

AFFECTING PARKS AND RECREATION PLANNING IN CARSON CITY

4.1 DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

4.1.1 GENERAL GROWTH

In 2004, Carson City was estimated to have a population of 55,625 people¹. According to the U.S. Census the City grew at an annual rate of 2.6% from 1990 to 2000. With regard to projections of future growth, Figures 4-1 and 4-2 compares various projections, including a national demographer (Woods & Poole), projections by the State Demographer and the synthesis developed for the Carson City Comprehensive Master Plan. According to the State Demographer and the Comprehensive Master Plan synthesis, Carson City's growth rate is expected to taper off slightly. The Carson City Comprehensive Master Plan demographic (the source the City will use to achieve consistency in City-wide planning) projects a growth rate of only 0.8% per year over the next 20 years, with the population reaching 66,000 by 2025.

The Carson City Comprehensive Master Plan has established a build-out maximum population of approximately 80,000 people, based on water capacity and land-use considerations. This suggests that the City will grow by a total of about 44% to its maximum buildout. This has implications for all of the City's recreation facilities. For example, if Carson City wants to maintain its current level of parks availability that means that we have to increase our current inventory of park acres by 44%, or approximately 336 acres.

4.1.2 GROWTH IN AGE GROUPS

Will all segments of the population grow equally? The Carson City Comprehensive Master Plan observes that Carson City's population is gradually getting older. The median age in 1990 was 36.8 compared to 38.7 in 2000. Fifteen percent of Carson City's residents are over 65 years of age, compared to 11% statewide. The Carson City Comprehensive Master Plan projects that the percentage of residents over 65 years of age in Carson City is expected to grow to 18% by 2024. Figure 4-2 illustrates the population projections of the Nevada State Demographer, by age cohort. According to these projections, over the next 15 years the growth trends, by age group, imply:

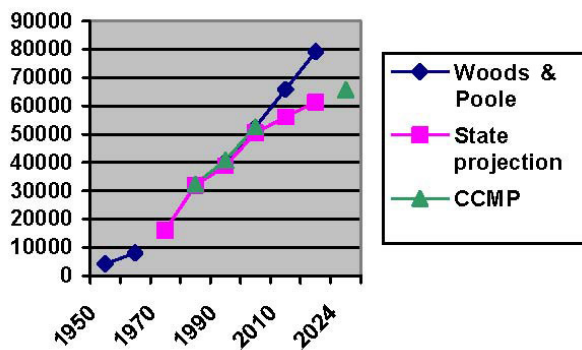


FIGURE 4-1

Growth Projections for Carson City from various sources.

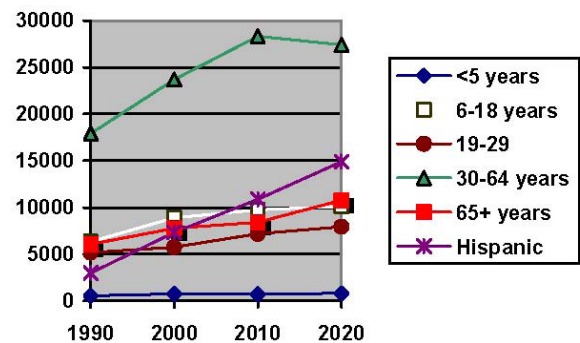


FIGURE 4-2

Growth projections for various age cohorts
(source: Nevada State Demographer)

¹ Carson City Comprehensive Master Plan, "Snapshot Carson City"

To meet the needs of its changing demographics, Carson City will need to make adjustments to its recreational programming. For example, additional programs for seniors and adults may be required. Youth programs and facilities may eventually see a gradual leveling off of demand.

TABLE 4.1: INTERPRETATION OF AGE COHORT GROWTH PROJECTIONS	
UNDER 5 YEARS (TODDLERS)	Very little change, no significant increase in pre-school programs
6-18 YEARS (SCHOOL AGE)	This recreation active age group, especially oriented to youth programs for soccer, Latch Key, baseball and basketball will show slight growth then stable demand.
19-29 YEARS (YOUNG ADULTS)	This age group, that probably contributes most of the demand for adult baseball, adult softball and adult soccer, will experience stable levels, then slight growth
30-64 YEARS (FAMILIES)	By far the largest age group but, according to the survey they “don’t use parks very much”. They will show continued strong growth for 5 years, then a slight decline
65+ YEARS (SENIORS, RETIREES)	This age group is clearly oriented toward passive recreation, but also with strong participation in swimming and fitness. It will see slow but steady growth.
HISPANIC	This group is a component of the overall population projections above. See the discussion below (Section 4.1.3) for implications.
(HISPANIC POPULATION IS INCLUDED IN THE OTHER AGE GROUP FIGURES, BUT SHOWN HERE AS A SEPARATE COHORT FOR COMPARISON PURPOSES.)	

4.1.3 GROWTH OF CARSON CITY’S HISPANIC POPULATION

By contrast, as an ethnic group, Carson City’s Hispanic population is projected to continue to grow strongly. In 2000, over 14% of Carson City residents were Hispanic, which is slightly higher than the national average of 12.5%. Between 1993 and 2003, enrollment of Hispanic students increased 172% and the number of non-English speaking students in the Carson City School District increased 100%.

This was reinforced in the focus groups related to Youth and Adult Sports. The representatives of the Hispanic soccer teams indicated that they currently have approximately 25 teams that utilize the City’s soccer fields on weekends. Further, they project that within 5 years they will have approximately 50 teams(!). This has, and will continue to, put significant pressure on the City’s soccer facilities in several ways:

1. The existing fields will have a much higher volume of use, wear and tear, and maintenance requirement (no time to rest and rejuvenate sports fields).
2. If current usage patterns are an indication, soccer for the local Hispanic culture is a social event that draws significantly more spectators, for a longer period of time, than does the typical non-Hispanic soccer venues. This suggests a need to provide greater parking accommodations and provision for spectators.

As the Hispanic population continues to grow, there may be an additional demand for soccer facilities, including both indoor and outdoor facilities.

The City has an opportunity to more fully integrate its growing Hispanic population. Integrating the Hispanic community into the City’s recreation programs will provide a number of dividends:

- Increased community cohesion;
- Valuable cultural exchange;
- Increase in the pool of volunteers to help lead programs, referee sports, etc.;
- Allow more comprehensive scheduling and anticipation of facility needs.

4.2 GROWTH OF ADJACENT COUNTIES

For many years Carson City has been a regional employment center. The City has also provided most of the recreation facilities for Lyon County and northern Douglas County. The City's quality parks, sports fields, and indoor facilities, combined with a lack of facilities in adjacent communities, have attracted use by a significant number of non-residents. However, there are signs of change.

Douglas County currently has a population of 46,000+ that is projected to grow to 61,000². Over the last decade Douglas County has begun to develop some recreation facilities (a few parks, a leisure pool, a skateboard park). At the moment there does not appear to be strong pressure for more local facilities, although that could change as growth continues.

At the moment, Lyon County remains a suburban bedroom community, without significant recreation or other civic amenities. Currently it is felt that Lyon County residents are a small but growing component of the users of Carson City recreation facilities. Lyon County is currently projected to grow from 41,000 to 75,000 population³. As Lyon County continues to grow to this level, it is likely that there will be an increasing demand to develop more local recreation facilities. If that occurs, it may reduce their use of Carson City recreation facilities.

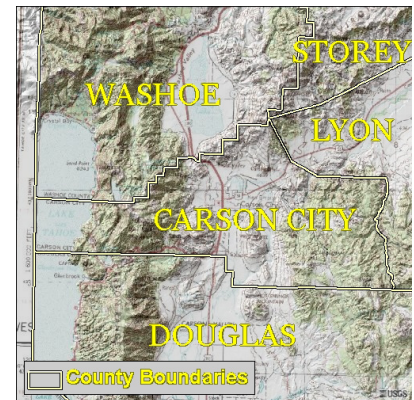
According to the City's projections, Carson City's growth will slow significantly and plateau within the next 15 to 20 years. It is likely that, as other communities grow and develop their own recreation amenities, patronage of Carson City's recreation facilities by residents from other communities will likely diminish as well.

On the other hand, regional trends may be altered in the reverse direction by the price of gasoline. If the cost of gasoline continues to rise, at some point the cost of commuting will cause workers to want to live closer to where they work. On one hand, this will make living in Carson City more desirable. On the other hand, since Carson City's growth will cap at approximately 70,000 to 80,000⁴, there will be limited capacity to absorb residential growth. Also, much of Carson City's growth will be through infill and redevelopment, on higher priced land—increasing the relative cost of housing. The result may be gradual pressure for businesses to locate closer to their workers—which would stimulate more business growth in Lyon County, which will encourage civic amenities to accompany it, which would further reduce non-resident use of Carson City's recreation facilities.

4.3 MONITORING CARSON CITY'S ACTUAL GROWTH

Growth projections attempt to take into account a variety of influences (in-migration, out-migration, fertility rates, job growth, etc.) and therefore serve as valuable indicators of trends and possibilities. However, it must be recognized that growth projections are highly subjective and need to be used with broad discretion.

Given the range of growth projections for the build out condition (26% to 44%) Carson City will be well-served to monitor demographic data to help develop more precise estimates for planning future facilities. In many western communities, over the last few decades growth seems to exceed projections. Therefore, the City should be conservative and build in excess capacity wherever possible. For example, by acquiring land in excess of projected needs the City will have the ability to add fields later, or leave the land undeveloped, or even dispose of unneeded land. Acquiring additional land later will be even more expensive than it is today.



Carson City's recreation facilities and programs actually serve residents from Lyon and Douglas Counties as well.

2 Nevada State Demographer's projections.

3 Ibid

4 A projection of the Carson City Comprehensive Master Plan.

4.3.1 IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

1. The City needs to monitor key demographic indicators from local, reliable sources to enable more accurate projections of future needs.
2. The City should be conservative (in excess of projected needs) in obtaining park and recreation land resources in order to have flexibility to respond to changing circumstances in the future. Once build-out occurs, there will not be land available, at affordable costs, to remedy additional park needs and desires.
3. To obtain land for future recreation needs, the City should look first to public land, then to private land, except where location criteria dictate otherwise.
4. Incorporate cultural and bilingual aspects into the City's recreational programming.
5. Reach out and incorporate Carson City's minority populations into youth and adult sports organizations.

4.4 RECREATION TRENDS

Recreation is trendy at times. The popularity of many activities seems to ebb and flow over the years, and from time to time there are new activities that sweep across the country—some lasting and some disappearing as fast as they appeared.

4.4.1 NATIONAL TRENDS

A variety of studies have been conducted across the United States to analyze the trends of both indoor and outdoor recreation. By analyzing a variety of these studies, Carson City may gain a better understanding of what types of facilities its citizens may desire in the future.

The National Recreation Survey (NRS) series was begun in 1960 by the congressionally created Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission (ORRRC), the first NRS was a four-season, in-the-home survey of outdoor recreation participation in the United States. Since that time, five additional NRSs have been conducted in 1965, 1970, 1972, 1977, and 1982-83, and one NSRE in 1994-95. A comparison between the 1982/3 survey and the 1994/5 survey is shown below:

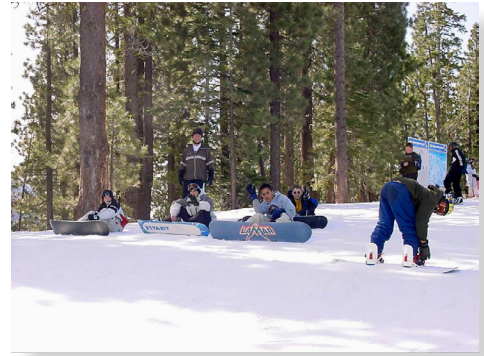
A similar recreation study was conducted by the University of Massachusetts. This study examined national trends for activity participation during the year 2002. According to this study, the most popular recreational activities were: walking for exercise, camping, swimming, exercising with equipment, and bowling.

The five fastest growing activities were: rock climbing (at indoor facilities), kick boxing, snowboarding, weightlifting, and kayaking. Other activities that were growing in terms of frequency of participation included target shooting, kayaking, snowboarding, skateboarding, and working out at a club. The activities that had a decline in the number of participants were roller skating, step aerobics, volleyball, cross country skiing, and racquetball.

TABLE 4.2-

Percentages of Americans who participated in outdoor recreation activities in 1982 and 1994. (Source: National Recreation Survey, Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission)

ACTIVITY	% PARTICIPATION		
	1982-1983	1994-1995	
BIRD WATCHING	21.2	54.1	+155.2
HIKING	24.7	47.8	+93.5
BACKPACKING	8.8	15.2	+72.7
DOWNHILL SKIING	10.6	16.8	+58.5
CAMPING IN A PRIMITIVE AREA	17.7	28.0	+58.2
ATTENDING AN OUTDOOR CONCERT/PLAY	44.2	68.4	+54.7
OFF-ROAD DRIVING	19.4	27.9	+43.8
WALKING	93.6	133.7	+42.8
MOTORBOATING	33.6	47.0	+39.9
SIGHTSEEING	81.3	113.4	+39.5
CAMPING IN A DEVELOPED AREA	30.0	41.5	+38.3
SWIMMING (RIVER/LAKE/OCEAN)	56.5	78.1	+38.2
ATTENDING SPORTS EVENT	70.7	95.2	+34.7
SNOWMOBILING	5.3	7.1	+34.0
GOLF	23.0	29.7	+29.1
OUTDOOR TEAM SPORTS	42.4	53.0	+25.0
CAMPING (OVERALL)	42.4	52.8	+24.5
CROSS-COUNTRY SKIING	5.3	6.5	+22.6
BOATING	49.5	58.1	+17.4
SWIMMING POOL	76.0	88.5	+16.4
PICKNICKING	84.8	98.3	+15.9
SLEDDING	17.7	20.5	+15.8
RUNNING/JOGGING	45.9	52.5	+14.4
WATER SKIING	15.9	17.9	+12.6
BICYCLING	56.5	57.4	+1.6
ICE SKATING	10.6	10.5	-0.9
FISHING	60.1	57.8	-3.8
SAILING	10.6	9.6	-9.4
HORSEBACK RIDING	15.9	14.3	-10.1
HUNTING	21.2	18.6	-12.3
TENNIS	30.0	21.2	-29.3



Results of the National Recreation Survey, ranked by percent of change between the two surveys.

4.4.2 TRENDS IN THE WEST

Closer to Nevada, in 2003 the California State Parks published a report analyzing the trends in outdoor recreation. The report found that in 2002, the most popular outdoor activities for families included:

- walking
- driving for pleasure
- visiting historic sites
- attending cultural events
- participating in pool activities
- visiting museums
- picnicking at developed sites
- wildlife viewing
- trail hiking
- using open turf areas

The most popular activities for youth were: walking and swimming, followed by visiting nature centers, attending outdoor cultural events, visiting historic sites, picnicking, biking, and playing on open turf areas.

The California State Parks report predicted that growing participation would occur in wildlife viewing, day hiking and cycling, as well as outdoor recreation activities with learning components, trail-related outdoor recreation, and water recreation.

Based on an informal survey of recreation planners conducted for this Master Plan, in the Intermountain West there are some noticeable emerging trends:

- Tennis was very popular in the 1970's/1980's, went into decline for approximately a decade (the 1990's) and now seems to be re-emerging in many areas.
- Jogging, walking and mountain biking seem to be growing gradually, consistently in popularity over the last two decades, especially in communities that have provided a well-designed trail system.
- The 'comprehensive recreation center' is a phenomenon that has spread from the Denver area to many communities in the West and Mid-west. The Denver area has seen the development of over 10 centers in the last 15 years. Even communities as small as 7,000 population have developed these very expensive amenities.
- Skateboard parks were a recent craze, initially held back by concerns about injury liability. Now resolved by national organizations that provide coverage, skateboard parks have become standard, well-used facilities in most communities.
- Aided by Olympic exposure, man-made whitewater kayak challenge courses have become increasingly popular in communities that have river access.
- Once a "hot" activity, roller blading has settled back to become consistently popular in the 20 to 40 year old age group in communities with good trails systems.
- Soccer remains popular for children and pre-teens, although participation traditionally drops off dramatically at middle school and high school ages. The growth of US professional soccer may alter that pattern in the future. Indoor soccer is also gaining popularity and extending the soccer season.
- Lacrosse, traditionally a sport of the Eastern Seaboard and New England, has been slowly but gradually working its way west, until it has progressed from a club to intercollegiate sport at a number of universities, and is beginning to appear in high schools in the intermountain west and California.
- In general, many recreation professionals are reporting a gradual shift in emphasis away from team sports toward individual sports, particularly environment-oriented challenge sports such as rock climbing and indoor climbing walls, mountain biking, kayaking, triathlons, and bicycle riding.

4.4.3 NEVADA TRENDS

A 2000 survey by Nevada Division of State Parks⁵ provides a comparative ranking, by outdoor activity, of percentage participation in individual activities, in types of activities (e.g. water-based) as well as average number of days per year per participant.

⁵ *Nevadans Outdoors—unpublished research, James A. Deloney, November 2002, Nevada Division of State Parks.*

It is somewhat useful to consider not only national and local recreation trends, but also to determine how demographic changes will affect recreation trends. The Denver architectural firm of Barker Rinker, and Seacat, who have designed a large number of comprehensive recreation centers, conducted a study⁶ to determine how the aging baby boomer population would affect indoor recreation trends. Key results are summarized below:

- 80% of the survey respondents felt that there would be a significant increase in the number of baby boomers utilizing recreation centers.
- Survey respondents thought that for the general population, the most popular activities in recreation centers would be: cardiovascular and weight training activities, followed by leisure pools, yoga, tai chi, computer labs, and continuing education classes.
- With regards to the aging baby boomer population, survey respondents felt that this group would most likely utilize exercise classes, health screenings, cardiovascular and weight training, and spa services.

Of course, national trends are often only marginally useful in predicting local trends. The popularity of activities is greatly affected by local facilities, availability of public land, the local environment, climate, traditions, and how transient the population is. It is therefore pertinent to observe local recreational trends as well as national trends. Table 4-2 lists the participation in recreational activities for the State of Nevada. This table does not represent trend data for the State of Nevada; however, it is useful for comparing the current participation levels of various recreational activities.

Carson City is blessed with a rich variety of natural environments: mountains, plains, foothills, and of course the Carson River. Lake Tahoe is a short drive away. In addition, it has one of the best ski areas in the U.S. within a 30-minute drive. From all indications, Carson City is an outdoor-oriented population. At the same time, the elderly age cohort is growing, and there is still a significant winter season—both of which suggest the growing importance of indoor recreation.

In the end, with regard to recreation trends, the best strategy for the City is to watch for changes in local interest (through surveys, media coverage, activities offered successfully in other communities), and to have a program that is receptive, even encouraging, to experimentation and innovation.

TABLE 4.3

Percent of Nevada Population Participating in Grouped Outdoor Recreation Activities in 2000. (Source: James A. DeLoney. Nov 2002. Nevadans Outdoors - Nevada (unpublished research). Planning and Development Section)

ACTIVITY OR RECREATIONAL RESOURCE GROUPING	INDIVIDUAL ACTIVITIES	TOTAL
WATER RELATED	Lake Fishing	61.5
	Stream Fishing	50.4
	Motorboating	44.5
	Canoeing/Kayaking/Rafting	37.3
	Sailing (Water)	35.2
	Swimming in Pool	33.2
	Swimming in Lake or Stream	32.7
SWIMMING	Waterskiing	29.6
	Swimming in Pool	28.9
WALKING	Swimming in Lake or Stream	27.4
	Walking without a Dog	26.1
FISHING	Walking with a Dog	25.3
	Lake Fishing	24.6
CAMPING	Stream Fishing	22.3
	Tent Camping	21.0
BICYCLING	Vehicle Camping	19.1
	Bicycling	17.7
OFF-ROAD MOTORIZED RECREATION	Mountain Biking	15.3
	Off-Road All Terrain Vehcling (ATVs)	15.1
	Off-Road Dirt Biking	14.7
WINTER RELATED	Off-Road 4-Wheeling (4x4s)	14.2
	Cross-Country Skiing	13.1
	Downhill Skiing/Snowboarding	12.8
	Snowmobiling	11.5
	Snowshoeing	11.5
HUNTING	Ice Skating	11.3
	Game Hunting	11.1
	Bird Hunting	10.6

6 Barker Rinker Seacat Architecture. "Baby Boomer Survey Report." December 2001.

TABLE 4.4-

Percent of Nevada Population Participating in Outdoor Recreation in 2000.

RANK	OUTDOOR RECREATION ACTIVITY	TOTAL
1	Pleasure Driving	55.1
2	Picnicking	47.6
3	Walking without a Dog	41.0
4	Swimming in a Pool	39.6
5	Wildlife Viewing	39.2
6	Swimming in Lake or Stream	38.7
7	Hiking	37.7
8	Walking with a Dog	34.5
9	Lake Fishing	33.6
10	Motorboating	33.1
11	Bicycling	27.6
12	Tent Camping	27.6
13	Golf	25.1
14	Off Road 4-Wheeling (4x4s)	20.1
15	Vehicle Camping	17.4
16	Downhill Skiing/Snowboarding	17.1
17	Stream Fishing	16.7
18	Jogging	16.7
19	Waterskiing	13.7
20	Off Road ATV's	13.7
21	Mountain Biking	12.6
22	Baseball	11.6
23	Tennis	10.9
24	Backpacking	10.8
25	Softball	10.2
26	Football	10.1
27	Game Hunting	9.7
28	Bird Hunting	9.6
29	Horseback Riding	9.2
30	In-Line Skating/Skateboarding	9.0
31	Canoeing/Kayaking/Rafting	8.4
32	Off-Road Dirt Biking	7.2
33	Soccer	7.0
34	Ice Skating	6.1
35	Snowmobiling	5.3
36	Sailing (Water)	4.4
37	Cross-Country Skiing	3.6
38	Roller/In-Line Hockey	3.2
39	Snowshoeing	2.0
40	Wind Surfing	0.7
41	Hang Gliding/Para Sailing	0.2

TABLE 4.5-

Mean Number of Annual Outdoor Recreation Participation Days Per Respondent in 2000.

RANK	OUTDOOR RECREATION ACTIVITY	TOTAL
1	Walking with Dog	61.5
2	Jogging	50.4
3	Roller/In-Line Hockey	44.5
4	Walking without dog	37.3
5	Off-Road Dirt Biking	35.2
6	Bicycling	33.2
7	Soccer	32.7
8	Horseback Riding	29.6
9	In-Line Skating/Skateboarding	28.9
10	Off Road 4-Wheeling (4x4s)	27.4
11	Pleasure Driving	26.1
12	Swimming in a Pool	25.3
13	Off-Road AllTerrain Vehicling (ATVs)	24.6
14	Golf	22.3
15	Wildlife Viewing	21.0
16	Football	19.1
17	Baseball	17.7
18	Cross-Country Skiing	15.3
19	Softball	15.1
20	Mountain Biking	14.7
21	Tennis	14.2
22	Hiking	13.1
23	Water-Skiing	12.8
24	Motorboating	11.5
25	Tent Camping	11.5
26	Swimming in Lake or Stream	11.3
27	Downhill Skiing/Snowboarding	11.1
28	Ice Skating	10.6
29	Vehicle Camping	10.6
30	Backpacking	9.5
31	Picnicking	9.1
32	Stream Fishing	9.0
33	Snowmobiling	8.7
34	Lake Fishing	8.3
35	Game Hunting	8.0
36	Bird Hunting	7.8
37	Sailing (Water)	6.5
38	Canoeing/Kayaking/Rafting	5.9
39	Snowshoeing	4.6
40	Wind Surfing	3.3
41	Hang Gliding/Para Sailing	3.0

(Source: James A. DeLoney, Nov 2002. Nevadans Outdoors - Nevada (unpublished research). Planning and Development Section