

REGIONAL PARKS, RECREATION, AND TRAILS DISTRICT FEASIBILITY STUDY

Prepared for:
The City-County Parks Board
Lewis and Clark County, Montana
City of Helena, Montana



Prepared by: The Beck Consulting Team
Barb Beck, Anne Cossitt, and Thomas Kohley

July 2013

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
INTRODUCTION	3
I PARKS, TRAILS & FACILITIES INVENTORY	4
Study Area	4
Existing Geographic Information System (GIS) data	5
PRORAGIS	5
Inventory Results.....	6
Parks.....	6
Facilities.....	8
Trails.....	8
Level of Service	10
Park Maintenance.....	10
Trail/Sidewalk Maintenance.....	13
Story Map	15
II CURRENT USE AND TRENDS	16
Introduction.....	16
Current Situation	17
Parks and Trails Facilities.....	19
Programs	23
Current Situation Key Findings	27
Recreation Trends.....	29
National Trends	29
State Trends	33
Local Trends	36
Trends Key Findings.....	40

III FINANCIAL FEASIBILITY ANALYSIS	42
Introduction.....	42
Cost Analysis.....	42
Cost of Existing Facilities	42
Summary – Costs of Maintaining Existing Facilities	49
Cost of Current Recreational Programs.....	51
Cost of Potential New Facilities and Programs	52
Summary of all Costs	55
Funding and Programmatic Analysis	57
Local Government Management and Administration of Parks, Recreation, and Trails	57
Current Funding	58
Potential Funding Sources.....	62
Summary	67
Feasibility Analysis.....	68
Projections and Trends.....	68
Sustainability of current approach	70
Criteria for Evaluating Alternatives to Current Approach	71
Alternatives Description and Analysis	71
Summary and Conclusions	77
 APPENDIX A: PARKS WITHIN THE REGIONAL PARKS, RECREATION, AND TRAILS DISTRICT	 78
 APPENDIX B: GROWTH POLICY GUIDANCE	 84

TABLE OF TABLES

Table I.1 Number and acreage of parks within study area by jurisdiction	6
Table I.2: Maintenance Categories for City of Helena	11
Table I.3: Maintenance Cost by Surface Type.....	14
Table II.1: Helena Area Local Jurisdiction Parks.....	19
Table II.2: Private non-profit program contributions	25
Table II.3: Southwest Montana Use and Assessment.....	35
Table III.1 Parks by Maintenance Level and Estimated Annual O&M Costs	43
Table III.2 Estimated Pathway O&M Costs by Surface Type and by Entity.....	45
Table III.3 City of Helena Capital Improvements Plan – Life Cycle Costs FY2014-2023	46
Table III.4 Estimate of Annualized Life Cycle Costs for Park Facilities in the Study Area (not including open space parks and additional costs for swimming pools)	47
Table III.5 Pathway Life Cycle Costs by Surface Type and by Entity	48
Table III.6 Annualized Cost of Maintaining Existing Facilities based on Standardized Methodology.....	50
Table III.7 Comparison of Alternatives to Review Criteria	76
Table A.0.1: Parks Within the Regional Parks, Recreation, and Trails District.....	78
Table B.0.1: Growth Policy Guidance for Parks, Trails, and Recreation	84

TABLE OF FIGURES

Figure I.1: Regional Parks, Recreation, and Trails District Study Area	4
Figure I.2: PRORAGIS – Memorial Park / Legion Field / Last Chance Aquatic Center.....	6
Figure I.3: Park Acreage by Type.....	7
Figure I.4: Developed, open land and school parks by jurisdiction	7
Figure I.5: Major park facilities by jurisdiction.....	8
Figure I.6: Total Miles of Trail by Surface Type	9
Figure I.7: Pathway Miles by Maintenance Responsibility	9
Figure I.8: Acres of Park per 1,000 Residents. The bar graph on the left includes Mt Helena and Mt Ascension. The graph on the right does not include these two large parks totaling 1,467 Acres.	10
Figure I.9: Park Maintenance Cost by Maintenance Level.....	12
Figure I.10: Maintenance Level Map	13
Figure I.11: Estimated Annual Pathway Maintenance Costs	14
Figure I.12: Story Map.....	15
Figure II.1: Spring fielding practice at Centennial Park.....	16
Figure II.2: Regional Parks, Recreation, and Trails District Boundary and Census Tracts.....	17
Figure II.3: Skateboarding at Centennial Park.....	18
Figure II.4: HHS Bengal AA State Champs	20
Figure II.5: Prickly Pear Land Trust volunteers doing maintenance on Mt. Helena trail, April 2013.....	21
Figure II.6: Spring Meadow Lake Park located in Helena.....	22
Figure II.7: Girl Scout Volunteer Project	24

Figure II.8: Fitness Trail, Jefferson School	31
Figure II.9: Family walking and biking in Helena’s Centennial Park.....	36
Figure II.10: Recreation Partners’ Focus Group	38
Figure II.11: Disc golf basket at Donaldson Park	39
Figure III.1 East Helena Swimming Pool.....	61
Figure III.2 Process for Creating Special District by Governing Body Resolution.....	64

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In February 2013, the City-County Parks Board (City of Helena and Lewis and Clark County) contracted with Beck Consulting to research, gather and analyze information about the parks and trails facilities, and recreation programming in Helena, East Helena, Lewis and Clark and north Jefferson Counties. The project area extends in a ten-mile radius from the center of Helena and encompasses 314 square miles. The total population of the study area is approximately 60,135 people. The population of this area is increasing and is expected to be 77,790 people in 2023 (ten years.)

Although both the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks, and the Helena National Forest have recreation facilities in the project areas, the focus of this study is the parks, trails and recreation facilities managed by the four local governments of Helena, East Helena, Lewis and Clark and Jefferson Counties, and the five school districts of Helena, East Helena, Montana City, Clancy, and Trinity.

Together, these local jurisdictions have a total of 123 parks and over 2,900 acres of parkland. Over 80% of the total acreage is within the City of Helena. The area also has 118 miles of existing pathways which include on and off-street dedicated trails, and sidewalks around parks. The existing parks, trails, and open land mean that when compared to national averages, local residents have a high level of service for these amenities. Parks, trails, and recreation programs contribute to residents' well-being and quality of life, and make the area attractive for businesses to locate in and attract talent.

As part of this project, research was conducted on recreation trends and local residents were asked through a focus group to identify current and future parks, trails, and recreation needs. National trends that are playing out in this region include; 1) the population is graying, 2) the influence of technology will remain strong, 3) the availability of volunteers is decreasing, 4) government funding is declining, and 5) there is an increasing focus on health care costs and obesity.

Helena and East Helena are the only two of the four local governments to offer any recreational programming. The programs offered by the two municipalities are limited as is availability of staff time. Recreation programming is largely provided by volunteer groups, associations, and loosely-knit groups of people who enjoy the same activities. As documented by the number of hours and the value assigned to those hours, the local programming provided by these recreation partners exceeds \$1 million per year. Recreation partners in the region gave examples of volunteer burnout, difficulty in sustaining adequate numbers of volunteers to manage programs, and challenges engaging young families in recreation programs.

Strong sentiment was expressed during the first focus group that the area had simply outgrown its recreation facilities—indoor swimming pools chief among these. The amount of outdoor field space for a variety of sports was viewed as inadequate and problems were compounded by the lack of a central coordination system for scheduling. Long seasons of cold snowy weather produces a demand for indoor sports spaces, now largely provided by the schools, that consistently exceeds the supply. Participants also expressed concerns about missed opportunities to host state and regional sporting events that result from the lack of appropriate facilities. Attracting these events could boost the local economy.

Currently, parks, trails and recreation programs are managed separately by each of the four local governmental entities. The City-County Parks Board (Helena and Lewis and Clark Counties) does help ensure that there is coordination between those two entities. The City of Helena is the only local government with a recreation department and a capital improvements plan (CIP.)

Each park was assigned to one of five maintenance levels based upon type of facility and frequency of maintenance. Maintenance level 1 was the highest level of maintenance, the highest cost per acre and taken together the largest share of the maintenance budget. Thirteen parks fell into maintenance level 1. Fourteen parks fell into maintenance level 2, 22 parks are maintenance level 3, seven parks are maintenance level 4, and 35 parks are maintenance level 5—the least frequent level of maintenance and the level assigned to open land. All of the school district parks were classified as maintenance level 2.

The total annual operations and maintenance (O&M) and life cycle costs for the parks in the region managed by the four local governments is estimated to be \$4.2 million. Life cycle costs are (multi-year major maintenance activities such as new roofs. This is approximately \$1.9 million more than the \$2.3 million combined actual budgets for O&M and life cycle costs in fiscal year 2013. Volunteer labor and fund raising makes up an unknown portion, but not all, of this funding gap. The FY 2013 budgeted expenditure for recreational programming for all four local governments is approximately \$112,000.

The current funding for parks and recreation comes from a combination of taxes, fees, subdivision cash-in-lieu, bonds/loans, cost-sharing and private-public partnerships, grants, and donations. This revenue stream is not adequate to maintain the existing inventory of parks. Park facility conditions are already and can be expected to further deteriorate at current levels of funding eventually causing safety and liability concerns. The City of Helena Capital Improvements Plan identifies an additional \$7.5 million in desired future projects, but the total cost of desired new construction identified to date ranges from \$22.9 - \$53.7 million..

Six alternatives were analyzed for effects on costs and the ability to provide recreational opportunities to make the area a great place to live, work and play. These alternatives could be considered individually or in some combination. The alternatives are 1) No change from current situation, 2) Budget for operations and maintenance at levels reflective of existing use and schedule and budget for life cycle maintenance, 3) Acquire new facilities only when accompanied by a revenue stream to support operations and maintenance and long term life cycle costs, 4) Provide staffing to coordinate scheduling and assist with logistics of sports field use, 5) Provide or expand recreational programming not already provided by other groups, and 6) Sell or trade surplus properties. In addition three management alternatives were analyzed; no change, coordinated management among the jurisdictions, and other new actions by individual jurisdictions.

Current revenues are insufficient to cover long-term costs of maintaining park resources. The most reliable source of long-term funding would be dedicated tax revenue, established through a multi-jurisdictional regional special district or separate improvement districts created by each jurisdiction.

INTRODUCTION

The City of Helena and Lewis and Clark County have a history and stated intent to work together for the benefit of their citizens. One manifestation of this intent was the establishment of the City-County Parks Board in 1999.

Residents from a broad geographical area (including north Jefferson County and the City of East Helena) use and enjoy the parks and recreation facilities made available by Helena and Lewis and Clark County. Concerned with their ability to maintain existing parks, trails and facilities and offer additional recreation opportunities, the Parks Board acted--with the support of their elected officials--to explore the feasibility of a Regional Parks, Trails, and Recreation District.

The Parks Board advertised and selected a consulting team, Beck Consulting, based in Red Lodge and Helena to inventory facilities and programs, describe current uses and trends, and examine the financial aspects of maintaining existing recreation facilities and planning for the future. Work by the consulting team for this study began in February 2013, was guided by a subcommittee of the Parks Board, and concluded with this report in June 2013.

Armed now with an objective compilation of information and analysis of the parks, trails, and recreation programs, elected officials can choose a course to ensure citizens of the area have parks and recreation facilities and programs that will meet their needs now and into the future.

I PARKS, TRAILS & FACILITIES INVENTORY

Study Area

The study area for this project included all lands within a 10 mile radius from the center of Helena. The total land area is 314 square miles and is referred to in this project as the Regional Parks, Recreation, and Trails District. The Region includes portions of Lewis and Clark County (199 sq mi. 5% of county), Jefferson County (95 sq mi. 5% of county), the entire corporate limits of the City of Helena (16 sq mi.) and the City of East Helena (4 sq mi.) Other non-incorporated towns in the Region include Fort Harrison, Unionville, Montana City and Clancy. There are also portions of five school districts in the Region including Helena, East Helena, Trinity, Montana City and Clancy.



Figure I.1: Regional Parks, Recreation, and Trails District Study Area

Existing Geographic Information System (GIS) data

The first step was to assimilate existing park and trail GIS data for the Region. Lewis and Clark County's GIS Department provided park boundaries and trails for the City of Helena and the county. Jefferson County provided subdivision park boundaries extracted from the State's cadastral database. The City of Helena's Parks Department provided supplemental trail data that was part of 2010 study of trail and sidewalk maintenance in addition to a limited amount of park facility data in the PRORAGIS format (see below). The Helena school district provided a list of outdoor facilities for some of their properties in the district, but did not contribute any spatial data or facility/maintenance costs to this project. No spatial data was obtained from the other school districts.

The remainder of the park, trail and facility data was compiled by the consulting team. The bulk of the work involved digitizing major park facilities (e.g., baseball fields, basketball courts, playgrounds, etc.) for all the parks and school properties in the region. This was needed to provide an accurate count of major facilities in the area.

Next, the trail data provided by the county was combined with sidewalk data that was inventoried by the city. Because sidewalks represent a significant asset in terms of installation and maintenance costs, it was decided to include these as part of the "pathways" database.

PRORAGIS

The city/county GIS information was transferred to a standardized GIS model to better accomplish the park and trail analysis across multiple jurisdictions. The GIS model chosen was developed by The National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA), a non-profit organization dedicated to the advancement of public parks and recreation opportunities. The database is known as PRORAGIS (Parks & Recreation Operating Ratio & Geographic Information System) and was used to inventory parks, trails and facilities in the region.

This system was chosen because 1) it is a standardized GIS model specifically designed to inventory park and trail facilities, 2) it is currently used by the City of Helena. We anticipate that the work completed in PRORAGIS as part of this project will be used by the city to further advance their database building efforts. The PRORAGIS database was populated using existing city/county GIS data and through aerial interpretation of park facilities. Park locations (points), park boundaries and major facility boundaries were included in the database as part of this project. Pathways, including trails and sidewalks were also included in this data model. A representative sample of data collected within PRORAGIS is illustrated here for Memorial Park / Legion Field / Last Chance Aquatic Center.

Open land parks make up the majority of the park lands in the region (63%). Mt. Helena and Mt. Ascension parks in Helena contribute significantly to this total. Without these two parks, open lands would contribute only 384 acres or 26% of the total acreage. Developed parks contribute 30% and school parks provide 7% of the total.

The map below further illustrates the distribution of developed, open land and school parks by jurisdiction.

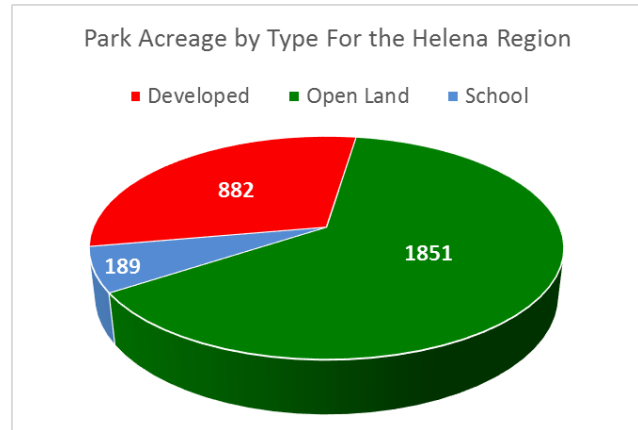


Figure I.3: Park Acreage by Type

A summary table of these 123 parks is provided in Appendix A which includes the acres, jurisdiction, type and facilities within each park.

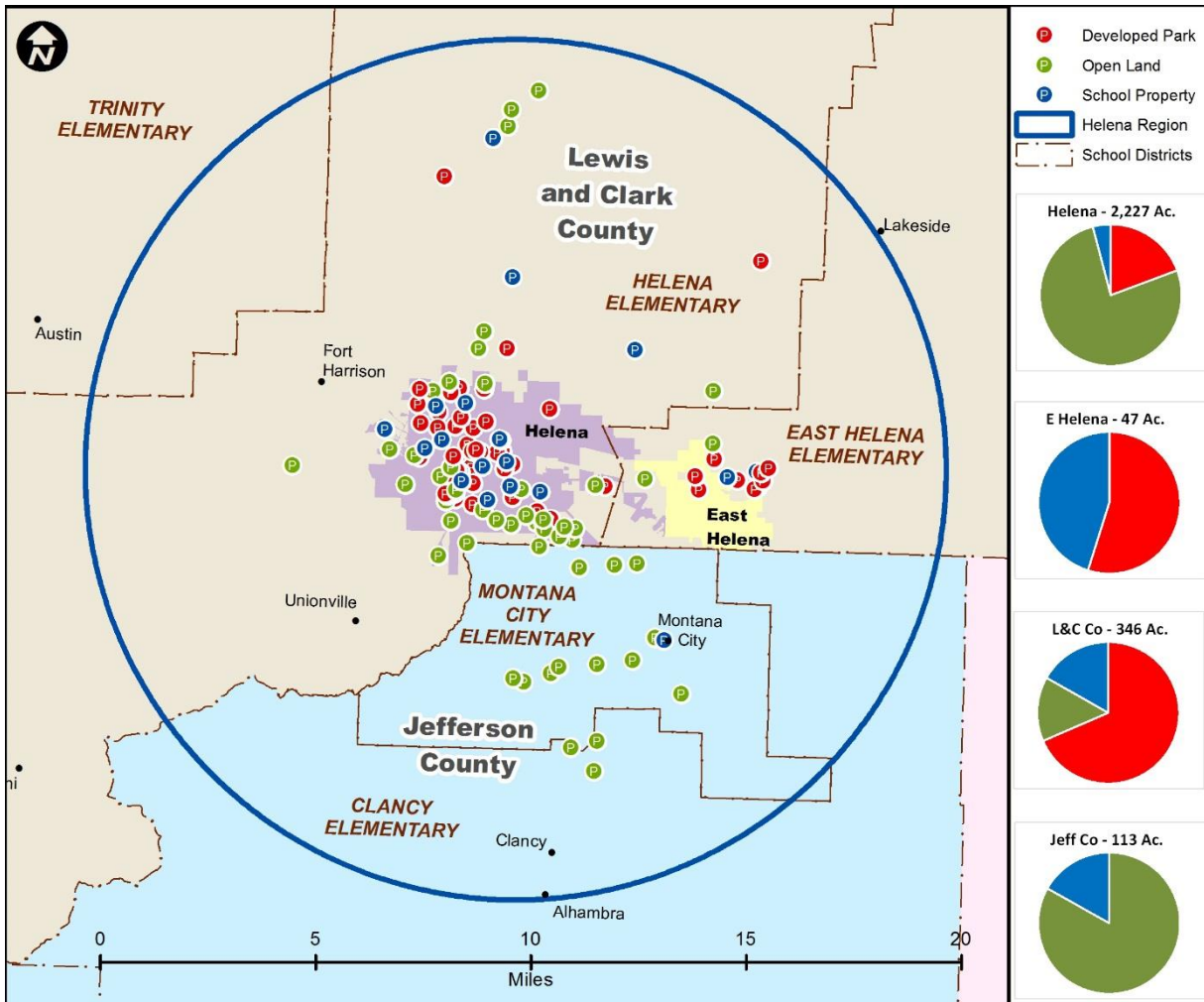


Figure I.4: Developed, open land and school parks by jurisdiction

Facilities

Major park facilities and amenities were mapped as part of this project and added to the PRORAGIS database. These included features such as athletic fields, courts, pools, off-street parking, memorials, restrooms, community gardens and those that could be identified through aerial imagery. We acknowledge that other “major” or high-cost amenities do exist in parks that cannot be mapped using this method (e.g., underground sprinkler systems, signs, etc.). Detailed park asset data collection was not within the scope of this project.

A total of 222 park features were mapped (not including trails). The bar graph below shows the distribution of major park facilities by the four jurisdictions within the region.

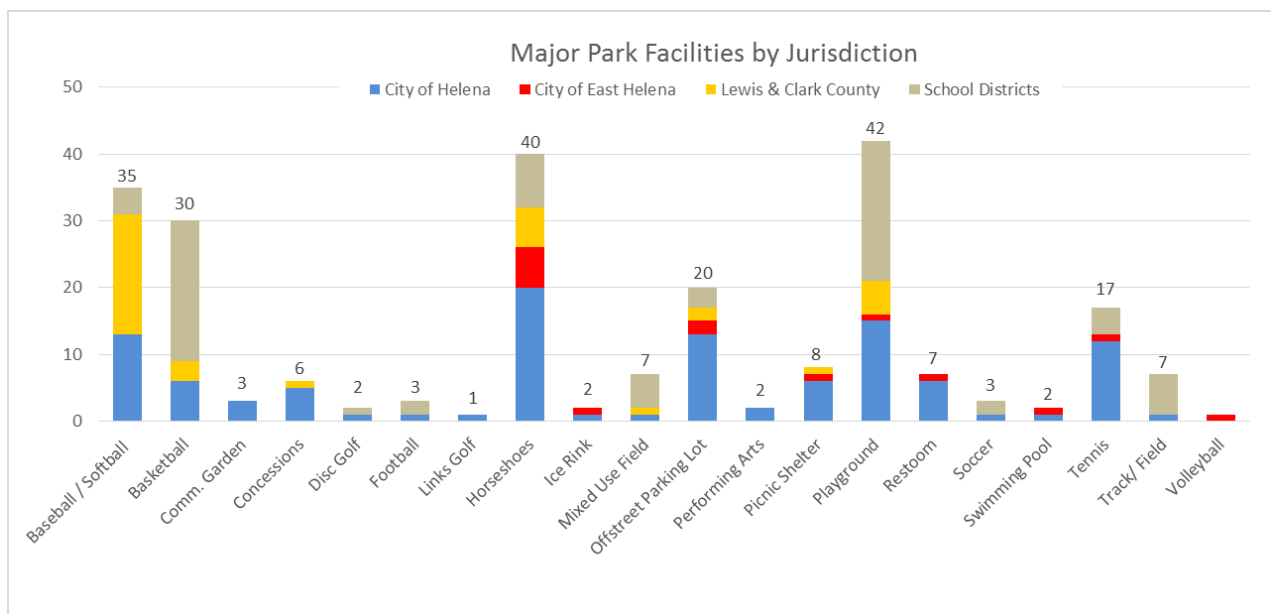


Figure 1.5: Major park facilities by jurisdiction

Facilities that appear to be abundant in the region include baseball/softball fields, basketball courts, horseshoe pits and playgrounds. The contribution of school facilities to the total number of facilities in the region is significant – especially for basketball courts and playgrounds. Lewis and Clark County makes a significant contribution to the number of ball fields in the region – mainly because Ryan Park was classified as a “County Park” although it is managed jointly between the City of Helena, the county and the Babe Ruth League. Jefferson County has only open land parks with no facilities.

Trails

The Regional Parks, Recreation, and Trails District has over 118 miles of existing pathways which include on and off-street dedicated trails and sidewalks around parks. Sixty-three miles of this total are native material trails that mostly exist in the Mt. Helena and Mt. Ascension areas. These trails are primarily maintained by the Prickly Pear Land Trust (PPLT.) The City of Helena maintains just over 19 miles of asphalt trail which includes dedicated off-street trails and on-street, striped bike lanes. In addition, the

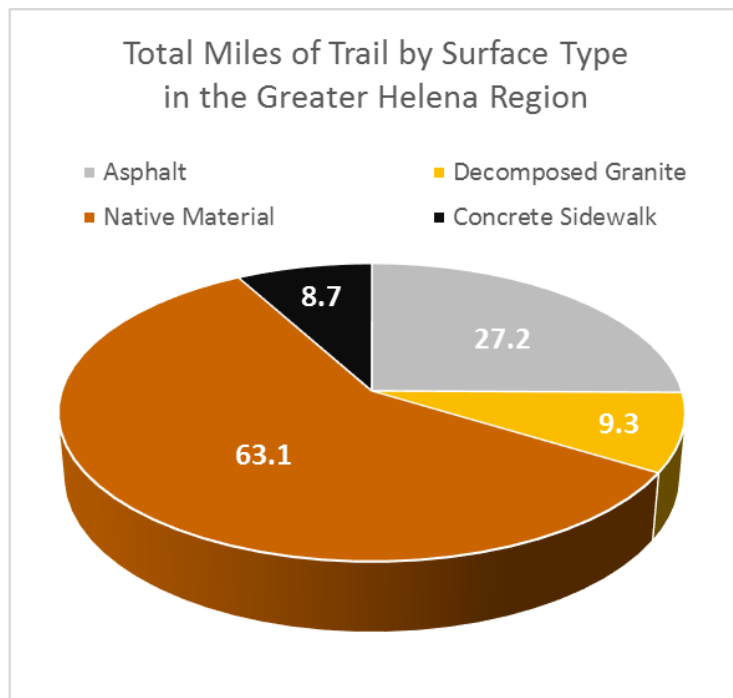
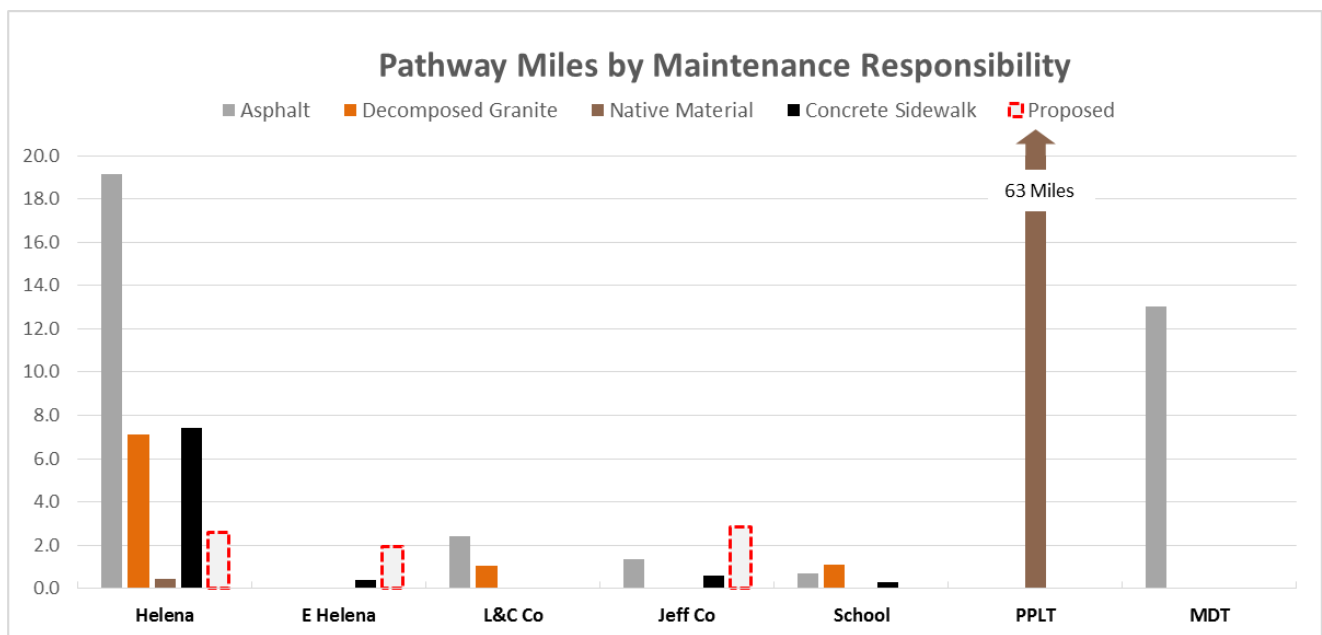


Figure I.6: Total Miles of Trail by Surface Type

City of Helena maintains 7.4 miles of sidewalk adjacent to and within city parks. The Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) has built and maintains nearly 3 miles of multi-use asphalt trail connecting the communities of Helena and East Helena on the north side of Highway 12. They also maintain another 10 miles of on-street designated bike lanes along highway 430 – Canyon Ferry Road.

There is approximately seven miles of proposed trail in the district; much of which would ultimately connect Montana City with East Helena. The “ownership” of this trail was distributed between East Helena and Jefferson County in the bar graph below.



Notes: Proposed trail category includes Montana City to East Helena connector and assumes joint responsibility between Jefferson County and East Helena. Asphalt category includes on-street bike lanes.

Figure I.7: Pathway Miles by Maintenance Responsibility

Level of Service

Level of service is a term that looks at objective measures (for example numbers, types, and locations parks) to determine whether existing parks are adequate to serve a given population. One well-accepted technique used to determine Level of Service (LOS) for parks is to calculate the number of acres of park per 1,000 residents within a defined geographical area. The general benchmark for service levels is about 10 acres of park for every 1,000 people, although many recreation planners generally recognize this number as deficient in today's recreation and open space environment.

In 2010, the City of Helena's Parks Plan showed a Level of Service (LOS) value of 66.4 acres of park per 1,000 residents for the city. This study calculated the LOS again for the city and the other three jurisdictions within the Region. The LOS was also calculated with and without school parks to illustrate the impact of school properties on service levels.

In this study, the City of Helena once again showed an above average LOS of 75.8 without school parks in comparison to the other jurisdictions (Figure I.8 – Left). This high number is largely due to the inclusion of Mt. Helena and Mt. Ascension – both large area parks (1,467 Ac. Combined). Adding school properties into this calculation for Helena resulted in a moderate LOS increase (79). If Mt. Helena and Ascension are removed from the LOS, the numbers drop significantly to 23.7 without school properties and 27.0 with school properties (Figure I.8 – Right).

Jefferson County had the second highest LOS with 21.1 (with school parks) and 25.4 (without school parks). The addition of East Valley Middle School in East Helena had a substantial increase (10.5) in the LOS for the community. This is probably due to the low population of East Helena (1,984) and the relatively large acreage of the School (21 acres.)

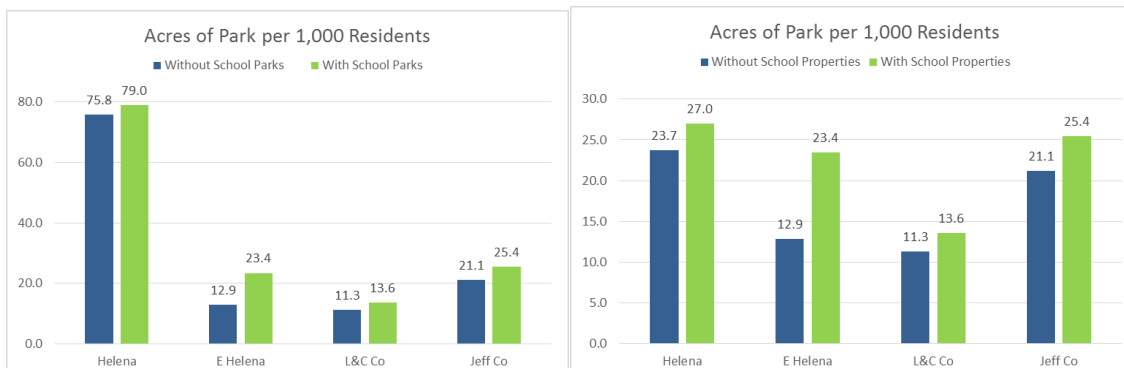


Figure I.8: Acres of Park per 1,000 Residents. The bar graph on the left includes Mt Helena and Mt Ascension. The graph on the right does not include these two large parks totaling 1,467 Acres.

Park Maintenance

To determine maintenance costs for all parks in the region, the methodology developed by the City of Helena in their "Park Use and Fee Policy" was used. Their methodology combined industry guidance from the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) and staff input to determine the level of developed amenities, amount of use, ease of access as well as maintenance activities. Developed parks in the city were assigned a maintenance level of 1 (high) to 5 (low maintenance). See below.

Maintenance costs per acre were determined after categorizing the parks into maintenance levels. According to the policy document,

“Maintenance costs are based on NRPA maintenance labor standards which suggest an average of 118 personnel hours are spent on each acre of parkland per year. Maintenance costs per acre/per hour were determined by dividing maintenance level costs per acre by the total work hours of one employee per year (2,080 hrs). Next; average acres per maintenance level were multiplied by the cost per acre/per hour. The cost per hour for maintaining Helena’s parks range from \$31.50 per hour (level #1) to \$1.33 per hour (level #4).”

Table I.2: Maintenance Categories for City of Helena

Maintenance Level	Frequency	Characteristics	Facilities	Tasks	Cost / Acre
Level 1	Daily or Semi-Weekly	Heavy Use; Easy Access; Intensive site development	Turf; Playgrounds; Restrooms/Porta potties; Water system; Lighting; Sidewalks; Utilities	Mowing; Irrigation systems; Trash collection; Litter & snow removal; Check lighting; Building maintenance; Disease; weed & pest control	\$4,622
Level 2	Weekly	Heavy use at peak times; easy access; intensive site development	Turf; Playgrounds; Benches/Tables; Water system; Lighting; Sidewalks; Utilities	Mowing; Pruning; weeding and planting; Trash collection; Litter & snow removal; Check lighting; Building mtc; Disease; weed & pest control	\$3,697
Level 3	Semi-monthly	Mod. to heavy use at peak times; Access to a mod. # of users; Active & passive rec. users	Open space areas; Ornamental plantings; Trail system; sidewalks	Trash collection; Litter pickup; Pruning and weeding; Disease, weed & pest control	\$3,081
Level 4	Monthly	Mod. at peak times; Passive recreation uses; Mod. to low development	Sidewalks; Bike paths; Undeveloped sites; Water system	Snow removal; Rough mowing; Trash collection; Disease, weed & pest control	\$2,773
Level 5	Every 6 Weeks or As Needed	Low use all times; Passive recreation use; Away from developed areas; Distance limits accessibility	Turf; Medians; Open space	Tree trimming; Disease, weed & pest control	\$2,460

This methodology was applied it to other parks in the region. First, the remaining parks were assigned a maintenance level based on Helena’s definitions. Next, the estimated yearly maintenance was calculated using the acreage of the park and the cost/acre value as shown in the previous table. Excluded from this analysis were parks that 1) are not owned by the city, county or school, and 2) operate through a separate enterprise program or budget. Excluded were Bill Roberts Golf Course, the

fairgrounds and subdivision parks in Jefferson County because they are not deeded to the county. Helena's two very large open space areas; Mt. Helena and Mt. Ascension were excluded. The Level 5 cost/acre estimate for these types of properties did not reflect the true maintenance cost of these areas. A total of 15 parks were excluded from the maintenance cost analysis. The estimated yearly maintenance cost for each park is included in Appendix A.

Estimated costs for park maintenance within the region totals \$3,027,086 as illustrated by the pie chart below. Parks with a maintenance Level of 1 or 2 (the highest levels) account for 66% of the total costs.

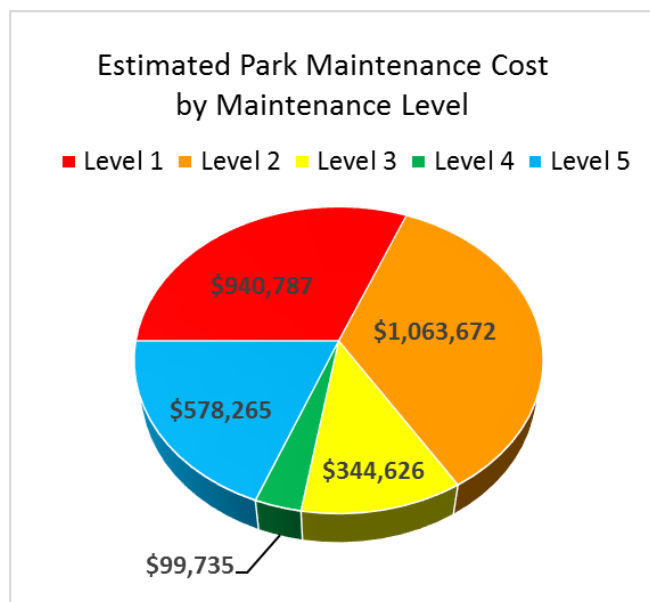


Figure I.9: Park Maintenance Cost by Maintenance Level

Finally, a map was developed showing the distribution of parks classified into these five maintenance levels. The size of the circle around the park is proportional to the estimated maintenance costs. The map also includes pie charts which illustrate the acreage within each jurisdiction by maintenance level category.

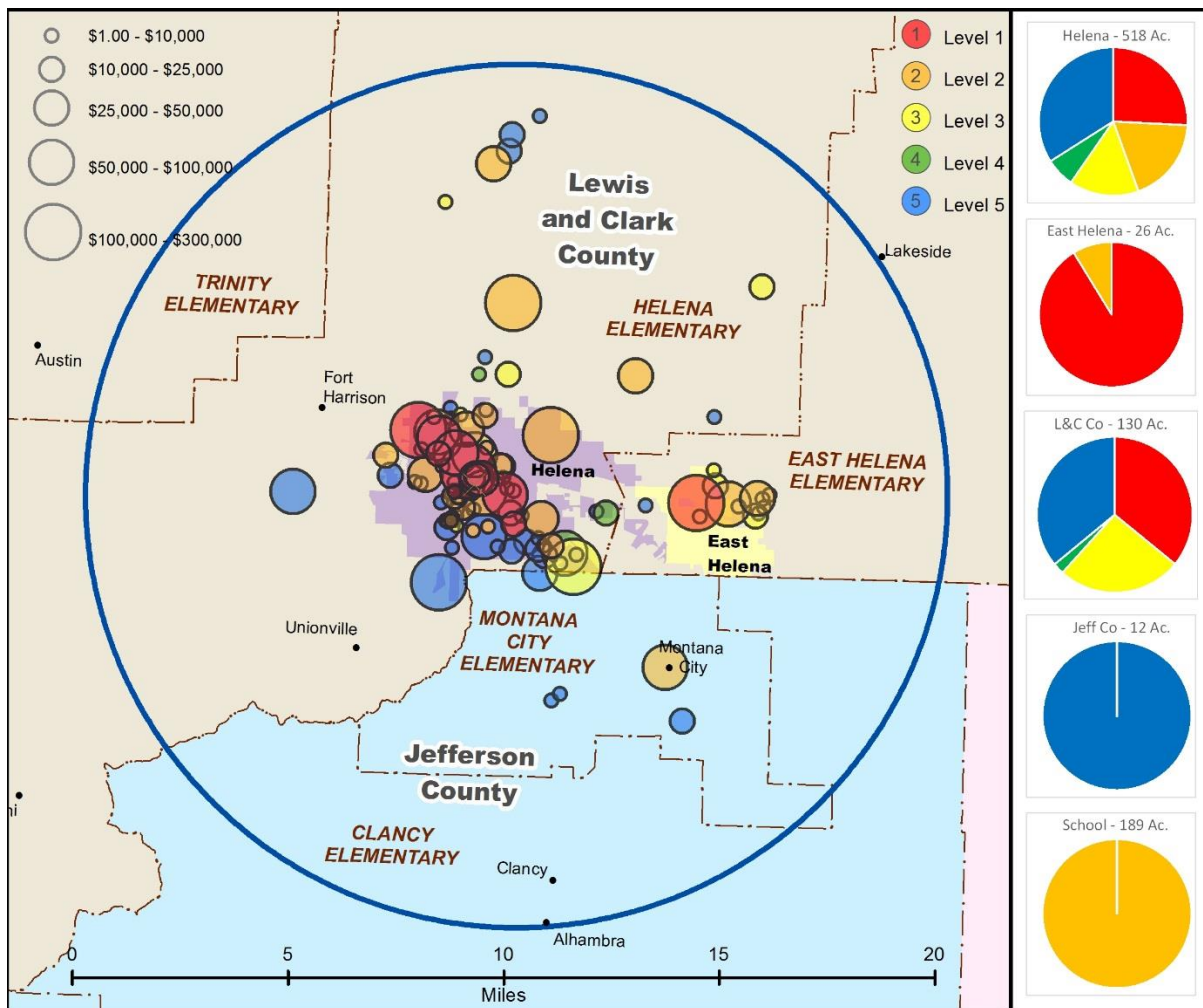


Figure I.10: Maintenance Level Map

Trail/Sidewalk Maintenance

In 2010, the City Parks Department conducted an inventory of trails and sidewalks to 1) summarize the number of miles of trails and sidewalks within the city by surface type, and 2) determine the maintenance cost per mile. Aerial photos and on-site inspections were used to confirm the surface composition and recorded in a GIS format.

Maintenance on these surfaces were broken out into “light” and “heavy”. Light maintenance includes sweeping and snow removal from trails and sidewalks while heavy maintenance consisted of repairing or replacing the trail. The costs per mile for light and heavy maintenance were compiled using information from Public Works and other city departments. Costs included labor, equipment use, fuel, materials, and frequency according to the study.

A written summary of the study was not available, but the maintenance costs by surface type were extracted from the GIS database and used in this analysis. The following table shows the maintenance cost per mile (light vs. heavy) by surface type.

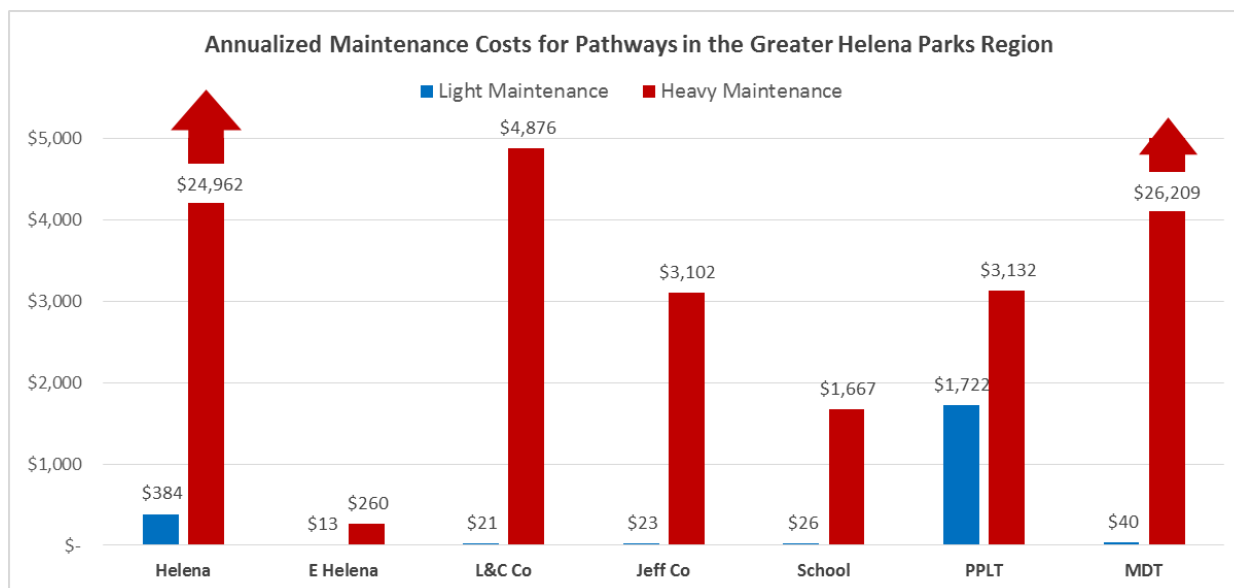
First, the four categories of surface type were applied to all the trail and sidewalk features in the PRORAGIS database, described earlier. A fifth category of “proposed” was added to the classification 1) because the existing trail database already identified some proposed new routes in the Helena area, and 2) to account for the proposed trail that is planned to connect Montana City and East Helena.

Table I.3: Maintenance Cost by Surface Type

Pathway Surface	Maintenance Cost / Mile	
	Light Maintenance	Heavy Maintenance
Asphalt	\$61	\$40,194
Decomposed Granite	\$263	\$1,052
Native Material	\$550	\$1,000
Sidewalk	\$639	\$12,920

The light and heavy maintenance cost estimates from the 2010 study were applied to the trail and sidewalk segments in the PRORAGIS database. On-street bike lanes were removed from the City of Helena total because those pathways are maintained by Public Works and do not accurately reflect maintenance costs associated with the Parks Department. The following chart estimates the annual costs to do light and heavy maintenance by the entities responsible for maintaining the trails. The chart does not factor into maintenance costs associated with any proposed trails. A more detailed discussion of this analysis is provided in Section III.

Figure I.11: Estimated Annual Pathway Maintenance Costs



Notes: Costs based on pathway type (asphalt, concrete, gravel, etc.) and length. Light maintenance includes sweeping, snow removal, weed spraying, patching, etc. Heavy Maintenance includes construction, crack or fog sealing, hauling materials, concrete dying and stamping, equipment, fuel and labor. 20 year trail life expectancy.

Story Map

To provide a better understanding of the Regional Parks, Recreation, and Trails District concept, a “story map” was developed and made accessible as part of this project. Story maps combine intelligent Web maps in a pre-formatted template that incorporate text, multimedia, and interactive functions. The purpose of this story map is to inform and educate people about the need and potential of a regional parks district.

To access the story map, click on the image below or go to the following Web address:

<http://ranch-maps.maps.arcgis.com/apps/StorytellingTextLegend/index.html?appid=ffe6ace420a145a3ac215d6036606b0f>

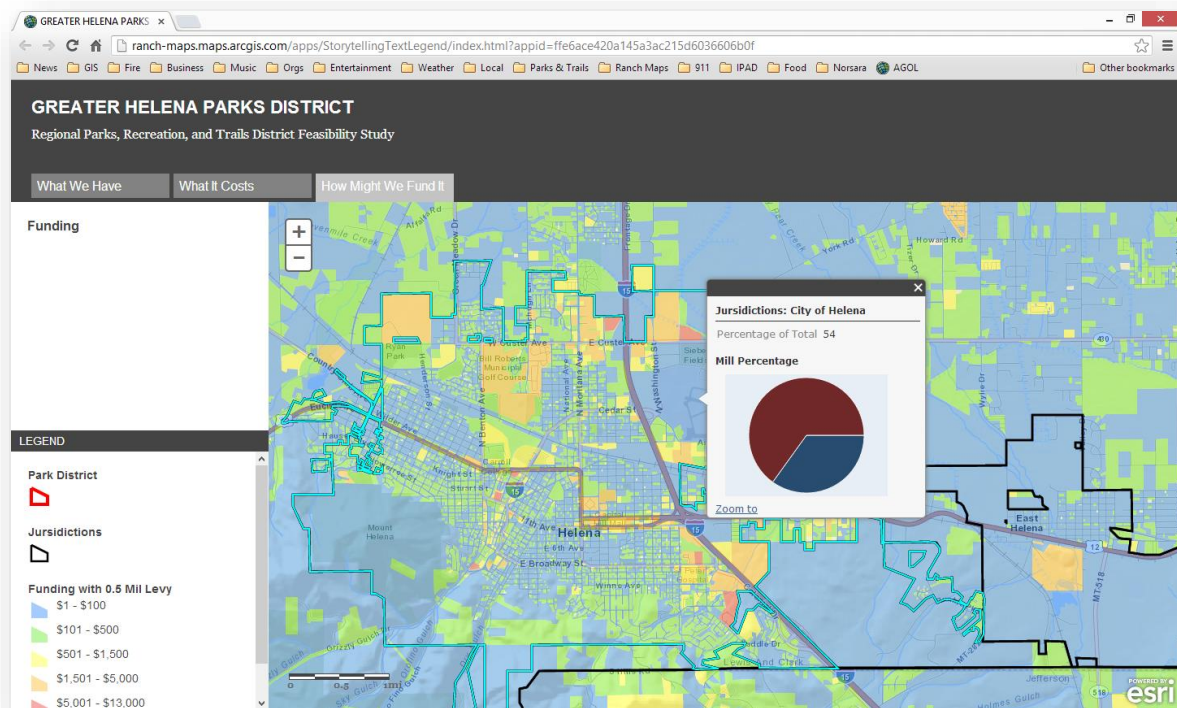


Figure I.12: Story Map

II CURRENT USE AND TRENDS

Introduction

The Regional Parks, Recreation, and Trails District area provides a diversity of parks, trails, and recreation opportunities for residents and visitors. These opportunities are provided by the local school districts, the cities of Helena and East Helena, Lewis and Clark and Jefferson Counties, the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks, the Helena National Forest, and the Bureau of Land Management. The specific contribution of each of these entities is detailed in the following Current Situation sections. Generally, the government agencies at all levels provide the parks, trails, and facilities, while private non-profit organizations work cooperatively with these agencies to provide the recreation programming. Area schools provide both facilities and programs.

In addition to productive private-public relationships, the Helena area is a model for public agency cooperation across all levels. The interagency environment providing parks and trails includes two cities, two counties, the state, and two federal agencies. These entities are able to respect each other's jurisdictions while collaborating to provide a multi-faceted recreation experience. The experience transitions seamlessly from more urban activities such as team sports on athletic fields, to a developed state park, to forested mountain trails offering solitude—all within close proximity to each other and the major population center.

Figure II.1: Spring fielding practice at Centennial Park



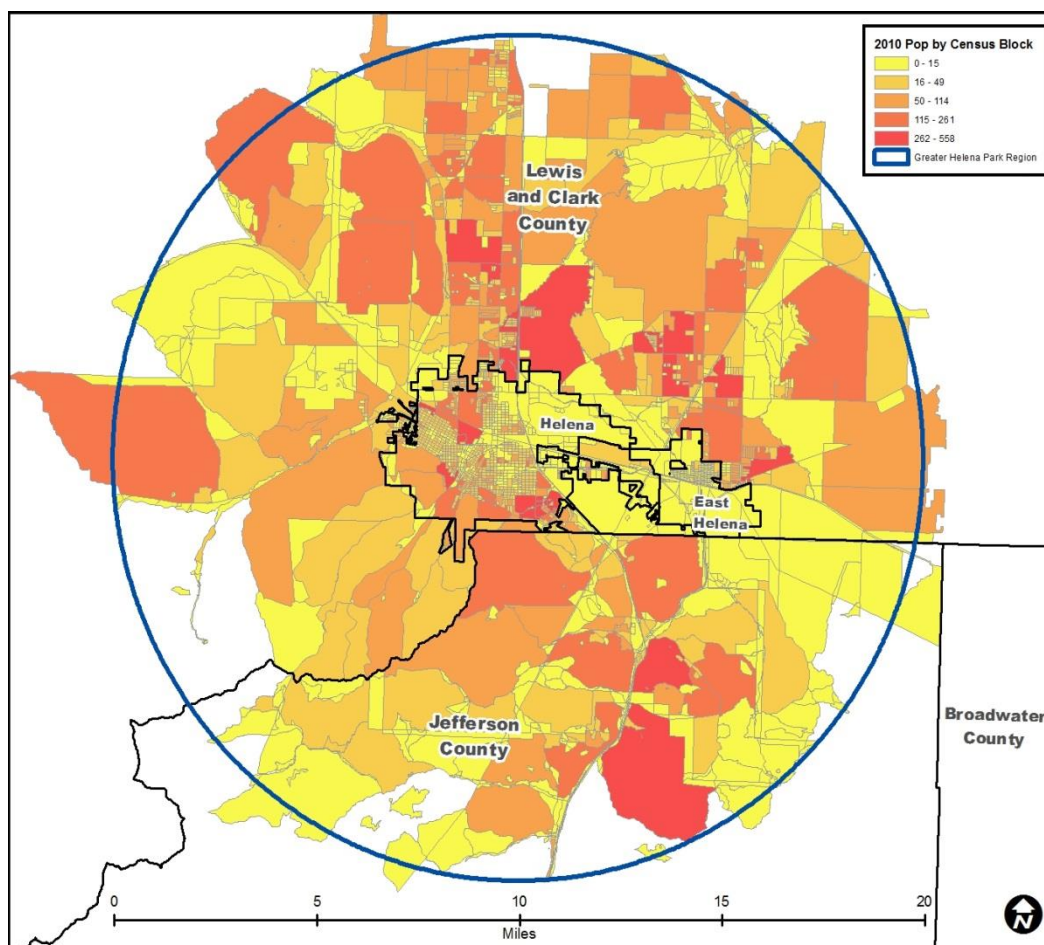
The level of cooperation between all of the “recreation partners” (both private and public at all levels) is exceptional—benefitting youth and adult recreationists and athletes, the economy, and the community as a whole. Participating in outdoor sports and recreation makes a significant contribution to the general health and quality of life for the active adults and children of the area.

Current Situation

Population

Using the 2010 Census data, the population for this project area—a ten-mile circle from the center of Helena --is estimated at 60,135 people. This figure was derived by taking the population of the census tracts that are located mostly within the blue boundary line shown below. The census tracts include Helena, East Helena, North Jefferson County, and the area surrounding Helena in Lewis and Clark County as shown on the map. Using this census tract information was the most accurate way to get population numbers for the ten-mile recreation district area.

Figure II.2: Regional Parks, Recreation, and Trails District Boundary and Census Tracts



According to the most recent decennial census in 2010, Helena had a population of 28,190. The Census Bureau projected the 2012 population to be 28,592. Director of Community Development for the city of Helena, Sharon Haugen, reports that over the past 10-20 years, the city has been growing at a rate of roughly 2-2.5% per year. She expects this rate of growth to continue. (Personal interview, April 9, 2013) The city's growth policy (2011) has mapped land that may be annexed over the next 20 years. There are no developed park facilities on these lands at the current time. It is possible that if subdivision occurs new parks could be created either while the lands are in county ownership or if

annexed into the city. It is unlikely that parks would be established in any other way unless there is funding above current budgets.

The East Helena Growth Policy population estimates cover the years 2000 through 2030. Three scenarios were developed for the growth policy. The population of East Helena in 2000 was 2,114 and in 2010 it was 1,984. Under the slowest growth scenario, the population in 2030 will be 2,943. Under the most rapid growth scenario, the population in 2030 will be 4,795.

The population of Lewis and Clark County in 2000 was 55,716. The 2010 population was 63,395. (U.S. Census Quick Facts) The county's population grew at a rate of 1-2% per year over the 10-year period. This rate is consistent with but slightly slower than the growth rate for the City of Helena.

Jefferson County had a population of 11,406 in 2010 according to the Census Bureau. County-wide, the population of the county is stable, exhibiting neither growth nor contraction based on two decennial census. Census tracts covering the unincorporated Montana City area in the north end of the county—adjacent to Lewis and Clark County— show the population for this area at 2,715.

Taking the estimated 60,135 people estimated to be residing in the greater Helena/East Helena area (2010) in both Lewis and Clark and Jefferson Counties and applying a 2% population growth rate, the population of this area will be approximately 77,790 in 2023. The area's parks, trails and recreation programs will need to serve an additional 17,655 individuals ten years from now.

Figure II.3: Skateboarding at Centennial Park



Growth Policies for each of the four local jurisdictions were reviewed. Policy statements, goals and objectives related to parks and recreation are summarized in the table in Appendix B. While a parks and recreation district was not specifically identified in any of the jurisdictions' growth policies, the parks and recreation district concept is consistent with providing the services and facilities identified in the growth policies.

Parks and Trails Facilities

One hundred twenty-three parks in the project area are owned by the cities of Helena and East Helena, Lewis and Clark and Jefferson Counties, and the school districts of Helena and East Helena. Together these parks (and open land) total over 2700 acres of public land available for recreation in the greater Helena area.

Table II.1: Helena Area Local Jurisdiction Parks

Jurisdiction	Number of Parks	Size range in acres	Developed Acres	Open Land Acres	School Property Acres
City of Helena (includes golf course)	68	0.1-909.8	431.2	1704.8	
City of East Helena	2	2.2-23.3	25.5		
East Helena School District	1	20.8			20.8
Helena School District	15	1.3-31.6			142.5
Jefferson County	14	1.0-28.5		93.9	
Jefferson School District	1	0-18.6			18.6
Lewis and Clark County	22	0.1-157.5	243.1	82.8	

Additional detail on parks/facilities (asset values and general condition) is contained in the City of Helena's Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) and PRORAGIS data base available through the City of Helena. However, expected future maintenance costs of 50 -212% of the asset value in the parks is projected for 42 of the 68 parks in the City of Helena (over half of Helena's parks.) This translates to a significant maintenance need. The majority of the parks in the study area are located in the City of Helena.

The City of Helena manages an aquatic center. Carroll College has an indoor pool available for use by the high school, the Lion's Swim Club, and public use. Focus group participants indicated year-round pool availability is an issue now and likely to become worse given the age of the Carroll pool.

Figure II.4: HHS Bengal AA State Champs



The planning area also contains 118 miles of trails. The local jurisdictions work closely with the Prickly Pear Land Trust to acquire and maintain the trails network, and with the Helena National Forest to provide opportunities on trails in the South Hills. The majority of the trail miles are native material (66.6 miles.) There are 33.3 miles of asphalt trail, 5.7 miles of aggregate trail, and 1.7 miles of concrete trail. There are roughly 20 trail systems with segments in this study area ranging from one mile at Meatloaf to the 22.1-mile trail system on Mt. Helena. Of this total number of trail miles within the planning area, 17.1 are on National Forest lands. These trail miles connect with and access additional miles of trails on the National Forest south of the City of Helena. National Forest trails and city open lands trails are not accessible for people with mobility challenges.

Figure II.5: Prickly Pear Land Trust volunteers doing maintenance on Mt. Helena trail, April 2013



The Helena Regional Airport also owns land that the community soccer fields are located. The soccer fields are managed and maintained by the Helena Youth Soccer Association.

The community's ice arena is privately-owned. The rink provides opportunities for recreational skating, youth and adult hockey, and figure skating. The current owner is interested in divesting the facility. The rink is an important recreational asset to the community. The city may have the chance to obtain the rink. However, any decision to do so must balance current and future operations, maintenance, and staffing costs against needs for other community recreation facilities and programs.

Playable Playgrounds is raising funds to construct a \$700,000 playground that will be accessible and serve as a draw for a large area, targeting ages 5-19. There is currently a lack of all-inclusive playgrounds in the project area. Some playgrounds are not accessible and some are only partially accessible.

There are six developed park facilities in the East Helena Planning Area according to the city's growth policy. The parks include Eastgate I, Eastgate II, Eastgate Village Park, Homestead Valley Park, and LaCasa Grande Center Park. Kennedy Park, dedicated in 1963, is the most utilized recreational facility in the city. The parks include a swimming pool, softball fields, picnic and covered picnic areas, a basketball court, tennis court, playground, horseshoe pits, open play areas, and landscaping. Within the City of East Helena, 26 acres of land are devoted to parks or about 5% of the city's land area.

The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks manages Spring Meadow Lake Park on the west side of Helena. The park has many amenities and was reported in an Institute of Tourism and

Recreation Research survey to be an attraction where area residents bring out of town visitors. The Park has a lake for swimming or fishing, a paved multi-purpose walking-biking interpretive path, an accessible fishing pier, picnic and group use shelters, restrooms, and two paved parking areas. The archery club has a small range located on the edge of the park. MDFWP has one fishing access site in the project area at the Helena Valley Regulating Reservoir. Prickly Pear Land Trust is working with MDFWP to create an additional fishing access site in the valley. The Department also offers grants for trails and recreation programs and is launching a statewide prescription trails program in cooperation with Bike Walk Montana.



Figure II.6: Spring Meadow Lake Park located in Helena

The Helena National Forest is situated in both Jefferson and Lewis and Clark Counties and abuts the City of Helena—providing trail opportunities available from trailheads within the city. There are approximately 72 miles of trails located on the National Forest immediately adjacent to the City of Helena in the area referred to as the South Hills. The Forest Service provides a variety of developed and dispersed recreation opportunities in the Helena area. Developed facilities include the Vigilante Campground, Ten Mile Picnic Area, Moose Creek Campground, Cromwell Dixon Campground, Park City Trailhead, Park Lake Campground and Day Use Area, Moose Creek Rental Cabin Bar Gulch Rental Cabin, Prickly Pear Sportsmen Target Range, and others. Trails in the Helena area are extremely popular, especially those in the South Hills adjacent to the City of Helena. The Helena National Forest also provides summer and winter recreation opportunities in the larger area outside of this project boundary that complement the more local opportunities. The Helena Ranger District has worked with the City of Helena on trail projects, signing projects, and land acquisitions—primarily in the South Hills. (Dave Payne, Recreation Staff Officer, Helena National Forest, March 2013)

The Bureau of Land Management owns the land comprising the Scratchgravel Hills on the northwest edge of the City of Helena. The Hills are surrounded by subdivisions. The land is open to the public and provides a variety of dispersed uses from hiking to mountain biking, off-highway vehicle use, motorcycle riding, and wildlife watching. Old mine adits now provide habitat that has attracted bats.

Programs

Recreation programs in the Helena area are offered through public-private partnerships. Public park and trail facilities and school gyms are used and private/non-profit organizations (not all organized not for profits... some are just committees) offer the majority of programs. The area has a large variety of opportunities available for both youth and adults. Some of the opportunities are available through established programs such as Small Fry Football and Adult Soccer while others, such as pickle ball, occur through informal networking by enthusiasts. Programs specifically for individuals with physical disabilities are not offered. The programs are primarily, but not exclusively, delivered through the use of volunteers involved in private/non-profit organizations and sports committees, clubs.

The City of East Helena offers swimming lessons at the outdoor pool. East Helena also participates in Kay's Kids, summer programs and nutrition for children that take place in the park.

The City of Helena offers the most extensive programming of the four local governments. The following recreation services and programs are offered by the city; parks and recreation programs, parks and recreation non-registration activities, opportunities for passive groups, and partnerships with and without use agreements. The information below was provided by Helena's Recreation and Aquatics Program Manager, Debbie McLarnon.

- The city's parks and recreation programs include tennis, golf, and swimming lessons (youth and adult), sports camp (tennis and swimming or golf and swimming), specialty lessons (swim league, diving, lifeguarding, first aid, CPR/AED, water safety instructor) and tee times.
- The city's parks and recreation non-registration activities include water aerobics, water sculpt (water aerobics with weights) lap swim, coached lap swim, water walking, water polo, open swim, ice skating (rink attendant and skates available), golf driving range, Park Fit, free summer youth recreation program (Kay's Kids, ages 6-13), broomball, RecConnect (Find Your Spot—youth connections and Helena Area Transit partnership.)
- The city provides the following passive recreation services; walking (open space, trails and parks), hiking (open space), golf (open space), cross country skiing (open space and golf course), snowshoeing (open space), geo-caching (open space, city parks) metal detecting (open space and parks), mountain biking (open space), tennis courts, basketball courts, pickle ball court, softball and baseball fields, ice skating rinks, soccer/multi-purpose fields, skate park, fitness stations, and a golf course. The city has plans for a dog park.
- The city has partnership/use agreements with the following groups; Helena Lions Swim Team (swim practice and meets), Helena Softball Association (adults, girls, rookie, practices and tournaments), YMCA (youth soccer, T-ball, coached pitched baseball), Helena School District-tennis practice and tournaments, softball practice and tournaments, golf tournaments, cross-

country skiing meet using golf course, and Helena Youth Soccer Association (youth and adult soccer.) Helena School District

- The city works with a number of user groups with whom they do not have formal agreements. These include mountain biking and running, rugby, lacrosse, pickle ball, and tennis lessons on city courts.
- Baseball- American Legion baseball, Helena Brewers (minor league baseball)

Private/non-profit organizations such as Babe Ruth Baseball, the Vigilante Runners, and the Lion's Swim Club offer a tremendous amount and diversity of recreational programming for both youth and adults. As a follow-up to the recreation partners' focus group, recreation partner organizations were invited to answer a number of survey questions. The survey was designed to collect information about the extent of the contributions—in terms of volunteer labor, materials and equipment, and other contributions made by these organizations to the recreation offerings in the Helena area.



Figure II.7: Girl Scout Volunteer Project

This response does not include all of the organizations that are offering recreational programming in the area. So, the information is illustrative of the scope and variety of programs being offered and the extent of the volunteer contributions, but not a complete listing.

Table II.2: Private non-profit program contributions

Organization	Number Served	Ages	Annual # volunt hrs	Services performed by volunteers
Adult soccer	300	Adults	175	Field clean-up, and set up, pull weeds, line painting
American Legion Baseball	30	13-19	1,500	miscellaneous
Babe Ruth Baseball	350 350	4-8 yr olds 9-19 yr olds	17,700	Coaching, governance, field improvements, field clean-up, running tournaments
Girls Softball	25	14-18	50	Field prep, lining fields, installing fences
Helena Ice Arena	25-30 100-120 130-140 45-60 20-25	Junior Youth (5-18) Adult men Adult women Figure skaters	5,500-6,000	Facility also serves the general public during open skating.
Helena School District	1800	13-18 yr olds	500	Organizing and offering events
Helena Youth Soccer Association	400 rec 95 acad. 225 competitive teams	5-18	24,500	Concessions stand operation, collect parking fees during tournaments, sporadic field clean-up days, board/admin service
Kay McKenna Youth Foundation (Kay's Kids Summer Recreation Program)	3820 visits	6-13	300	Lead projects, teaching, presenting. Enhance city's operation of program. Funding.
Lion's and Helena HS Swim Team	57	7-18	4,000	All aspects of program, organize and run meets and camps, keep records, fund raise, etc.

Organization	Number Served	Ages	Annual # volunt hrs	Services performed by volunteers
Force Fitness (ParkFit) (12 weeks)	240	25-60	48	Organize, prep, advertise, set-up and teaching
E Helena Schools	200 700 200 300	3-8 9-15 16-20 21-91	500	Instruction, custodial, Administration
Small Fry Football	650	5 th -8 th grades	12,000	Coaching, board and administrative work
Softball Association	1500	Adult men and women	1,000	Materials, oversee field maintenance, organize tournaments, scheduling, painting
Tennis	80	K-5 th grade	30	Support Helena's summer tennis program
Vigilante Runners	80-90 250	Adults Youth-19	4,000	Serve as umbrella org for two clubs, fund raise, organize events

Source: Surveys completed by organizations, March-April 2013, and follow-up phone calls

The Helena YMCA offers a wide range of programs serving individuals of all ages. Traverse Cox of the Helena YMCA listed some of the programming provided by the Y and additional leagues and activities.

- basketball traveling teams-3rd grade to 8th grade (61 participants in 4th-5th grade alone)
- fall and winter youth basketball programs (500 youth participants),
- men's adult basketball city league
- floor hockey league-92 kids aged 3-8
- spring and fall volleyball—serving approximately 300 kids from 2nd-12th grade
- Helena Youth Volleyball Club, Capital City Volleyball Club, Montana City and Townsend volleyball clubs (15 traveling teams for 150 participants) play January –May indoors
- Helena Youth Soccer Association indoor soccer travel teams
- Indoor adult soccer league with 6 teams—new program
- Adult volleyball leagues playing from the fall to May (12 teams, 100 players)
- Rossiter and Smith School adult volleyball leagues (64+ participants)
- Youth T-ball
- Triathlon training

- Taekwondo
- Dancing
- Lifeguard training
- Zumba
- Maxfit
- Kettle bells
- Aquatics

Neither Jefferson nor Lewis and Clark Counties offer recreational programming.

At the visioning session held by the MidTowne and Sixth Ward Neighborhood Association in December of 2012, the following needs were raised (related to programming); low cost/no cost activities for youth, after school activities, affordable academic support, fine arts opportunities, service learning, ultimate Frisbee and paintball, life skills and mentoring, badminton leagues, organized youth social events, board games and leisure activities, and cheap theatre.

This particular public-private model of program delivery appears to have developed organically in the Helena over time area based on the fact that the local jurisdictions have been unable to offer very extensive recreational programs directly. With potentially decreasing access to traditional sources of public funds for parks, trails, and recreation programming, building on these existing partnerships will be vital for programs in the area in the future. The key will be to determine the roles of each—local government departments and private non-profits—in constructing and maintaining assets and offering recreational programs.

The Montana Discovery Foundation (in association with the Helena National Forest) sponsors numerous community activities, such as outdoor school programs, nature hikes, moonlight hikes, lectures, etc. The Forest Service reports a trend where a growing number of users are seeking a guide or event leader for their outdoor activities. (Dave Payne, Recreation Staff Officer, Helena National Forest) The BLM does not offer any recreation programming in the Scratchgravel Hills.

According to the 2010 Outdoor Recreation Participation Report (Outdoor Foundation) 55% of the population ages 6 or over in the Mountain Region (MT, ID, CO, WY, UT, NV, AZ, and NM) participated in outdoor recreation.

Current Situation Key Findings

The current service population of the ten-mile radius recreation district planning area is 60,135 people. Growing at 2% per year, the population will be 77,790 in 2023, an increase of 17,655 individuals.

The four local jurisdictions of East Helena, Helena, Lewis and Clark and Jefferson Counties along with the school districts manage 123 parks. Fifty-six of these are open land, 50 are developed, and 16 are properties managed by school districts. Many parks lack adequate parking and restrooms.

Two things stand out with respect to recreation facilities and programming in the Helena area; 1) the public-private partnerships are very productive, and 2) government agencies at all levels from city to

county to state to federal work together to provide recreation opportunities. These cooperative working relationships in the greater Helena area add tremendous value for residents.

The Helena area has a high level of service (LOS) relative to open space--due in large part to the South Hills trails system.

Of the four local jurisdictions included in this project, only two, the cities of Helena and East Helena offer any recreational programming. The programming offered by the two cities is somewhat limited. User groups such as Babe Ruth Baseball and Small Fry football partner with Lewis and Clark County and other jurisdictions to offer recreation programs.

The schools and the communities work together on providing and scheduling indoor recreation space. Schools are key players in the recreational picture for all ages and are with just a few exceptions (for example the gym at the East Helena City Hall) the exclusive providers of gym space.

Long winter seasons in the area mean that facilities and space for indoor recreation is at a premium. Scheduling of these spaces is not well coordinated and has led to challenges and inefficiencies.

The perception exists that field capacity in Helena is inadequate. Because the City of Helena and other non-profit groups handle the scheduling of fields somewhat independently, no single entity oversees the scheduling of all outdoor venues. The extent to which this perception is reality is difficult to gauge. There is a need for overall coordination in scheduling of gym and fields.

The majority of recreation programming in the area is provided by private and not-for-profit groups and individuals—volunteers. These groups are finding it increasingly difficult to engage the needed number of volunteers (primarily parents of athletes) to continue offering the programs. The Helena area has no central multi-sport complex. Recreation partners were able to provide specific examples of where Helena has lost the opportunity to compete for and host a variety of state high school and other youth and adult tournaments. As a result the community has lost and continues to lose the very real economic benefits that come with hosting major events. Given the desires of the owner of the ice arena to sell the arena, there is some chance that the economic benefits of ice-related events will be lost in the future.

Helena has active youth and adult swim clubs. Carroll College makes its aging pool available, but as the only indoor regulation-sized pool, great demand makes scheduling difficult and practice hours extend from early morning to late evening. Carroll may not wish to maintain the pool indefinitely. Year-round pool facilities are a major concern.

Although there is overlap in the users, recreation interests are distinguished somewhat by those who need developed facilities for their activities and team sports (gyms, pools, soccer fields, paved trails, etc.) and those who utilize the open space and less developed facilities (e.g. natural surface trails) and recreate individually or in small groups.

Recreation and athletic clothing and equipment retailers identified outdoor recreation as a “strong lifestyle component in Helena.” These retailers appreciate the opportunities available in the Helena

area and believe the continuation of these opportunities is critical to their business success. They also see “outdoor recreation opportunities as an economic driver” for the area.

Recreation Trends

National Trends

This section discusses briefly recreation trends at the national and state levels, before identifying considerations at the local level. Some national trends—such as demographics—transcend recreation yet will influence demand for recreation facilities and opportunities in the future.

The information on national trends has been taken from a variety of reports. Sources are cited in the text. The larger societal trends that are already and could continue to affect recreation facilities and programs include:

- The population is graying

Baby boomers are aging into a less active demographic. “They’re still very interested in hiking, but they want it to be easier distances” according to Chuck Frayer, Recreation Planner for Oregon and Washington’s national forests. The participant rate in outdoor recreation varies by different age groups. According to the Outdoor Foundation, “As individuals age, their lives are shaped by their environment and life experiences.” The foundation reported on life cycle participation in outdoor activities. Youth participation is initially high, declines sharply in adolescence, climbs in early adulthood, and starts a gradual decline by the mid-30s. Participation in team sports is less than 5% for adults 66 and over. Outdoor activities are more popular than indoor activities among men of all age groups. Among women, indoor activities are most popular from 21 years of age and up.

- The influence of technology will remain strong

Last Child in the Woods (Richard Louv) and other works have documented the declining participation of American youth in outdoor activities. The Outdoor Recreation Participation Report (Outdoor Foundation) continues to track an overall downward slide in outdoor recreation among 6 to 12 year olds. Sixty-two percent of this group participated in some form of outdoor recreation in 2009 compared to 64% in 2008 and 78% in 2006. The pull of technology is strong in younger generations than it has been in the past—providing an activity that can directly compete with participation in sports and outdoor activities. However, the Outdoor Foundation reported in 2010 that for many, watching television, playing video games, or browsing the Internet were activities enjoyed by individuals that were also active outdoor participants.

Helena area recreation partners reported observing this in the local area as well. The City of Helena is to be commended for participating in the Montana Children and Nature Initiative—connecting kids with nature, promoting healthy kids and families, building future leaders, and getting families outside.

Technology also plays a role in the future of recreation because of the evolving applications and tools. Orienteering—an activity that combines technology with outdoor skills is growing in popularity. And, “workout apps will be downloaded at record pace” according to Three Predictions for Recreation Professionals to Watch in 2013. (The Active Network)

For a brief time, a non-profit group maintained the website www.boredinhelena.com. The site contained a list of 27 different types of activities. The site has been discontinued. Also, consistent with this trend of access to information, the Montana Office of Tourism has rolled out a “Get Lost” smart phone application. The app shows destinations in the immediate area of the user.

- The availability of volunteers is decreasing

Over half of the volunteers to the National Park Service are retirees. (High Country News, March 18, 2013) The baby boom generation which is now entering retirement provides a great source of potential volunteers for the recreation field. However, these retirees may opt for National Park or National Forest assignments rather than looking for opportunities to volunteer in local youth sports programs where they may have little personal connection. Recreation partner organizations in the Helena area report that it is challenging to find enough dedicated volunteers to continue to offer programs.

- Government spending at the federal level is declining

Early in 2013, the federal government implemented a sequestration. The sequestration required an automatic 5% spending reduction by federal agencies such as the National Forests, National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Reclamation, and the Bureau of Land Management—all of which provide recreation opportunities in Montana. While it is too early to determine the exact impact of this policy on recreation in the Helena area, if prolonged or permanently institutionalized in the agencies’ budgets it could reduce recreation opportunities on adjacent federal public lands and shift some of the demand to Helena’s local facilities and programs.

- Focus and concern on obesity and health care costs is increasing

Recreation and sports have direct ties to general wellbeing. Nearly half of American adults suffer from at least one chronic illness. One in three American adults is obese—and almost one in five children. Children in the U.S. struggle with obesity. Although many in the Helena area are very active, obesity—especially in children continues to be a concern.

According to Parks and Recreation Magazine, “decades of medical research attest to the preventive and curative effects of increased fitness—particularly outdoor exercise and walking-oriented lifestyles—on children and adults.” Parks are good medicine. (November 2012) In some places, doctors are beginning to write prescriptions for recreation. According to the Outdoor Foundation, outdoor participants rated their fitness level at 6.4 on a 10-point scale versus 4.9 for non-participants. In terms of health, outdoor participants rated their health level at 7.5 versus 6.6 for

non-participants. Many local governments are considering and enacting smoke-free parks ordinances to ensure parks provide the healthiest environment not just for children but for all users. Helena's Centennial Park has a new tobacco-free policy as of 2012. The city is considering applying this policy to other city parks.

Communities are also participating in Health Impact Assessments, maximizing the health benefits of a community's built environment. Centennial Park fitness trail (2013) will provide fitness and general recreation benefits in the center of the community.



Figure II.8: Fitness Trail, Jefferson School

According to "Three Predictions for Recreation Professionals to Watch in 2013" the #1 trend is "fitness parks come to your area." Fitness parks are free outdoor gyms that have been popping up across America. These outdoor gyms have new and traditional exercise equipment and are designed to withstand the weather. Helena area recreation retailers also reported increased activity in sales of items related to fitness boot camps and the YMCA offers numbers of fitness activities.

The participation rate of Americans (ages 6 years and older) who live in communities with designated walking and biking trails is significantly higher than those without. Participation of those with nearby walking routes is 20% higher and for those with nearby biking routes, participation is 25% higher. Clearly, close-to-home opportunities for recreation are important. A full 84% of outdoor participants and 74% of non-outdoor participants agreed with the statement "Developed parks/biking, walking trails in my neighborhood are important." Sixty-six percent of both groups vote regularly. (Outdoor Recreation Participation Report, 2010)

Participants at the May 16, 2013 recreation partners' focus group discussed the benefits of parks and trails to a community/area and identified wide-ranging economic benefits from parks and trails. Some of the more direct benefits included; increased sales of recreational clothing and equipment by existing businesses, opportunity for new businesses catering to specific recreational activities, and the opportunity to bring large numbers of event participants and supports to the area for tournaments.

Some of the more indirect, yet also important benefits of parks and trails included the ability of the area to attract new businesses—not related to recreation and the ability of existing business to attract strong talent and highly qualified individuals for job vacancies-- because of the quality of life connections with recreation opportunities offered by parks and trails. One participant reported on a recent conversation

with the President of Carroll College during which a student had identified Helena's recreation opportunities as a prime reason for deciding to attend Carroll.

Adequate and well maintained parks and recreation facilities can also attract retirees—with their incomes-- to the community. Finally, studies repeated across the U.S. have demonstrated that access and proximity to such amenities as walking and cycling trails can help maintain and increase property and home values.

The Forest Service conducts visitor use monitoring on each of its National Forests. The most recent Visitor Use Monitoring conducted on the Helena Forest was during federal fiscal years 2003-2008 and published in 2009. The data show that the Helena Forest receives approximately 459,700 visits per year, with males between the ages of 40-59 being the largest group. "This forest serves mostly a local client base with the majority reporting they are from Lewis and Clark County. Nearly 70% of visits came from people who live within 50 miles from the forest." Most visits to the Forest are day visits of less than 10 hours. The main activities visitors reported most frequently participating in were hiking/walking and viewing scenery. And relevant to the Helena area recreation project, almost half of the interviewees reported that they would travel only 0-25 miles to participate in the same activity in an alternative location. Many of these individuals then would be recreating in the parks and open space provided by Helena, East Helena, Jefferson, and Lewis and Clark Counties.

"People appear to have less time, money or desire to venture to the more remote and undeveloped public lands, so they increasingly seek out more conventional outdoor recreation." (High Country News, Tourism 2.0 on Public Lands, March 18, 2013)

Oregon Parks and Recreation has now equipped 18 of its 96 state parks with standard yurts renting for from \$35 - \$41 per night. None of the local jurisdictions (cities or counties) in this study offer developed camping. People staying in developed campgrounds expect a wide range of amenities. The Forest Service is installing yurts in some national forests to meet this type of demand. According to the Forest Service, kayaking and orienteering have some of the fastest growth rates.

Three nature-based outdoor activities showed double-digit increases in participation according to the Outdoor Foundation. These activities and their relative increases were adventure racing up 18.4%, snowshoeing up 17.4%, and whitewater kayaking up 10.2%. The Foundation also found participation in team sports and higher cost destination activities was generally down over the same period (2009.)

The percentage of first-time participants in an outdoor activity can be an indicator of growth in that activity. Activities with high percentages of first-time participants (according to the Outdoor Foundation, 2010) included triathlon, kayaking, climbing, and adventure racing.

Running, jogging and trail running are Americans' favorite outdoor activity by frequency of participation with an average of 88 outings per runner per year. Road biking, mountain biking and BMX was the second favorite activity with an average of 59 outings. Third, with 58 outings per individual was skateboarding. The Helena area already provides for all three of these favorite outdoor activities.

According to Robert Burns, an outdoor recreation researcher at West Virginia University, “What we see in the West is that there are a lot of people traveling shorter distances and traveling for shorter periods of time.” Ken Cordell, researcher with the Forest Service’s Southern Research Station in Georgia, reports that based on phone surveys, nature appreciation activities such as watching or photographing birds or other wildlife grew more rapidly than backcountry hiking, hunting, and fishing. Cordell also found that walking for pleasure is today’s most popular activity, enjoyed by 85% of Americans. This was followed by family gatherings outdoors, enjoyed by 74% of Americans. (High Country News, March 18, 2013)

State Trends

In 2012, the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks provided funding to the Institute of Tourism and Recreation Research (ITRR) at the University of Montana to conduct research for updating the state’s recreation plan. The plan is referred to as SCORP (state comprehensive outdoor recreation plan.) The state’s plan has not yet been updated, but the research (survey) results that will form the basis for the state plan update has been completed and was published in February 2013.

The “Montana SCORP, Facility and Natural Resource Recreation Area Needs: Facility Managers Response” was one of two reports documenting the research for the SCORP update. This work was published by Dr. Norma Nickerson and Dr. Elizabeth Metcalf. ITRR developed a web-based survey in the fall of 2012. ITRR contacted 396 city, county, school, state, federal, and tribal facility managers in Montana by e-mail. Of the 396 contacted, 109 responded for a 27% response rate. Both Lewis and Clark and Jefferson Counties were situated in the survey’s southwest region. Nine responses were received from within Lewis and Clark County, second only to Flathead County in the number of responses by county. Jefferson County had no respondents. Eleven percent of the respondents represented cities. Ten percent represented counties. The purpose of this study was to “understand the quantity and quality of outdoor recreation facilities and areas and the future recreation needs from the perspective of the managers.”

According to the findings from the survey, 51% of the respondents indicated walking/jogging/bike paths should be increased. Other top needs included playgrounds, expanding facilities, and deferred maintenance. Around 50% reported there were an adequate number of horseshoe pits, baseball fields, softball fields, and football fields. Over 20% of respondents indicated that disc golf and tennis courts should be increased.

The Executive Summary from the ITRR report stated, “Results from this study suggest Montana outdoor recreation managers should focus on developing and creating more hiking/walking and biking paths and trails.” Additionally, 33% of the respondents said that bike lanes on roads should be increased. This statewide finding in the SCORP was consistent with the information obtained from Helena recreation retailers during interviews in March and April 2013. The results of the survey indicate that the top facility need mentioned by the facility managers was an aquatics facility. This need was also expressed at the focus group of recreation partners in Helena in March 2013.

When asked about needs by age group, respondents to the ITRR survey indicated the top future facility need for youth was playgrounds followed by hiking and biking trails; for adults it was hiking and biking trails; and for seniors, hiking and biking trails and campgrounds. The need for hiking and biking trails surfaced across all demographic groups. Issues that were most important in decision making about facilities were in order of priority, youth and future generations, health benefits of recreation, and children and nature.

Finally, funding was explored in the ITRR study. The study suggests that recreation agencies are relying on service groups to augment public monies. The Executive Summary states “Agencies should continue to develop relationships with service-based organizations to help fund recreation efforts.”

In the Helena area, non-profit groups are already providing both park maintenance and recreational programming. The ITRR study suggests that in the face of decreasing budgets (36% of respondents reported a decrease in public tax funding over the last five years) recreation providers will need to collaborate with these other groups.

The second report published by the ITRR in 2013 in support of the Montana SCORP update was titled “Public Recreational Use Study: 2012. Dr. Nickerson and Dr. Metcalf also authored this publication. The purpose of this use survey was to understand the current outdoor recreation facility uses by Montana residents. The objectives of the survey were to estimate Montana residents’ outdoor recreational activities; estimate outdoor recreation experiences, and; identify residents’ perceptions of recreation resources in the state.

Two survey methodologies were employed. The first was a seven-question intercept survey where individuals were intercepted at local businesses such as gas stations and asked to participate. 4,387 residents agreed to answer the questions for a 95% response rate. Those answering the seven questions averaged 46.87 years of age and were almost exactly evenly split between males and females. Based on the information provided by these respondents, 88% of Montana residents aged 18 and over were active in outdoor recreation during the past year with 74% having visited public lands in the past year.

The second survey methodology involved taking a more detailed on-line survey. Participants in the intercept survey were offered the chance to also complete the on-line survey and 410 did this. Another 170 ITRR on-line travel and recreation research panelists also completed the on-line survey for a total of 580 survey responses. From this on-line survey, 95% of respondents aged 18 and over said outdoor recreation is important to their quality of life and 93% said it was important to their family’s quality of life. In response to questions about funding recreation needs, 95% said it was important to them to maintain existing recreation facilities and 86% said it was important that budget cuts not affect parks and recreation agencies.

Responses to questions about some specific sports and recreation facilities relevant to the Helena Recreation District study are summarized in the table below. The information presented is from the study’s Southwest Region. The Southwest Region includes Jefferson and Lewis and Clark Counties in

addition to Beaverhead, Deer Lodge, Granite, Madison, Powell and Silver Bow Counties. The sample size from this region of the state was 50.

Table II.3: Southwest Montana Use and Assessment

Facility Type	Users (% of respondents)	Reporting facilities are adequate	% that would like to see increase in facilities
Walking, jogging, bike paths	71%	50%	46%
Hiking trails	51%	44%	52%
Indoor pool	30%	30%	66%
Dog parks	19%	40%	40%
Softball, soccer, football field, outdoor volleyball courts	Various %	over 50% for each	various
Playgrounds	27%	45%	47%

Source: Montana SCORP 2013 (Note: percentages may not add to 100% because some either did not believe facilities were adequate or needed to be increased, or may not have responded to the question)

In general, the survey found that Montana residents are very happy with their outdoor recreation experiences: 81% of respondents said their outdoor recreation experiences have been excellent, 70% rated their experiences with natural areas as excellent, and 62% reported excellent experiences with trails.

Statewide, “paths for walking, jogging, and biking are used by more Montana households (77%) than any other facility followed by hiking trails (72%), picnic areas (62%), and heritage/historic areas (60%).” The top statewide needs identified by survey respondents in descending order are bike lands, rifle/handgun ranges, off-road ATV trails, and sledding/tubing areas. More respondents indicated that the following five types of facilities should be increased than indicated that the facilities were adequate. These five types were hiking trails, bike lanes, off-road ATV trails, rifle/handgun ranges, and sledding/tubing areas.

Relatively less recreational programming is offered by the City of Helena than the cities of Billings, Bozeman, and Missoula. Billings offers a large range of fitness programs (10) including martial arts, yoga, pilates, zumba, and nature hikes. Billings also offers 14 different youth camps, five youth sports, and two adult sports. Missoula offers ten youth camps for children from 6 to 12 years of age including sports, art, bowling, discovery, eco or green, nature, water world beach, wildwest, world traveler, and outdoor adventure. Adult offerings by the City of Missoula include active adult tours and photography clinics. Bozeman puts out a monthly recreational newsletter with upcoming offerings. Listed in the June 2013 newsletter were canoe, kayak, and paddleboard classes, an adult kick-ball league, adult sand

volleyball, six camps/programs for preschool and youth, and music and movement classes for babies, toddlers, and preschoolers.

Local Trends

Information on local trends has been developed from research conducted by the Forest Service, the University of Montana Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research (ITTR)(2005), comments made during the recreation partners' focus group in 2013 and community focus group meetings in 2011, the surveys filled out by the partners (2013), interviews with local planners (2013), the City of Helena's CCIP (2012), MidTowne and 6th Ward Neighborhood Visioning Meeting Notes from 2012, and interviews with recreation equipment and clothing retailers in the Helena area (2013.)

A resident attitude survey was conducted by the ITTR in 2004. While somewhat dated, this survey focused specifically on the Helena area. The findings of this research are contained in the report "Helena Residents on Tourism Development: Attitudes and Opinions from Montana's Capital." Residents surveyed lived in the community longer (an average of 25 years) than the state average and the majority of the respondents were Montana natives. Data showed that 34% of overnight visitors surveyed by the Institute in 2001/2002 participated in day hiking and 3% participated in a sporting event. Respondents were also asked to rate parks and recreation areas in Helena. On a scale in which -2 was very poor condition and +2 was very good condition, respondents gave Helena's parks and recreation areas a mean score of 1.31. It is possible that this facility condition score would be different today than it was 11 years ago. The sample size was 178 respondents.



Figure II.9: Family walking and biking in Helena's Centennial Park

Residents participating in the survey were asked where they take visiting guests. Spring Meadow Lake, hiking, and sports were listed by 9% of the resident respondents. Of the 168 residents surveyed, 143 or 85% reported outdoor recreation as the attraction with the greatest potential for attracting visitors. Fishing, hunting, hiking, and winter sports topped the list of suggested outdoor recreation attractions.

One hundred five or 63% reported sporting events as the attraction with the second highest potential for attracting visitors. Carroll College sports, high school sports, tournaments, football, baseball, and hockey were the top sporting event attractions suggested in that order. Twelve percent believed that good recreational opportunities would provide a positive impression to visitors. Two percent suggested that “not enough activities for youth” might contribute to a negative impression of Helena by visitors.

In December 2012, the MidTowne and Sixth Ward Neighborhood Association held a visioning meeting to discuss recreation needs, missing facilities, and potential uses for the Caird property. Individuals representing a wide range of interests attended the meeting.

Facilities deemed at this meeting as missing in the community included; indoor climbing, indoor competitive pool, indoor turf, indoor paintball, on-site daycare, multi-generational facilities, a community center, an affordable banquet facility, indoor ice skating, adequate gym space and courts, a bike park, a real water park, family activity area, indoor playground, performing arts space, on-site food service, special needs area, a rehab pool, weight training, an indoor climbing wall, indoor walking track, a computer lab, a shop to build things, and safe places to hang out.

At a follow-up meeting of this same group held in January 2013 discussion started with identification of the following specific needs; a 21,000-square foot soccer practice field, baseball practice field, a 6-lane competitive swimming pool with locker rooms and showers, and a gymnasium.

A recreation partners’ focus group was held in Helena on March 7, 2013. The group was asked what trends they were observing in the Helena area. A number of trends occurring in the Helena area were identified by the participants.

- 1) Participation is declining in programs where there is a lack of organization. Some of the non-profits struggle to maintain viability over time in terms of volunteers and funding.
- 2) There is a lack of parental involvement in getting children away from computers and engaged in sports and recreation activities. Children focusing individually on technology may be less inclined to participate in team sports.
- 3) Attracting a sufficient number of volunteers to offer programs is becoming more challenging.
- 4) Adults are interested in participating in tournaments, such as volleyball tournaments, and are willing to travel around the state to take part.
- 5) Lack of funding is an issue across all entities. Within local government parks and recreation faces increasing competition for funds. It is difficult for private and non-profit groups to raise funds. Grant funding is getting more limited.
- 6) More family-friendly facilities are needed (e.g. wider, flatter trails) to accommodate all ages. (A bike park with pump track, safe jumps, a slalom course, and skills trail was mentioned as a needed recreation asset in other conversations—and as an asset to provide opportunities for active kids who do not participate in organized team sports.)
- 7) Pickle ball is a relatively new sport to the area and is rising in popularity. Participants at the focus group repeatedly expressed the opinion that the population in the Helena area has “outgrown” most of its recreation facilities. The three specific situations

mentioned most frequently were the need for a multi-sports venue that could host both resident practices and events and also tournaments, the swimming pool situation, and indoor gym space and scheduling.



Figure II.10: Recreation Partners' Focus Group

Between March 26 and April 10, seven recreation and sporting goods' retailers in Helena participated in phone and in-person interviews--responding to five questions. The participating businesses included; the Basecamp, Big Sky Cycling and Fitness, Bob Ward and Son's, Capital Sports and Western, the Garage, Montana Outdoor Sports, and Tread Lightly. Taken together these businesses sell bicycles, general sporting goods, boats, running gear, skis, snowshoes, shoes and boots, accessories for all of these activities, and guns and ammunition.

The questions were designed to understand local trends in participation in various activities, retailers' perspectives on the existing park facilities and programs, retailers' perspectives on future needs, and the relationship between economic health of their businesses and the area's parks, trails, and recreation.

The owners/managers surveyed reported strong or increasing sales related to the following activities; bicycles (both commuter bicycles and mountain bikes), footwear and accessories for trails (year-round use of trails), golf, fitness/boot camps, and team sports soccer, baseball, lacrosse, and rugby. Also mentioned but less directly related to this recreation district project, were canoes, kayaks, and paddleboards. Those businesses that sell guns and ammunition reported that category as having the strongest sales, but included the caveat that the guns were not being sold for recreational purposes, but rather as a reaction to a national discussion about regulating sales of certain types of firearms and ammunition.



Figure II.11: Disc golf basket at Donaldson Park

When asked about the adequacy of existing parks, trails, and recreation programs, answers were oriented more towards open space and trails than city parks. Most interviewees specifically mentioned and praised the South Hills trail system. Also mentioned numerous times was the importance of the Centennial Park and the projects underway there. Several respondents remarked that Helena has a strong bicycle commuting population and went on to express the belief that Helena is not a bike-friendly city in terms of commuting by bicycle or getting around town on bikes. “Bike lanes end abruptly with no thought on where the cyclist will go” and “the town itself is not friendly because of the infrastructure.” Recent improvements to this situation (signage and marked bike lanes) were praised, but followed by statements that not nearly enough has been accomplished to date.

In terms of planning for the future of recreation in the Helena area, more and connected bike trails was mentioned most frequently as a need. More fields for growing numbers of team sports was mentioned as was the need for a multi-sport complex. Related to the fitness boot camps, one retailer suggested that an obstacle course would be a desirable addition to the park system pointing out that one group now uses a playground (mixing what should be mutually exclusive activities for safety reasons) as an obstacle course. A shooting range was identified as a future need by one business person who observed that there are three shooting ranges. None of the shooting ranges are close to the city. The city manages a shooting range on open space lands (Davis Gulch); not open to public, must be a member of the Archery Club.

Trends Key Findings

Helena area recreation interests are identifying trends (challenges and opportunities) consistent with the state and national trends in recreation.

The population of the nation and the state of Montana is aging. Along with that come changes in individuals' physical abilities and preferences for types of recreation experiences. There will be a corresponding increase in demand for accessible facilities—including all-inclusive playgrounds. "Lack of facilities for disabled individuals" was identified as a challenge/barrier during the recreation focus groups held in August 2011.

The importance of technology in the lives of Montanans continues to grow. Recreationists will come to expect recreation facilities and experiences to be supported by and integrated with technology. Helena area recreation interests are asking for a coordinated master facility scheduling tool. Current and future public expectations are likely to include the ability to obtain even more information about recreation programs and facilities on line.

Young families and youth are not as engaged in recreation activities as desired by the recreation providers in Helena. In 2011, participants at a recreation focus group identified a need for more free activities for youth and families with low incomes. Outcomes from the fact that families and youth are not engaged include young people are not reaping the physical and social benefits of these activities that can become lifelong contributors to good health and quality of life, and parents are not actively involved in supporting recreation programs as volunteers. Finding volunteers to manage programs will likely become increasingly difficult.

Recreation programming in other Montana cities include such programs as photography, dance, music, and more other non-sports related offerings that have been identified as needs in the regional area. Other cities also offer more extensive youth summer camp experiences.

SCORP survey participants in Montana believe that maintaining parks is important and that funding for recreation should not be decreased. Yet facility managers reported that they expect public funding (tax payer funds) for recreation to decrease. It will be important to maintain the strong cooperation and coordination that exists between private and public recreation interests in the Helena area in the face of declining tax funding for parks and recreation.

There is currently a national focus on health, fitness, and the cost of healthcare. Access to parks, recreation, and trails can be part of the solution to these issues. Montana ranks 35th-healthiest state for senior citizens in the United Health Foundation's "America's Health Rankings Senior Report: A Call to Action for Individuals and Their Communities."

Results from the ITRR SCORP survey suggest "Montana outdoor recreation managers should focus on developing and creating more hiking/walking and biking paths and trails." Helena residents want more and interconnected walking and biking paths and trails.

Helena businesses selling outdoor equipment and clothing repeatedly reported a high degree of interest in bicycle commuting and development of infrastructure to accommodate the bicycle commuting.

There has been a strong and long-standing interest—by the public, by recreation interests, by schools, and by elected officials-- in having the various levels of government (especially city, county, and school districts) work together on recreation facilities and programs in the greater Helena area to maximize efficiencies and offerings.

III FINANCIAL FEASIBILITY ANALYSIS

Introduction

The purpose of this section is to analyze the financial and administrative feasibility of continuing parks, recreational programming and trails systems into the future in the 10-mile study area surrounding Helena.

The primary focus of this financial analysis is the governments of Helena, East Helena, and Lewis and Clark and Jefferson Counties. The following provides that focus within the broader context of the public's overall needs and also the services provided by other organizations.

This section consists of three main parts:

- 1. Cost Analysis**

A look at costs for existing facilities and programs and possible additional facilities and programs

- 2. Funding and Programmatic Analysis**

Examining existing and potential funding sources and management/administration

- 3. Feasibility Analysis**

Summary of costs and revenues, a review of economic trends and costs/benefits of parks, recreation programs, and trails, and an analysis of several alternatives for costs, management, and funding

Cost Analysis

This section examines what it costs to provide and maintain the existing park facilities and programs and provides a snapshot of potential new facilities and programs. This "Cost Analysis" section is composed of three main topics:

- Cost of Existing Facilities
- Cost of Current Programs
- Cost of Potential New Facilities and Programs

Cost of Existing Facilities

Maintaining existing facilities consists of two types of continuing expenses: 1) Operations and Maintenance (O&M), which is routine maintenance such as mowing, trash removal, and weed control; and 2) Life Cycle Costs which includes major repairs, renovations, and replacements. In the following section, we discuss O&M and life cycle costs for existing parks and pathways of all types including sidewalks, trails, bike paths, bike lanes. Each jurisdiction uses different methodology for budgeting and accounting for O&M, so the Beck Consulting Team developed approaches to standardize the analysis.

Operations and Maintenance of Existing Parks and Pathways

Existing Parks - O&M

O&M for parks includes routine tasks, such as mowing, pruning, weeding, planting, trash collection, litter and snow removal, checking lighting, maintenance of buildings such as restrooms, and control of plant disease, weeds, and pests. Each jurisdiction manages the O&M costs differently and it isn't always clearly distinguished as a separate line item in local government annual budgets. In addition, many parks are maintained by volunteer groups and the dollar value of those O&M efforts are unknown. In order to derive some standardized numbers for O&M, the Beck Consulting Team applied the maintenance classification system developed by the City of Helena in 2012 to all parks in the study area.

As discussed in Section I "Parks, Trails, and Facilities Inventory," the City of Helena categorized 235 acres of its developed parkland into five different maintenance levels (open lands acres were not included) and identified a per acre cost of O&M for five maintenance levels. Table III.1 contains detailed information about the characteristics of each maintenance level.

For purposes of this study, the Beck Consulting Team classified all other parks in the study area based on facilities and amenities at each park, using Helena's system. O&M costs were determined by applying the per acre cost to the total number of acres for parks by maintenance level. Table III.1 displays the standardized O&M costs for all municipal and county parks in the jurisdiction and for school district properties used as parks in the Helena, East Helena, and Montana City school districts.

Table III.1 Parks by Maintenance Level and Estimated Annual O&M Costs

Maintenance Level	# Parks	# Acres	Average Annual O&M Cost Per Acre	Total Annual O&M Cost
Municipal and County Parks				
Level 1	13	203.5	\$4,622	\$940,787
Level 2	14	99.0	\$3,697	\$365,891
Level 3	22	111.9	\$3,081	\$344,626
Level 4	7	36.0	\$2,773	\$99,735
Level 5	35	234.6	\$2,465	\$578,265
SUBTOTAL LOCAL GOVERNMENT	91	684.9		\$2,329,304
School Districts (all Level 2)	17	188.7	\$3,697	\$697,781
TOTAL - ALL	108	873.7		\$3,027,085

Note: #s as shown may not calculate to totals due to rounding

Based on the above methodology, annual cost for city and county parks would be approximately \$2.3 million per year. The \$2.3 million O&M estimate includes all of the parks listed in Appendix A for Helena, East Helena, Lewis and Clark County, and Jefferson County except for parks which are not included in the park departments' budgets (Lewis and Clark Fairgrounds, Bill Roberts Golf Course, and subdivision parks in Jefferson County that are deeded), and Mount Helena and Mount Ascension. Mount Helena and Mount Ascension were not included because they are uniquely different from other parks in terms of size and types of maintenance needed. O&M estimates for school district properties (not including any indoor school space) are included separately in the table above. It is important, however, to remember that the school district properties are an integral part of overall park use in the study area as many school and non-school team sports take place on school fields.

Existing Pathways – O&M

Pathways include sidewalks, hiking/biking trails, and bike lanes. Materials consist of asphalt, decomposed granite, native materials, and concrete (sidewalk). Similar to parks, each jurisdiction manages and tracks costs differently and sidewalk/trail maintenance is not always clearly distinguished. In addition there is volunteer trail maintenance which is not included in dollar costs tracked by local government budgets. In order to derive some standardized numbers for pathways O&M, the Beck Consulting Team applied the maintenance classification system developed by the city of their trail-sidewalk inventory project completed in 2010 to all pathways in the study area.

The Helena inventory categorized pathways by type of surface and identified a 'light maintenance' cost per linear measurement (feet/miles). Light maintenance includes sweeping, snow removal, weed spraying and patching.

As shown in Table III.2, there are approximately 108.6 miles of existing pathways of all types in the study area. Based on the cost per mile calculations from the City of Helena, the total O&M costs for all pathways are estimated at \$44,568 per year. Of this amount, \$8,806 is for pathways that are maintained by the local governments (Helena, East Helena, Lewis and Clark County and Jefferson County), \$519 by the school district, \$34,448 by Prickly Pear Land Trust, and \$796 by MDT. Prickly Pear Land Trust is a non-profit association and works to help maintain trails throughout the study area, primarily in the Mount Helena and Mount Ascension Areas. Although most of Mount Helena and parts of Mount Ascension are owned by the City of Helena, the city has partnered with Prickly Pear Land Trust to ensure trail maintenance. The Montana Department of Transportation maintains the asphalted pathways that fall within the right-of-way of state highways, including the segment from East Helena to Helena.

Table III.2 Estimated Pathway O&M Costs by Surface Type and by Entity

Pathway Surface	Municipalities and Counties	School Districts	Prickly Pear Land Trust	Mt Dept of Transportation	Total Miles	O&M Annual Cost per Mile	Annual O&M Cost
Asphalt	13.5	0.7	0.0	13.0	27.2	\$61	\$1,661
Cement/Brick Sidewalk	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.4	\$639	\$234
Decomposed Granite	8.2	1.1	0.0	0.0	9.3	\$263	\$2,433
Native Material	0.4	0.0	62.6	0.0	63.1	\$550	\$34,679
Sidewalk	8.4	0.3	0.0	0.0	8.7	\$639	\$5,560
TOTAL MILES	30.9	2.1	62.6	13.0	108.6		
TOTAL \$ By Entity	\$8,806	\$ 519	\$34,448	\$ 796			\$44,568

Note: #s as shown may not calculate to totals due to rounding

Life Cycle Costs (Major Maintenance) of Existing Parks and Pathways

Existing Parks – Life Cycle Costs

Major maintenance costs are also referred to as life cycle costs. Life cycle costs are those that occur once in a multi-year period, such as the 20-year life of a roof on a building. Capital Improvements Plans (CIPs) are the mechanism by which governments plan and budget for major maintenance, repair and renovation as well as the anticipated installation of new or additional facilities. Currently, Helena is the only local government in the study area with a CIP. The Helena CIP details life cycle costs for each year over a 10-year period. The other local governments of East Helena, Lewis and Clark County and Jefferson County may be aware of upcoming major repairs, such as need to replace irrigation systems, but have not formalized these into dollar amounts in the annual budgeting process. In order to provide a ball-park estimate for life cycle costs, the Beck Consulting team used the Helena CIP information as a basis for standardizing life cycle costs of the other jurisdictions.

Table III.3 shows the estimated life cycle costs for the 10 year period from 2014 through 2023 identified in the January 29, 2013 draft version of Helena’s CIP. The CIP is a constantly fluctuating document, with adjustments made as needed to reflect new information. The CIP has six different categories for parks: vehicles, non-capital equipment, park facilities, pool, open space (not including trails), and trails and

sidewalks in developed parks (not open space.) The life cycle cost total over the 10 year period is approximately 12.5 million. The annualized cost is approximately \$1.3 million.

Table III.3 City of Helena Capital Improvements Plan – Life Cycle Costs FY2014-2023

	Description	Estimated Cost FY2014-2023	Annual Cost
Vehicles	Mowers, trucks, flatbeds, trailers, skidsteer, etc.	\$ 669,790	\$66,979
Equipment	Power brooms, weed sprayers, power rakes, snow blowers, etc.	\$ 224,140	\$22,414
Park Facilities	Renovating buildings including bathrooms and picnic shelters, resurfacing tennis and basketball courts, replacing/updating lighting and irrigation, etc.	\$ 10,494,810	\$1,049,481
Pool	replace pool liner, replace hot water heater, paint, deck equipment, mats, etc.	\$ 587,570	\$58,757
Open Space (does not include trails)	fire fuel reduction, equipment (track chipper), fencing, kiosk upkeep, etc.	\$ 423,520	\$42,352
Trails-Sidewalks (other than Open Space)	reseal, repave, signage, dog kiosks	\$ 145,340	\$14,534
TOTAL MAJOR MAINTENANCE		\$ 12,538,730	\$1,254,517

The majority of life cycle costs above are related to park facilities. Swimming pools can be quite expensive to maintain over the long-term but both Helena and East Helena have had major upgrades and replacement in the past five years and significant life cycle costs for these will likely occur in years beyond the 10-year period above. Trails/pathways are examined separately below.

The Beck Consulting team focused on park facilities only for estimating life cycle costs of existing parks throughout the study area. An estimate of total annualized life cycle costs for all developed municipal and county parks in the study area is displayed in Table III. 4. The estimate is based on the per acre life cycle costs for Helena’s developed parks. Per acre cost was applied to the acreage of the developed

parks for East Helena and Lewis and Clark County. Bill Robert Golf Course and the Lewis and Clark Fairgrounds were not included in the developed park acreage as these are separate from the parks department budgets. There are no developed parks in Jefferson County in the study area. Based on this methodology, the annualized life cycle costs for the study area would be approximately \$1.4 million for all municipal and county developed parks and an additional \$708,002 for school properties, for a total of \$2.1 million annually. Actual life cycle costs could differ based on the actual facilities on the property and their current condition.

Table III.4 Estimate of Annualized Life Cycle Costs for Park Facilities in the Study Area (not including open space parks and additional costs for swimming pools)

Entity	Acres of Developed Parks	Estimated Cost per Acre	Estimated Annual Life Cycle Costs - Developed Parks only
Helena	278.5	\$ 3,752	\$ 1,044,932
East Helena	25.5	\$ 3,752	\$ 95,676
Lewis and Clark County	79.0	\$ 3,752	\$ 296,408
Jefferson County	0	0	0
Total Municipal and County	383.0		\$ 1,437,016
School Districts	188.7	\$ 3,752	\$ 708,002
Total local government and schools	571.7		\$ 2,145,018

Note: #s as shown may not calculate to totals due to rounding

Existing Pathways – Life Cycle Costs

For purposes of this study, life cycle costs for pathways were based on the “heavy maintenance” category in the City of Helena’s trail-sidewalk inventory project completed in 2010. Heavy maintenance includes construction, crack sealing, hauling materials, concrete dying and stamping, equipment, fuel and labor. In order to derive standardized numbers for pathways O&M among the various jurisdictions, the Beck Consulting Team applied the maintenance classification system developed by the city in their trail-sidewalk inventory project all pathways in the study area.

As shown in Table III.5, based on the cost per mile calculations from the City of Helena total lifecycle costs for all pathways in the study area are estimated at \$64,210 per year. The City of Helena study did

not annualize their “heavy maintenance” category, so for purposes of this study a life cycle period of 20 years was considered reasonable for pathways.

Table III.5 Pathway Life Cycle Costs by Surface Type and by Entity

Pathway Surface	Municipalities and Counties	School Districts	Prickly Pear Land Trust	Mt Dept of Transportation	Total Miles	Life Cycle Cost per Mile	Life Cycle Cost	Annualized Life Cycle Cost over 20 years
Asphalt	13.5	0.7	0.0	13.0	27.2	\$40,194	\$1,094,693	\$54,735
Cement/Brick Sidewalk	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.4	\$11,733	\$4,298	\$215
Decomposed Granite	8.2	1.1	0.0	0.0	9.3	\$1,052	\$9,734	\$487
Native Material	0.4	0.0	62.6	0.0	63.1	\$1,000	\$63,054	\$3,153
Sidewalk	8.4	0.3	0.0	0.0	8.7	\$12,920	\$112,416	\$5,621
TOTAL	30.8	2.1	62.6	13.0	108.6		\$1,284,194	\$64,210
Annualized Cost by Entity	\$33,202	\$ 1,667	\$3,132	\$26,209				

Note: #s as shown may not calculate to totals due to rounding

Summary – Costs of Maintaining Existing Facilities

The actual FY 2013 parks-related budgets for Helena, East Helena, Lewis and Clark County and Jefferson County was \$2,336,933. This includes a total of \$2,223,975 for the City of Helena, including the Open Space Maintenance program but excluding recreational programming. The budget of \$58,719 for East Helena is their entire parks budget except for the portion they pay for Kay's Kids programming. The entire county-wide budget for Lewis and Clark County parks is \$40,371, although expenditures are generally for maintenance within the study area. The entire Jefferson County Parks Budget of \$13,868 was also included in the \$2,336,933 FY2013 budget total for the study area.

Table III.6 provides a total for standardized O&M and life cycle costs for parks and pathways that are discussed separately in previous sections above. The total estimated annualized cost of O&M and life cycle costs for parks and pathways for local governments in the entire study area is approximately \$3.8 million as shown in Table III.6. This is approximately \$1.5 million more than actual FY 2013 combined budgets of the local governments for parks and pathways. The difference is primarily due to the fact that none of the local government jurisdictions are setting aside enough money in their budgets for annualized life cycle costs, estimated at \$1.5 million by standardized methodology as shown in Table III.6. However, Helena, East Helena, and Lewis and Clark County have in fact used some of their annual budgets and capital funds to pay for life cycle costs or upgrades, which have cut into the amount available for regular O&M. Examples include approximately \$45,000 of sprinkler upgrades on the Ryan fields (L&C County) and approximately \$300,000 (over the course of two budget cycles) for clean-up of pine bark beetle killed trees on Mount Helena.

Despite the differences in standardized costs and actual budgets, parks and trails appear generally to be well-maintained. The gap appears to be primarily made up by the O&M work performed by various user groups (such as softball, soccer associations, etc.) and by individual subdivision property owners' association groups. A portion of the difference may also be accounted for in less-than-standard maintenance of some parks and trails.

Table III.6 Annualized Cost of Maintaining Existing Facilities based on Standardized Methodology

	Helena, East Helena, Lewis and Clark and Jefferson Counties	School Districts	Prickly Pear Land Trust	MT Dept. of Transporta tion	TOTAL
Annual O&M					
Parks	\$2,329,304	\$697,781			\$3,027,085
Trails	\$8,806	\$519	\$34,448	\$796	\$44,568
Total Annual O&M	\$2,338,110	\$698,300	\$34,448	\$796	\$3,071,654
Annualized Life Cycle					
Parks	\$1,437,016	\$708,002			\$2,145,018
Trails	\$33,202	\$1,667	\$3,132	\$26,209	\$64,210
Total Parks and Trails Annual Life Cycle	\$1,470,218	\$709,669	\$3,132	\$26,209	\$2,209,228
Life Cycle Pool costs	\$250,000				\$250,000
All other life cycle (vehicles, equipment, open space)	\$150,000				\$150,000
TOTAL O&M and Life Cycle	\$4,208,328	\$1,407,969	\$37,580	\$27,005	\$5,680,882

Table III.6 also shows O&M costs for the school districts, Prickly Pear Land Trust, and the Montana Department of Transportation. The properties and trails maintained by these entities are an important part of the overall parks and trails in the study area and integrally linked to the recreational opportunities for residents and visitors. The total cost of O&M and life cycle costs for all parks and pathways in the study area, including these entities and local governments would be approximately \$5.3 million annually, based on the methodology described above. Actual life cycle costs could differ based on the actual facilities on the properties and their current condition.

Table III.6 includes life cycle costs of open space maintenance, swimming pools, vehicles, and equipment. Annual life cycle costs for the two swimming pools in the study area are estimated at \$250,000/year based on a replacement cost of \$5m each and annualized over 40 years. Annual life cycle costs for open space, vehicles and equipment is estimated at \$150,000 year based on the annualized amount of \$132,000 in Helena's CIP for these items. Adding these to the total annual O&M and life cycle costs results in an estimated \$4.2 million cost for local governments in the study area.

In summary, the existing local government budgets are not adequately covering the cost of regular O&M and life cycle costs. The FY 2013 budget for all local government jurisdictions was \$2.3 million; the total estimated annual facility costs are \$4.2, resulting in an approximate \$1.9 million shortfall. As already noted, part of the dollar cost difference is being made up for by volunteer efforts. Further, this assumes that school district properties and pathways managed by the Prickly Pear Land Trust and Montana Department of Transportation would continue to be maintained by those organizations.

Cost of Current Recreational Programs

The study area has a number of recreational programs, most of which are coordinated by non-profits and user groups, as discussed in the "Current Uses and Trends" section of this report. The municipalities of Helena and East Helena are the only local government entities that provide recreational programs.

Helena's recreational program in the FY 2013 budget consisted of 1.25 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff positions and a total budget of \$104,218. Of this amount \$34,171 was dedicated to Kay's Kids, the 8-week summer recreational program provided to youth ages 6-13. There is no charge to participants of this program. The remaining \$70,047 provides for a variety of organized activities including coordination of seasonal staff at the swimming pool, swimming lessons, tennis lessons, a "swing and splash" golf and swim program for grades 5-8, staffing the ice rinks, scheduling activities on city parks, and maintaining the city's recreational program information on the internet.

East Helena's FY 2013 budget allocated \$7,331 of its total \$66,000 park budget to Kay's Kids. Other recreational programming was not identified as a line item in the budget. East Helena has in past years contracted with the YMCA to provide programs and maintenance oversight at the East Helena swimming pool, but hired a program coordinator in the spring of 2013 to take over those functions at a rate of approximately \$12,000/yr. The position is full-time during the summer pool season.

The estimated annual amount dedicated by all of the four local governments in this study combined to recreational programming is estimated at approximately \$112,000 (\$104,218 from Helena, and \$7,331 from East Helena)..

There is more demand for team sport field space and for indoor space (e.g., gyms, indoor basketball, etc.) than there is supply. Helena recreational program staff is stretched to meet all of the scheduling requirements. Lewis and Clark County does not have any staff dedicated to scheduling. By default, scheduling becomes the responsibility of user groups, such as the Babe Ruth Association, subdivision organizations (managing subdivision-dedicated parks), or ad hoc groups.

The true cost of recreational programs in the study area is considerably higher than the estimated \$112,000 recreational program budgets of Helena and East Helena. The actual cost is reflected in the time spent by local groups to coordinate logistics, schedule events and practices, purchase equipment, and provide coaching. The total number of volunteer hours as documented in the “Current Uses and Trends” section of this report is 70,803 hours. This figure likely omits some of the smaller groups that also provide and support programming so if anything may be a conservative number. Based on the value attributed to an hour of volunteer time for 2011 (the most recent year available) of \$15.73/hour, this is the equivalent of \$1,113,731 contributed by volunteers annually. Volunteer time is spent on park and pathway maintenance, logistical coordination, as well as recreational efforts such as coaching.

Cost of Potential New Facilities and Programs

New Facilities Identified in Helena’s CIP

Helena’s CIP is a planning tool that identifies projects and associated costs. It is used in developing annual budgets and identifies possible funding sources, but obtaining the necessary revenue for projects, particularly new capital projects, is beyond the scope of a CIP. The CIP identifies a total of \$7.5 million of possible future projects, with major cost items described below.

- New Parks Maintenance Office and Shop, \$1.65 million. This was identified by several staff members as a critical need. The existing parks maintenance office/shop is located in the basement area of the Civic Center and has work space roughly equal to a four to six-car garage. There is daylight access to the garage area, but the park staff offices have no windows. The shop is too small to work on concurrent projects so many projects are completed outside in the parking lot, where wind and weather can be troublesome. The space is too small to store all of the equipment needed by the department (mowers, blowers, etc.) Seasonal equipment is stored in a variety of locations and then brought out when needed. For example, in the winter, much of the summer equipment is stored in a variety of locations, including below the band shelter in Memorial Park. In the spring, the storage is switched to hold winter equipment.
- Centennial Park Trail, \$1.27 million. The region is working on connections between East Helena and Spring Meadow State Park.
- Community Recreation Center, \$895,000. An indoor community center has been identified as a need. In 2013, Helena was the possible candidate for grant funds for a community center associated with affordable senior housing on the Caird property in the 6th ward. The funding was not approved, but the need for a community recreation center has been identified in several public meetings as part of this study.

- 4 Restrooms or Restroom Expansions, \$895,540. Need for new restrooms at public parks was heard at several meetings held for this study.
- 6 Pavillions or Picnic Shelters, \$765,840
- Splash Park and Bath House, \$597,000
- Basketball and Multi-Use Courts, \$303,730
- Open Space Improvements, \$ 221,670. This would include boundary locations, new fencing, trailhead improvements, and signage.
- 3 Playgrounds, \$179,100

Other New Facilities and Programs Identified by Cities and Counties

East Helena is looking to build a gazebo. Lewis and Clark County has identified a number of properties that could benefit from irrigation or sprinkler systems and other amenities, including improved sports fields. Other needs identified by Helena and Lewis and Clark County include more staff to assist with scheduling and logistics of parkland and more recreational programs. In addition, local government staff also indicated the public's desire for other facilities as described below under "Other Potential Facilities and Programs."

In addition, before the fall of 2013, the following improvements will be completed at Centennial Park: signage, tables, benches, trash cans, dog stations, volley ball courts, bike racks, picnic shelters, community health trail (completed), dog park, climbing wall.

Property Acquisitions

None of the local governments of Helena, East Helena, or Lewis and Clark and Jefferson Counties have specific properties identified for acquisition. Only Lewis and Clark County has a current funding mechanism for property acquisition – funds through its open space bond (see discussion of the open space bond under "Funding and Programmatic Analysis" section further in this report).

Regionally, there is an interest in connecting trail systems and providing open space from Helena to Montana City to East Helena and North Valley. Prickly Pear Land Trust has worked with the City of Helena on various programs on Mount Ascension and Mount Helena. Lewis and Clark County acquired a portion of the Aspen Trails Ranch in the Helena Valley through its open space bond, and Prickly Pear Land Trust is working on maintenance and trail development.

Although no specific projects are in the works at the current time with Lewis and Clark County, the work of Prickly Pear and other groups will identify opportunities for acquisition with Lewis and Clark County open space funding as leverage for other grants and donations.

Other Potential Facilities and Programs

Focus group meetings and other information sources identified in the “Current Uses and Trends” section of this report identified a number of desired new or expanded facilities and programs. The following provides a review of some of the major items and discussion of cost-to-build.

Capital Facilities

- Year-Round Indoor Swimming Pool The Helena and East Helena pools are open during the summer only. Users would like to see longer summer hours at the Helena pool, which is difficult since most of the seasonal staff are students and unable to work during the school year. Carroll College pool and the YMCA pool are public indoor pools, but both facilities are aging and there is no other indoor facility adequately sized for competition. Missoula built a major indoor-outdoor swimming facility in 2007. The total cost was \$13.6 million, of which approximately \$5.5 million or more was for the indoor facility. Concession revenue of \$414,000 for the indoor facility is inadequate to cover operating expenses of \$638,000, resulting in a net operating loss in FY 2012 was \$224,000. Cost to operate the outdoor swimming pool in Helena is approximately \$400,000 annually and also requires general fund dollars to supplement fee revenues.
- Indoor Multi-Sports Complex. Some of the concepts for a multi-sports complex included gym space for basketball, volleyball, etc., walking/running deck, indoor turf practice field, exercise programs, community recreational programming rooms (for art or other activities), dance floor, stage. Costs of building an indoor multi-sports complex can vary widely depending on the intended uses. The \$11 million Freestone Recreation Center in Mesa, AZ (built in 2002) includes 50,000 square feet, climbing wall, 4 racquetball courts, fitness/weightlifting room, large double gymnasium, sauna and steam rooms, locker rooms (men, women, and family), 2 aerobic rooms, game room, and assembly room. In 2012, Cheyenne, Wyoming contemplated a 200,000-square-foot facility with leisure pool with slides, locker rooms, a multi-use gym for basketball, volleyball and other sports and a field house the size of a soccer field that also could be used for lacrosse, baseball and football, meeting rooms, a cardio balcony, strength and conditioning machines, walking track, indoor playground, climbing wall and group exercise rooms. Total cost of the facility was estimated at \$33 million. Recreation centers are also likely to need subsidy. A review of financial data for 10 Arizona recreation centers that have a fitness component showed that their operation cost last year was an average of \$482,000 more than the revenue they generated. This is comparable to the experience in Casper, Wyoming where the costs of operating the facility are estimated at \$1.1 million, approximately half of which is paid for by local government.
- Accessible Playground. There is no accessible playground in Montana for persons with disabilities. Estimated cost of construction is \$650,000 - \$750,000. A private group in Helena, Playable Playgrounds, has begun fund-raising for an accessible playground.

- Recreation Center. A smaller sized community center compared to the indoor multi-sports complex, one where kids could gather after school and adults could have access to recreational programming. The City of Helena estimated approximately \$1m to construct in their CIP.
- Restrooms at Parks. Construction costs are approximately \$179,000 to \$240,000 per restroom based on Helena's CIP.
- Outdoor Multi-Sports Fields. There is more demand for field space than there are fields. At one focus group meeting, a participant described how an unscheduled baseball game resulted in baseballs landing in the middle of a soccer game. Costs of developing outdoor playing facilities would depend on the acquisition of land (if no land is already available), the level of amenities (restrooms, concession buildings, etc.), bleachers and equipment.

Programs

One of the major items that came from the public was the need for paid staff to coordinate logistics and scheduling. Estimated cost of a full-time staff person to do this work is estimated at \$40,000 or more (\$30k salary and 35% benefits).

Other programs that have been suggested include the following:

- Non-competitive team sport – instruction and coordination of leagues (to provide opportunity for children who may not otherwise may not get enough sports play time)
- Affordable academic support
- “Fine arts opportunities accessible to all
- Carpentry or other opportunities to building things
- Life skills mentoring
- Computer lab
- Badminton
- Youth organized social events
- Board games, leisure activities, “game night”
- Theatre

Costs of providing these programs would include additional staff and equipment.

Summary of all Costs

The cost of maintaining existing facilities (routine operations and maintenance plus life cycle costs) in the study area by Helena, East Helena, Lewis and Clark County and Jefferson County is estimated at \$4.2 million annually. Additionally, contributions of the school districts and others account for an additional \$1.5 million annually for maintenance of existing facilities, for a total value of \$5.7 million per year.

The cost of current recreational programming provided by Helena, East Helena, Lewis and Clark and Jefferson Counties is approximately \$112,000 annually. Actual total costs of recreational opportunities are substantially higher – volunteers spend approximately 70,000 hours with team sports and recreational activities. This time has the approximate value of over \$1 million. Local government

recreational programming and staffing would need to increase to provide the additional staffing needed for scheduling and providing new services that were identified during this study process.

Proposed new facilities in the City of Helena's CIP include a new shop, Centennial trail, restrooms, recreation center, picnic shelters, playgrounds, and other. The total is estimated at \$7.5 million, not including annual O&M or life cycle costs.

Other new potential facilities include an indoor swimming pool, indoor multi-sports complex, and accessible playground. An initial review indicated construction costs alone could range from \$22.9m to \$53.7, not including annual O&M or life cycle costs.

Funding and Programmatic Analysis

This section examines how the parks and recreation functions of Helena, East Helena, Lewis and Clark County, and Jefferson County are managed and funded. It also looks at potential funding sources.

This section is composed of three main topics:

- Local Government Management and Administration of Parks, Recreation and Trails
- Current Funding
- Potential Funding Sources

Local Government Management and Administration of Parks, Recreation, and Trails

Parks, trails/pathways and recreational programs are administered at the local government level by city and county governments. School properties are administered by the school districts. Non-profit and other organizations also are involved in management of various recreational programs and open space/trails. The following provides more detail about the administration of parks at the municipal and county levels.

Helena

The Helena Parks and Recreation Department includes four divisions: Parks, Recreation and Aquatics Program, Open Lands/Open Space Program, and Golf Course. This study does not include the Golf Course, which is an enterprise fund (sustained on fees charged), nor does it include the Weed control and Urban Forestry programs under Parks Division. The Parks Department has a total of 13.34 full-time equivalent staff. Helena has a comprehensive parks plan, which was completed in 2010.

The Parks and Recreation Department is guided by the City-County Parks Board, which was created in 1999 by interlocal agreement between Helena and Lewis and Clark County. The board serves in an advisory capacity to the city and county commissions in parks, recreation, and open lands matters. The Parks Board meets monthly. The separate Helena Open Lands Management Advisory Committee consists of seven members and provides guidance on open space land in the city.

The city has a number of shared responsibility agreements with user-groups. These are written agreements that explain terms and conditions, including details of cost-sharing. The city coordinates with the School District on Kathleen Ramey Park.

East Helena

East Helena has a parks and recreation department and one seasonal full-time employee. The town does not have a parks board or comprehensive parks plan.

Lewis and Clark County

Lewis and Clark County does not have a parks and recreation department. The City-County Parks Board advises the county on where new county parks should be built, making recommendations on parkland

dedications in subdivisions and on how park funds should be spent. Staffing for parks-related work is provided by the County's Community Development and Planning Department, primarily the Special Districts Coordinator. The County's Park and Recreation Plan was adopted in March 2012 and includes specific direction for the Helena area.

The majority of the work and budget in the county is directed toward Ryan Fields. Lewis and Clark County has a working relationship with the Babe Ruth Association to assist with maintenance and logistical support for Ryan Fields. The county also coordinates with the school district on Sierra Park, adjacent to Rossiter School and Warren Park, adjacent to Warren school. The county contributes funding, approximately \$5,000 for Sierra Park and \$3,300 for Warren Park. The Sierra Parks Board, a local fundraising group, also helps with logistics, scheduling and maintenance at Sierra Park. The agreements among the county and the schools and groups such as Babe Ruth, Sierra Park and others are informal and unwritten.

Subdivision parks are county property but maintenance and upkeep is generally the responsibility of the subdivision associations and property owners. La Casa Grande Subdivision, for example, funds park maintenance with an optional \$4 monthly payment that lot owners can add to their water bill.

Jefferson County

Jefferson County's budget has a fund account for parks and recreation but the county does not have any parks staff nor a parks and recreation plan.

Nearly all of the parks in Jefferson County in the study area are parks owned by subdivisions that were established when subdivisions were approved by the county. All of the maintenance for these deeded parks is the responsibility of the subdivision.

Current Funding

Revenue sources for local government parks and recreation in the study area come from one or more of the following sources:

- 1) Taxes
- 2) Fees
- 3) Subdivision "cash-in-lieu" park dedication
- 4) Bonds/Loans
- 5) Cost-sharing/Private-Public partnerships
- 6) Grants
- 7) Donations

Helena and East Helena derive most of their annual park funding from general taxes that are deposited to the municipality's general fund and then allocated via the budgeting process to parks and recreation. Lewis and Clark County's park program derives all of its revenue from taxes, some from the general fund and some from dedicated taxes. Jefferson County relies entirely on funding from "cash-in-lieu" subdivision dedication.

Both municipalities also derive income from fees from their swimming pools, park facilities, and recreation programs.

Subdivision “cash-in-lieu” is used by Helena and Lewis and Clark County for capital improvements—both jurisdictions account for this as a separate parks capital fund. As already noted, “cash-in-lieu” is Jefferson County’s sole parks revenue. The East Helena budget did not identify separate accounting for subdivision “cash-in-lieu.”

Helena, East Helena, and Lewis and Clark County each have a current bond obligation or loan that is paying for major capital improvements or land acquisitions.

All of the jurisdictions use cost-sharing or some sort of private-public partnership to leverage their budgeted dollars. Helena and Lewis and Clark Counties coordinate with the school districts on certain properties used for recreation by the public. Both also have a variety of arrangements with other entities to assist with park and trail maintenance. East Helena works with ASARCO on planning for future park and trails connections. Jefferson County required most subdivisions in the 10-mile study area to retain deeded ownership and maintenance responsibilities for parks dedicated to the public as part of the subdivision.

Helena has had the most success garnering grants and donations of all four jurisdictions.

The following sections provide more detail on each jurisdiction’s revenue with focus on the FY 2013 budget.

Helena

The Helena Parks and Recreation Department receives 86% of its annual budget from the City’s general fund, approximately 9% from fees and the remaining 5% from other dedicated funds. The Open Space District program is 98% funded with special assessment taxes. The Parks Improvement Fund is funded entirely by cash-in-lieu of subdivision park dedication funds and by donations. Improvements to Centennial Park were funded in part with a \$7.85 million General Obligation Bond and with grants and donations. The following provides more detail about the FY 2013 budget and bond and taxing programs.

The Helena Parks and Recreation Program (including Parks Division and Recreation and Aquatics Divisions) had total revenues of \$2,040,791 budgeted in FY2013. Of this \$1,757,970 were general fund revenues. The remaining \$282,821 was dedicated revenues, of which \$176,090 were fees for service. Fees for service include \$96,110 of swimming pool fees (lessons, tickets and passes , swim pool rent); \$52,500 was park use fees, and the remaining \$25,080 was from fees for recreation, ice skating, tennis, food, and miscellaneous.

The Open Lands program is under the Parks Department but accounted for separately. FY 2013 budgeted revenues were \$329,606. Funding is from an Open Space Taxing District, established in 2007, to provide long-term funding for the maintenance of the city’s open space lands. The district provides

funding for labor and materials to manage the city's open space land system, including forest fuel reduction to mitigate potential fires, weed control, trail development and maintenance. Funding is provided through an annual assessment to each lot in the city with a base amount of \$7 per lot plus \$0.00215 per square foot of impervious area in excess of 2,222 square feet. In FY 2010 the base charge was increased by \$10 per lot and estimated to bring in an additional \$112,000 annually. The funding increase is intended to provide matching funds for grants and help offset costs of tree removal and forest fire mitigation necessitated by the pine beetle infestation. The city was awarded a FEMA Hazard Mitigation grant for \$235,497, matched with \$78,499 of city funding. The project is anticipated to be completed in 2013.

Helena has a Parks Improvement Fund that was projected to have a balance of \$192,339 at the end of FY 2013. The fund's source of revenue is primarily cash-in-lieu of park dedication as subdivisions are approved in the city. The fund also receives donations such as memorials (e.g. park benches) that have a dedicated purpose. The intent is to build the fund. Active, ongoing projects include Memorial Trees, Veterans Memorial, Kay McKenna Park, Skelton Park, Centennial Playground, and Selma Held Memorial.

The city has a history of issuing bonds for open space and parks, paid for with taxes. In November 1996, voters approved issuance of \$5.375 million in General Obligation Bonds to acquire open space and fire equipment and prepare a comprehensive parks, recreation and open space plan. All funds were expended by FY 2011.

In November 2007 Helena voters approved issuance of \$7.85 million in general obligation bonds for the purpose of a General Obligation Bond issued for \$7.85m for improvements to Centennial Park, Kindrick Legion Field, and the Memorial Park Pool. The debt is scheduled to be completely repaid in 2028 at an approximate average of \$570,000 per year.

Helena has had success applying for grant funds and leveraging existing funds to match grants. The Parks Department received an American Recovery and Reinvestment Act award of \$498,776 that was used to fund improvements at Centennial Park. Other examples of leveraging funds in Centennial Park include the \$30,000 fitness trail (\$20,000 provided by Carroll College/\$10,000 city); a dog park (\$50,000 in anticipated contributions/\$35,000 city), and a climbing boulder (\$21,000 Helena Recreation Foundation and \$8,000 city).

East Helena

East Helena parks and recreation receives all of its revenue from the city's general fund. Revenues from fees for swimming and park/recreation are deposited to the general fund. The city's FY 2013 budget for parks and recreation was \$66,050. The city is also paying on an InterCap Loan of \$692,958. These funds were used to pay for the costs of replacing the city's damaged pool in 2009 that were not covered by insurance.



Figure III.1 East Helena Swimming Pool

Lewis and Clark County

Lewis and Clark County received approximately 60% of its FY 2013 parks and recreation budget from the general fund and 40% through dedicated taxes --a portion of a mill. However, the budgeted revenues were less than budgeted expenditures and the balance was a draw-down on a one-time cash reserve. Effectively the cash reserve functioned as 23% of the budget, general fund revenues at 45%, and the dedicated tax as 32%. The county has used the draw-down over several years in increasing amounts. In FY 2013, the total budget was \$40,371, of which approximately \$9,000 was draw-down on cash reserves. At the end of FY 2013 the ending cash balance was projected at approximately \$11,000. Lewis and Clark County has a separate parks development fund of \$233,537 at the beginning of FY 2013. The revenues for the fund are cash-in-lieu of subdivision parkland and are dedicated to the areas of the county where the subdivisions occurred.

Lewis and Clark County's Parks Development Fund is funded primarily by cash-in-lieu of park dedication as subdivisions are approved in the county. The funds are restricted to various geographic areas linked to the subdivision location. Approximately \$131,000 was for properties within the 10-mile study area. This fund has also been steadily decreasing over the past several years. Approximately \$41,000 was spent in FY 2013 for installation of sprinkler systems at Ryan fields and \$6,000 for baseball-related facilities at Sierra Park.

In November 2008, a bond issue was approved by voters to issue \$10 million in debt to acquire conservation easements. These amounts are for purchasing land or conservation easements for open space, agriculture, watershed protection, and/or recreation purposes. In December 2010, the county issued a bond for \$3 million, anticipating a number of projects in the near future, which were not realized. The county budgets approximately \$2 million each year for the program, but actual expenditures have been much less. To date, three projects have been funded for a total of about

\$900,000 spent to date. The Open Space Advisory Board makes recommendation on projects; projects are approved by the County Commissioners.

Jefferson County

The entire FY 2013 park budget of \$13,868 was projected to come from cash-in-lieu of subdivision park dedication. Generally, the county works to ensure that actual expenditures do not exceed actual revenue. If actual expenditures exceed revenues, then the county uses federal “Payment in Lieu of Taxes” (PILT) funds if the projects qualify.

Potential Funding Sources

The following section provides more information on potential future local government funding sources for parks and recreation. Many are already being used by the local governments in the study area.

1) Taxes

Property Tax

Cities and counties derive most local funding from a general property tax which goes to the general fund and then is allocated to different programs. As noted above, this is a major portion of funding for Helena, East Helena, and Lewis and Clark County.

Sales Tax

The single authority in state law for a municipality or county to impose a sales tax is the resort tax provision.

State law (7-6-15, MCA) provides for local communities to impose a sale on certain types of goods and services related to tourism. In order to establish the tax, the community must meet specific criteria. One of the criteria is population size. In an unincorporated area, the community must have a population of less than 2,500, or less than 5,500 in an incorporated municipality. Additionally the community must derive the primary portion of its economy from tourism-related activities. Finally, the community must be designated by the Department of Commerce as a resort community. It would be difficult for the communities of Helena (population 28,190), East Helena (population 1,984), and Montana City (2,715) to meet these criteria given their population size and/or role of tourism in their economy.

There is currently no other provision in state law authorizing municipalities or counties to impose a sales tax. Local jurisdictions with self-governing powers, such as Helena, have powers beyond what is strictly authorized in state law but are still restricted to *any power not prohibited* by the constitution or law. The imposition of a tax on sales of goods or services by local government is specifically prohibited in 7-1-112, MCA. In order to be designated as “self-governing,” a local government must adopt a self-government charter. Approximately 10 municipalities in Montana have adopted such a charter.

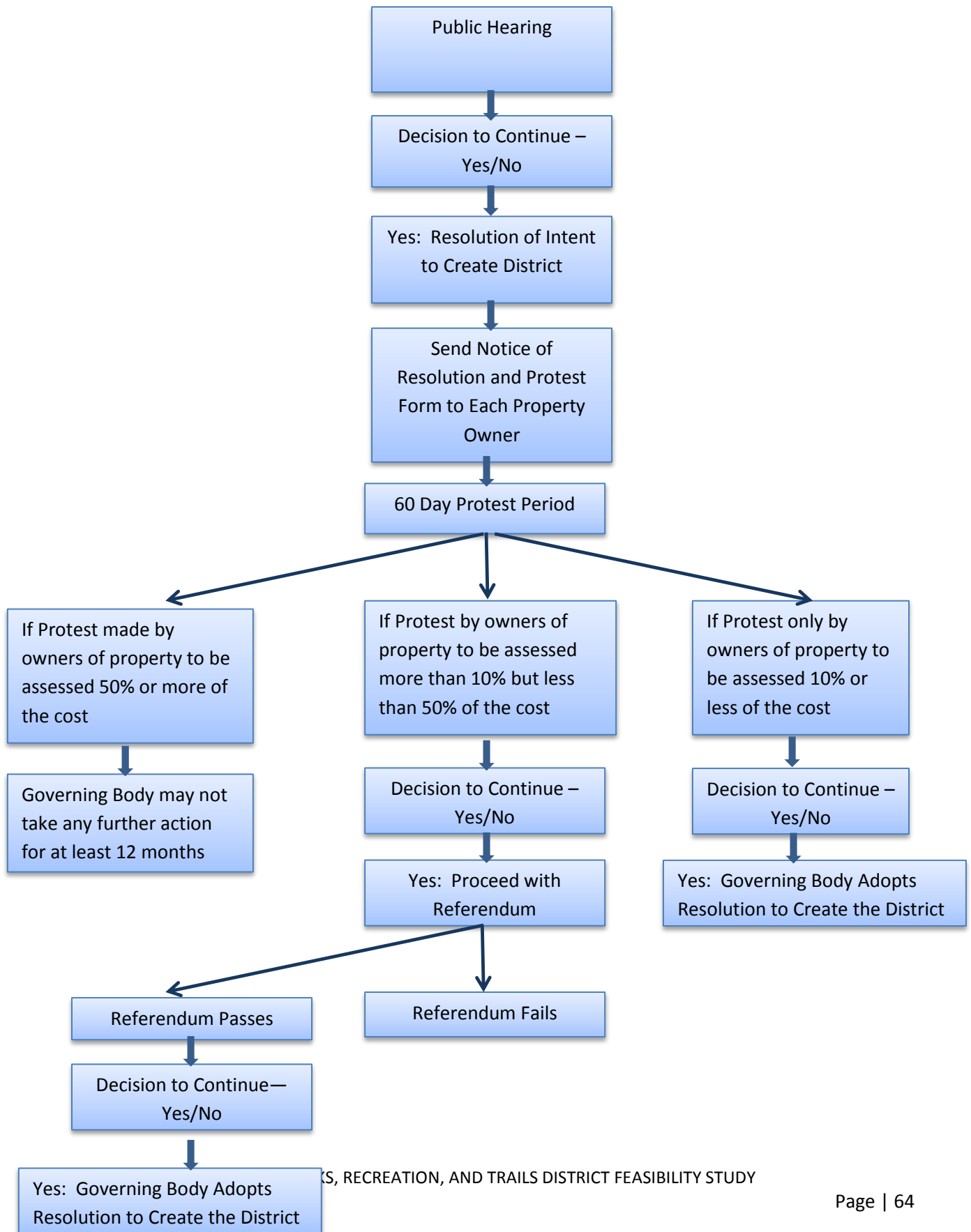
Special Districts

A municipality or county or any combination of municipalities and/or counties can create special districts to make assessments on property to fund parks or any other use not specifically prohibited by state law. Helena's Open Space Taxing District is an example of a system that is based on assessments (as differentiated from a property tax based on mil levies). Special districts are authorized by state law (7-11-10, MCA). This part of state law was changed as a result of House Bill 314, passed by the 2013 state legislature and signed into law by the governor. It was effective upon passage. House Bill 314 made changes to increase notification to the public and provide greater opportunity for the public to oppose the creation of a district.

Special districts can be created either by petition of landowners or by resolution of the jurisdiction's governing body—which would be the Helena City Commission, East Helena City Council, and the Boards of County Commissioners for Lewis and Clark and Jefferson Counties. Figure III.1 displays the process for creating a special district by resolution of the governing body.

The law provides a number of options for how properties are assessed (7-11-1024, MCA). The assessment can be for all properties in the district or can be for only those properties with residential or commercial uses. There are five different allowable ways to assess for all properties and any combination of the five can be used. There are three different ways to assess for commercial and residential units and any combination of the three is also allowable. The assessments must be based on a budget for the district.

Figure III.2 Process for Creating Special District by Governing Body Resolution



Special districts can be administered either by the governing body or by a separate elected or appointed board. The governing body, however, is always responsible for reviewing and approving annual budgets for the district.

Rural Improvement Districts and Special Improvement Districts

Counties and municipalities may also impose taxing districts for special purposes under the “Improvements Districts” authority of Title 7, Chapter 12 of Montana State Law. Rural Improvement Districts (RIDs) are for counties and Special Improvement Districts (SIDs) are for cities and towns. SIDs under this portion of state law are more restricted in how they can be used than under 7-11-10, MCA described above. The allowed uses are different but do provide for districts for building and constructing swimming pools and recreation facilities, and acquisition of public park and open space land.

2) Fees

Fees for service

Helena and East Helena charge fees for use of facilities and recreational programs such as swim lessons and swim passes. Helena’s “Park Fee and Use Policy” (2012) includes detailed information about fees for specific parks and types of use. Rental fees for facilities are generally not differentiated between city residents and non-residents. Recreation programs in the city are differentiated with non-residents paying higher rates. East Helena charges the same fees for residents and non-residents. Higher rates for non-residents is one way to equalize the total contributions made by residents, who also pay taxes to support park facilities and programs whereas non-residents do not. Within limits, fees for service can be charged at rates higher than costs of operating a particular facility. For example, the outdoor swimming facilities in Missoula have net revenue that is used to offset the net loss of the indoor year-round pool.

Impact Fees

Impact fees are upfront fees assessed on developments to assure that new development pays its fair share of facilities and infrastructure. Impact fees are for the capital improvements necessary to serve the future development. Costs for general operation to serve the population at large are excluded from what can be assessed as an impact fee. Very few local governments in Montana have completed the rigorous documentation and process of establishing impact fees per state law (7-6-16, MCA). The City of Helena researched the potential for impact fees in 2012 and has decided to not move forward with impact fees for park purposes at that time.

3) Subdivision “Cash-in-Lieu” of Park Dedication

Subdividers in Montana are required to either contribute land for parks or pay a cash equivalent of the required parkland based on the raw value of the land prior to subdivision and development (76-3-621, MCA). The governing body determines whether the contribution will be in land or cash. Park dedication funds can be used for developing, acquiring, or maintaining parks in proximity to the subdivision, but not

more than 50% can be used for park maintenance. Local governments have the authority to require parkland dedication for some subdivisions otherwise exempted by state law, such as certain subdivisions that create five or fewer lots. The local governments in the 10-mile study area may want to examine their current subdivision requirements to see if they are using all appropriate options.

4) Loans /Revenue Bonds

Both loans and bonds allow for funds to be obtained and repaid over time. They fill the need for large capital or acquisition projects that cannot be funded with annual revenue sources. Revenue bonds or general obligation bonds require a vote of the public, whereas some qualifying loans may be obtained by the governing body without a vote. Generally governing bodies do not desire to obtain funds that require re-payment without taking it to a vote of the public.

5) Cost-sharing/Private-Public partnerships

Cities and counties can enter into agreements with each other, with school districts and with agencies or departments of the state of Montana to provide for efficient and cost-effective provision of services and facilities (7-11-1, MCA). Helena and Lewis and Clark County coordinate with the school districts regarding parks. Currently there are no inter-local agreements among the municipalities and/or the counties to provide parks and recreation.

The local governments may also enter into cost-sharing agreements with private entities. Helena, for example, has a cost-share arrangement with the Helena Softball Association. The Association pays for utilities at Batch field, but keep the concession revenues and player fees. The coordination of open space acquisition and maintenance between the Prickly Pear Land Trust and Helena and Lewis and Clark County is another example of local government partnering with a private, non-profit entity.

Partnerships with private for-profit entities are another possibility.

6) Grants

Grants from state and federal government and from private foundations change from year to year. Grant opportunities include, but are not limited to FEMA (for mitigating fire potential from high fire hazard areas—such as the pine bark beetle damage), Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (for trails), Montana Department of Commerce, and federal Community Transportation Enhancement Project administered by the Montana Department of Transportation.

7) Donations

Donations can be accepted by local governments. Helena has accepted donations for their parks improvement fund. In addition, donations have played a significant indirect role in supporting improvements at Centennial Park. Individuals have contributed to organizations such as the Pad for Paws Foundation, which is contributing \$25,000 to the Dog Park.

8) *Friends' Groups*

Local governments cannot fundraise, but separate groups may be established by the public specifically to fundraise for local parks and recreation. For example, the Spokane Parks Foundation has been fundraising and providing grants for parks and recreation throughout the greater Spokane area since 1951. The Foundation's website states "we fill the gaps between what our parks need to thrive and what annual budgets can provide."

9) *In-Kind Contributions*

In-kind contributions are the "sweat equity" of volunteer labor and the value of goods and services contributed as donations. The many hours spent by team sports groups in field maintenance is an example of in-kind contribution.

10) *Sale of Surplus Property*

Helena and Lewis and Clark County parks departments have begun to consider the sale or trade of properties that have little or no public recreational potential. These are properties that may not be accessible or have constraints that make them undesirable as park properties. They do not always add to the overall public benefit, but can add to annual O&M costs and also be potential liabilities.

Summary

The local governments of Helena, East Helena, Lewis and Clark County and Jefferson County manage their parks and recreation separately from each other at this time. Helena and Lewis and Clark County are both served by a single city-county parks board, which does provide some continuity between the two jurisdictions. The other two jurisdictions do not have parks boards. Only Helena has a full-time staffed parks department. Lewis and Clark County and Helena have parks plans, but the other two jurisdictions do not. Helena and East Helena rely on general fund appropriations and fee revenue for nearly all of their annual operating budgets. Lewis and Clark County relies on a dedicated tax allocation, general fund appropriations, and a drawdown on a one-time cash reserve that has been used for that purpose over several years and is now nearly depleted. Jefferson County's park budget is entirely based on the estimated amount of subdivision park "cash-in-lieu."

Feasibility Analysis

The purpose of this section is to analyze the feasibility of various alternatives for the future maintenance, acquisition, and development of parks, open space, trails, and recreational programs.

This section is organized as follows:

- 1) Projections and Trends – a look at the factors affecting the future for parks and recreational opportunities
- 2) Sustainability of Current Approach
- 3) Criteria for Evaluating Alternatives to Current Approach
- 4) Alternatives Analysis
- 5) Summary and Conclusions

Projections and Trends

The Helena region will increase in population and with a greater proportion of persons aged 65+ in the next 20 years. The increase in population will result in an increased demand for recreational facilities and programs. The increasingly older population will have an effect on the mix of demand for facilities and programs.

The region has an active and outdoor-oriented population and is a destination for recreationists and this is projected to continue. Residents and visitors alike camp, fish, boat, waterski, etc. at nearby lakes-- three of Montana's largest lakes – Canyon Ferry, Hauser, and Holter (within 15 minutes or less of Helena and East Helena), and Lake Helena, "Regulating Reservoir," and Spring Meadow (within the 10-mile study area). Residents are on the hiking/biking trails on a daily basis in increasing numbers. The area is a destination for mountain bikers who come from across the Northwest to use the trail system. Demand is increasing for more pathways and connecting pathways from the south hills to Montana City, to East Helena, Helena and North Valley, particularly in or to areas with public space or parks.

The area has a huge variety of team and individual sports at many recreational and competitive levels and numbers of participants continues to increase as does demand for new sports fields, different types of facilities (e.g., boulder climbing), more amenities (restrooms), and better areas for regional sporting events (multi-sports complexes). The indoor swimming pools are not adequate to keep up with current demand, and demand is expected to grow. Both outdoor pools in Helena and East Helena are used to capacity or near capacity during the high summer season. In sum, the outdoor recreational opportunities in the study area are a major feature for attracting residents and visitors. Much has been done to build and develop facilities and opportunities, but there are also issues with the deferred maintenance, such as aging sprinkler systems, older playgrounds, etc. Keeping up with increased and changing demand is a challenge now and for the future.

Overall, demand in the study area for park-related facilities, recreational programs, facility scheduling, and pathways is increasing. This reflects national trends. The cover story of the May 26, 2013 edition of *American Profile*, which is included in newspapers across the nation, was about the growing

popularity of public pathways and how pathways have reinvigorated communities. Although not groundbreaking news, the fact that the article was included in such a broadly distributed publication indicates the increased awareness and understanding of the role pathways play in individual and community health and economic well-being. Many studies have been able to demonstrate a direct relationship between connected pathways and increases in property value.

In addition, there is growing awareness nationwide of the link between physical activity and individual health for everyone, including those with disabilities. Nationally there is increasing awareness that universal access is more than sidewalk ramps. Montana, and in the Helena region, have a much greater proportion of veterans compared to national figures. This includes veterans who are returning with severe injuries and special needs. Demand is increasing for park and recreational facilities, including playgrounds that can readily be used by children and parents with disabilities.

The national economy is trending to a slow recovery from the “Great Recession” that began in 2007-2008. The Helena region did not experience the depth of the national housing market crash. Helena has a history of a stable housing market with values slowly increasing over time. Taxable values are generally up in the region. Across the nation, the recession has resulted in major cuts to public services. Nationally, many communities faced with shrinking budgets have had to reduce funding for basic public health and safety – law enforcement, fire departments, etc. Parks, recreational programs, and libraries are often the first to be cut.

Fortunately, the Helena Region for the most part has not had such dramatic cuts as elsewhere in the nation. Still, it is evident here as well. Jefferson County had more delinquent taxes in FY 2013 than at any time in their history, although much of the delinquency was due to a single large taxpayer. Lewis and Clark County is balancing park budgets with increasingly shrinking reserve funds. East Helena is facing major costs for aging and inadequate water and sewer systems. Helena has other infrastructure issues. It is difficult for jurisdictions even in this study area to allocate general funds for park and recreation, given competing and immediate priorities. Although local residents have supported a number of bonds for parks and open space in the past, the growing national trend of decreasing public support for increased taxes is evident here as well. A recent vote on bonds for Helena school district capital improvements was defeated, to the surprise of many.

Outdoor recreation, parks, pathways, and year-round recreational opportunities can have positive effects on local economies. As more people become aware of and utilize pathways and park facilities, the more these facilities are desired and valued. They become features that people look for when selecting where to live or where to vacation. Ken Market, former planning director for Cody, Wyoming, indicates that the community’s large recreational center with indoor swimming and racquetball courts has been a contributing factor to new residents’ decision to move to Cody, compared to other places without such a facility. Open space, well-kept parks and pathways, and recreational programming are part of a community’s overall ability to attract and retain existing businesses and expand existing businesses. As communities contemplate expanding recreation programs, they need to consider public facilities as complementing, not competing with other private recreational facilities. Fundamentally, the public facilities are typically those that require some sort of public financing because they are not

profitable in the private sector. Large swimming pools are a classic example of a facility that simply cannot be supported by fees alone.

Parks and recreation can have immediate and direct effects on the economy, even when the events are relatively small. Take for example the state men's rugby tournament held in Helena on two school-district owned fields in April, 2013. Most people in the study area were probably unaware that this event took place. The teams came from Missoula (2), Butte, Bozeman, Spokane, Coeur d'Alene, and Kalispell, in addition to the local Helena team. A conservative estimate of the out-of-town numbers (players plus coaches, extra players, and spouses) plus referees and officials would be 20/team X 7 visiting teams plus 10 officials for a total of 150 people. The teams started playing Saturday morning. Half probably came on Friday night and all of them stayed Saturday night. At the average per day cost for in-state resident pleasure travel of \$98,¹ the event resulted in total visiting team expenditures of \$22,075,² . The event brought visitors to the region during the off-season, and it was likely a first exposure to Helena for some who may be inspired to visit again. There are numerous other events that already occur in the area (soccer tournaments, for example) or could occur (swim meets in an indoor facility.)

Another general trend to consider is evolving and changing communication, including social media. The mechanisms for spreading information about the great recreational opportunities in the study area will need to stay current with technology and communication styles.

Lastly it is important to consider how the study area considers itself as a community. The Helena, East Helena, Montana City, and North and East Valley areas are growing as a regional community. The lines between municipalities and outlying areas are blurring. As one drives (or bikes or walks) around the area it is not possible to easily distinguish the edges of Helena or East Helena from the surrounding unincorporated areas. People live in one area and work in another. They recreate throughout the entire study area.

Sustainability of current approach

Continuing current local government budget approaches will not be able to sustain existing parks and recreational programs over the long term. Expenses will increase as facilities age and suffer the effects of deferred major life cycle and maintenance costs. The reliance on volunteer labor to maintain parklands and provide scheduling and logistics is wearing down the volunteers. Revenues are not keeping up with expenses overall in the study area. The dependence on general fund revenues and subdivision "cash-in-lieu" is a concern.

The region needs to consider alternatives to the current approach. The following sections do that, first with a discussion of criteria for evaluating alternatives, followed by a review of several alternatives.

¹ Based on the November 2012 report by the Montana Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research, "Resident Travel and In-State Vacation Characteristics." The report stated that average cost of a trip was \$208, and the average length of a trip was 2.12 days. \$208 per trip/2.12 days= \$98.11.

² 150 persons x 1.5 nights average stay/per person x \$98 = \$22,075.

Criteria for Evaluating Alternatives to Current Approach

The criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of alternatives for meeting future needs are as follows:

1) Does the alternative increase revenues or resources?

- More revenue dollars?
- A revenue stream that is more dependable and stable?
- A tax base with higher taxable values?
- More donations/grants?
- More volunteer time/less burn-out of volunteers?

2) Does the alternative decrease costs?

- Are there efficiencies of scale or cost-sharing?
- Other methods to reduce costs?

3) Does the alternative improve and/or build on parks and recreational opportunities that make this area a great place to live, work and play?

- Is the region more desirable as a place to live or visit?

Alternatives Description and Analysis

The following considers alternatives under two main topic categories:

- Acquiring and Maintaining Parks, Facilities, Trails, and Recreational Programs
- Management and Funding

The alternatives include “no change” or continuing to do things in the same way that they have been done. This is done to help highlight the differences with other alternatives. The alternatives are not always mutually exclusive. Some may be used in combination. All dollars are expressed as current dollars (2013).

Alternatives for Maintaining and Acquiring Parks, Facilities, Recreational Programs and Trails

The following describes 6 different alternatives to maintain and support facilities and programs in the future.

1) No change from current situation.

Open space and trails will continue to be acquired as opportunities arise. Regular O&M will be addressed with limited budgets and the balance made up with volunteer efforts to maintain fields, parks, and subdivision properties. Major repairs/replacements will mostly be deferred. There will be no expansion of existing recreational programming or scheduling by public entities, and issues with scheduling by user groups will continue.

Sustainability Assessment: Not sustainable over the long term. Assets and facilities will deteriorate with backlogs of deferred maintenance. Some properties and facilities (old playgrounds) could become a

safety issue with increased liability. User groups and others who maintain and schedule parks may begin to think of the parks as dedicated to a particular use or group rather than available to the public.

Projected Cost: Annually the dollar cost would be frozen at FY 2013 levels across all of the study jurisdictions combined. Actual costs would be higher and include the cost of losing facilities that could have been retained had they been adequately maintained, repaired, and replaced over time.

2) Budget for O&M at levels reflective of the existing use and schedule and budget for life cycle maintenance (major repair/replace) of facilities and programs.

Local governments would budget for actual total O&M and account for volunteer or user group maintenance efforts in annual written cost-share agreements. This will help to clarify responsibilities and actual work levels with an end goal of reducing volunteer burn-out and ensuring adequate maintenance. Scheduling and budgeting life cycle costs would be part of a parks level CIP (for jurisdictions that do not have a CIP now). The schedule and costs should be included in annual budgeting cycles and provide for a “pay-as –you-go” dedicated fund for life cycle costs.

Sustainability Assessment: The effort will not be sustainable without additional funding. Assuming additional funds, this alternative would extend the useful life of existing facilities. It does not address the O&M and life cycle costs of new parks and facilities that could be acquired as opportunities arise.

Projected Cost: An additional \$1.9 million per year compared to current total local government budgets of \$2.4 million.

3) Acquire new facilities only when accompanied by a revenue stream to support O&M and long term life cycle costs.

There are a number of facilities that have been identified by the public as a wish list for the future. These include an indoor swimming pool, indoor multi-sports recreation center, multi-sports outdoor complex, community center, accessible playground, more restrooms in parks, more trails and a connected trail system linking areas of the region (Montana City, E Helena, Helena and parks and open space). Helena’s CIP also identified some of the same facilities (e.g., restrooms, and community center) and others such as a new office/shop for the parks department. Under this alternative, any new facility that was approved would have identified sustainable annual revenues to support the upkeep.

Sustainability Assessment: Funds would need to be acquired for construction, regular O&M and long-term life cycle costs. This is a challenge, but if achieved would result in facilities that would have good prospects for an extended useful life.

Projected Cost: The cost will depend on types of new facilities. Building and maintaining an outdoor multi-sports complex that may consist of bleachers, concession/restroom, parking space, goal posts and turf will cost considerably less in the long-term than an indoor swimming pool. If all projects on the wish list were built, costs could exceed \$23 million or more for construction alone. The cost of staffing needs for new/additional facilities would also need to be addressed.

4) Provide staffing to coordinate scheduling and assist with logistics of sports field use.

Local governments would provide staff to alleviate some of the volunteer burn-out and confusion that results when user groups schedule and do all of the logistics and maintenance. Volunteers are over-burdened with making sure events have porta-potties installed and removed, trash is collected, parking is adequate, etc. Nearly total reliance on volunteers for this work can create issues for park maintenance and user satisfaction.

Sustainability Assessment: Funds would need to be acquired, but providing staff to schedule and assist with logistics would allow more time for volunteers to spend coaching and would help to ensure that volunteer-led programs continue in the long-term.

Projected Cost: Estimated cost of a full-time staff person to do this work is estimated at \$40,000 or more (\$30k salary and 35% benefits).

5) Provide or expand recreational programming not already provided by other groups.

Other programs that have been suggested include more instruction and coordination leagues for team sports that are less competitive than other existing programs, academic support, fine arts learning opportunities, carpentry and building skills, computer lab, dance, organized social events for youth.

Sustainability Assessment: Assuming funding is obtained, this could be sustainable if it complemented any similar existing programs.

Projected Cost: Costs of providing these programs would include additional staff and equipment. Actual costs would be dependent on what exactly local governments added to their staffing and responsibilities.

6) Sell or trade surplus properties.

Properties that have access or other issues making them ineffective and costly for public ownership as parks would be sold or traded for other properties with desired qualities for parks or open space.

Sustainability Assessment: Local governments would need to identify surplus properties (as some have already) and identify criteria for sale or trade. Assuming surplus properties can be sold, it would reduce maintenance responsibilities and cost.

Projected Cost: There may be some costs associated with determining what properties qualify as surplus properties, staff time and legal review to close sales or trades. Some one-time funds could be generated from land sales.

Alternatives for Management and Funding

The following describes alternatives for managing and funding park facilities and programs in the future. The three alternatives include: 1) no change, 2) various options for coordinating regionally, and 3) actions that the individual local governments can take on their own. All of the potential funding mechanisms described in the section of this report entitled, "Funding and Programmatic Analysis" would apply to the second and third options below.

1) No change from current situation

Each local government generally functions separately from the other local governments, with Helena and Lewis and Clark County currently under the guidance of the City-County Parks Board. There is coordinated management of properties shared by each school district and their corresponding local government. Individual user groups and non-profits manage themselves. There is coordination and support among various groups, local government, and school district on specific projects and facilities. Local governments, school districts, and other entities would continue to use other funding sources (general fund, “cash-in-Lieu,” etc. as they are currently.

Sustainability Assessment: Not sustainable as current revenue is insufficient to cover the long-term upkeep of existing facilities. There is a lopsided arrangement of support for regional facilities, with a greater than proportional share of costs paid by City of Helena residents.

Projected Cost/Revenue: Annual budgets would remain flat.

2) Coordinated Management Among Jurisdictions

Working together in a regional approach could provide for cost effectiveness, reduce duplicative costs, provide economies of scale, and provide greater opportunities for leveraging local dollars with grants and donations. The following are some alternative approaches to coordinated management.

Cost-Sharing/Interlocal Agreements

To some extent this is already being done with coordinated efforts of local governments, school districts, and user groups, but it is not always formalized. Local governments and the school districts could, for example, examine the equipment and facilities needed to maintain parks, trails, swimming pools and other facilities and consider consolidating, coordinating resources, or contracting for services. Helena has potential capacity to provide those services and has provided contracted services to the county in the past. Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks (Spring Meadow State Park) and Montana Department of Transportation (pedestrian/bike path along highway) might also have an interest. Other potential opportunities include planning and cost-sharing inter-connected trail systems and expanding the city-county parks board to East Helena. Agreements could include all or some of the jurisdictions, depending on interest and type of program.

Sustainability Assessment: Would be sustainable if actual costs to each jurisdiction were the same or less than operating independently and the quality of maintenance were comparable or higher than operating independently.

Projected Cost/Revenue: There would be some costs in identifying what would be included in a regional interlocal agreement. Amount of cost savings is unknown at this time.

Multi-jurisdictional Special District

This would create a regional taxing district under the authority of 7-11-10, MCA, for the local governments of Helena, East Helena, Lewis and Clark County and Jefferson County, or some combination thereof. There are a variety of combinations as one or more jurisdictions could create the district together. The district could be administered either by the governing bodies or by a separate

elected or appointed board. Staffing for a regional entity could be performed by one or more jurisdiction's staff, but functionally only Helena has adequate staff capacity at the current time (as no other jurisdictions have any full-time parks staff). Depending on the purposes of the district, funds could be used for O&M, major repair/replacement, or acquisition of new equipment or facilities. Annual budgets for the special district would require approval of the participating local governing bodies (city commission, city council, county commissioners). The following are some possible configurations:

- a) Each jurisdiction would receive whatever tax revenues are collected from their portion of the district and would use those funds to create their own programs in their own jurisdictions.
- b) Consolidate participating jurisdictions' parks departments into one regional entity.
- c) The City of Helena's park department could contract for services with the other participating jurisdictions using funding from the regional district. This could be considered an interim step with responsibility turned over to a separate regional entity at a later time.

Sustainability Assessment: Creating a multi-jurisdictional tax district could solidify a regional approach if the effort benefitted the region and individual jurisdictions. It could definitely provide greater predictability in funding than annual general fund allocations or subdivision "cash-in-lieu." Creating a tax district would face challenges because of anti-tax sentiments among voters. It could provide greater amounts of funding which could also be used to better advantage by leveraging for grant funds, as multi-jurisdictional efforts typically receive higher rankings. Perhaps the regional efforts would stimulate establishment of a support group such as the Spokane Parks Foundation in the Spokane, Washington area.

Projected Cost/Revenue. There would be costs of time for staff and elected officials to identify the proposed purpose and structure of the special improvement district and to go through the many procedural steps to create it (Refer to Figure III.1 in this report). In addition, there would be costs of printing and mailing notices and forms required in the process. There would be costs of administering the system once in place. Revenues would be based on property assessments based on a district budget. . .

3) Other New Actions by Individual Jurisdictions

Local governments could implement separate improvement districts (under the authority of 7-11-10 or 7-12, MCA) for their jurisdictions or the portions of their jurisdictions in the study area. Or they could increase general taxes to better provide for parks, trails, open space, and recreational programming. They could establish criteria for park dedication in subdivisions that would reduce issues with maintaining park properties and/or require parkland or cash equivalent from subdivisions that are not currently required to set aside parkland. Local governments could also apply for more grant funding.

Sustainability Assessment: Assessing new taxes faces challenges, similar to creating a Regional Special taxing district for parks. Establishing dedicated mills to parks would provide greater stability for future funding than annual general fund allocations.

Projected Costs/Revenues: Costs would include time of elected officials and staff to establish new tax districts. Applying for grants takes staff time or contracted efforts. It can take many years to obtain grants. Revenues are dependent on mills levied and taxable value.

Table III.7 Comparison of Alternatives to Review Criteria

	Increase revenues or resources?	Decrease costs?	Improve parks or recreational opportunities?
Maintenance/Acquisition Alternatives			
1. No Change from Current	No	No	No - Current is the baseline
2. Budget for O&M at levels reflective of existing use and schedule and budget for life cycle maintenance	NA	YES - over long-term	No
3. Acquire new facilities only when accompanied by a revenue stream to support O&M and long term life cycle costs.	YES	YES - over long-term	YES
4. Provide staffing to coordinate scheduling and assist with logistics of sports field use.	No	No	YES
5. Provide or expand recreational programming not already provided by other groups	No	No	YES
6. Sell or trade surplus properties.			
Management/Funding Alternatives			
1. No change from Current	No	No	No
2. Regional Management Coordination			
2a. Cost-sharing/Interlocal Agreements	No	YES	YES
2b. Multi-Jurisdictional Special District	YES	Possibly- depends on whether resources are shared or continue separately	YES
3. Other new actions by individual jurisdictions	YES	No	YES

Summary and Conclusions

The recreational resources in the study area are for the most part regional resources (with the exception of a few neighborhood parks.) Certainly the trails and open space are regional amenities and residents' expressed desire for connecting trails reflects this. Residents of the area may identify their residence or workplace with a specific jurisdiction, but when it comes to recreation, the distinctions between jurisdictions is often unclear to people or simply doesn't matter. Driving or biking from east to west or north to south across the region, most people do not care to distinguish if they are in the county, Helena, East Helena, or Montana City. For recreationists, it is the experience that is important.

Working regionally to address parks, open space, trails, etc. has potential to increase overall benefits in the region and those of individual jurisdictions as well. Regional efforts have greater likelihood of receiving certain types of grant funds. Creating a regional funding mechanism could leverage a greater array and amount of funding.

The current approach to budgeting costs and revenues for parks, trails, open space and programming is not sustainable in the long-term. Revenues are simply insufficient to cover long-term costs of maintaining existing resources over the long-term. Except for a very small portion, revenues are not dedicated to parks and consequently funding is potentially unstable. The most reliable source of long-term funding would be dedicated tax revenue, established through a multi-jurisdictional Regional Special District or separate improvement districts created by each jurisdiction.

APPENDIX A: PARKS WITHIN THE REGIONAL PARKS, RECREATION, AND TRAILS DISTRICT

Table A.0.1: Parks Within the Regional Parks, Recreation, and Trails District

PARK	ACRES	JURISDICTION	MAINTENANCE LEVEL	EST YEARLY MAINTENANCE	PARK TYPE	MAJOR FACILITIES	PARK / FACILITY NOTES
East Helena Main Street Park	2.2	East Helena	2	\$8,255	DP	Wading pool (1), Ice Rink (1), Memorial (1), Play Area, Sidewalk (431'), Offstreet Parking (1)	pool decommissioned - site for new Gazebo when fund raising complete
JFK Park	23.3	East Helena	1	\$107,598	DP	Swimming pool (1), Tennis Court (1), Horseshoe Pit (6), Picnic Shelter (1), Restrooms (1), Playground (1), Volleyball Court (1), Play Area, Sidewalk (1698'), Offstreet Parking (~75 spaces)	Tennis court not to standard and in poor condition
Archery Range Park	74.4	Helena	5	\$183,474	OL	Archery Range	Area leased by Lewis & Clark Archers Club; portion of park in Lewis & Clark County
Barney Park	5.1	Helena	1	\$23,425	DP	Softball Field (1), Basketball Court (1), Playground (1), Tennis Court (4), Ice Rink (1), Restrooms (1), Play Area, Offstreet Parking (~35 spaces), Sidewalk (821')	
Batch Park	17.5	Helena	1	\$81,074	DP	Softball Fields (4), Concession Stand (1), Offstreet Parking, Picnic Shelter (1), Playground (1),	

Bausch Park	3.4	Helena	1		DP	Skatepark (1), Horseshoe Pits (16); Monument (1)	Linear parks sometimes combined with Centennial; large flag pole monument/memorial
Beattie Park	1.3	Helena	3	\$3,915	DP	Historic Site / Monument, Picnic Shelter, Sidewalk (615'), Multi-Use Trail (423')	Locomotive as historic site
Belt View Addition Park	8.7	Helena	5	\$21,546	OL	None	
Bill Roberts Golf Course	151.7	Helena	1	\$0	DP	18 Hole Golf, Monument, Offstreet Parking, Picnic Shelter	Established in 1925; Owned and operated by City as enterprise program; Staff works in partnership with citizen-based, Golf Advisory Board (GAB)
Bull Run Acres 2 Park	0.8	Helena	5	\$2,056	OL	None	Potential trail corridor
Bull Run Acres Sub. Park	4.6	Helena	5	\$11,247	OL	None	Potential trail corridor
Bullrun	6.1	Helena	5	\$14,962	OL	Native Material Trail (1706')	
Centennial Park	53.0	Helena	1	\$244,966	DP	Multi-Use Asphalt Trail (9621'), Multi-Use Decomposed Granite Trail (525'), Monument, Offstreet Parking (~150 spaces), Play Area, Mix Use Field, Softball (3), Play Area	Future site for dog park, pump track and accessible playground; part of 2007 Parks improvement bond referendum; CIP Values combined with Bausch Park
Charles Van Hook Wetland	2.8	Helena	5	\$6,838	OL	None	
Cherry Hill Park	0.7	Helena	2	\$2,430	DP	Basketball Court (1), Picnic Shelter (1), Playground (1), Play area, Sidewalk (620')	
Clinton Park	0.4	Helena	2	\$1,426	DP	Basketball Court (1), Playground (1), Play Area, Sidewalk (445')	
Constitution Park	0.2	Helena	3	\$742	DP	Kiosk (1), Sidewalk (354')	
Cruse	0.5	Helena	3	\$1,524	OL	Picnic Area	Triangle park bordered by ROW
Crystal Springs Park	3.4	Helena	5	\$8,266	OL	Sidewalk (342')	Sidewalks on periphery; mostly undeveloped;

Cunningham Park	0.9	Helena	3	\$2,872	DP	Skating Rink (1), Picnic Shelter (1), Playground (1), Sidewalk (464')	seasonal, non-attended ice rink
CW Cannon	0.3	Helena	5	\$639	OL		small, interior city lot, limited public access?
Dale Harris Park	6.9	Helena	5	\$17,106	OL	Native Material Trail (2156')	undeveloped except for trail which connects to Mt Ascension network
Davis Gulch Park	3.1	Helena	5	\$7,743	OL	Native Material Trail (1530')	Adjacent to Mt Ascension;
Diehl Hill	2.0	Helena	5	\$5,025	OL	Native Material Trail (707')	Adjacent to Mt Ascension; Provides access from Diehl Dr; acquired in 1999
Donaldson	36.7	Helena	3	\$113,171	OL	19 Basket Disc Golf, Offstreet Parking, Sidewalk (1604') along Saddle and Cabernet Drives	Site of new RTP funded trail; property acquired in 1999
Fire Tower Park	3.0	Helena	3	\$9,336	DP	Historic Site (1), Offstreet Parking, Picnic Area	
Flowerree Triangle Park	0.2	Helena	4	\$612	OL	Landscaped	small triangular park bordered by street ROW
Heritage Park	0.7	Helena	2	\$2,754	DP	Memorial (1), Performing Arts Stage (1), Sidewalk (561')	Adjacent to Last Chance Mall
Highway Park	0.8	Helena	3	\$2,609	DP	Offstreet Parking (~8 spaces), Sidewalk (759')	Linear park along W Lyndale Ave
Hill Park	3.3	Helena	2	\$12,117	DP	Memorial (1), Sidewalk (2095'),	Special use area
Janet Park	4.0	Helena	4	\$11,180	DP	Community Garden, Decomposed granite trail (1058')	Mostly undeveloped
Kathleen Ramey	12.6	Helena	1	\$58,263	DP	Softball Field (2), Playground (1), Basketball Court (1), Play Area, Offstreet Parking (~50 spaces), Track(1), Football Field (1), Decomposed granite trail (1079'), Sidewalk (1184')	North half of park maintained by Helena HS, south half maintained by City
Kay McKenna Park	1.5	Helena	1	\$7,067	DP	Tennis Courts (4), playground (1), Restroom (1), Play Area, Sidewalk (855'), Offstreet Parking (~15 spaces)	

KCAP	0.1	Helena	4	\$179	OL	Monument (?)	Pocket park
Kessler Park	0.2	Helena	3	\$554	DP	Play Area, Playground (?)	small triangular park bordered by street ROW
Kindrick-Legion Field	7.1	Helena	1	\$32,972	DP	Baseball Field (1), Grandstand, Clubhouse, Concessions (2), Restrooms (1), Offstreet Parking, Sidewalk (311')	Home field for Helena Brewers, Built 1939, visitor capacity of 2010; part of 2007 Parks improvement bond referendum
Last Chance Mall	2.4	Helena	2	\$9,004	DP	Walking Mall - 1796' in length, Multiple Monuments/Historical features, Gazebo	
Last Chance Water Park & Pool	2.5	Helena	1	\$11,568	DP	Aquatic Center including Pool, Swim Channel, zero-depth pool and splash deck; Concessions, Restrooms	Original pool completed in 1953; renovated and expanded as part of 2007 Parks improvement bond referendum; Funded through the Parks and Recreation budgeting process and revenue is generated through patrons and programs.
Lincoln Park	4.7	Helena	3	\$14,483	DP	Mix Use Field (1), Skating Rink (1), Horseshoe Pit (8), Play Area, Restrooms/Community Building (1), Offstreet Parking (~8 spaces), Sidewalk (2191')	Mix Use field flooded for skating rink in winter; Overlaps with Lincoln School property
Lockey Park	3.8	Helena	1	\$17,641	DP	Tennis Courts (4), Basketball Court (1), Youth Baseball Field (1), Playground (1), Picnic Shelter (1), Play Area, Sidewalk (1919')	
Meatloaf Hill	22.9	Helena	5	\$56,546	OL	Native Material Trail (5802')	Acquired in 2000; Trail connects into Mt. Ascension; Municipal water storage tank onsite

Memorial Park	7.7	Helena	1	\$35,671	DP	Memorial (2), Bandstand (1), Playground, Ice Rink, Warming House/Concessions, Restroom, Play Area, Sidewalk (3495'), Offstreet Parking	part of 2007 Parks improvement bond referendum; Fee for use of Ice rink when in attendant present
Mt Ascension Park	557.2	Helena	5	\$0	OL	Native Material Trail (13.8 Mi) including some connecting trails	Designated as City park in 2000; Alpine Meadows portion of park located in both Lewis & Clark and Jefferson Co.
Mt Helena Park	909.8	Helena	5	\$0	OL	Native Material Trail (22 Mi) including some connecting trails; Trailhead parking, signs and maps provided at Adams Steet trailhead.	Listed on National Register of Historic Places in 1997; Dedicated as City park in 1995;
Nature Park	25.1	Helena	3	\$77,201	DP	Asphalt Trail (2989'), Offstreet Parking	Undeveloped except for trail and parking lot
Nob Hill Park	28.3	Helena	4	\$78,563	OL	Native Material Trail (4425')	Municipal water storage tank onsite
Nob Hill Sub. Park	3.2	Helena	5	\$7,774	OL	None	Linear park - potential trail corridor
Northgate Park	1.7	Helena	3	\$5,209	DP	Sidewalk (955'), Play Area	Large, water lawn area
Northwest Park	19.2	Helena	1	\$88,708	DP	Softball Field (2), Soccer/Mix Use Field(multiple), Decomposed Granite Trail (4341'), Sidewalk (372'), Playground (1), Play Area, Offstreet Parking (~ 50 spaces)	Multiple (youth) soccer fields
Oakes Street Parcel	6.4	Helena	5	\$15,660	OL	None	
Pioneer Cabin	0.2	Helena	4	\$514	DP	Historical Structure	
Pioneer Park	0.9	Helena	2	\$3,334	DP	Playground (1), Public Art, Play Area, Sidewalk (733')	
Pioneer Village Park	0.5	Helena	3	\$1,555	DP	Play Area, Sidewalk (436')	
Pocha Park	0.1	Helena	3	\$308	DP	Playground (1), Play Area, Sidewalk (56')	

Reber PUD	6.2	Helena	5	\$15,344	OL	Decomposed Granite Trail (780'), Native Material Trail (515'), Sidewalk (1330')	Interspersed park properties within subdivision
Red Letter Sub. Park	18.2	Helena	5	\$44,934	OL	Native Material Trail (4815')	Located in Jeff Co., maintained by City
Robinson Park	2.6	Helena	3	\$7,922	DP	Picnic Shelter, Play Area, Sidewalk (1261')	
Selma Held Park	5.9	Helena	2	\$21,952	DP	Community Garden, Decomposed granite trail (1446'), Sidewalk (715')	
Shaw Addition Park	0.4	Helena	5	\$894	OL	None except for adjacent Sidewalk (91')	
Siebel Soccer Complex Park	75.1	Helena	2	\$277,538	DP	Multiple Soccer Fields, Concessions (1), Decomposed granite trail (2998'), Offstreet Parking	
Sixth Ward Park	0.9	Helena	5	\$2,131	DP	Play Area, Offstreet Parking (~8 spaces)	
Skelton Addition Park	0.6	Helena	5	\$1,577	OL	Undeveloped	Linear park possible trail corridor
Skelton Park	3.2	Helena	2	\$11,751	DP	Play Area, Sidewalk (1398')	
Sleeping Giant PUD Park	1.2	Helena	5	\$2,920	OL	None	
Sunrise Loop Sub. Park	0.9	Helena	5	\$2,132	OL	None	
Tracy Park	2.1	Helena	5	\$5,101	DP	Playground, Play Area	Possibly a maintenance level 4?
Waukesha Park	2.5	Helena	2	\$9,087	DP	Community Garden, Playground (1), Play Area, Sidewalk (1393')	
Wesleyan Park	0.2	Helena	2	\$753	DP	Playground (1), Sidewalk (511')	Triangle park bordered by street ROW
Women's Park	1.5	Helena	2	\$5,489	DP	Memorial (2), Sidewalk (1207')	
Yund Park	0.1	Helena	4	\$228	OL	Play Area	small triangular park bordered by street ROW
Beacon Hills Sub. Park	2.1	Jefferson Co	5	\$0	OL	None	Grassland, linear park along stream bed; Near Elementary School; Maintained by HOA

Blue Sky Heights Sub. Park	8.6	Jefferson Co	5	\$0	OL	None	Wooded, rock outcrop with conifers; Maintained by Blue Sky Heights Water Users Assoc.
Forest Park Estates Sub. Park 1	3.6	Jefferson Co	5	\$0	OL	None	Partially wooded with conifers and deciduous trees; Maintained by Forest Park Water Users Assoc.
Forest Park Estates Sub. Park 2	18.5	Jefferson Co	5	\$0	OL	None	Mostly wooded with conifers, Rocky; Maintained by Forest Park Water Users Assoc.
Homestead Estates Sub. Park	2.2	Jefferson Co	5	\$0	OL	None	Open grassland; Maintained by HOA
Jack Mountain Estates Sub. Park 1	4.7	Jefferson Co	5	\$0	OL	None	Partially wooded; Mixed deciduous/conifer; Maintained by HOA
Jack Mountain Estates Sub. Park 2	2.5	Jefferson Co	5	\$0	OL	None	Linear; Heavily wooded with conifers; Maintained by HOA
Jefferson Tracts Sub. Park	6.4	Jefferson Co	5	\$0	OL	None	Linear, partially wooded with conifers; Maintained by HOA
Montana City Ranches Sub. Park	28.5	Jefferson Co	5	\$0	OL	None	Grassland/riparian corridor; Maintained by HOA
Moonlight Ridge Estates Sub. Park 1	1.5	Jefferson Co	5	\$3,777	OL	None	Linear, grassland park; Maintained by jeff Co.?
Moonlight Ridge Estates Sub. Park 2	1.1	Jefferson Co	5	\$2,720	OL	None	Linear, grassland/riparian park; Owned/Maintained by Jeff Co.?
Saddle Mountain Estates Sub. Park	9.1	Jefferson Co	5	\$22,509	OL	None	Hammer-shaped, mostly forested with conifers; Owned/Maintained by Jeff Co.?
South Gate Minor Sub. Park	1.0	Jefferson Co	5	\$0	OL	None	Open grassland; Maintained by HOA
South Hills Park Sub. Park	4.1	Jefferson Co	5	\$0	OL	None	Open grassland; Maintained by HOA
Bridge Creek Park	5.6	Lewis & Clark Co.	5	\$13,804	OL	None	Currently part of pivot irrigation system

Broadwater Estates	28.3	Lewis & Clark Co.	5	\$69,866	OL	None	Grassland; Steep hillside; Linear portion that follows ditch along Hwy 12
Eastgate Fire Park	1.4	Lewis & Clark Co.	5	\$3,451	DP	No recreational facilities	Mostly Linear park; Structure owned by Eastgate Fire District exists on portion of property
Eastgate Remmington	0.3	Lewis & Clark Co.	5	\$740	OL	None	Triangle parcel adjacent to ditch
Eastgate School Adjacent	1.2	Lewis & Clark Co.	3	\$3,697	DP	Playground (1), Horseshoe Pit (4), Play Area	
Eastgate Sports Park	6.4	Lewis & Clark Co.	3	\$19,718	DP	Basketball (1), Track/Trail (1022;), Youth Baseball (2), Play Area	
Eastgate Triangles	0.4	Lewis & Clark Co.	5	\$986	OL	None	3 small triangle parcels adjacent to Buttercup Street ROW
Emerald Ridge Park	6.6	Lewis & Clark Co.	3	\$20,335	DP	Baseball / Mix Use Field (1), Picnic Shelter (1), Basketball Court (1), Playground (1)	Portion of park used as wildlife / drainage corridor
Fairgrounds	157.5	Lewis & Clark Co.	2	\$0	DP	Rodeo Area, Exhibit Hall, Playground (1), Horseshoe Pit (4), Play Area, Fishing Pond, Natural Area	directed by separate board / budget and not under the purview of the Consolidated City-County Parks Board; located w/I City limits
Hahn Road	0.3	Lewis & Clark Co.	5	\$747	OL	None	Open grassland; potential disposal
Harris Sub. Park	2.0	Lewis & Clark Co.	5	\$4,918	OL	None	Open grassland; High voltage wires overhead
LaCasa Grande Parkland North	2.8	Lewis & Clark Co.	3	\$8,723	OL	Basketball Court (1), Play Area	The Parks Board provided money from the Park Development fund for a sprinkler system. A boyscout did fund raising and installed a basketball court.

LaCasa Grande Parkland South	6.4	Lewis & Clark Co.	3	\$19,672	DP	Baseball/Softball Field (2), Playground (1), Play Area, Offstreet Parking	Fire Station and water storage tank located on property; Maintained through the HOA's volunteer donation as part of the Water Bill. Fields are improved and maintained by volunteers from the various user groups
Oro Fino Park	3.1	Lewis & Clark Co.	4	\$8,458	OL	Play Area	Maintained grassland area along Tenmile Creek; scattered trees; Receives regular maintenance via Oro Fino Park RID
Paul Kleffner Memorial Park	1.2	Lewis & Clark Co.	3	\$3,763	DP	Youth Baseball Field (1), Play Area	Maintenance is through Kiwanis?
Ranchview Estates Park	5.5	Lewis & Clark Co.	5	\$13,558	OL	None	Linear, grassland parcel bordering high-density residential subdivision
Ryan Park	46.7	Lewis & Clark Co.	1	\$215,836	DP	Cal Ripken (youth) Baseball Fields (8), Babe Ruth (Junior) Baseball Fields (5), Play Area, Concessions (1), Offstreet Parking	Park is managed in cooperation with the City of Helena and the Babe Ruth Baseball League; County provides approx. \$15,000 annually to Babe Ruth League for maintenance
Seaver Park	0.7	Lewis & Clark Co.	5	\$1,722	OL	None	Open grassland; Not developed, not watered, mowed or otherwise attended to; potential disposal
Thomas Court Park	0.8	Lewis & Clark Co.	3	\$2,465	DP	Play Area, Maintenance Shed	Watered lawn
Treasure State Acres Park	8.1	Lewis & Clark Co.	3	\$24,921	DP	Playground (1), Play Area, Mix Use Field	Developed with regular maintenance via mill levy
Wooten Park	2.3	Lewis & Clark Co.	5	\$5,670	OL	None	Open grassland/brush; potential disposal

Montana City Elementary School	18.6	MT City School District 27	2	\$68,764	SP	Track (1), Mix Use Field (1), Playground (2), Basketball Court (3), Play Area, Trailhead, Offstreet Parking	
Broadwater School	2.5	Helena School District 1	2	\$9,089	SP	Playground (1), Basketball Court (1), Play Area	
Bryant School	1.3	Helena School District 1	2	\$4,811	SP	Playground (3), Basketball Court (1), Play Area	
Capital High School	24.4	Helena School District 1	2	\$90,173	SP	Track (1) Football Field (1), Tennis Court (4), Offstreet Parking	
Central School	3.6	Helena School District 1	2	\$13,446	SP	Playground (1), Basketball Court (2), Play Area	School closed?
CR Anderson School	9.7	Helena School District 1	2	\$35,961	SP	Track (1), Mix Use Field (2)	
Four Georgians School	8.5	Helena School District 1	2	\$31,492	SP	Playground (2), Basketball Court (4), Offstreet Parking	
Helena Middle School	14.0	Helena School District 1	2	\$51,657	SP	Track (1), Football Field (1), Mix Use Field (1), Basketball Court (2)	
Jefferson School	1.9	Helena School District 1	2	\$7,190	SP	Playground (1), Basketball Court (1), Fitness Trail (618')	
Jim Darcy School	6.9	Helena School District 1	2	\$21,259	SP	Basketball Court (1), Playground (1), Play Area, Mixed Use Field (1), Offstreet Parking	
Kessler School	6.0	Helena School District 1	2	\$22,115	SP	Playground (1), Basketball Court (1) Trail (1179')	
Lincoln School	4.2	Helena School District 1	2	\$15,567	SP	Playground (1), Basketball Court (1), Sidewalk (768'), Offstreet Parking	School property ties in with Lincoln Park to East
Ray Bjork School	3.4	Helena School District 1	2	\$12,600	SP	Playground (1), Basketball Court (2), Play Area, Offstreet Parking	
Rossiter School & Sierra Park	31.6	Helena School District 1	2	\$116,726	SP	Playground (1), Soccer Field (1), Horseshoe Pit (8), Baseball Field (3), Asphalt Trail (2348'), Decomposed Granite / Fitness (2897'), Offstreet Parking	The County contributes \$8000 to Sierra Park and Warren Park each year; Picnic shelter is proposed for this park

Smith School	11.7	Helena School District 1	2	\$43,227	SP	Playground (2), Basketball Court (1), Track (1), Soccer / Mix Use Field, Offstreet Parking	
Warren School & Park	10.6	Helena School District 1	2	\$39,145	SP	Playground (2), Basketball Court (2), Track (1827'), Offstreet Parking	The County contributes \$8000 to Sierra Park and Warren Park each year; Picnic tables and garbage cans are planned additions
East Valley Middle School	20.8	E Helena School District 9	2	\$76,832	SP	Baseball Field (1), Basketball Court (3), Track (1), Mix Use Field (1), Play Area, Decomposed Granite Trail / Fitness Trail (2145'), Playground (1), Disc Golf, Offstreet Parking	
Eastgate School	9.1	E Helena School District 9	2	\$33,680	SP	Playground (1), Basketball Court (1), Play Area, Offstreet Parking	

APPENDIX B: GROWTH POLICY GUIDANCE

Each of the four local jurisdictions has a growth policy with stated goals. The growth policies were reviewed for guidance related to parks, trails, and recreation. The outcomes from this project are consistent with and will help move the jurisdictions towards implementation of the goals and objectives stated in the Growth Policies. Table xx summarizes some of the key points from these growth policies.

Table B.0.1: Growth Policy Guidance for Parks, Trails, and Recreation

Jurisdiction	Plan Date	Relevant Goals	Comments
Helena	2011	<p><u>Economic Conditions:</u> Promote and sustain economic vitality while maintaining and enhancing the quality of the human and natural environments.</p> <p><u>Public Facilities and Services:</u> Provide and maintain quality park facilities, open spaces, and recreational opportunities for citizens of all abilities and age groups.</p> <p><u>Transportation:</u> A multi-modal transportation system that; Meets the current and future transportation needs of the greater Helena area including, but not limited to, travel by automobile, and Promotes public health by facilitating non-motorized transportation..</p> <p><u>Culture:</u> Strengthen the relationships between Helena's cultural assets...., recreation, and its people.</p> <p><u>Coordination:</u> Cooperate with adjacent jurisdiction as needed for land use development issues.</p>	<p>There is no specific objective for parks and recreation, but parks and recreation support many of the objectives that are listed.</p> <p>Objective 5. Implement the Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan.</p> <p>Objective 10. Support joint planning efforts to provide coordinated infrastructure in the future.</p> <p>Objectives 2 and 3 encourage policies, decisions and facilities that accommodate pedestrian and bicycle travel.</p> <p>Objectives 11-14 address variety of recreation opportunities for everyone, protecting the environment, adequately fund maintenance of recreation facilities, and analyze opportunities for increasing city-supported recreation programs and services.</p> <p>Objective 2. Explore options for coordinating efforts to maximize effectiveness and efficiencies in service delivery for programs,</p>

Jurisdiction	Plan Date	Relevant Goals	Comments
			projects, buildings, lands, infrastructure, etc.
East Helena	2008	Background information	Section 6.5 Parks, Recreation Facilities and Open Space: "Parks, recreational areas and open space are important components of a community and contribute to the physical, mental, and emotional health of the population. The residents of East Helena Planning Area have access to developed park and recreation within the City of East Helena and area subdivisions."
Jefferson County	2003	<p><u>Goal III:</u> Preserve and enhance the rural, friendly and independent lifestyle currently employed by Jefferson County's citizens.</p> <p><u>Transportation</u></p> <p><u>Land Use</u></p>	<p>Objective D: Encourage the continued development of educational programs and facilities, recreational opportunities and spaces and health services for all county residents.</p> <p>Objective F: Encourage provisions for multiple types of transportation (bike trails etc.)</p> <p>Objective H: Cooperate with developers and school districts to provide walks, bridges and pathways for children to improve safety...</p> <p>Objective D.2-4. subdivision parkland requirement and policy</p> <p>Objective D.2.E. Complete an inventory of all subdivision lands accepted as parklands in the county.</p>
Lewis and Clark County	2004	<p><u>Issue C:</u> The quality of the County's wildlife habitat and open space may be threatened by development.</p> <p><u>Issue D:</u> The character and quality of the Missouri River Corridor is impacted by increased development and recreational pressure.</p>	<p>Goal 3: Maintain the quality of the county's critical wildlife habitat, wetlands, and open space.</p> <p>Goal 4: Preserve, improve, and protect the Missouri River Corridor.</p>

Jurisdiction	Plan Date	Relevant Goals	Comments
		<p><u>Economic Development</u></p> <p><u>Economic Development Issue D:</u> Sports facilities attract visitors to the county.</p> <p><u>Transportation Issue D:</u> There is a benefit to providing non-motorized travel in the County, including developed areas, and recreational and tourist areas.</p>	<p>Key finding: ...the economies of southern L&C County, northern and central Jefferson County, and central and western Broadwater County...have been increasingly linked in an economic and demographic region that transcends county boundaries... This trend has increased the need for inter-county planning and cooperation in the region.</p> <p>Goal 6: Continue working with the schools, Carroll College, the Fair Grounds, the U of MT, technical colleges, the Helena Regional Airport, and the private sector to develop sporting complexes that not only provide activities for county residents, but attract sporting events throughout Montana and the Northwestern U.S.</p> <p>Goal 5 and Objectives 5.2, 5.5 address safe bicycle and pedestrian access, providing bikeways and pedestrian paths, and providing non-motorized paths to natural and scenic areas.</p>