indicating an increased need for recreation services for that age group, while Columbia's higher education-based demographics profile our young adult population as the largest and fastest-growing of our population, with ages 20 – 24 at 20% and ages 15 – 29 at 40% of the total population.



Photo Courtesy of wikipedia.org

Unfortunately, there are no identified algorithms for determining how or when recreational or leisure pursuits will become either a short-lived fad or a trend. From a management perspective, the Columbia Parks and Recreation Department (CPRD) approaches health and fitness trends that are popularized from media sensationalism with a cautious approach. For example, the nationwide broadcast of slacklining (a practice in balance that typically uses nylon webbing tensioned between two anchor points) during the 2012 Super Bowl may temporarily increase participation in the sport, but is likely not going to have a long-term effect on

recreation programming. In contrast, the reality TV genre introduced a dance-fitness craze with the 2005 premier of "Dancing with the Stars" that continues to thrive.

Legislative decisions can also affect future program and facility needs. In 2010, the Department of Justice made substantial revisions to the original 1991 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The most recent revisions left facility managers facing a host of challenges in interpretation and implementation. The impact on this decision is that many park planners are fully embracing universal design concepts in their plans for future parks.

The methodology used to identify trends consisted of a review of leading industry journals and publications; consumer purchasing patterns; state and national recreational participation patterns; presentations at conferences, seminars and workshops; and review of online blogs and information obtained via Google Alerts. The National Recreation and Park Association, American Academy for Parks and Recreation Administration and Active Living Research publications, and internet listserves were instrumental in providing valuable information from recreational practitioners in other parts of the country. Publications from national trend resources, including the World Future Society and the Herman Group, were also consulted. Recreation trends were discussed during focus group meetings, as well as ongoing communication with Department staff.



Trend identification is divided into three sections:

- Section I reviews national trends that have an impact on the Department as a whole.
- Section II reviews municipal recreation policy and operating trends.
- Section III reviews facility and program trends directly related to the field of Parks and Recreation.

Also included in this chapter are national recreation participation data and five-year participation levels from CPRD's existing activities and facilities, reflecting local trends.



Men's Rugby at Cosmo Park