

Planning for the City of Benson, Arizona in regards to the “Parks, Trails, and Open Spaces” Master Plan

By Peter Kane

A Practicum Report
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Science
In Applied Geospatial Sciences

Northern Arizona University
Department of Geography, Planning and Recreation
December 2016

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Abstract

The community of Benson, AZ has history, a strong sense of the word “community”, and has the potential to grow very large in the coming years. The Parks and Recreation Department recognized this based on multiple sources; surveys, analysis of needs, and an overall lack of proper facilities evident by scheduling conflicts. As such, it was determined that a Parks, Trails, and Open Spaces Master Plan would be written to help guide the Parks and Recreation Department into the future and help support a likely, much larger population. In my internship, I assisted in subject matter expertise, geospatial expertise, and analysis assistance for data. I feel that my success was largely due to the hard work of others and I gained considerable insight into municipal governance, public opinion, geospatial representation, and possible programs for use in this venture. Overall, the Master Plan was accepted by Council and remains a staple of the future of Benson, AZ Parks and Recreation.

Letter of Significant Contribution

October 12, 2016

To Whom It May Concern,

In October of 2015, the City of Benson Parks and Recreation Department began working on a Parks, Trails and Open Spaces Master Plan. Mr. Kane became involved in the project, as an intern, in the spring of 2015, to assist with the critical project of mapping, and areas served analysis prior to City staff submitting a Technical Assistance Grant Application to the National Parks Service. It has been known that the residents of the Benson area are underserved with respects to recreational activities, which is why the need for a Parks, Trails and Open Spaces Master Plan for the City of Benson.

Mr. Kane participated is several key components of the project and provided valuable input during this time. Benson is a community that consists of one partially developed park and a few smaller pocket parks. The need and desire for a trail system is great, Mr. Kane provided suggestions, maps and theories to help pinpoint feasible locations to establish a trail system. Along with the mapping components of the project, Mr. Kane provided soil analysis data and other plans for use with parks and proposed locations.

During Mr. Kane's time as an Intern with the City of Benson, he took all of the related research and data that he compiled and provided the National Park Service staff member and myself from the National Park Service. This comprehensive information was beneficial during our Parks, Trails and Open Spaces stakeholder meetings, which allowed us to provide crucial information to our stakeholders to assist them in the decision making process. Mr. Kane was typically in attendance of all critical meetings as well as meetings with the City Manager, and the Pima County Planner Steve Anderson, and other key players of this project.

The Parks, Trails and Open Spaces Master Planning process from the time the City was awarded technical assistance from the National Park Service took a total of eight months, from start to approval of the plan by Mayor and Council in May 2016. This deadline would not have been obtainable without Mr. Kane's expertise and assistance.

Sincerely,



Laura Parkin
City of Benson
Recreation Coordinator
(At the time of Project)

Currently
Town of Sahuarita
Senior Office Assistant Parks and Recreation
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Introduction

Overview of Area and Current Assets

Benson, Arizona is a small community whose tagline reads, “Home of Kartchner Caverns State Park”. Established in 1880 with the “passing through” of the Southern Pacific Railroad, Benson served multiple purposes; it was a stagecoach stop, it was a railroad stop, and was an important ranching community in southeastern Arizona (Benson, 2016).

Benson covers a large area for the population. The population estimate in 2015 by the United States Census was 4,888 (American FactFinder, 2016). As of 2000, there were a known 4,711 people residing in the city and a population density of 131.9 people per square mile (City Data, 2016). The map below shows the area of Benson. As you can see, the area is significant.



Figure 1 Outline of Benson, AZ in yellow Source: Author

There are multiple parks within city limits; Lion's Park, Apache Park, and Union Street Park. Lion's Park, the most developed, contains multiple sports fields with lights, ramadas, restrooms, and grilling areas¹. There is an active community center and a community pool located nearby.

The current list of Parks, per the City of Benson website, offer each of these facilities;

LIONS PARK:

- Multiple sports fields: Little League, "Sandlot", Soccer, and Softball
- Basketball Courts
- Horseshoes -
- Numerous ramadas
- Volleyball -
- Skatepark -Walking
- trails -Grills -
- Playgrounds -
- Restrooms

UNION STREET PARK: -

- Two small ramadas
- Grills
- Field
- Adjacent to community center and pool

APACHE PARK:

- Part of the historical district

¹ http://www.cityofbenson.com/index.asp?SEC=F6C46232-F62B-4AE9-AA0F-B1C2415DF96E&Type=B_BASIC

The locations of the parks, in relation to the major part of the city is shown below (map taken from Benson Parks and Recreation page):



Figure 2 Location of current Benson, AZ area parks Source: City of Benson

In the next section, the problem of the location of these parks will be discussed further.

The size of the parks, while large also offer a problem that will also be discussed further.

Purpose and Problem

The completed “Parks, Trails, and Open Spaces Master Plan” states the purpose of writing as,

“This is the first ever, Parks, Trails and Open Spaces Master Plan for the City of Benson and the Parks and Recreation Department. It has been prompted by two specific situations:

- 1) Existing facilities at Lions Park and the community pool cannot adequately serve and meet user demand for swimming and sports fields, parks and casual, unscheduled outdoor recreation; and*
- 2) The City Parks & Recreation Department must prepare for an increase in population from the proposed Villages at Vigneto planned area development, and other future developments, that will increase the Benson population to more than 70,000 residents.”*

It is well known and understood that the need for parks and recreation in a city, especially in a growing city such as Benson. This growth, projected to be greater than 70,000 residents, means that the current infrastructure will be strained. Already, as identified in the final “Parks, Trails, and Open Spaces Master Plan, scheduling of certain areas can be difficult.

The other problem, that can be seen in Figure 1 and 2, is the spread out nature of the city boundaries and neighborhoods. As identified in the supporting document regarding Tucson’s and Marana’s Recreation Plan, the service areas of parks can only spread so far. As Benson is large but not as dense, it might be difficult to serve all the neighborhoods that have been being built.

The map below highlights the “area served problem”:

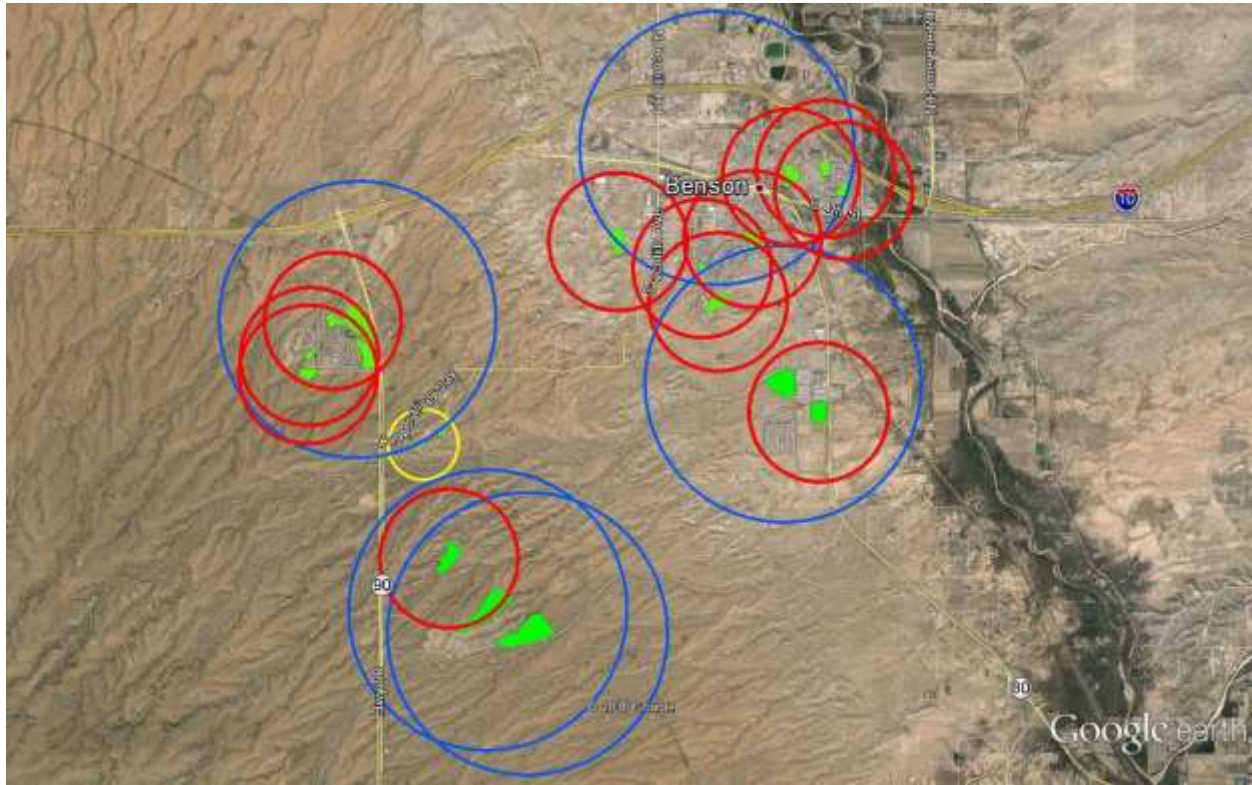


Figure 3 Proposed parks are in green. Smaller parks serve only a small area (yellow), medium parks serve larger areas (red), and blue circles serve the large areas. Source: Author

This low density, high area, is a twofold problem that can not only affect the access to the park, but the safety of those that want to use those facilities. Access, as a general rule from the supporting recreation plan from CITY, should be simple and include not much more than walking or biking from the surrounding area. While driving in to the parks is possible, walking to most of the parks in Benson, in relation to the service area by the size of the park, is difficult or excludes many.

The other concern with the size of the current facilities in relation to neighborhoods and size is the safety of the residents in order to reach those areas. Benson is bordered and sliced by three major highways and interstates; Arizona Highway 90, Interstate 10, and Arizona XX. Neighborhoods border either side of AZ 90, neighborhoods are south of I-10, and there are more

neighborhoods and neighboring communities on either side of AZ 80. See Figure 4 for the map that shows these interstates in relation to the park location and city boundaries:



Figure 4 Map of Benson with major highways and interstates. Lion's park and the school are in blue. Source: Author

It is interesting to note the areas on the far west side near AZ 90. These neighborhoods are growing and are far removed from any park. These parks, not only separated by highway, are also separated by a large change in terrain. In fact, the easiest, albeit only, way to safely access the city center (and Lion's Park) from the far west side of AZ 90 is to take a series of roads. The only way across 90, outside of the crosswalk near I-10, is to use an underpass. While this underpass was included in the trails systems developed, it is not ideal for routine use as a means to get towards the main city center.

Overall, while Benson has taken care to have numerous parks, the low density but high area of the city coupled with the potential growth, means that there is serious concern for proper service of parks and recreational facilities to the residents.

Goals and Objectives

The goal, as stated in the “Parks, Trails, and Open Spaces Master Plan” is:

“Public parks, trails and open spaces are as important to a community’s infrastructure as utilities, transportation, police, fire, schools and other critical services. The City of Benson population could grow to 70,000 residents by 2035. This Parks, Trails and Open Spaces Master Plan aims to keep pace with recreation demands by maintaining, expanding and creating needed facilities, programs, events and activities to promote life-long physical activity and a thriving, cohesive community. The cost of doing nothing, at this point in time, would be severe to the City’s mission and the Parks and Recreation Department mission.”

The objectives are; provide guidelines to further developments to both the public and the City Council, provide an audit of current facilities in relation to current and future need, and have an official and supported means to boosting the Parks and Recreation Department and the services served.

The goal of my participation in the practicum was to help understand geospatial application, to help understand the way a city government works, and apply knowledge of multiple tools to help complete the Master Plan. While not only having the ability to participate in the legislative process, I was also able to expand my skillset. There are multiple ideas that I knew would lend themselves to the successful completion of my graduate career and thus educational goals; an understanding of geospatial science in relation to planning and recreation, an application

study in relation to applied geospatial science, and applied knowledge learned in pursuing the degree from various classes that were taken.

The objective of these goals was to show that simple and free tools, like Google Earth, are powerful enough to be applicable in multiple uses from planning to use in city documents. While simple in its design, the ability for small communities to work with free software just as easily as software that can cost thousands of dollars, and proving that, was something that I objectively wanted to prove. Another objective was to apply the knowledge learned in classwork successfully. While it was my intention and goal to apply my classwork, objectively I knew I needed to apply it successfully. Similarly, while one of my goals was to help with the Master Plan, objectively I knew that it was not so easy. Being only an intern, I was in a learning capacity. I wanted to make sure that I was helpful, not a hindrance. Finally, an objective was to work as usefully as possible. My goal in this internship and practicum was to understand the city government and understand part of the legislative process when it comes to planning. I knew, however, that learning was not solely from those around me but from myself. I did significant research through other parks and recreation sources to help further my understanding and base my knowledge.

Finally, there were objectives and goals that arose that were not part of the original set at the beginning of the internship. This included; critical thinking exercises, problem solving, and stakeholder analysis of information (surveys).

Practicum Methods and Implementation

Contacting Benson, Arizona (February – March, 2015)

Benson was contacted initially as an internship opportunity. It was determined that there was an opportunity for internship within the Parks and Recreation department after making contact and discussing a possible arrangement with Laura Parkin, Parks and Recreation Coordinator (former) for Benson, AZ.

Workflow Establishment (March, 2015)

After initial contact, there was a meeting where there was determination of what I would be doing as an intern and what I could be working on. It was determined that the Parks, Trails, and Open Spaces Master Plan was being worked on and I could assist in this venture. I would work a certain number of hours per week and an extension of this internship would be determined based on time and need.

Initial and Substantial Work (March – August, 2015; Various)

Initial work, after workflow establishment, was varied. I started making multiple maps, mostly for trails that led from different trails established previously or were to be established that would lead back to Benson and points beyond. The purpose of these maps were to help establish a trail network that could be used by the people of Benson and to help tie Benson into the aforementioned trail network already being worked on.

Other work done during this time were multiple meetings with several different people. I attended a department meeting, attended by the heads of each department and run by the City Manager, I met with Laura Parkin a number of times, and met with the Pima County Planner in Parks and Recreation.

One of the meetings with the gentleman from Pima County, included the City Manager and Laura Parkin. This meeting, held June 2015, discussed various topics from the trail network that I was working on to an overall idea of the scope and scale of the Master Plan.

This trail network was developed for multiple purposes and over multiple iterations. For example, it was a necessity to attach part of the Sun Corridor Trail to part of Benson and then continue this trail. This maps are below with explanations;



Figure 5 A route for the Sun Corridor Trail. Two concepts were proposed to connect Benson; one through the Whetstone Mountains and connecting Kartchner Caverns SP and one route that bypassed the Whetstone Mountains. Source: Author

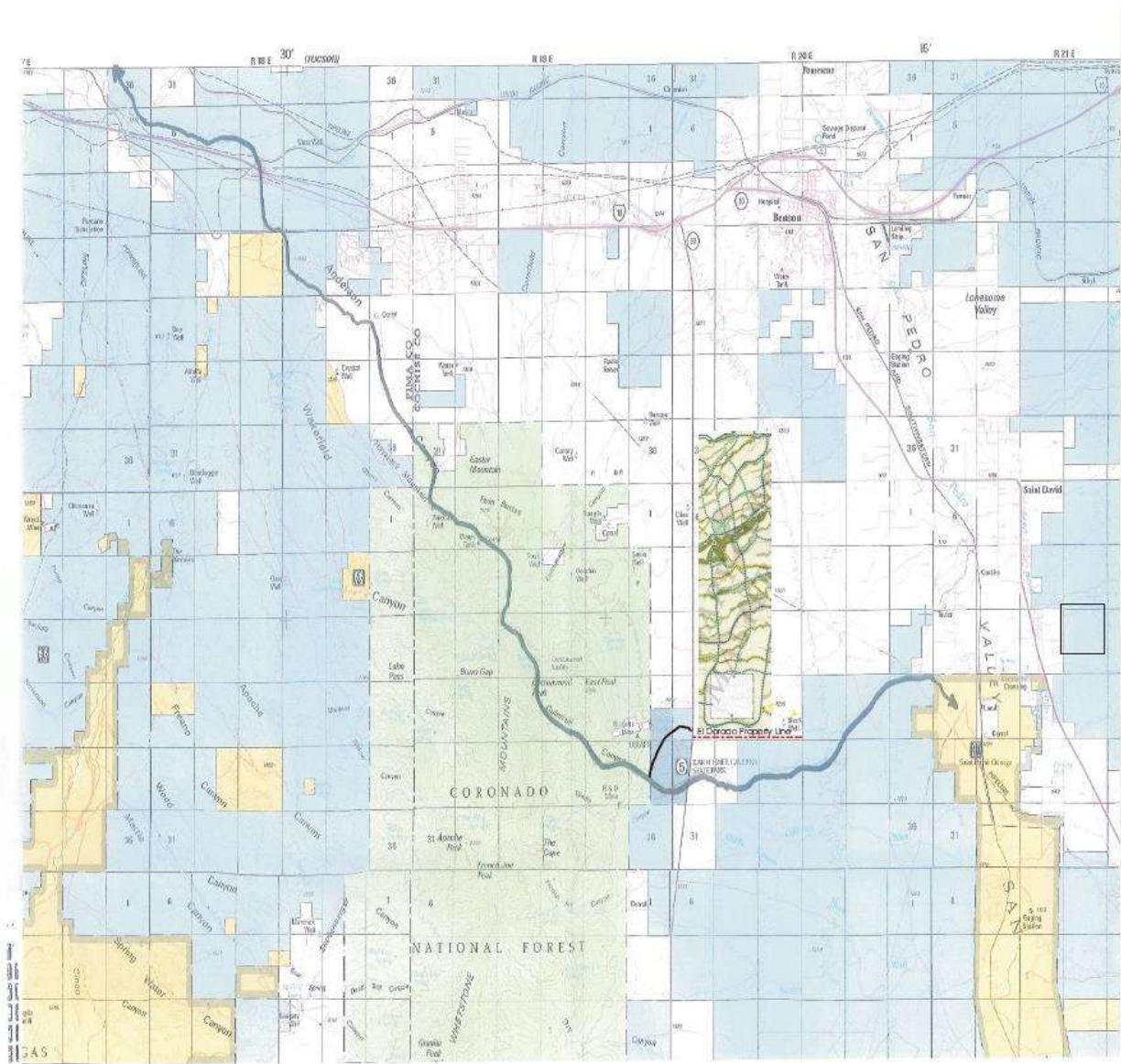


Figure 6 Land use was of major concern, as public land was most opportune for use. This map shows not only a potential route (created by Laura Parkin) but shows the new development that would significantly increase Benson's population. Source: Pima County



Figure 7 As it was determined that the trail would run from the Guindani Trail on NFS land, a route from this trailhead to Benson and a trail route through Kartchner were determined. Source: Author

Another trail that connected to larger trails was the Butterfield Trail, part of the old stagecoach line that helped build Benson into history. Below is the map and concept of this trail and integration into modern geospatial information.



Figure 8 Historic Butterfield Trail as it runs through Benson proper. A historic trails manager was contacted regarding this trail. Source: Author

Finally, one of the other ideas that came out of the geospatial work and analysis, was determining new recreational opportunities. This was secondary and not part of the original work. These new recreational opportunities included a 5 and 10k run and possibility of a historical walk. Only the 5 and 10k maps were ever created. A similar marathon route, along the San Pedro River was also proposed and is concluded below the 10k map. It is included below;



Figure 9 A later rendition, the idea of a 10k was presented as a community building event. It was modeled after the success and abilities of the "Guano Happens 5k" held at Kartchner Caverns SP (part of Benson city limits but owned by the State as a State Park) Source: Author



Figure 10 A marathon route (in purple) is show that would go along the scenic San Pedro and connect the community of St. David. Please note the "culvert" distinguished on the map is one discussed previously. It was determined the most accessible route under AZ 90. Source: Author

Trail work was not the only studies conducted for the overall Master Plan. As previously mentioned, one of the other tenants of this project was expansion of parks and open spaces to be utilized for recreational purposes. There were many ways that this was accomplished. One of the most effective, and cost-effective, methods utilized Google Earth much in the same way that it was used to determine trails. Open lots, especially near neighborhoods, were viewed and selected. The size of the open lot and potential would be compared against established guidelines from other cities and towns regarding size of the park and the area served. Figure 3 shows the proposed parks and radius of area served. But other conditions were used as well. For example, the map below shows the zoning classification within Benson and the potential park overlay.

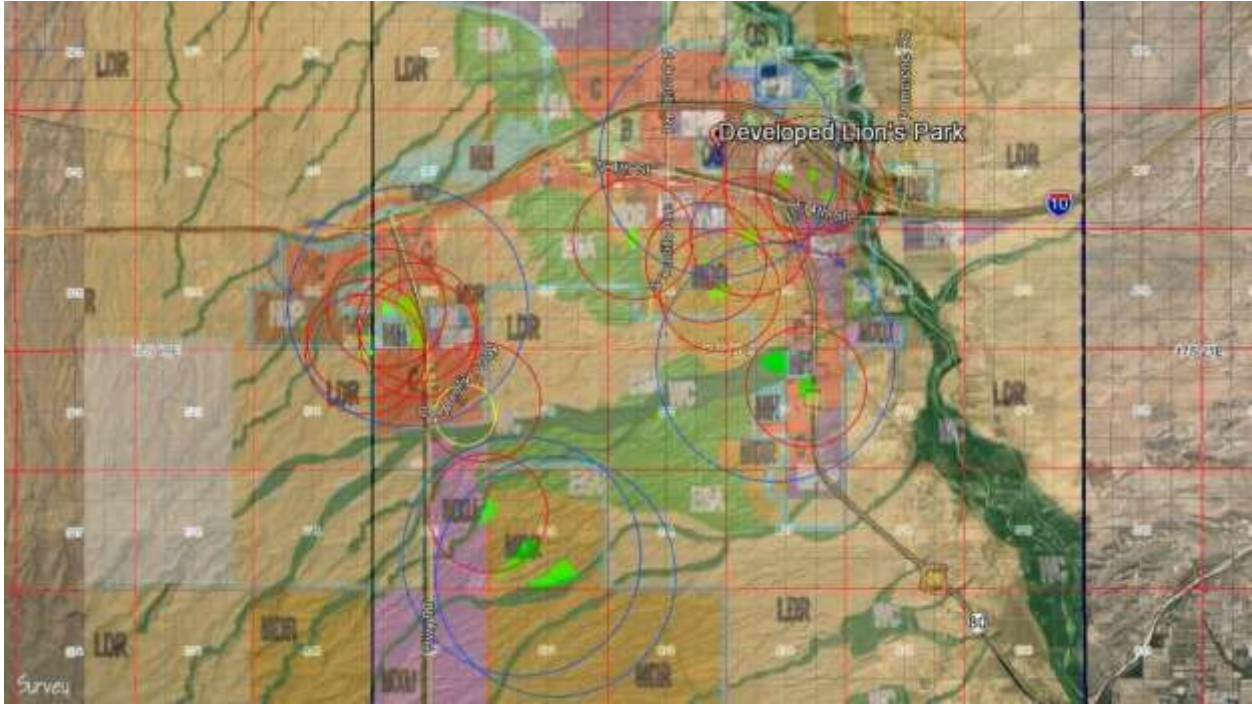


Figure 11 Potential parks overlay with zoning underneath. Source: Author and City of Benson

Other considerations for park locations were tax liens. As this area would have a high potential for easy and cheaper acquisition, it was also considered in the final map showing the potential parks. Multiple Tax IDs were drawn from public records and then put into a map for final use.

Outside Assistance from the National Park Service (September, 2015)

While there were multiple interested parties that were assisting Laura Parkin in her work, several grants were applied for.

A grant was awarded through the National Park Service and Cate Bradley from the NPS assisted through her expertise and insight (see Appendix B). Cate Bradley had a significant amount

of expertise, experience, and insight in the sort of undertaking Benson was working on; particularly working with a small community and development of a plan for that community. Cate Bradly used this experience to ultimately mold, assist, and advice on various parts of the process and stayed with the remainder of the Master Plan until the final, council approval.

Other work done this month included a draft Master Plan written by me as both an experiment in formatting and a test of content. Though never fully developed, it was relayed that this draft, which would be worked on and refined in the coming months, helped in writing the final draft that was approved by Council.

Support Requirements and Implementation (September, 2015 – April, 2016)

Most work that was completed during this practicum/internship included map development, refinement, and final publication (either in print or electronic form) using Google Earth, NCRS resources, various census and state resources regarding taxes, land ownership, and liens, and guidance from various city level publications. Other work that was done during this time multiple field visits to possible trail/park/access locations, data input and basic statistical analysis, geospatial planning for trails/parks/access locations, meeting attendance of stakeholders, data conglomeration and information conglomeration for potential use in planning, and a public meeting regarding a draft of the plan (prior to Council approval). The various maps and work previously discussed, such as the tax liens and land ownership maps, were produced at that time and this time period. Overall the discussion regarding these maps and potential sites continued until the draft Master Plan was written.

A survey of public views regarding parks and recreation was conducted and this information was included in the Master Plan. While other surveys had taken place previously, this survey looked at multiple sides of the parks and recreation problem; size of family, age of family,

activities participated in, activities they would like to see, and how important parks and recreation is to them overall. An example of a survey document is included in Appendix C.

Results from this survey, taken and compiled March of 2016, showed some interesting data. Below is a table of that data and the resulting information.

What sports does your child play?									
Sport					Total		Totals		Percentage
Base/Softball:					75				52.4
Football:					21				14.7
Soccer:					26				18.2
Other:					21				14.7
					0		143		
Number of children:					145				57.8
Number of Adults:					106				42.2
					0		251		
Time of activity averaged per day (child):	<1 hr				3				4.2
	1 hr				9				12.5
	2 hrs				17				23.6
	3 hrs				18				25.0
	4 hrs				12				16.7
	5+ hrs				13				18.1
					0		72		
Time of activity averaged per day (adult):	<1 hr				17				23.9
	1 hr				17				23.9
	2 hrs				11				15.5
	3 hrs				10				14.1
	4 hrs				4				5.6
	5+ hrs				12				16.9
					0		71		
Type of exercise:*	Walking				32				23.7
	Swimming				5				3.7
	Jogging				0				0.0
	Running				9				6.7
	Sports (indv.)				4				3.0
	Sports (team)				14				10.4
	Bike				15				11.1
	Other				56				41.5

[illegible]

Figure 12 Results of Benson survey. Source: Author

The Benson survey conducted hit multiple groups of people including church groups, fitness groups, little leagues, and doctor surveys. One of the most striking results from this survey was that of all the respondents that answered, 81.8% believed that an active life is important.

While not directly related to the goals and objectives, namely those interested in the use of geospatial programs in parks and recreation planning, the ability to understand the public's view on the importance of an active life and the various activities they would like to participate in, helps to solidify why I was doing this internship. In a way, it did affect the one goal of successful participation in this internship. I felt like I was successfully affecting a positive change in the community by supporting what the community desired.

Final Approval of Master Plan (May, 2016)

There were multiple public open houses where the public was asked to come and participate in the legislative process. As this was a major deal, public input was important. On display, besides the small presentation regarding the overall Master Plan, were previously conducted surveys and blueprints regarding parks and refitting those parks to serve different needs.

In particular, Lion's Park was on display.

After public comment and editing of the Master Plan, the plan was presented to Council and passed unopposed. Unfortunately, a new job did not let me attend the approval session of the City Council.

Results and Findings

The ability to participate in the process of approval for the Master Plan was very educational. The overall findings that I discovered were twofold; the city government process is unique from other processes I have experienced (both federal and state as a contractor and

employee respectively) and that the complexity of a plan lends itself to the time it may take to complete and level of required public input.

The city process, especially that of a small city like Benson, can be difficult to navigate as resources are limited. Laura Parkin is to definitely be commended for her work.

Another part of the city process that was different, was the amount of “space” to which ideas and approvals were required. Where the State and Federal work can bounce across the state or the country, the City Manager, in my opinion, worked closely to help understand this process. Other departments, other stakeholders, and the public were all within a short radius. Most people, most stakeholders, and the city employees all had similar experiences, all lived near Benson or southern Arizona, and all had a “stake” in this master plan more directly than I would have thought.

An example of this was the stakeholder meeting. Examples of the people there were members of Kartchner Caverns State Park, the head of the school district, the head of the Benson hospital, and mothers of children in the school. All would have been affected by this plan and all were nearby to each other.

The other surprising part was the level of public input and sway that could have been brought to the Master Plan. This was also different than State or Federal work. While most work is done as a group of other state or federal employees for the public (or customer), the ability for public input and the level of public input, was incredible. I really got to experience the city working for the city. The people, the taxpayers, were able to work for their own Master Plan during the open houses. While at the open house it was laid out at that point, public input was very important, and everything was explained.

In terms of the application of tools like Google Earth to important city documents, it did work. However, there were several problems to the overall scope and abilities of the tool;

-Scope: The overall ability of Google Earth to perform in the way asked lacked in comparison to much more powerful, albeit expensive, programs like ArcMap. The ability to analyze the data, not just present it, lacked without installation of 3rd party tools (e.g. a township and range overlay had to be installed separately).

Other layers, like the township and range, albeit 3rd party, was easy to use because of the limited and complete file types used in Google Earth. Google Earth uses the .kml and .kmz file type which are easy to use and find. ArcMap uses multiple file types and different types of layers. The scope of this, from the perspective of the overall program, is much larger and therefore much more difficult to use. Cities like Benson might not have the resources to be able to have the multiple licenses. Google Earth, being free, can do essentially the same with much less complexity.

-Technical: There were major problems encountered by the use of Google Earth that made it difficult to complete the maps on time and as needed. While technical problems were encountered, they would be and were worked around. However, the technical problems did slow the work significantly.

-Presentation: While ArcMap does have dedicated tools for layout, Google Earth, as shown in the supplied figures, does provide enough of a presentation to be used appropriately. However, there was a “game ending” glitch that made it impossible to develop and print a desired layout. A work around was used, but it did not show

the best possible map. Below, shows an example between the typical map made, and provided to Benson, within Google Earth.

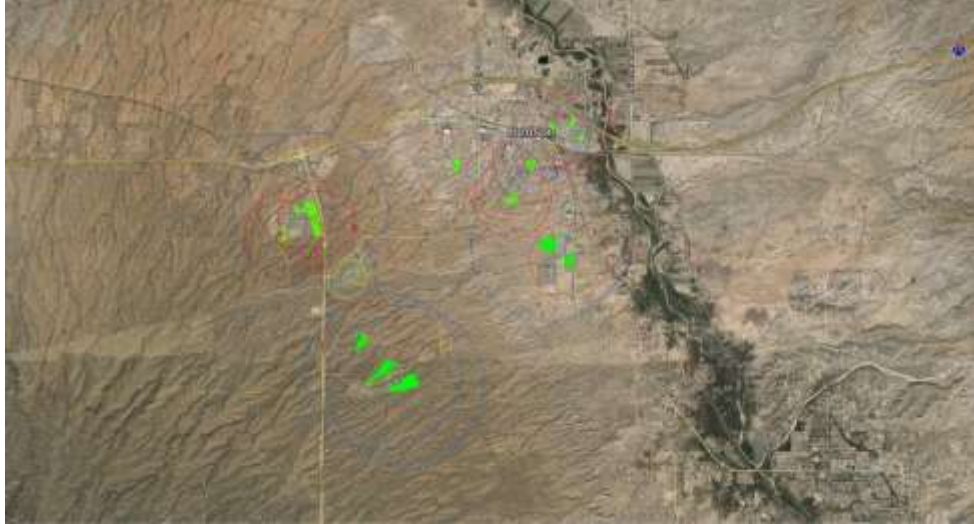


Figure 13 Typical map made for Benson, AZ. While technically correct, it is missing several key aspects that unfortunately glitched in my copy of Google Earth; the legend, scale bar, and border. Source: Author

The overall goals and objectives of both the practicum and internship was to provide a successful level of input, provide proper technical assistance based on classwork, and provide a level of assistance. The findings, to be broken down and discussed in the next section, were overall positive. The experience was worthwhile, the ability for me to provide positive information, and the ability to be a part of the team was there. The experience, not only bolstered what I had learned in class but enhanced that information to the point that I could learn a multitude of information regarding city government.

Further Study and Discussion

The overall goal of this internship and practicum was to show and apply geospatial tools to assist in a major document for a small city. The objective, to show that even free tools can be

used for the aforementioned purpose. Theoretically, tools like Google Earth should be able to handle this level of work.

While Google Earth, and several other smaller applications did work well in the overall work, the ability was lacking. What it lacked, which was described previously, could have been solved by a license of ArcMap. The most irritating problem that was encountered was the layout function and the glitch that ended most of Google Earth's map building support. The ability to use ArcMap, and the ability to import Google Earth documents, would have been of significant advantage.

This is most evident within the findings discussed previously. The shortfalls experienced in Google Earth the glitches and lack of powerful layout tools are almost out shadowed by the aspect of free software and ability to swap information easily because of file formats. Future study and work would have used ArcMap regardless. As previously mentioned, the ability to create such good looking maps quickly in ArcMap, Google Earth would do no more than act as a supplement and not the main software.

Another option that would be of interest in study would be the ability of having a City-wide GIS professional. This would be in addition to the Master Planner. This GIS professional, would be in charge of the database, capture of data, and development of that data. While impossible for one person to do in a large city, the ability for Benson to do this would be plausible. As of the writing of this practicum document, there is no dedicated GIS professional on staff.

During my time as an intern, and in relation to my other goals and objectives regarding being an intern/volunteer, my benefits from assisting appeared mutually beneficial. For example, a couple of the goals previously mentioned regarded; the ability to assist successfully and goal to

do such, ability to assist without getting in the way, and ability to apply my classroom knowledge successfully.

To speak to the first goal, assisting successfully, it is apparent from the Letter of Significant Contribution attests to my ability to be a worthwhile member of the team. There were some steep learning curves that do come with being an intern; there is very little time to “start the ball rolling” in terms of exercising work, it is a quick learning curve for both student/intern and supervisor to understand each other to the point of mutual benefits, and certain styles of the supervisor and City that needed to be learned quickly in order to produce information and product in a timely manner.

Getting in the way, while an intern, was always a concern. Working through email, phone calls, and meetings was difficult as I balanced this with a full-time contracting position on Fort Huachuca, Arizona. The problem with this setup was that I was not able to get into the ebb and flow of the office. In other words, I was removed from what was actually occurring in the office and I could feel I was being a pester for information, not knowing what was happening. I believe, though, that the situation lent itself to this setup, where I did telework, because of the limited facilities available and the odd hours I would have to keep because of my other position.

Finally, the goal and objective regarding application of my school work was successful to a point. I was able to draw from information regarding parks and recreation, planning, and law through the various classes that I took in pursuit of this degree.

Literature Review

The ability for a small town to apply geospatial information into its planning schema is important. Without geospatial data, new insights into planning and proper land use may be lost and the overall planning regime may fail. Part of this geospatial recognition, and heavily used in this project, was the determination of trail routes. In determining trails, there were several factors that came into play; terrain, pre-existing trails (e.g. old railroad lines), access, and overall use. In the same sense, the locations of parks were also determined geospatially with confirmation on the ground. Terrain, size, proximity to neighborhoods, and overall feasibility came into play.

Finally, there were other sources of data that was drawn from. This assists planners and those in charge of parks and recreation decisions ability to make final determination. This could include soils (to help determine growth potential of grass and construction ability), tax liens (which would help determine potential cheap land potentially for sale, and new recreational opportunities (geospatial data is easy to determine length of trails coupled with other information generally used).

Geospatial Integration

In planning, and in particular parks and recreational planning, the ability to use geospatial information is key. However, access to this information and program ability can be difficult and often times hard to find. Not only can access be difficult, the ever evolving landscape of the GIS world can mean there is a steep learning curve, there are challenges that must be faced, but the fact remains that there are resources out there to use (Drummond, 2008). One of these resources, mostly open-sourced and web based, was Google Earth.

Google Earth in and of itself is a powerful tool, and in fact, is a powerful teaching tool (Patterson, 2007). Google Earth has multiple abilities, like the ones described above in use for the practicum, but also has the ability to be routinely updated for free with the newest data from Google's very powerful information and geospatial data collection. The functionality of these free applications are also typically more than accurate in some situations (Linehan, 2006). Granted, if we were mapping permanence, high accuracy technology would be preferable and almost always nearly required. There are risks, however, and these risks and benefits, while studied, need to further those questions (Sheppard, 2009).

The fact remains that geospatial information and the ability to use GIS is paramount in both the support and develop of a management and master plan. It was identified that there were five areas of GIS that had scientific implication, "geographic information database development for planning-related analysis; integration of geospatial technologies with urban models; building of planning support systems; facilitating discourse and participation in the planning process; and evaluation of planning practice and technological impact." (Nedovic-Budic, 2000) In remote areas, even more remote than Benson, they are using the power of GIS to help support tourism. This support of tourism, in places like Transylvania, also help sustainability. The ability to pull information from multiple medias and developments is crucial to supporting that sustainability goal (Voda, 2013).

Geospatial Data Use for Trails and Multi-Use Paths

Trail routes for many years, and even still today, come from walking and marking the route. However, the ability to add geospatial information into this trail development is very advantageous to helping plan a successful trail that would see a lot of use. There are numerous instances of geospatial use in trail network schema. For instance, it was used in a forest to help coordinate

management practices and location of trail networks. The trail assessments that were produced from this GIS work helps keep the trails available to visitors (Brach, 2014).

Other instances of geospatial data integration into trails include Greenways and determination of use and qualities that contribute to its use. These included a dissatisfaction with trails that are the same for too long, trails that have multiple physical features are sought, and trails that have a variety of activity for multiple age groups are also used more than trails that lack these features (Lusk, 2002). Trails used in Benson and suggested in Benson, offer varying degrees of scenery from mountains to the San Pedro River.

Determining Park Locations and Size

Parks were the other major need in Benson based off of multiple assessments, concerns regarding the expanding population, and surveys conducted of the local population. As previously mentioned, there were multiple factors that went into the determination of location and size. In literature, outside of other municipal and county recreation plans, it is known that accessibility and distribution can affect the impact the park may have on the purpose (Oh, 2007). Determination of visitation can come from multiple sources of information and once such method is “Instant-count Sampling” used by Tyre, et. al. (2009). Other methods include a PPGIS (Public Participation GIS) such as was used in Australia’s National Parks. This integrated experiences and impacts through an internet mapping method (Brown, 2011).

Overall, Marana and Tucson, AZ were the two cities that contributed the most to determining park size. Their Master Plans for their parks and recreation department was the basis of most of the park planning and trail planning that occurred.

Other Supporting Documentation

Other supporting documentation for a project such as this can come from direct sources like the NCRS (Natural Resource Conservation Service) website, which provided soil and terrain data, and from the United States Census Bureau.

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Appendix A: Time Log of Work Completed

Benson Internship/Volunteer Hours Worked (By Month)

<i>Month</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Hours*</i>	<i>Work Performed</i>
March	2015	20	Introduction, internship signup, map creation, document creation
April	2015	15	Document refinement, map creation
May	2015	10	Document refinement, map creation, planning, network expansion (Pima County Planner)
June	2015	10	Meeting with City Manager/Pima County Planner, map refinement
July	2015	10	Map creation, network expansion (Arizona Trail Foundation, Trail Historical Contact), meeting with advisor, NRPA
August	2015	10	Map creation, map refinement, meeting with advisor
September	2015	15	Master plan draft writing (working copy), NPS grant award
October	2015	10	Google Drive creation, Master Plan draft refinement based on comments, map drop-off for meeting, NRPA Proragis Sign-up
November	2015	10	Proragis, Benson Master Planner collaboration

December	2015	15	Proragis troubleshooting, addition of data to site, stakeholder meeting (planning), meeting with health official, layer overlay/map development
January	2016	15	Information gathering, map development, Google Drive share, map refinement
February	2016	15	Survey data collection/statistics input, results presentation, Proragis
March	2016	10	Survey data collection/statistics input
April	2016	10	Review of Master Plan final draft, map refinement
May	2016	10	Public open house attendance, final data submissions for plan, updated maps, Council approval of plan
<i>TOTAL HOURS:</i>		185	

*Hours are estimated based on; email volume, meetings, product volume, "read"/study time, and other time dedicated to project.

Source: Author

Appendix B: Application Sent for Community Assistance from the National Park Service

Application for Community Assistance

Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



The National Park Service Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance program supports successful partnerships with communities across America in achieving their conservation and outdoor recreation visions.

Please follow the [application steps](#) on our website and then submit this completed application along with a map of your project site, at least three letters of commitment, and any other supplementary information that helps us learn more about your project to your National Park Service [Regional Program Manager](#) by August 1.

Date: July 23, 2015 Project Name: Phase One – Parks, Trails, Open Spaces Master Plan

Project Location Description (provide a location/site map): City of Benson – City Wide

City and State: Benson, Arizona

Congressional District(s) Number (s): AZ 2

Applicant organization(s): Municipal Government

Primary Contact: Laura Parkin Title: Recreation Coordinator

Street Address: 120 W. 6th Street

City: Benson **State:** AZ **Zip Code:** 85602

Email: lparkin@benzonaz.gov **Website (if applicable):** www.cityofbenzon.com **Daytime**

Phone: 520 720 - 6044

Project Description:

1. Describe:

- a) **Your vision and summary statement of the overall project goal:** Improve the quality of life through increased recreational opportunities while creating a long term strategic plan for improvement and expansion of recreational facilities and opportunities to meet the needs of current and future residents. Work to meet the standards of the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) for accreditation. Establish partnerships to ensure project completion while maintaining strong relationships to implement the strategic plan.
- b) **Tangible outcomes of the project** (i.e. recreational opportunities developed, plan creation, development of ideas and goals, miles, acres): An expanded Stakeholder analysis identifying key partners to analyze all aspects of a complete Master Plan to include health and wellness needs, needs for increased recreational facilities and opportunities, identify underserved populations, to establish an all-inclusive Master Plan which will include the following and accomplished through successful plan creation:
 - **Plan Creation:**
 - Assistance for development of a Concept Plan that would include:
 - An expanded Stakeholder analysis to include health and community wellness;
 - An expanded Situation Analysis tracking down the NRPA standards/population, and other information used; by gathering and mapping other existing resources and potentials and developing a Community Involvement and Communications Plan;
 - Ultimately, the Concept Plan including maps and text, would be used to communicate to the public and to present to Mayor and Council and the County Board of Supervisors for approval and for the partner network to use with their constituents and decision-makers.

- **Recreational Opportunities Developed:**

- Easy access to recreational facilities for all residents:
 - Establish recreation needs based on NRPA standards and working guidelines for facilities in all parks – number of restrooms, ball fields, playground equipment, picnic tables, pavilions, etc.;
 - Inventory and mapping of community resources;
 - Benchmarking;
 - Neighborhood parks existing (approximately 43 acres), and possible new parks and open spaces designation (see attached concept map);
 - Regional parks and facilities in Cochise County;
 - District parks and facilities in Benson;
 - Provide residents with facilities to increase recreational opportunities;
 - Increased health and wellness opportunities;
 - Increased social benefits; and
 - A gain in economic value.
- Community wide connectivity through a Concept Plan for an interconnected trail system, from the City of Benson and into Cochise County to include among other trails:
 - Butterfield Trail (proposed NHT);
 - Sun Corridor Trail (proposed 175 mile regional trail);
 - Access to Kartchner Caverns State Park;
 - Long-term Goals:
 - Approximately 90 miles of multi-use trails within the City Limits;
 - County wide connectivity;
 - Access to Whetstone Mountains (northeastern side).

- **Development of Ideas and Goals:**

- Identifying major health issues by working with the County Health Department and Benson Hospital;
 - Utilize their expertise and connections in the health and medical fields.
- Working with the School District(s) to identify the health and recreational needs of their families;
- Identify Stakeholders in the parks and recreation field to utilize their expertise and connections to develop recreational opportunities and plan creation.
- Identify the needs of seniors and the Disabled population to ensure accessibility to recreational facilities and meet their health and wellness needs.

c) **Project accomplishments to date:**

- Continued communication with residents to gain support and input;
- Working with Pima County Department of Natural Resources Parks and Recreation for guidance;
- Working with an intern to develop maps for this project while creating an educational environment;
- Mapping and boots on the ground for feasible future trail, open spaces and parks locations;
- Compiling data for benchmarking and inventory purposes;

- Communicating with the Cochise College Benson Facility Director on trail connectivity through the College property; and
- Communicating with El Dorado Holdings and their plans designer.

d) **Support:** governmental/organizational support/recognition; endorsements from elected officials and boards, etc.:

- Resolution of Support from Mayor and Council of the City of Benson, Arizona. Continued support from Mayor and Council to allow staff to work toward completion and approval of a Parks, Trails, and Open Spaces Master Plan.
- Letter of support and commitment from Benson Unified School District #9 to gain insight on the overall recreational wants and needs of their students and families.
- Letter of support and commitment from Pima County Department of Natural Resources Parks and Recreation. Continued guidance and input with ideas and suggestions based on their expertise in completing their Parks, Trails, and Open Spaces Master Plan.
- Letter of support and commitment from Arizona State Parks for continued partnership in offering recreational programs to familiarize our residents with their local State Park;
 - In the spring of 2015, I contacted Kartchner Caverns State Park with the idea to partner with them to offer camps during the month of June (Tuesday's in June at Kartchner Caverns). We offered a series of four camps so our families could experience the park the camps were Reptiles 101, Desert Dwellers the Mammals around Us, Heads Up! It's a Bat, and a family Scavenger Hunt Hike. These camps were very well received and attended with the majority of the participants signing up for all of them. We plan to continue this partnership and to plan for program expansion.
 - I would like to engage State Parks as a Stakeholder during the Plan Creation Process.

e) **Community benefits that would result from implementing the proposed project (i.e. recreational opportunities in areas with little to no recreational access):**

- Increased access to recreational opportunities through geographic distribution of facilities;
- Planned development of recreational facilities, open spaces and trails will aide in a more cost effective use of funds;
- Improved quality of life;
- Improve overall health and fitness of residents;
- Aide in economic development by making Benson a more attractive place to live, work and play. Which will increase our permanent tax base - providing additional funds for long term strategic plan completion.

f) **Geographic location of your project and characteristics of that location (rural, coastal, wetland, urban, specific areas within a city or county, etc.):**

- This project will encompass the entire Benson City limits with connectivity to outlying rural areas.
- Benson is located in Southeastern Arizona and is a rural desert area.

g) **Important demographic characteristics of your project area that will benefit or be impacted with creation and/or addition of recreational opportunities:**

- According to the 2010 US Census Benson's population is 5,002. The estimated population including the surrounding unincorporated areas of St. David, J-6/Mescal and Pomerene is 12, 520 all serviced by the City of

- Benson's Parks and Recreation Departments.
- According to the Cochise Community College Economic Prospectus Benson's poverty level is higher than the State and National average. Benson has a high percentage of students who receive free or reduced lunches. Benson School Superintendent indicates a large number of grandparents are raising their grandchildren in our community.
 - Results of our 2013 Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment (see the attached complete report) show 69% of respondents were age 55 and up, with only 38% participating in recreation, and over 80% favored adding upgrades to existing parks and facilities. Over 70% of respondents wanted to see more adult and youth programs offered. The Superintendent's indication could be an explanation of our survey results reflecting the need to bridge the generational gap in this area to provide recreational opportunities that encourages family participation for all ages and demographics.

Applicant and Partner Roles:

2. a. Describe your role and the level of commitment/services your organization can provide to the project:

- Develop and maintain relationships with key players and the community.
- Staff will coordinate, schedule, network, and communicate to reach project goals and objectives.
- See the project through to completion and approval by Mayor and Council.

b. List the key partners involved with the project. Briefly summarize the existing or anticipated role and

contribution of each partner:

- Mary McCool letter of continued support and commitment to ensure we are inclusive of the County Master Planning Project to work toward connecting Benson trails to County Trails.
- Letter of Support and Commitment from Benson VFW Post 6271 Boy Scout Troop and Pack 420's, continued supporters of the recreation department through volunteerism. Would like for them to continue involvement through a collaborative partnership for input on the project to encourage stewardship and establish a lifelong involvement in parks and recreation to pass on from generation to generation. Would like the Scouts to encourage their peers to become involved in the process with the idea it will increase youth participation and establish a lifelong commitment and connect more people to parks.
- Benson Hospital's letter of support and commitment to engage in the planning process by providing information on the health and wellness needs of our community. Would like a continued partnership for grant opportunities to increase health and wellness opportunities through initiatives. Also, provide long term health related physical activities and challenges to get more members of our community active.
- Letter of support and commitment from Benson resident Karin Tifft to work as a

liaison between the City and residents she is in contact with to gain input and encourage participation in the Master Plan process.

c. Please include commitment letters from each partner listed in the application.

Commitment letters should note the partner's support, list their anticipated project role, expected contribution(s), and responsibilities in the project.

Public Support:

3. a. Describe the level of public support to date, and any plans for future public outreach, participation, and

community inclusion:

- Local residents and recreation department volunteers Roland and Barbara Arney have contributed thoughts and comments on conceptual trail ideas, and have a strong relationship with local and regional hiking clubs. Would like them to work as liaisons to involve the local and regional hiking clubs as collaborative partners to establish a trail system.
- El Dorado Holdings verbal agreement to enter into agreement to provide access for use of permitted washes for connectivity of the Sun Corridor Trail. Continued support during the critical analysis process working toward completion and approval of the Master Plan.
- Cochise Community College (Benson) Director will work with the Board for use of property for trail connectivity. Would like the College to mirror their Sierra Vista program by creating a local program to build, and maintain their section of the trail once completed. Would like their involvement in the health and wellness analysis for collaboration and input into the planning process.
- Identify and involve other recreational and planning professionals in the planning process for input on the project.
- Would like to involve the Cochise County Health Department to gain insight on the health and wellness needs of our community to work toward improving the overall health.
- Would like to involve Juvenile Probation to identify the needs and problem areas with our youth in an effort to curb or eliminate undesirable behavior from our youth.

b. Provide letters of support from three stakeholders.

National Park Service Assistance:

4. a. What are the major challenges and overall needs of the project?

- Productive Citywide collaboration that encourages community input and involvement.
- Designing community outreach and participation strategies in a time efficient manner.
- Development of ideas and goals for a concept plan.

b. What type of assistance are you seeking from National Park Service staff? Please include a short description of the specific project need(s) for each of the boxes checked. Prioritize the project's top needs in the description.

7 Defining project vision and goals

2 Identifying and analyzing issues and opportunities: **This is our opportunity to analyze our strengths and weaknesses to develop a plan that will allow us to overcome our challenges by connecting them to our strengths. Bringing in regional partners increases our potential – they may make observations from a distance that we overlook.**

1 Assessing and engaging partners and stakeholders: **There are several entities who have already gone through the planning process to reach their goals in the development of a master plan. I would like to identify those Stakeholders and rely on their expertise to help us work to develop a master plan for the City that will maximize the overall recreation benefits for our residents.**

6 Inventory and mapping of community resources

4 Priority setting and consensus building: **Putting all aspects of the project in order of priority to successfully pull it all together for completion.**

8 Identifying funding sources

5 Organizational development

3 Designing community outreach and participation strategies: **Identifying the reason(s) members of the community are hesitant to get involved and provide input. Create an environment so they feel comfortable getting involved and to be a part of their project.**

9 Planning (trail, park, open space, greenway, etc.)

☐ Other

5. Describe how your project advances one or more key National Park Service strategic initiatives. Projects that contribute to one or more of these strategic initiatives are given emphasis in the project selection process.
 - a. **Builds partnerships with health and wellness organizations to promote healthy parks and healthy people:** Engaging in a networking partnership with the Benson Hospital and Cochise County Health Department to identify the areas of need in our community to improve the overall health and wellness of our community.
 - b. **Engages youth or youth organizations to promote close-to-home resource conservation, stewardship, and outdoor recreation opportunities:** Involving the Scouting Troops as a gateway to connection with other youth of our community to encourage participation in recreational planning. Continued partnership with State Parks to involve our youth in programs that encourage exploration of their local State Park. Continued partnership with the School District to engage our youth in programs and provide them with opportunities to participate in community projects.
 - c. **Develops and/or improves local connections to parks, rivers, trails, and greenways within urban areas:** Planning to connect trails, parks and other destinations in the City and the County.
 - d. **Improves public access to National Park Service sites by enhancing connections to local communities:** Improved parks and recreational opportunities will encourage a desire to visit State and National Parks in our area. One of our long-term goals is to provide access to the Whetstone Mountains on the northeast side. Connection to the Sun Corridor Trail will create new opportunities to utilize trails in the State and National Parks and land areas.
 - e. **Advances the conservation and stewardship of natural landscapes:** Analyze areas of proposed development to ensure policies are in place for best practices and responsible development through designation of open spaces areas.
 - f. **Expands public access to water resources, such as water trails, portages, and adjacent recreational opportunities:** Designated trails along the San Pedro River connecting Benson, Pomerene and St. David to the San Pedro Riparian Area.

Appendix C: Example of Survey Form

City of Benson Parks & Recreation Physical Activity Survey

**YOUR
FAMILY
SIZE**

of ADULTS: please circle one 1 2 3+

of CHILDREN: please circle one 1 2 3 4 5+

**WHAT
SPORT(S)
DOES YOUR
CHILD(REN)
PLAY?**

PLEASE LIST # of CHILDREN PLAYING THESE SPORTS:

FOOTBALL: 0

BASEBALL/SOFTBALL: 0

SOCCER: 0

OTHER SPORT: 0

How much time per day does your child(ren)
spend being physically active?

12

WHAT ABOUT YOU AND OTHER HOUSEHOLD ADULTS?

How much time per day do you spend being physically active? please write in: 5

Types of physical activity or exercise you participate in: please write in:

sports, walking, swimming

Do you prefer to exercise: please circle one: ALONE WITH OTHERS

If you exercise with others: HOW MANY OTHERS? _____
please write in: HOW OFTEN? _____

How much time per day is your spouse/partner physically active? please write in: 3

Types of physical activity or exercise your spouse/partner participates in: please write in:

sports, running

Does your spouse/partner prefer to exercise: please circle one: ALONE (WITH OTHERS)

If your spouse/partner exercises with others: HOW MANY OTHERS? 3+
please write in: HOW OFTEN? Daily

What types of recreation activities would you like to see the City of Benson offer that
are not currently being offered? please list:

splash pad, golf (kids),

How important is a healthy, active lifestyle to you? VERY SOMEWHAT NOT MUCH

RETURN COMPLETED SURVEY TO: City of Benson Recreation Center @ 706 W. Union OR
THANK YOU!! Benson City Hall Finance Department @ 120 W. 6th Street

Appendix D: Example of Draft Document and Evolution of

Document by Author

CONCEPTUAL STUDY – BENSON CITY PARKS AND RECREATION

INTRODUCTION

Benson, AZ is a growing town in Southeastern Arizona. Rich in history, growing in potential, and home to one of the greatest examples of caves in the world, Benson has the ability to grow and continue to develop.

As a small city, Benson has many considerations to make. One of these considerations is recreation and facilities for that recreation.

In general, Benson has identified a need for more parks to provide these facilities across its growing developed border, more hiking trails to connect the various parts of Benson together and with the surrounding community, and events that can bring a further sense of community.

CURRENT AND PROPOSED PARK FACILITIES

It has been identified that there is a need for more parks within Benson. The city itself does have a single park, however, it is not within the reach of the entire community as the community is continually growing and more and more developments are emerging. There are known open spaces within city limits that would allow for more parks to be added. These communities where some of these areas are located have also indicated the need and desire for more parks within that area.

Using guidelines from the City of Tucson, which is based on national park standards as well as standards set by cities of comparable size, it has been determined that the size of the parks can serve a certain portion of the community. Also used in determining what facilities are within these parks was City of Marana standards. This breakdown, according to Tucson and Marana City Guidelines are as follows;

*Mini Parks**

- Size: 1 acre max
- Service Area: Surrounding community to ¼ mile radius

Neighborhood Parks

- Size: 1-15 acres
- Service Area: Immediate neighborhood to ½ mile radius
- Parks of this size are not lit but provide many fields, courts, and equipment
- Provides facilities like restrooms and on-site parking

- Also provides sewer, electricity, and potable water
- Fully landscaped
- Dusk to dawn security lighting
- Signs

Community Parks

- Size: 15-40 acres
- Service Area: Surrounding community to 1 mile radius
- Similar facilities as above except courts/field are lit
- Adds access for telephone (for irrigation), ADA regulations, and on-site maintenance facilities

District/Metro Park

- Size: 40-200 acres
- Service Area: Surrounding community to 2.5 mile radius
- Same facilities as above but with more complexity/capabilities

*Regional Park**

- Size: >200 acres
- Service Area: Surrounding community to 7 mile radius

*As Marana does not distinguish these parks, there are no facilities recommended

Following these guidelines, Lions Park can be categorized as a Community Park. This is because the total area of the park (developed) is 21.0 acres. Current facilities of this park include, but are not limited to; lit and unlit fields (multi-purpose, softball, and little league), a group ramada, restroom facilities, a skate park, and an unused dirt area connected to developed land by existing bridge. This undeveloped area adds ~12 acres more of usable land.

As this park does serve the current community, guidelines presented in the Marana System determine the number of people served per unit area of a park. Since the usable facility of the park is ~21 acres total, which means at 2.74 acres per 1000 residents, Lions Park can serve roughly 7,600 people within that 1 mile radius. *See Appendix B to view image of area served by Lions Park*

Lions Park does have artificial barriers that prevent it from serving the entire community possible. These barriers include 4th Street/Highway 80 (a major city street), active Union Pacific railroad tracks, and neighborhoods. These limitations essentially cut-off close to 50% of potential users from the surrounding area.

Since a lot of the city, then, does not have access to a park, more parks are needed. These other parks are those that would be neighborhood parks (as per the guidelines) or a larger, second community park of the other side of Benson closer to Highway 90. These parks would range from ~1-35 acres. The locations of the other parks in the system are in areas that are open land, not being used, zoned for residential but not developed, or a combination thereof. These parks could have many of the overall called-for facilities in the Marana design such as courts, fields, ramadas, playground equipment, and on-site restrooms. Development for these

parks would be minimal, as most of this area is already bare. This will be further discussed in the feasibility study to follow this section.

These parks, along with serving the neighborhood's families and residents of Benson, could also serve as equestrian centers, places to rent, and places for starts/stops/checkpoints for trails.

In those areas that were mentioned and in serving the duties listed above, these parks are then spread throughout the city in such a way that many people could access it.

A community park that could be added to the city would be near the development on Highway 90 just south of Interstate 10.

This park could be spread over the open land near the development and would include many amenities found in Lyon's Park. It would serve that development, the nearby development further south of Highway 90, and could serve new developments in the area.

Smaller, neighborhood parks would be spread throughout the city in open lots and vacant areas. These smaller parks would serve about a ¼ mile radius and would allow those homes and families further from the community parks to still have a place to go with their families.

These parks would not be lit and like many parks, close after a certain period of time (typically after sunset). Security for these parks after that closing time could be a gated walkway to the park and natural plants (e.g. cacti, mesquite trees) surrounding.

Facilities at these smaller parks could include play equipment, a small ramada, or a half court basketball court.

These parks and their respective facilities, are also considered by population served. In these various areas where it has been identified parks could go, the population of Benson could also be a major factor of what facilities are needed.

Also from the city of Tucson, these guidelines are also part of what facilities are built and where. The table below is also taken from the City of Tucson Parks and Recreation 10-year Plan. See below

Facility Guidelines		
Facility Type	Guideline	Population Type
Adult Baseball (>200')	1 field/12,000 persons	Total population
Youth Baseball (<200')	1 field/10,000 persons	Youth population
Soccer/Football	1 field/12,000 persons	Total & Youth population
Softball	1 field/10,000 persons	Total & Youth population
Trails/pathways within parks	1 mi/15,000 persons	Total & Senior population
Playgrounds	1 playground/2,500 persons	Total population
Recreation Centers	1 sf per person served based on size of center	Total & Senior population
Swimming Pools (year-round and seasonal)	Neighborhood: 1 pool/5,000 Community: 1 pool /15,000 Family Aquatic Center: 1 pool /30,000 Heated/Year-round: 1 pool /50,000	Total population

As the City of Benson has a population of 5,005 (as of 2013; United States Census Bureau), by Tucson's plan, Benson does have the number of facilities it needs as Lion's Park, as described above, has most if not all of the amenities within this table.

However, and also as previously mentioned, Tucson's guidelines are for comparable cities. Another difference is population density. Benson does have a significant central neighborhood, there are other developments further away from the city center that makes it difficult for families to enjoy these facilities.

TRAILS AND MULTI-USE PATHWAYS

Benson City has a unique location. As the gateway to the San Pedro River Valley, it not only serves as the gateway to this natural area, it also contains the San Pedro River within its borders as well. Not only this, the area surrounding Benson are steeped in history and the surrounding towns certainly have their own stories to tell.

The Sun Corridor Trail and Kartchner Caverns State Park

Benson is home to Kartchner Caverns State Park; one of the top ten mineralogical caves in the world and a "living cave" in near pristine condition. This means that there is a potential of hundreds of thousands of people in tourism to that park.

The Sun Corridor Trail is a trail that is proposed to run from Las Vegas, Nevada to Douglas, Arizona. It is meant to break-off from Kartchner Caverns and go through Benson. This is a unique opportunity to develop a trail that many people could potentially use.

This trail that runs from Kartchner Caverns is proposed to run east of the Whetstone Mountains, north up Highway 90, and then further east into Benson (or by-pass Benson depending on which trail is taken). There is also a proposed trail which will bypass the Whetstone Mountains if desired that will run through J-6.

As the trail goes through Benson, AZ, it would be an opportunity to include natural resource markers, historical markers, and could include some of the smaller parks proposed above.

Historical and Natural Resource Trail

It is also proposed that there could be a city trail that would go through the different neighborhoods and districts and would offer users a chance to look at historical and natural resource markers along the way.

With these markers, it would also create walking access to downtown, between neighborhoods, and would connect to other trails being proposed of next.

Inter-County Multi-Use Trails

Other trails that could run through Benson could include use by people, bicyclists, and horse users.

These proposed trails would connect Benson with J-6 and Mescal, Benson with St. David, and Benson with Pomerene. These areas would also be interconnected with each other. See *Appendix H for where these trails go*

Also within this map are areas of use within these trails and what these trails could be used for. It is proposed that these trails could be used by hikers walking between these different areas, equestrians could load in different areas in some of the different locations, and bikers could use it for road and off road experience.

These trails would be closed to motor vehicles due to safety. However, if it was evident that safety would not be an issue with motorized vehicles then these trails would work for vehicles that are highway compliant.

**Appendix E: Parks, Trails, and Open Spaces Master Plan (as
accepted by Council)***

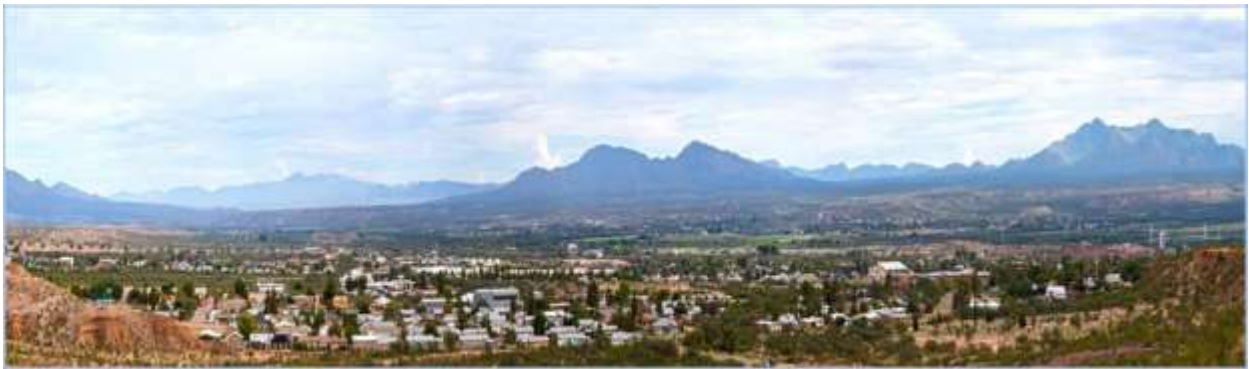
*Formatting was adjusted to fit standard portrait layout

City of Benson

Parks, Trails and Open Spaces

Master Plan 2016

For a Healthy, Cohesive Community



City of Benson

Parks, Trails and Open Spaces

Master Plan 2016

Mayor & City Council

Toney D. King, Sr. – Mayor

Lori McGoffin – Vice-Mayor

Patrick Boyle - Council Member

Jeff Cook - Council Member

Joe Konrad - Council Member

David Lambert - Council Member

Chris Moncada - Council Member

City Manager

William D. Stephens

Collaborating City of Benson Departments

Michelle Johnson – Planning and Zoning

Dustin DeSpain – Finance

Brad Hamilton – Public Works

Bob Nilson – Tourism

Joe DelVecchio – Golf Course

Peter Kane – Northern Arizona Geospatial Science, Intern for Parks and Recreation Department

Prepared By

Laura Parkin – Recreation Coordinator, Parks and Recreation Department

Cate Bradley, Ph.D, MLA – National Park Service – Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance
Program

Parks, Trails and Open Spaces Master Plan Stakeholder Steering Group

Much gratitude is extended to the citizens and community leaders who contributed time, ideas, energy and commitment to shaping, developing and supporting this plan. Without their efforts and caring, Benson's future would not be as bright.

Thank you for all your work and commitment!

Asher Arnold, Men's Softball Coordinator

Barbara Arney, Benson Resident

Rolland Arney, Benson Resident

Kelsey Arzaga, Cochise County, Health and Social Services

Gene Beyer, Presbyterian Church

A.B. Blair, First Baptist Church - Benson

David Bryan, SSVEC Planning Engineer

Karin Coe, Wellness Connections

Lyndon Denton, Apache Nitrogen Products Business Development

and Public Relations Manager

Lupe Diaz, President Benson Chamber of Commerce

Sabri Dickman, US Border Patrol

Dick Ferdon, Retired State Parks Manager

Chris Frost, Benson Cub Scout Leader

Judith Gilligan, Cochise County Prevention Services Director

John Healy, Buena MTB Community

Lisa Hill, Benson Clean and Beautiful President

Anica Lewis, Cochise County Health Department

Mike Lingenfelter, First Baptist Church - Benson

Mary McCool, Cochise County Trails Association

Micah Mortensen, Benson School Superintendent

Brad Nielson, US Border Patrol

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Kyle Riesterer, Kartchner Caverns Park Ranger

Brent Smith, Arizona State Parks Chief of Field Operations

Becky Smyth, Legacy Foundation

Mark Snyder, Calvary St. David Christian Fellowship

Kirk Sorensen, Pastor

Sepp Sprietsma, Cochise County Juvenile Court, AYSO

Eric Hollensbe, El Dorado Holdings **Karin Tift**, Greenhouse Vegetable Consultants, LLC

Benson Unified School District Student Participation in the Master Planning Process

<u>K-4</u>	<u>Middle School</u>	<u>High School</u>
Karlee Sherman	Chloe Reynolds, Grade 8	Alyssa
Prescott, Senior, Student Body President		
Lance Ausseresses	Brooklynne Pullis, Grade 7	Keegan Graf,
Junior, Link Leader		
Adrianna Villa	Alex Romero, Grade 6	Adrianna
Winkler, Junior, Link Leader		

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"Serving the people of Benson by effectively planning for growth, providing for a safe environment, quality transportation, reliable utilities, enhanced recreational opportunities, competent administration, a healthy business climate, a positive

Executive Summary

Public parks, trails and open spaces are as important to a community's infrastructure as utilities, transportation, police, fire, schools and other critical services. The City of Benson population could grow to 70,000 residents by 2035. This Parks, Trails and Open Spaces Master Plan aims to keep pace with recreation demands by maintaining, expanding and creating needed facilities, programs, events and activities to promote life-long physical activity and a thriving, cohesive community. The cost of doing nothing, at this point in time, would be severe to the City's mission and the Parks and Recreation Department mission.

Overview

This is the first ever, Parks, Trails and Open Spaces Master Plan for the City of Benson and the Parks and Recreation Department. It has been prompted by two specific situations:

- 3) Existing facilities at Lions Park and the community pool cannot adequately serve and meet user demand for swimming and sports fields, parks and casual, unscheduled outdoor recreation; and
- 4) The City Parks & Recreation Department must prepare for an increase in population from the proposed Villages at Vigneto planned area development, and other future developments, that will increase the Benson population to more than 70,000 residents.

Partnerships

Committed citizens and community leaders from local and regional organizations and agencies helped reveal needs, brainstorm and shape ideas, prioritize goals and generate options for the Parks, Trails and Open Spaces Master Plan recommendations. These partners aided the formation of the guiding Vision for the plan, which is intended as a framework to influence informed and strategic decision-making in the City's budget allocation process over the next 10 to 20 years. They also helped clarify the Mission for the City's Parks and Recreation Department into the future. In return, these partners expect that their needs regarding recreation facilities, programs and activities, will be met to complement their own organizational missions. In this way, community resources will be maximized through collaborative relationships. And community cohesion will help anchor community values through times of change.

Mission and Vision of the Parks and Recreation Department

The Parks, Trails and Open Spaces Master Plan provides a strategic framework to anticipate the future and guide decision-making within the City's Mission Statement. The City of Benson Parks and Recreation Department Vision is:

*"To keep pace with demand for public and private spaces for
parks, trails, recreation facilities and alternative transportation
options for public health and safety, and to enhance partnerships
and quality of life for our healthy, cohesive community."*

The Parks and Recreation Department Mission are four-fold, to:

- 1) *Understand and promote healthy lifestyles and lifelong active living for the residents of Benson and surrounding communities;*
- 2) *Understand and provide effective and representative recreation services to the residents of Benson and surrounding communities ;*
- 3) *Cultivate outreach to maximize partnerships with community organizations and volunteers to meet diverse physical activity and recreation needs; and*
- 4) *Collaborate, through multi-use/multi-purpose planning and administration, across City Departments for effective and representative allocation of resources.*

The Planning Process

To achieve this needed master plan, City of Benson Parks and Recreation Department staff applied for and received assistance from the National Park Service – Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program (NPS-RTCA) who helped facilitate the process which highlighted the importance of local input and partnerships related and relevant to this recreation master plan. Monthly stakeholder/ partner meetings began on October 29, 2015 and continued through April 8, 2016. Two public open house meetings were presented in April and May to explain the results of the public meetings, show maps and gather public comment on the draft master plan.

All meetings were open to the public and meeting notes and other project related information was available on the City’s website [throughout the planning process](#). Meeting participation was typically over 18 people.

The process progressed in a systematic fashion to:

- identify and convene stakeholders
- gather information (existing City documents and policies, benchmark information – population, demographics and national physical activity and recreation standards, public survey, community input and facilities inventory)
- map critical information
- convene inter-departmental meetings
- project and prioritize future needs

This information formed the foundation upon which the strategic directions for the Parks, Trails and Open Spaces Master Plan were built.

Strategic Goals and Directions

Because of proposed growth in the Benson area, the Parks and Recreation Department needs to balance allocation of resources between maintenance of older facilities and creation of new facilities. This will require flexibility to accommodate change within the available financial resources of the City.

To realistically prepare for the coming growth and increase in demand for services, the structure of this master plan is based on six strategic goals and directions (that will be described in more detail in the body of this plan):

- Lifetime Customers
- Maximize Resources
- Signature Parks
- Trail Network Connectivity
- Natural Resources Protection
- Multi-use/ Multi-purpose facilities

Recommendations

- 1) Adopt the Parks, Trails and Open Spaces Master Plan to provide the necessary policy tool for grant applications and to establish the required quality of life amenities for any new development in the City of Benson.
- 2) Implement components of the Parks, Trails and Open Space Master Plan, by phases, according to available resources.
- 3) Create and adopt a Recreation Area Design Manual to provide uniform levels of recreation service across the City.
- 4) Adopt a Complete Streets Master Plan that will establish a downtown trails network that can be used to leverage alternative transportation grant funds.
- 5) Include Parks and Recreation Department in any downtown revitalization planning and project implementation to better achieve goals of the Parks, Trails and Open Spaces Master Plan.
- 6) Adopt an Interpretive Signage Master Plan to articulate various stories, lore, landmarks and signatures that distinctly represent the City of Benson – past and present.
- 7) Determine which of the Environmentally Sensitive Areas, Wildlife Corridors and Open Space areas identified on the General Development Plan Land Use Map are critical to implement the mission and goals of the Parks, Trails and Open Spaces Master Plan and acquire them for the recreation system.
- 8) Upgrade the City's Information Technology network to improve inter-departmental communications, scheduling, planning and project management, and other essential networking for multi-use/multi-purpose efficiency goals.
- 9) Establish a percentage (i.e. .5% to 1%) of any revenues, generated to the City from new development, earmarked for implementation of the Parks, Trails and Open Spaces Master Plan – in addition to typical funding from the General Funds and the annual budget process.

The City of Benson is at a critical crossroad in its history. The challenge will be to balance existing values and needs while at the same time keeping pace with new development, new residents and, possibly, new values. Change is most always difficult and sometimes profoundly

positive. Benson leaders, in all sectors, must prepare themselves and their resources to manage the coming change to help all of Benson thrive.

“...the more webs of human relationships a neighborhood has, the stronger, safer, and more successful it is. Any institution that promotes this kind of community cohesion ...adds value to a neighborhood and, by extension, to the whole city.”²

City of Benson Parks and Recreation Department Parks Trail, and Open Spaces Master Plan

Background

² “Measuring the Economic Value of a City Park System”, Harnik, Peter and Ben Welle. 2009. Trust for Public Lands.

The City of Benson is facing profound growth in the very near future. One planned area development alone, The Villages at Vigneto by El Dorado Benson, LLC³, will increase the Benson area population from around 12,500 residents to nearly 72,500 residents by 2032⁴. There may be other development proposals that will increase that population number even more.

The City Parks and Recreation Department has begun a Parks, Trails and Open Spaces Master Planning process to prepare for the impact to City recreation facilities and programs from the pending population growth and consequent demand for public services. To assist with this process, City staff applied for and was granted technical assistance for the 2016 planning process from the National Park Service – Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program. NPS staff has served as advisor to the master planning process and helped facilitate stakeholder and public meetings to gather as much input about recreation and conservation needs and trends to formulate priorities, best management practices and projections for recreation improvements and expansions, based on the best available information.

³ “The Villages at Vigneto Community Master Plan and Development Plan”. 2015. El Dorado Benson, LLC.

⁴“Economic Impact of Villages at Vigneto Planned Development Projected Direct, Indirect, and Induced Output, Earnings, and Jobs to be Created in Cochise County, AZ (2015-2032 and Beyond)”_Robert Carreira, Ph.D. July 17, 2015.

History

This is the first, ever, Parks, Trails and Open Spaces Master Plan for the City of Benson and the Parks and Recreation Department. It has been prompted by two specific situations:

- 1) City Parks and Recreation facilities currently cannot adequately serve and meet community demand for organized and non-organized physical activity and outdoor recreation; and
- 2) The City Parks & Recreation Department must prepare to respond to an increase in population from the proposed Villages at Vigneto planned area development, and other future developments. That will increase the Benson population comparable in size to the City of Flagstaff and impact already strained recreation facilities, programs and staff.

Parks and Recreation Department within the City of Benson, formed in 1980, is fragmented organizationally. Parks are administered under the Public Works Department maintaining Lions Park, Apache Parks and others. The Recreation Department established in 2007 with a current staff of 1.5 reporting to the City Manager, coordinates programs and activities as well as scheduling for parks, the Community Center and the pool. The golf course is operated separately from either of these departments.

Facilities

Lions Park, located at 435 N. Adams Street, is the only developed ball field facility available for youth and adult league sports in Benson. The land, approximately forty (40) acres, with nine (9) developed acres, was purchased in 1942 and 1947. It was developed into a multi-use complex with ball fields, basketball and tennis courts, and playgroup equipment and has not been renovated since, with the exception of new grass on each of the ball fields and three new ADA complaint restrooms. A significant portion of the park area is under-developed or being used as a

staging area for other City and County purposes. This is a conflict of land use that obstructs the ability to maximize and provide recreation and physical activity services. Parks and Recreation Department budgets, in the past, have not been able to develop new recreation facilities on this site. Until this site is cleared, expansion and/or development of recreation facilities cannot take place.



Lions Park Ramada photo Laura Parkin

Lions Park Little League Field photo Bob Nilson

Lions

Park Play Equipment photo Adelyn Baber

Demand for reservations of the playing fields exceeds supply. The good news is that, of the Benson population under the age of 20, 37% of those youth are involved in league sports at this City facility⁵. The number does not include youth involved in school sports. Little league coaches and other youth league organizers say they could start more teams (engage more youth) if there were more fields open during the hours of practice and games. Youth are our future. For

⁵ Based on demographic information from the recent “Benson Hospital Community Health Needs Assessment report” 2014.

the benefit of Benson's youth, this is a quality of life asset that is worth protecting and improving.

Numbers and data for adult sports league use of City facilities are not as clear or available. What is known is that they compete for the same field reservation times as the youth sports leagues. And because the adult players are stronger, balls are often hit beyond the fences where family members and young children sit to watch the games or use the adjacent playground area. This is a dangerous situation that increases Benson's liability profile. Revenues from both the youth and adult sports league field rentals represents about 18.4% of the Department's revenue stream.

Another recreation facilities managed by the City are the Community Center and swimming pool with some adjacent playground equipment. For at least the last eight years, approximately 98% of the swimming pool users are youth during the summer months when the pool is open⁶ and maximum pool capacity of 100 is reached during most days and hours of operation. This indicates that the Benson population above the age of 12 is not being served for aquatic recreation opportunity.

⁶ From Parks and Recreation Department records from 2007 to present.



Benson Community Center

photo Laura Parkin

Community

Center Pool on Union Street photo Bob Nilson

The Community Center serves multiple purposes and multiple community partners. It was built in 2000, with funds from a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG). Rental of the Community Center provides about 13.5% of the Parks and Recreation Department's revenue stream.

Some of the multi-use functions of the Center are:

- Senior Meals Program
- Salvation Army Assistance Program
- Community non-profit rental space
- Rental for private functions
- Recreation Department programing when space is available



Apache Park was acquired by the City in 1949 from Apache Nitrogen Products Powder for \$1. It provides casual and limited non-organized recreation opportunity as well as an area where

Apache Park photo Laura

residents can access the City's wi-fi internet connection.

Rail Road Linear Park, located on Third Street downtown, is part of the Benson Historic Walking Tour and includes the Tourism Center, Veterans Memorial Park, and a Fire Wise Exhibit. As part of a 2013 beautification project murals and railroad emblems depicting Benson's train history have been added to this park.

The San Pedro Golf Course is also a City-owned enterprise recreation facility situated on the west bank of the San Pedro River and north of I-10. Operated separately from the Parks and Recreation Department, it is an 18 hole golf course, approximately 35 acres, and dining restaurant acquired by donation in 2010.



Parks and Recreation Department Budget History

The overall Department budget for the past 8 years has decreased nearly 20%, because of the general economic downturn, from \$475,053 in 2008 to the 2015/16 Fiscal Year the Parks and Recreation budget of \$388,142 (\$155,249 Recreation and \$232,893 Parks). The Parks and Recreation Department budget covers:

- Recreation programs (summer camps, arts and crafts, movies in the park, Bingo, etc), aquatics and Community Center operating and maintenance costs.
- The Parks budget covers operating and maintenance (water, turf, equipment, materials, labor, etc.) costs

Current Benson Population

Organized recreation activity at Lions Park accounts for less than 25% of the overall Benson service area population, most of which is over the age of 45. It is important for the Parks and

Recreation Department to understand and provide for physical activity and recreation needs for an aging population, since that is, and is projected to be, the majority Benson population for the next several decades. The cost of under-planning for this population will be borne by the area hospitals, other social service agencies and community organizations and personal care givers.

According to the 2014 Benson Hospital Community Health Needs Assessment report, the Benson service area (includes Benson, St. David, Pomerene, J-6 and Mescal) demographic breakdown is:

Under 20 years old – 21.4%

21 to 44 years old – 21.4%

45 to 65 years old – 30.1%

Over 65 years – 27.1%

Partners and Volunteers

The goals and missions of our partner organizations represent their values and are important to the Department, as respected collaborators. As such their needs are important to incorporate into the Department's strategic and work plans, and for the City's budget allocation process to be able to honor and accommodate their requirements.

The Parks and Recreation Department depends heavily on partnerships and volunteers to run key programs and provide recreation services. For example, without the Little League, Youth Football, and Soccer Boards, as well as other volunteers who dedicate their time, talent and ideas to these vital programs, these opportunities would not exist or would be a tremendous cost to the

City. Volunteers contribute over 10,000 hours per year among the various organized sports activities within the City, especially for the youth and adult leagues. This is the equivalent of 22 full time positions. There is mutual benefit in these partnerships because the City subsidized approximately 75% of the cost for lights, field maintenance, staff time and other support. As the City grows, it is critical to continue recruiting new volunteers of diverse ages to help keep programs and services running and keep Benson residents engaged in life-long physical activity.

Planning Process

Stakeholder and Situation Analysis

City Parks and Recreation staff and NPS staff (Planning Team) began working together in October 2015 to begin the situation analysis and the stakeholder analysis for this process. On October 29, 2015 the Planning Team convened a meeting with City Department staff from Finance, Planning and Zoning, Public Works, and Tourism to explain the Parks, Trails and Open Spaces Master Plan process, desired outcomes, goals and schedule – and to ask for their input, ideas, concerns and who else should be informed about this process and encouraged to participate.

That same day the Planning Team convened a meeting with other community stakeholders to conduct the same format. Seventeen people attended that meeting representing interested residents, the Hospital, AZ State Parks, local Boy Scout troops, Cochise County Health Department, Legacy Foundation, Cochise College. More participants representing more organizations in the region attended subsequent monthly meetings. All meeting notes are available in Appendix A.

The focus of the meeting was to become acquainted with stakeholders and interested parties, and learn more about their values and interests related to the Parks and Recreation Department and the programs offered. Participants were asked “why are you here?”, “what are you/your organization’s goals?”, “who are other possible stakeholders for this project?”, and “what do you need to stay involved in this effort?”

The second stakeholder meeting focused on current situations, reporting on results from a recent Parks and Recreation survey, and presenting relevant concepts from the City’s General Plan⁷ including the Land Use Plan map with discussions about projected recreation service needs. The meeting discussion also aimed to understand what the desired recreation activities are for Benson residents.

The third meeting focus was to understand and discussion demographic information (existing and projected), and existing and possible demand for organized and non-organized sports, among other things in Benson.

Fourth meeting topics included discussion about the challenges and opportunities Benson faces with the proposed El Dorado Benson planned area development. That included how the City budget process works, what economic benefits and opportunities could be for the City as the new development build out occurs, how to address keeping the existing values and resources vibrant

⁷ City of Benson General Development Plan. Adopted by the Benson City Council on: February 23, 2015 by Resolution 8-2015.

as new values and resources emerge. A downtown revitalization plan developed by the Tejido Group⁸ from the University of AZ in 2001 was presented. The plan represents many of the values previously discussed and offers suggestions, ideas and drawings of possibilities for ways the City can make improvements to the downtown area for the current residents and to attract the new residents and tourists – all to improve economic development.

The fifth meeting was a recap of information, values, ideas and desired outcomes gathered to date in the process, and to begin discussions about how to structure and prioritize how to move forward in the plan and with recommendations.

Sixth meeting aimed to understand best ways to communicate purpose, contents, recommendations of the Parks, Trails and Open Spaces Master Plan to build support for successful adoption by Mayor and Council.

Seventh meeting finalized talking points and strategy to maximize turnout for the scheduled public open house meetings.

Public open house meeting #1 – Thirty three people attended the April 19, 2016 public open house meeting for a PowerPoint presentation summary of the Parks, Trails and Open Spaces Master Plan, Concept map review, and discussion session of feedback before providing written comments and an indication for agreement or disagreement on direction and recommendations of the Master Plan – 13 agreed, 1 disagreed. Input and comments were incorporated into the Master

⁸“Benson Town Center Concept Plan”. Frederickson, Mark; Barnes,H; Camacho, M; Emptage, N; Moreno, L; Su, H; Sussman, R. The Tejido Group, University of AZ. 2001.

Plan text and Concept Map and are included in the meeting notes found in Appendix A of this document.

Public open house meeting #2 – Seventeen people attended the May 3, 2016 public open house meeting. The slide presentation included an overview of the need for a Parks, Trails and Open Space Master Plan for Benson, the possible funding opportunity from newly generated revenues from proposed development, the community values that emerged from the public planning process that focus the master plan, the master plan Vision and Mission statements, the master plan concept map as well as the existing master plan maps for Lions Park and Apache Park, the strategic directions from the public input process that guide the master plan including the nine recommendations and the four suggested phases to implement the plan.

There were no objections to the information presented and a majority of the participants indicated they agree with the direction and concepts of the master plan.

In addition to the general public meetings, City and NPS staff reached out to specific community leader groups to inform them of the planning process, gather their input, and request they inform their respective networks about the master planning effort and encourage participation in the process by their constituents. Those leadership groups included the Ministers, Hospital Administrators, BUSD School Board, Southeast Arizona Economic Development Group, Junior Women's Club, and Chamber of Commerce. The planning team also convened a focus group

with students from the Benson Elementary, Middle School and High School to get feedback from those age groups.

Partnerships

The Parks, Trails and Open Spaces Master Plan process was strongly supported by community partnerships, especially by education and health professionals. That helped reveal and define community needs and opportunities to explore collaboration to satisfy similar missions and goals and provide services across City departments and partner organizations. For example, the Parks and Recreation Department applied for funding from Cenpatico's Community Reinvestment Grant Program to address some of the immediate needs for facility improvements based on input from the stakeholders.

Working relationships can be further cultivated and strengthened through participation in each other's committees, collaborative grant-writing, and agreements to contribute resources and use partner networks to raise public awareness, and reach a broader and more diverse population and user groups in the community. For example, community health professionals provided the most current Community Health Needs Assessment and Community Health Improvement Plan for Benson and Cochise County to help inform the Parks, Trails and Open Spaces Master Plan process. These documents were rich with demographic information as well as health issues that can be addressed, in part, through recreation activities. Those same professionals made frequent statements about the need for City Parks and Recreation staff to be regular participants in a Health Focus group to continue information exchange across disciplines that help to maximize outcomes through multi-use/multi-purpose facilities, programs and activities.

Community Values, Issues, Concerns

Each stakeholder meeting aimed to uncover core values, issues and concerns of the participants, this was for two reasons. First was to promote authentic engagement and uncover important information. Second was to differentiate between values, issues and concerns – which can help shape goals and objectives and encourage commitment to them – as opposed to expectations, which are often never satisfied because someone else is expected to make them happen.

Following are the values, issues and concerns (which have been combined into five general categories) expressed by the stakeholders.

Philosophies or Desired Standards

- creating community for people to enjoy life
- infrastructure for activity and recreation, promote trails, parks and open space as sustainable and valuable assets in the community in phases
- undeveloped open space and wildlife area need to be protected as development occurs to increase community engagement and encourage healthy population habits
- make it easy for young families to get outdoors, increase their interest in outdoor recreation and stewardship of resources
- non-team activities for youth and close to home recreation facilities, and ability to walk to school
- young kids need access to nature and a way to explore Benson
- accessibility to recreation facilities and programs, including health care and mental health needs
- coordinate trail development with land development for connectivity
- system is inclusive of outlying communities and addresses how to get around without a car
- recreation facilities and trail system supports various user skill levels
- create more jobs in Parks and Recreation
- consider border safety issues along all trails
- protecting the property values in Benson by providing enough services
- offer youth a “sense of place” and sense of belonging
- meet the needs of a larger population with City services
- increase commitment to water resources management
- address pent up demand as soon as possible

Social Engagement and Concerns

- motivate people to get active and engaged through programs and information
- address issues about Benson Unified School District/St. David Unified School District “identity crisis” (who goes to what school, which school offers what programs, school/youth rivalry, etc.)
- residents become problem solvers – historic Benson has to become part of the solution as growth happens
- address the sense of loss that will be created by development and growth changes
- address the social tension – both for and against change (how to let voices be heard, understand and address the issues, keep the community cohesive)
- how will Benson and it’s residents be involved in future planning processes
- use the El Dorado development plan as a discussion point for how to blend values (historic and new)
- prevent “tribal” dynamics that would separate one group from another
- new developers to the area can be part of the regional solutions (i.e. connectivity of trails, etc.)

- City is projecting population growth to 75,000 over the next 20 years and must respond to community needs

Unique Features and Destinations

- identify themes to promote place making and describe “who/what is Benson?” (i.e. Benson schools are high quality, story of trains, stage coach, San Pedro River, Kartchner Caverns, birding, etc.)
- connect to Kartchner Cavern via a trail and connect Kartchner to San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area (SPRNCA)
- consider weather issues and provide shade (tree planting) and safety around washes
- work to increase access to Forest Service land from this side of the mountains
- community interfaces with others to coordinate at/beyond City limits into the County
- protect connectivity of wildlife from large landscape areas (San Pedro River, Whetstone Mts, major wash corridors) – address transportation conflict issues to protect wildlife
- protect connectivity of wildlife from large landscape areas (San Pedro River, Whetstone Mts, major wash corridors) – address transportation conflict issues to protect wildlife
- historic Benson is going to be challenged to change – identify what we want and need (what is our identity)
- develop linear parks to connect to other community parks and other activity areas and neighborhoods
- provide access to the river and to washes
- to provide more conveniently located recreation facilities and opportunity throughout Benson

New Facilities, Programs, Events

- Hospital is trying to attract a YMCA facility here
- consider weather issues and provide shade (tree planting) and safety around washes
- find safe spaces for various physical activity areas in town, even after dark
- include drinking fountains throughout town
- provide for equestrian and mountain biker use needs
- provide non-sports organized activities for youth
- develop courts that can be used for casual, unscheduled activities (tennis, volleyball, badminton, etc.)
- develop measured walking/running courses
- encourage use by creating a passport/stamp book for park use and activities
- create information and maps (printed and electronic) to locate parks, trails and facilities in town for new and existing residents
- Benson needs another pool (therapy pool, in-door all year round)
- create neighborhood pocket parks
- build a splash pad that can be used by all ages
- create nature trails
- implement the Apache Park plan to create an event venue

- design and install uniform signage along the Historic Walking trail downtown
- acquire new land for recreation expansion opportunities
- improve existing facilities (60% of resources)
- acquire new land for expansion opportunities (40% of resources)

Trails

Aside from the Historic Walking Trail downtown, there are no official trails currently in Benson. There are some opportunities, however, that should be represented in the Parks, Trails and Open Spaces Master Plan as possibilities. Those include:

- Historic Walking Trail downtown
- historic Butterfield Overland Mail Route trail
- Sun Corridor Trail
- the abandoned railroad bed (which runs through the El Dorado property)
- birding trail at the San Pedro Golf Course
- Complete Streets trails potential
- Benson Hospital par course behind the hospital
- access to the San Pedro River

Possible Other Stakeholders

- Arizona Generation and Transmission Cooperatives
- AZ Public Service Electric Company (APS)
- AZ State Lands Department
- Amtrak and the Railroad
- Benson Chamber of Commerce
- Bike stores
- Cochise County Cooperative Extension Service
- Developers
- Ft. Huachuca
- Gym owners
- Residents in surrounding communities
- Sulphur Springs Valley Electric Cooperative (SSVEC)
- Southeastern AZ Governments Organization (SEAGO)
- Sierra Club

Partners to Collaborate and Maximize Results

- Legacy Foundation exists to help fund efforts for healthy populations and support community needs
- Youth scout programs and Eagle Scout projects to implement recreation projects
- Cochise County Health Department is focused on quality of life resources in Benson
- Benson Unified School District and students
- Cochise College
- Others

Highlights of Community Values, Issues, Concerns

Participants in the Working Group are focused on three main points:

- 1) Partnership with the health community is important to develop ways to:
 - ask health care providers to “prescribe” walking and other physical exercise for their health benefits;
 - use existing and current Community Health Needs Assessments for Benson and Cochise County to understand, plan for, and design relevant recreation facilities and programs that address those needs;
 - evaluate and assess community usage of recreation facilities to better plan for future facilities, programs and activities;
 - achieve the Parks and Recreation Department’s goal of a healthy active community.
- 2) Establish and manage recreation facilities that contribute to economic development and return on investment (ROI) in downtown Benson, such as:
 - a softball tournament venue to attract and host regional and state teams and increase out-of-town visits to Benson;
 - a unique and signature facility that draws out-of-town users (such as river access, a special events site, splash pad or some other state-of-the-art venue;
- 3) Create unity and social cohesion between historic north Benson and the new development in south Benson. Ways to achieve this would be:
 - trail connectivity
 - access to recreation facilities for all residents
 - promote healthy life styles for all residents

Whenever possible, conduct multi-use, multi-purpose planning to incorporate recreation projects that collaborate and complement with other City departments and other community agencies and organizations.

Community Surveys

Community input has been the hallmark of this planning process. Two surveys have been conducted on behalf of the Parks and Recreation Department to inform this master planning process. The first was in 2013, by Arizona State University College of Public Programs School of Community Resources and Development⁹. Key survey findings indicate a decreased participation level in recreation activities from 2006 (83%) to 2013 (41%).

A majority of those survey respondents also indicated a desire for improvements at existing parks and recreation facilities, increasing adult and youth program and activity options, and building new recreation facilities. Respondents also indicated a need for more family oriented activity options and ways to increase physical activity, particularly for seniors (55 years or older).

Reasons for decreased levels of recreation activities from 2006 to 2013 are unclear from the survey results. However the Parks, Trails and Open Spaces Master Plan Working Group want to regain the 2006 levels of use through the recommendations in this plan.

⁹“City of Benson Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment Report”. Ross, Allison M.Ed.; Rodríguez, Aírel, Ph.D.

Arizona State University College of Public Programs School of Community Resources and Development. 2013

The second survey was a questionnaire conducted by the Benson Parks and Recreation Department with assistance from community partner organizations from January to May 2016 (see Appendix B). The purpose of the questionnaire was to learn more about current adult physical activity levels, patterns and frequency in the community. Results from the questionnaire indicate:

- 85% of the adult respondents exercise from 30 to 120 minutes per day
- 74% combine socializing with exercise
- Exercising with someone else provides more incentive to do a physical activity
- Most common exercise activities reported were walking, team sport, bike riding, running, swimming, other activities
- Trails, bike paths, organized sports and other options were the most frequently identified activities that need more local facilities

These results nearly exactly mirror nation statistics for park use and values, cited by the latest National Recreation and Parks Association report¹⁰.

As mentioned before, over 50% of the current Benson population is over 65 years of age, and that percentage is growing. There is a need to provide relevant recreation facilities and services to encourage active living among this age group. Modifications at existing facilities for use during non-peak hours and new program development designed for various skill and ability levels, offered during non-peak hours would increase services to this sector of the population.

Review and Findings of Existing Documents

General Development Plan

The City of Benson General Development Plan (GDP) was adopted by the Benson City Council in February 2015. The plan acknowledges local traditions of outdoor enjoyment that depend on recreational facilities made available to the public, and on scenic, natural areas surrounding the developed community. To accommodate future population growth, additional recreational space (ranging from playing fields to picnic areas, trails, open space, and other leisure-time venues) must be acquired and improved. Much of the necessary acreage shall be accommodated for in master planned developments where most of the residential development is expected. There will, however, still be demand for new park sites within the presently-developed portions of the City.

¹⁰ “Americans’ Broad-Based Support for Local Recreation and Park Services: Results From a Nationwide Study”. National Recreation and Parks Association. 2016.

To that end, the GDP includes three specific Land Use Policies that guide this Parks, Trails and Open Spaces Master Plan process. They are:

- Develop and maintain a City of Benson Parks and Recreation Plan to identify goals, inventory resources and establish tasks for developing this aspect of the city;
- Establish a city-wide trail and interpretive system with meaningful access to public lands, wildlife viewing, recreational amenities and the San Pedro River Corridor;
- Secure public access to National Forest Service lands by pursuing agreements at the time of development, zoning approval or annexation as appropriate.¹¹

The GDP states “the Open Space designation recognizes the need for developed community parks, both natural and developed recreational areas which add to the attractiveness of the community and to the quality of life of the residents. Areas that are environmentally unique or otherwise present a natural barrier to development also add to the aesthetic appeal of the City of Benson’s physical landscape and encourage recreation opportunities. Additionally, open space encourages separation between potentially incompatible land uses. The OS designation is intended to be consistent with the State's Open Space Planning law.”¹² Presently, the City has no zoning district or development standards which encourage additional areas to be reserved for recreation purposes.

¹¹City of Benson General Development Plan. Adopted by the Benson City Council on: February 23, 2015 by Resolution 8-2015. p. 10

¹²City of Benson General Development Plan. Adopted by the Benson City Council on: February 23, 2015 by Resolution 8-2015. p. 15

In particular, the GDP identifies 3 Goals with Objectives in the Open Space element section that include:

Goal 1: Develop new community park facilities, leisure areas and recreational activities that appeal to a broad range of ages and interests.

Objective 1.1: Develop a Parks and Trails Master Plan to identify sites suitable for new open space, park and recreational development.

Objective 1.2: Coordinate open space improvements with economic development objectives.

Goal 2: Promote better trail access and connectivity to State and Federal holdings adjacent to the city limits.

Objective 2.1: Identify and map connecting routes, easements and land acquisition needs for potential trail routes to connect recreation areas with residential areas.

Objective 2.2: Develop multi-use, pedestrian, cycling and equestrian trail networks that effectively links parks, recreation areas and open spaces.

Objective 2.3: Promote Rails to Trails and work with rail-owning landowners for access.

Goal 3: Preserve and enhance the San Pedro River corridor natural attributes.

Objective 3.1: Increase accessibility to the area for visitors.

Objective 3.2: Plan and promote appropriate outdoor recreational activities, such as hiking, bird watching, with sensitivity to the environment. (p.53)

General Development Plan Land Use Map

The GDP Land Use Map (see Appendix C), imbedded in the General Management Plan, indicates sensitive wildlife corridors and open space areas that could be considered as part of the open space areas for the Parks, Trails and Open Spaces Master Plan. More public input is needed for these discussions.

This map identifies Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESA), open spaces (OS) and wildlife corridors (WC) that are relevant to the Parks, Trails and Open Spaces Master Plan. There are five specific locations defined on the GDP Land Use map because of their rough terrain and steep slopes. Presently the City has no zoning district which sets aside areas for conservation. Maintaining these designated areas will depend upon the careful review of site plans and development proposals by the City, in and adjacent to these areas.

Wildlife Corridors, indicated on the GDP Land Use map and consistent with the State's Open Space Planning law, recognize important riparian areas and wash corridors to be maintained in their natural state to provide wildlife habitat, recreational access and maintain watercourse retention. Again, the City has no zoning district which sets aside land for conservation, protection and maintenance of these lands. The ESA, OS and WC areas designated on the General Land Use Map are also important areas for casual, non-organized recreation opportunities. Policies are needed to protect these areas and, where possible and according to state law, there should be a zoning overlay district established for protection of these lands that would then be part of the development review process.

In addition to specific policies mentioned related to parks, trails and open space within Benson, the Circulation element section of the GDP includes policies, goals and objectives¹³ that are compatible with needs, goals and objectives of the Parks, Trails and Open Spaces Master Plan.

All the policies mentioned indicate opportunities for creative collaboration and multi-use, multi-purpose planning among and across City departments to achieve the goals and objectives of the Park, Trails and Open Space Master Plan. This is necessary to maximize the City budget and resources - especially as the projected rapid growth happens.

Small Area Transportation Study

Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) conducted a Small Area Transit Study¹⁴ (Study) for Benson in 2007. The Study includes one map (see Appendix D) that identifies the issues and indicates where future ADOT transportation projects will happen into 2030.

Another Study map projects volume of traffic on various existing and proposed streets by 2030. These maps and the proposed roadway priority projects will be important to identify alternate modes (bike lanes and sidewalk trails) through a Complete Streets planning process which would

¹³City of Benson General Development Plan. Adopted by the Benson City Council on: February 23, 2015, 2015 by Resolution 8-2015. p. 22-25.

¹⁴“City of Benson, Arizona Small Area Transportation Study Final Report”. Prepared by United Civil Group Corporation for ADOT and City of Benson. August 2007.

identify walking and biking consideration that should be included in the early planning stages to help achieve the Parks, Trails and Open Spaces Master Plan goals.

Though not in the ADOT study, there is some discussion about extending Ocotillo Rd. further south to provide eastern access into the El Dorado planned area development. The same Complete Streets alternate modes components should be included in that planning, as well, if it is to happen.

Complete Streets

Complete Streets is a transportation planning concept that incorporates designated roadways that provide connectivity to other community destinations. The Complete Streets concept encourages a community-wide, multi-modal transportation plan that incorporates alternative transportation options within the public right-of-way, such as walking and biking – as well as vehicular and public transit options, for a safe, comfortable, integrated system serving and accessible to all users. Fundamentally, Complete Streets plans encourage active transportation options which promote healthy life styles

Whether retrofitting existing roads or building new roads, Complete Streets plans incorporate marked bike lanes, sidewalks, vegetation (shade) and signage as well as vehicular lanes for automobile traffic. Those alternative modes of transportation should be included in the cost of the whole transportation project.

Creating a Complete Streets Plan for Benson would help to establish an inner-city trails networks that could be linked to perimeter trails, nature trails and community parks that will be identified in the Parks, Trails and Open Spaces Master Plan, including the policy of multi-use, multi-purpose planning and project implementation.

There are multiple and relevant existing plans pertaining to various aspects of improvements for the City of Benson that can and will be foundations for recommendations in the Parks, Trails and Open Spaces Master Plan. Each planning process has conducted substantial public input and there is no need to reinvent the wheel – or, more to the point – disregard the important information that has been gathered within the community.

Historic Walking Tour and Map

The Benson Chamber of Commerce, and other partners, in 1995, commissioned Johns & Strittmatter, Historic Architects to identify existing structures and facilities that tell the story of Benson since 1880. The results were documented in photos and with text, all compiled in the Benson Historic Walking Tour brochure¹⁵ that included a walking tour map of 12 “must see” sights in Benson. This resource can be easily incorporated into the trails section of the Parks, Trails and Opens Space Master Plan as part of the multi-use, multi-purpose policy.

¹⁵ “Benson Historic Walking Tour”. Johns & Strittmatter, Inc., Historic Architects. 1995.

Summary on Population, Recreation Use and Impacts Projections

As part of the Parks, Trails and Open Spaces Master Planning process, a Population and Recreation Use and Impact Projections summary¹⁶ was developed in January 2016. Using data from the recent Benson Hospital Community Health Needs Assessment report (2014) and recreation use records for the past 8 years, recreation use levels and trends were established and projected on the proposed population increase from the El Dorado planned area development.

The Community Health Needs Assessment summary found that 21.4% of the population in the Benson service area is under the age of twenty. The Population and Recreation Use and Impact Projections summary determined that about 38% of Benson youth are involved in organized recreation activity. While this is a very positive statistic reflecting youth and physical activity in Benson, it is critical to understand what the recreation needs are for the other 78.6% of the Benson population who are over 20 years of age.

Mentioned before, a questionnaire was conducted by the Parks and Recreation Department to gather more information about that population sector over the age of twenty. Those results combined with the Community Needs Assessment indicate a need for recreation services relevant to the 20 to 45 year old segment, the 45 to 65 year old segment and the over 65 year segment of the population.

¹⁶ “City of Benson Parks, Trails and Open Space Master Plan Summary Document on Population, Use and Impacts Projections”. Cate Bradley, Parkin, L. 2016.

There is uncertainty for the Parks and Recreation Department and the City, regarding the impacts of the El Dorado planned area development on recreation facilities. The developer has plans for recreation facilities within the development, but they are not specific nor are they tied to projected age and population sectors at this point.

Parks and Recreation Department records since 2008 reveal the current over-demand for existing City recreation facilities between the youth league sports and the adult league sport for reservations of the developed ball fields at Lions Park, and other special events held there.

The Parks and Recreation Department created a “level of services” map (see Appendix E) that indicates, according to national recreation standards, approximately where new parks should be developed in Benson to reach the national goal of a park or recreation facility within .5 miles of residential neighborhoods. This map indicates the need for the City to consider adding up to 14 new park facilities from 1 acre to 40 acres, depending on the level of service determined for each facility.

Community Parks Master Plans

Lions Park is about 30 acres of City-owned land north of Hwy 80 off Pearl Street and Adams Street. A bit more than half of the available land is developed with two softball fields, two multi-use fields, basketball and tennis courts and a playground area with shade ramada. There is a current conflict of use on the west side of Lions Park where the City and County have a

partnership to store road construction materials. There is currently no other place to store that material. Until it can be moved, the Parks and Recreation Department cannot make plans to expand facilities and develop more needed ball fields.

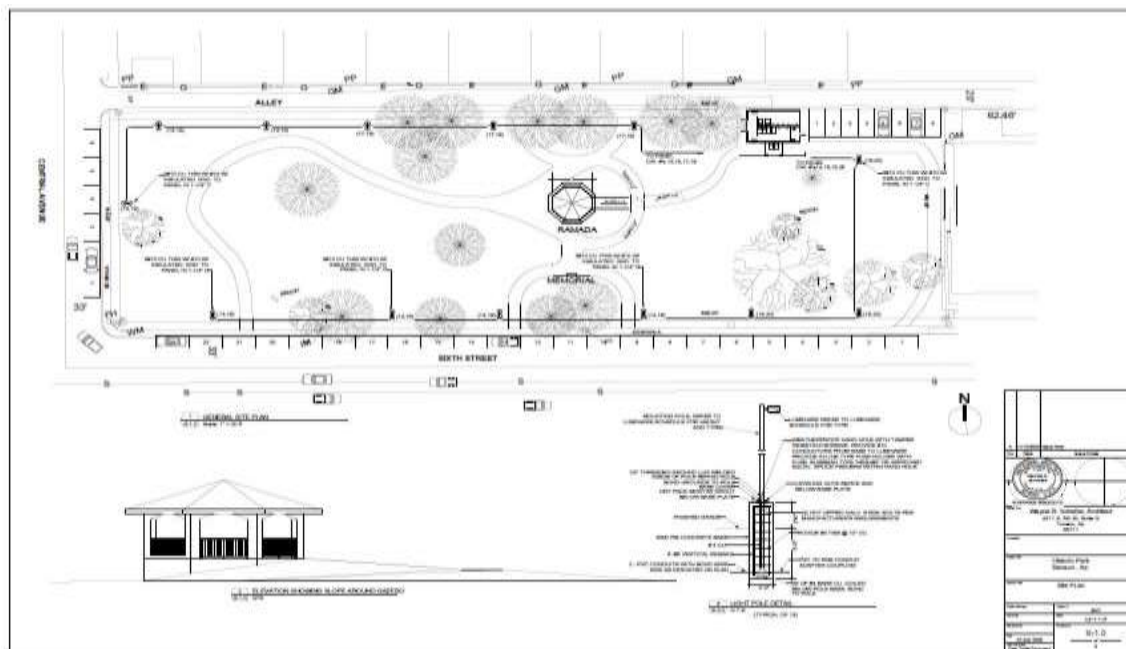
Feedback during public open house meetings indicated a community desire to include pickle ball courts, par course stations, and include the existing skate park in the Lions Park Master Plan. In addition, it was mentioned there is vacant land south of Lions Park that should be purchased for additional parking when there are tournaments or large events at the park.

The Community Center is located west of Ocotillo Rd. on Union St. It has a multi-purposed building about 1200 sq. ft. and an adjacent swimming pool and small playground area on Union Street. West of the swimming pool is a turf area that can be used for casual recreation however it is frequently impacted by cars parking under the existing shade trees which damage the turf and leave an uninviting area. Fencing around the turf area would eliminate this problem.

Apache Park is land adjacent to existing City Hall on west of Patagonia St on 6th St. The park was purchased by the City from Apache Powder on March 4, 1949 for one dollar. While the park is used for casual recreation, as a park it is undeveloped for the services, events and potential revenues or economic development it could provide.

In 2008, the architect Wayne Scheibe was contracted to develop a master plan for Apache Park¹⁷ that includes a central bandstand ramada with interior walking paths, lighting, trees and other vegetation, a memorial area and benches. This park could be used for community events and concerts, and activities.

Community suggestions for other design specifics at Apache Park include adding some par course (fitness exercise) stations, an amphitheater, and a dog park area. In addition there is a desire for a shaded area next to the City Hall building with benches underneath to take advantage of Wi-Fi connection currently offered.



¹⁷ "Apache Park, Benson, AZ". Wayne R. Scheibe, Architect. 2008.

In 1989, the City contracted with McGann & Associates Landscape Architects to survey the community for recreation needs and desires and develop a master plan for Lions Park¹⁸. Another master plan for Lions Park¹⁹ was developed in 2008 that includes several football fields, soccer fields, two softball fields; two multi-purpose fields and a playground area (see Appendix F).

According to community input in 1989, the Lions Park master plan calls for expanded softball fields, improved multi-use fields, and other areas that respond to and provide flexible recreation opportunity for all age groups and families. The stakeholder group for the Parks, Trails and Open Spaces Master Plan has a strong preference for the 1989 master plan layout for its multi-use/multi-purpose features. However certain components of the 2008 plan will be incorporated into the 1989 master plan version. For example, it would include more family picnic areas and a larger playground area with additional swing sets. These incorporations will then serve as the 2016 Lions Park Master Plan. There is vacant land north and south of Lions Park that could and should be acquired, when resources are available, for future park expansion.

¹⁸“Lions Park, City of Benson Arizona Master Plan”. McGann & Associates Landscape Architects/Planners. 1989.

¹⁹“Lions Park Benson, AZ”. Approved by Mayor and Council on September 22, 2008.

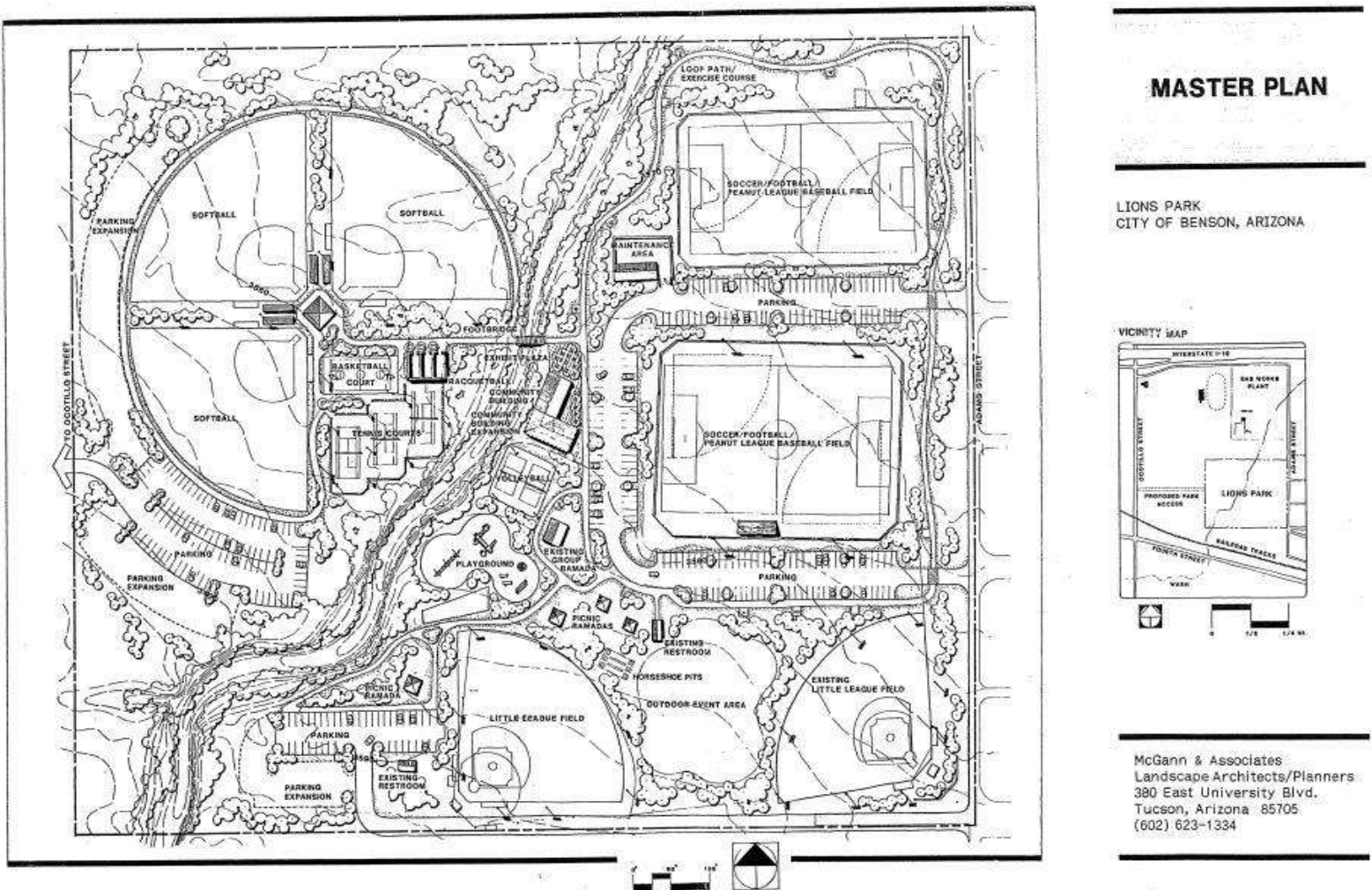


Fig. 3 1989 Lions Park Master Plan

The Benson Hospital and other area health care professionals are significant and consistent partners in this master planning process. Among those professionals, and other stakeholders in this process, there is a strong concern about the national data revealing the link between extended participation in full body contact sports and brain damage. The City of Benson realizes there is risk of injury with certain sports which will be a consideration in the decision making process for new facilities.

In addition to golfing at the San Pedro Golf Course, there is discussion about the possibility of a perimeter trail through the mesquite bosque for bird watching, walking and bike riding. This would advance the multi-use/multi-purpose goals for the Parks, Trails and Opens Spaces Master Plan and broaden recreation services, especially for non-organized, casual physical activity in the community. Such a partnership would increase grant and other funding opportunities. There was also a suggestion to add an archery range within the golf course along the river.

As the City implements park improvements or builds new parks, the existing Outdoor Lighting Ordinance 496²⁰ will be followed to protect the dark sky values for star gazers.

Downtown Redevelopment

Mentioned earlier, in 2001 The Tejido Group, a student design program under the direction of Dr. Mark Frederickson at the University of Arizona, created a Concept Planning Document for the Benson Town Center. The Tejido plan offers possibilities for revitalization of several strategic areas: a town center adjacent to City Hall on 6th Street; a linear park along Fourth Street that includes the Historic Information Center and Walking Tour; and connecting trails to and between the most common destinations in downtown Benson. The plan offers ways to highlight and connect important places.

This plan lays out rationales, themes, concepts and design sketches for revitalization of:

²⁰ City of Benson Outdoor Lighting Ordinance 496. 2005

- The Town Square at City Hall
- Fourth Street
- The Historic Trail
- San Pedro River Park
- Coyote Wash Recreational Corridor
- Coyote Shopping Center
- Adobe Plaza
- Gila Park
- Historic Tour Information Center

Much of this plan is still relevant today and it could be used, modified if necessary, to prioritize what projects could be implemented to take advantage of the “opportunity” that may be created by increased sales taxes from the Villages of Vigneto development, shown in the graph above.

Current Recreation Programs and User Trends

Aside from school recreation, both organized and non-organized is the primary activity available to youth in Benson.

Programs

The Parks and Recreation Department consists of 1.5 full time equivalent (FTE) positions and they are kept very busy all year long, and busier during the peak season of the summer months. High season demands include:

- Little league and other organized field sports clubs
- A wide variety of summer camp programs for youth
- Aquatics program and swimming lessons for youth and adults

Currently, existing facilities
at Lions Park are at
maximum capacity after
school and on weekends

Little League	28 teams (approximately 274 players total)
Football	5 teams (approximately 120 players total)
Soccer	22 teams (approximately 242 youth total)
Cheerleaders	60 youth
Middle school baseball	15 youth
2014 TOTAL	Approximately 711 (\approx 37% of youth in Benson)

Table 1. Number of Youth League Teams in Benson

with Saturday showing the highest usage over Sunday. 2014 actuals for team sports that use City facilities are shown in Table 1.

During certain times of the year, the leagues run concurrently. For example, in October, football, soccer and cheerleaders leagues are all active starting after school hours. This leads to parking lot being full and all grass areas in use. Due to lack of lighting, many leagues have to curtail early.

Little League participation over the past five years indicates increasing demand for City facilities each year. Little League actuals for the past four years with 2016 projections are shown at the right.

YEAR	# PLAYERS	# TEAMS
FY11	246	21
FY12	277	28
FY13	274	28
FY14	322	31
FY15	340	33 (projected)

Table 2. Increase in Player and Teams Past 5 Years

There is similar increasing demand for other youth sports, as well as adult leagues.

In 2015, 344 youth in Benson participated in skill building summer camps that included: tennis, jazz/ ballet, snag golf, wrestling, volleyball, karate, arts and crafts, basketball, baseball, and nature discovery. Scheduled simultaneously, every available facility, staff and many volunteers are used to provide these programs. Despite the slight decrease in population from 2010 – 2013 Census there continues to be an increase in demand for summer programs, seen in Table 3.

YEAR	# Registered
FY13	281
FY14	337
FY15	344

Table 3. Skill Building Camp

Pool users are about 98% youth. Table 4 provide the numbers for pool use for the last eight years (there are four key factors that contribute to the fluctuation of pool patron counts – an extended school year, weather, mechanical failure, and most recently budget cuts). Given the high demand among youth pool users, adults in Benson have very little opportunity for pool use. For example, the pool is unheated and opens for the season around Memorial Day and closes around Labor Day, nearly mimicking the school summer break. During the hours of operation, pool youth programs are nearly constant, because demand for supervised summer youth activity is a safe option for working parents.

YEAR	# USERS
FY08	4,655
FY09	3,936
FY10	5,473
FY11	5,780
FY12	6,034
FY13	4,146
FY14	4,232
FY15	3,347

Table 4. Number of Pool

Organized adult sports league that request for the existing ball fields at Lions Park is also limited because of field use by the youth league sports schedule. The main scheduling conflict for the ball fields is during peak usage after school and typical working hours.

- Men's Softball – average 110 players in past 3 years (capped due to field availability and lack of lighted fields).
- Women's Softball – average 135 per year (capped at this number due to field availability and lack of lighted fields).
- Adult Soccer – Data was not available at the time of this report.

Permits for recreation facilities rentals (Community Center, fields and group use of ramadas) are also on the rise, indicated in

Table 5.

Park Permits/User Center			Community	
Year	# Ramada Permits	# Users	Year	# Rentals
FY14	62	2410	FY13	46
FY15	65	2793	FY14	72
FY16	52 to date	2049	FY15	56 to date

In addition to the complicated scheduling requests for sports facilities use, staff also coordinates several annual events such as:

- Movie in the Park
- 4th of July Celebration
- Butterfield Overland Stage Days
- Tree Lighting Ceremony
- Festival of Lights – Light Parade

Scheduling conflicts continue to arise due to a lack of affordable facilities available for rent in the area. The Community Center has several committed functions, which leaves limited availability for use by the community and the City. Those functions include:

- Catholic Community Services Meals Program, every weekday morning until noon
- Salvation Army, Monday, Wednesday, Friday afternoons

Baseline numbers are not available for non-organized recreation use at City facilities, by both youth and adults. Activities such as the skate park, tennis at the school courts, walking, bike riding, music, art, theater, and other pursuits are, or could be, accommodated at City sites.

However, results from the community questionnaire indicate some preferences for walking and biking trails, splash pad, and improved skate park. Providing this variety of recreation opportunities will increase services to a broader population.

As the Parks and Recreation Department responds to expansion and improvement for facilities, programs, activities and services, there is a need for a City Parks and Recreation Area Design Standards Manual to promote cohesive healthy lifestyles for Benson residents. Like other

guiding documents, this would provide the City and developers with guidelines, requirements and policies to ensure the standards of recreation for current and future residents.

Department Budget and Volunteer Contributions

The Parks and Recreation budget had a significant decline since FY09, and is starting to slowly recover, as seen in Table 6.

YEAR	Total Budget	Parks	Recreation
FY15	\$388,142	\$232,893	\$155,249
FY14	\$366,885	\$223,981	\$142,904
FY13	\$328,720	\$263,457	\$210,843
FY12	\$377,703	\$222,840	\$154,863
FY11	\$301,630	No Recreation Department	
FY10	\$311,408	No Recreation Department	
FY09	\$417,360	No Recreation Department	
FY08	\$475,053	No Recreation Department	

Table 6. Parks and Recreation Budget Past 8

Volunteer hours for the Parks and Recreation Department over the last eight years have been remarkable. When taken as a whole, over 10,000 hours of volunteer time is contributed to the community every year to implement the major community events, programs and youth sports leagues. Contributions from generous volunteers are critical to the Parks and Recreation Department operation. The total hours of service annually equal about 22 full staff time (FTE). Without this dedication, the community would not receive the existing recreation level of service.

In summary, the Parks and Recreation Department is doing a good job with what it has to offer, and there is a pressing need to add more facilities and lighting, more hours of service (which means more staff), and more diverse programs that meet the needs of all recreation users (adults and youth) that are not involved in organized sports.

City of Benson Parks, Trails and Open Spaces Master Plan and Map

This master plan is based on an inventory and analysis of existing plans, unique features and community values that shaped the direction and guided the final recommendations. Benson, like all communities across the country, is faced with limited budget and staff for ever increasing demands on those resources. The keystone to this master plan is to make every resource go as far as possible and help Benson stay competitive with other communities to attract new economic drivers and sectors and improve local economic development by providing excellent recreation opportunity.

One proven way for a community to stay competitive is to identify, maximize and promote the quality of life features – Benson has many such as the location, scenery, San Pedro River, open spaces and mountain ranges. Benson can improve its competitive advantage with other communities by creating and providing a robust recreation system and Parks and Recreation Department that is relevant to 21st century community concepts and populations.

Following are the components of the City of Benson Parks, Trails and Open Spaces Master Plan, beginning with the concept map (Fig. 3). The map illustrates existing and proposed recreation elements that stand as an example of the Benson recreation system. These elements include parks, trails and natural areas/open spaces that either exist or are needed to reach for recreation standards proposed by the National Recreation and Parks Association – the standards by which other communities are measured and compete for economic development potentials. These standards should be applied to present as well as future Benson population and land use.

As illustrated by the Parks and Recreation Levels of Service Map for Benson in Appendix E, according to current service area population the City should have approximately twelve small parks (1-5 acres) and five larger parks (15-40 acres) to offer sufficient recreation opportunity. Presently the City has three smaller parks (Apache, Union St/Community Center, Rail Road Linear Park), and one larger park (Lions), plus the San Pedro Golf Course. The Parks, Trails and Open Spaces Master Plan Concept Map (Fig. 3) proposes six more small parks – including the Fourth Street River Park, and two larger parks – the Turquoise Hills Park and one west of downtown between Fourth Street , Hwy 90 and Jennella Drive. Each proposed park includes the symbol that indicates park amenities such as parking, informational kiosk, restrooms, as well as recreation equipment or playing fields. Three of the parks could establish river access. Creating these necessary parks will come closer to the national recreation standards.

Land necessary for trails is measured in feet not acres. Typically, trails require easements of 30 feet or less, and/or public rights-of-way such as on streets or sidewalks, or designated trail corridors. Since the City owns no land for trails, the principle option for a downtown network of trails is on existing streets, through a Complete Streets trail system shown on the map as a solid red line with indications for directional and interpretive signage at major intersections.

Extending the proposed downtown trail network is a proposed loop trail, indicated on the map by a dotted red line. The loop trail would circle the greater downtown Benson area creating connectivity and a safe long-distance trail system. Any new development would be required to provide this level of trail opportunity and connectivity to existing trails where ever possible.

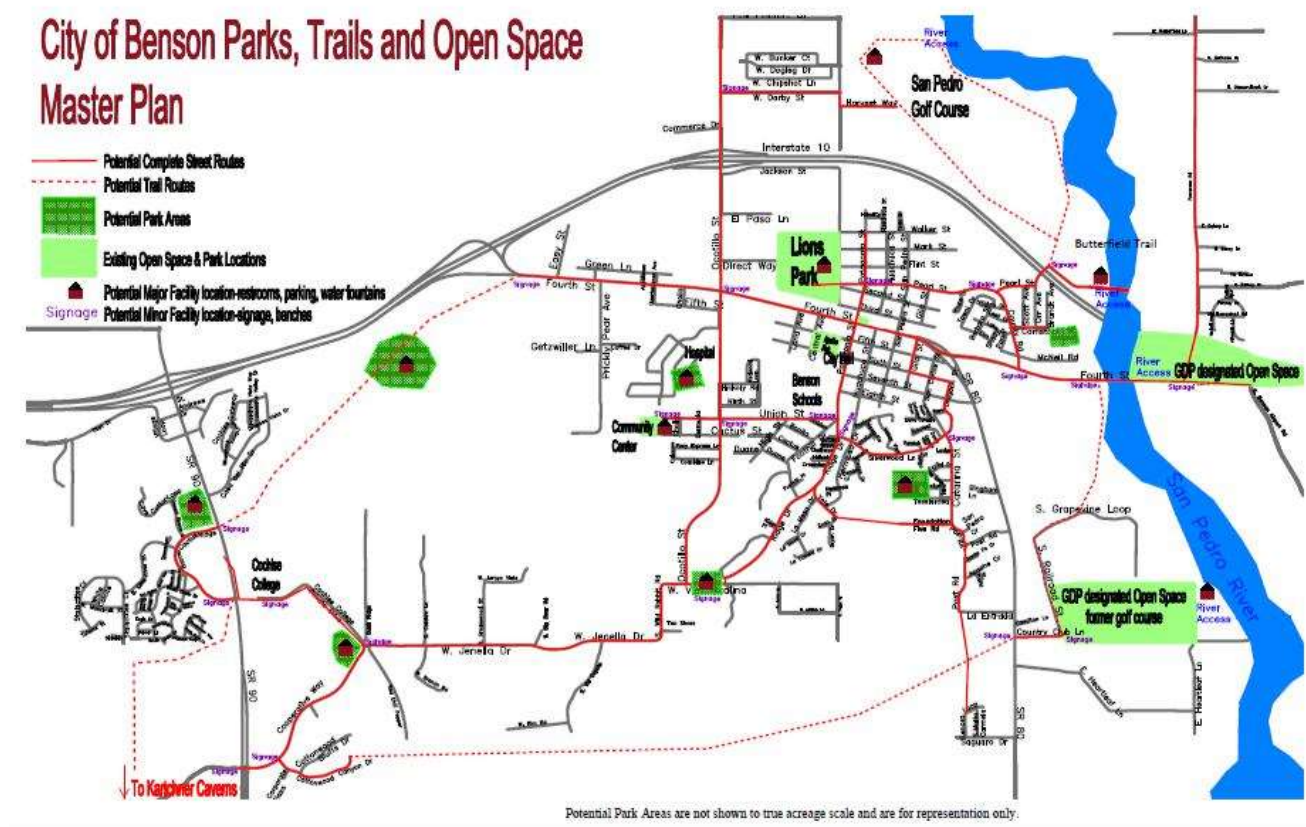


Fig. 3 City of Benson Parks, Trails and Open Spaces Master Plan Concept Map

Strategic Goals and Directions

Several clear values and priorities emerged from community partners and stakeholders during the public participation process and serve as guides for the Parks, Trails and Open Spaces Master Plan strategic directions. The strategies that will guide the Parks and Recreation Department through this Master Plan include:

- Lifetime Customers
- Maximize Resources
- Signature Parks
- Trails Connectivity
- Natural Resources Protection

- Multi-use/ Multi-purpose facilities

These categories frame the focus areas for the Parks and Recreation Department going forward.

They are describe more clearly below, allowing for future flexibility as situations change or arise, along with recommendations for ways to address and achieve goals they represent.

Lifetime Customers

Accepted industry definitions of accessibility are described in many ways. Accessibility can means close to home access to non-organized recreation opportunity for casual and/or personal physical activity styles for all ages. It can mean convenient, safe spaces designed for recreation users with physical, mental or emotional disabilities. It can mean programs, activities and design adaptations for seniors who engage in active and passive recreation. It can mean more close-to-home park and recreation facilities, within ¼ to ½ mile walking distance to a park or connected by a trail system to combine walking or biking with park use in accordance with National Recreation and Parks Association standards²¹. All of these definitions describe the values expressed by participants of this master planning process to provide for and encourage physical activity among Benson residents through all the phases of life, including well into old age.

The Benson Parks and Recreation Department should understand the typical concerns, needs and abilities of each distinctive phase of life (i.e., toddlers, early childhood, pre-teen, teen, early

²¹ “Americans’ Broad-Based Support for Local Recreation and Park Services: Results From a Nationwide Study”. National Recreation and Parks Association. 2016.

adult, young adult, adult, middle age, senior and geriatric stages) and develop recreation facility designs, modifications, improvements, and/or expansions at existing facilities, and/or build new facilities, and develop and provide programing to address the active life style needs of each life stage, reflecting Benson's demographics.

Maximize Resources

Community partners have been a critical component to this master planning process, both from residents and representatives from other organizations. Closer working relationships have been formed and discussions have begun about how to work more closely together to maximize resources for effectiveness and efficiency. A double bonus of this type of collaboration is a broader user network for the Parks and Recreation Department programs, events, activities and services and a more engaged and healthy community.

For example, the Benson Hospital and County Health Department, among others in the health fields, will embark on a County-wide Health Assessment in the near future and want the City's Parks and Recreation Department to be actively involved in the process and consider the results as the City implements the recommendations of the Parks, Trails and Open Spaces Master Plan. Another example of collaboration to maximize resources is with Cochise College and with Kartchner Caverns State Park, both will host summer Parks and Recreation Department programs at their facilities which will increase awareness of these resources among City residents.

One specific recommendation during the master planning process, relative to this value, is for a City/Hospital partnership to build a traditional use/therapeutic use aquatic center accessible to all residents.

Signature Parks

There was strong encouragement to “think outside the box” and design a new park that features a unique recreation opportunity – one that might draw tourism as well as residents to the experience. The desire was that one or more of the City’s Parks and Recreation Department facilities would help stimulate economic development, tourism and Benson’s reputation as a great community to live, work and play.

Such a concept could be an all-ages splash park, or a unique performance venue. It could be high quality access to the San Pedro River, or a barrier-free connective trail network. It could be a combined wastewater treatment/urban fishing facility, or any other outstanding, yet doable concept.

Trails Connectivity

A repeated concept heard in the master planning process was for trails and connectivity of the trails to destinations within existing Benson, such as neighborhoods, parks, schools, and commerce and retail areas. This trail connectivity would build a stronger community network.

And there was equal desire for a trails network that connects existing Benson with new developments to extend and unite the sense of community among new residents.

The City owns very little property and the cost of acquisition demanded more creative options for creating a trails network. The Complete Streets concept is a strong option to achieve the trails network goal. The PTOS Master Plan Map indicates existing streets that could be retrofitted to create a Complete Streets network within the transportation right-of-way. This network would facilitate alternative transportation modes and promote physical activity and more social interaction. The map also indicates recreation trails that are extensions of the Complete Streets network and would create a loop around the north Benson area. These trails would require future easement acquisition as resources become available. Completion of segments of these trails would also be included as requirements for new development proposals within which the proposed trail is represented.

Important long distance trail connections that are in early planning stages but not indicated on the Parks, Trails, and Open Spaces Master Plan map are the Butterfield Overland and Mail Route Trail, a historic long distance trail currently being considered for Congressional designation into the National Trails System. And the Sun Corridor Trail – a multi-regional long distance trail that would connect the City of Las Vegas, NV with the AZ/Mexico border in Douglas, AZ includes a segment through Cochise County along the northern border of Kartchner Caverns SP crossing Highway 90 south of the proposed El Dorado development with a proposed easement under

discussion with El Dorado Holdings to achieve connectivity to north Benson and access to the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area (SPRNCA).

El Dorado Benson, LLC are the developers behind the Villages at Vigneto Master Planned Community. The development partners have stated a willingness to provide trail easement to connect to downtown Benson, Kartchner Caverns and the Sun Corridor Trail.

Natural Resources Protection

Benson is rich with abundant natural resources. Most distinctive among these are the San Pedro River and the multiple tributary washes that are critical wildlife corridors; the San Pedro National Riparian Conservation Area (SPNRCA), managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM); the scenic vistas of the Whetstone and Dragoon mountains, managed by the US Forest Service (USFS), and close-to-town hills that provide natural open spaces; and the near-by Kartchner Caverns State Park. Kartchner Caverns SP accommodates approximately 141,000 visitors per year, and the SPRNCA accommodates nearly 24,000 visitors per year. Benson is the gateway community to all of this nature-based tourism.

Participants of the master planning process highly value these resources and want them protected. They also want to access these resources for passive, low-impact recreation experiences. There are four suggested close-to-town access points, indicated on the master plan map, recommended to achieve this goal. The proposed network of trails also includes connection

to Kartchner Caverns SP. And the El Dorado project developers have agreed to provide a connective trail easement through the proposed Villages at Vigneto project to help linkage between Kartchner Caverns SP and the SPNRCA. Partnership with AZ State Parks (ASP) is currently strong and the City has a relationship with the El Dorado developers. Relationships with BLM and USFS should be established to achieve the goals of connectivity from downtown Benson to these public lands.

The General Development Plan Land Use Map identifies Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESA), Wildlife Corridors (WC) and Open Space areas (OS). These are special resources and should be protected through City policies that guard them from land use disturbance, possibly with a natural resources overlay zone, or some other protection method. In the event of damage to these protected natural resources from land development, a policy of mitigation should be in place that requires compensation to off-set disruptive impacts. In such a case, any compensation resources should be used to improve other protected natural resource sites in the City.

Multi-use/Multi-purpose Planning and Facilities

The City holds very little public land yet needs to establish new parks, trails and open spaces to be responsive and keep pace with demand for services and population growth. To overcome the burdensome expense of land acquisition for recreation facilities, certain City departments, such as Parks and Recreation, Transportation, Public Works, Golf Course and Economic Development, must consider multi-use/multi-purpose planning, funding and implementation of projects whenever possible. This will require new ways of thinking and managing, and it will

require much more coordinated and collaborative communication to share information, schedules and project plans across each department and with the City Manager's office.

It will mean, for example, that a street improvement project on the proposed Complete Streets network would also plan for and install pedestrian and bike lanes including all necessary safety signage and standards and it will mean the Parks and Recreation Department should find the way to be value added to the project. It will mean that any downtown revitalization project for economic development purposes will also include funding for pedestrian and bike amenities such as shade (trees or hard structure) directional and interpretive signage, benches and other amenities – and Parks and Recreation will become value added to that revitalization project. It will mean the Golf Course helps create a trail along the eastern edge along the San Pedro River to attract birders and other trail users and the Parks and Recreation Department provides some value added aspect to that facility. It will mean that any new park development will accommodate compatible needs from the other departments.

Funding Options

General Fund

Municipal funding is based primarily on the general fund. The general fund is comprised of different types of revenue. Sales tax and property tax are just two types of revenue sources the City uses to fund departments. As the population increases through growth the property tax revenue increases. This growth creates a demand for increased services such as restaurants and shops, which in turn generates increased sales tax revenue for the City. General fund

expenditures are determined by priority and the overall needs of the City. Along with allocation of general funds to meet the needs of parks and recreation other methods of funding need to be considered in order to maintain a standard of quality.

Other funding sources are also available to aid implementation of the Parks, Trails and Open Spaces Master Plan. While each makes a contribution, all have limitation. Following are the funding sources and their opportunities and constraints.

Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) Projects

CIP projects are funded by the General Fund and/or Construction Sales Tax. All proposed projects are priority based and are typically short range planned projects (4 to 10 years) over \$5,000 for improvement or to purchase equipment and they are only possible when funds are available.

Grants

Grants are always competitive and not always available or certain to be awarded. All grant proposals must be included in the annual City budget which means all applications will require a long lead time and some mid-cycle opportunities will be missed.

Arizona State Parks (ASP) administers any available state and federal recreation funds through the Land and Water Conservation Fund and the Recreation Trails Program – both are federal funding sources.

Arizona Game & Fish Department also has funding for wildlife and habitat protection that could be applied to proposed open space areas and proposed river access.

Legacy Foundation of Southeast Arizona is a regional private nonprofit foundation whose mission is to promote population health and community wellness throughout Southeast Arizona. They are dedicated to supporting capacity-building efforts and convening organizations throughout the region.

Alternative transportation funding is cyclic depending on Congressional legislation and the current Federal Highways Administration grant programs. The FAST Act (Fixing Americas Surface Transportation) Act was signed in December 2015 authorizing \$305B for highway funding programs until 2020. Some of that funding includes alternative transportation and Complete Streets programs.

Bonds

Bonds must be voter approved and usually fund schools and hospitals, unless there is a specific bond package, approved by voters, for streets, parks, libraries and other community necessities. These create a secondary property tax based on the home value.

Millage Tax

This is a property tax based on amount of tax per thousand dollars of property value. It is similar to a bond and must be voter approved.

Real Estate Transfer Fees/Taxes

These are based on the market value of a home, for example a \$50,000 home assessed a 0.25% Real Estate Transfer fee would generate \$125. This tax method must be voter approved and would require a change to the tax code. Revenues could be used for open spaces and other community needs, and can take up to one year to put in place.

Sales Tax Increase

The current Benson sales tax is 3.5% (of the total 9.6% tax that includes city, county and state). These funds can be designated for a community purposed such as parks, trails and/or open space. Any increase must be Mayor and Council approved.

Revitalization District or Special Improvements District

This is a specifically targeted self-taxing method applied to a specific neighborhood that wants to install sidewalks or some other amenity that was not included in the initial development of the neighborhood, for example.

Construction Sales Tax

These taxes become significant and are generated from large scale new development. They are not permanent, lasting only the duration to build out. They are appropriated through the City budget on a priority basis, and cannot be used to fund City staff position.

Utility Roundup

The City could initiate a voluntary contributions roundup program through their utilities that generates pennies on the dollar. Some of those funds could be used for parks and recreation utility improvements, such as the electric needs at Apache Park, for example.

Private Funding

An example of private funding for the Parks, Trails and Open Spaces Master Plan would be a Friends of Parks and Recreation nonprofit 501(c) group that raises funds to make improvements or complete projects.

Local, State and National Private Foundations

Successful fundraising from state and national private foundations, such as the National Recreation Foundation, the Outdoor Foundation, and the Arizona Community Foundation – to name a few – will require time, skill, creativity and solid community partnerships and collaboration.

Summary

The Benson Parks, Trails and Open Spaces Master Plan presents bold and visionary thinking based on community values, input and commitment to quality of life and a bright and thriving

City. Implementing this plan will require patience, flexibility, creativity, time, staff, funding and political will to make it happen. The Plan is a long-range vision. Every year it will need a new work plan based on priority projects, available staff, funding and resources, and support – from all sectors – to build the vision, little by little.

The most assured way to reach the visions and goals of this plan is a commitment to funding. If growth comes to Benson, the City should be ready to take advantage of that window of opportunity with plans to improve north Benson as undeveloped areas build out. To that end, a percentage (.5% or 1%, for example) of revenue generated by sales, construction and property taxes from new development, in addition to the existing General Fund appropriations and percentage of bed tax shall be dedicated to the City's Parks and Recreation Department to implement the Parks, Trails and Open Spaces Master Plan.

Strategic Plan Phasing

As stated before, implementation of any component of this master plan depends on available funding from any or all of the above mentioned sources. With few exceptions, all of the visions and concepts mentioned in this master plan require further detailed designs to accurately estimate costs and prioritize within an annual work plan. A robust implementation strategy, should there be sufficient funding for several projects, will likely require a full time Parks and Recreation Facilities Coordinator, or a Parks and Recreation Department Director. New facilities will also require more involvement of the Parks and Recreation Coordinator to maximize use and revenues of all facilities.

Following are the priority projects, in no particular order, by phases.

Phase I Implementation (1-3 years)

- Apache Park Master Plan implementation
- Community Health Assessment participation
- Pool shade installation
- Lions Park fencing
- Lions Park lighting installation
- Complete Streets Plan development
- Fourth Street Signage Plan development and installation
- San Pedro Golf Course Trail Plan development
- Land easements identified for Loop Trail
- Establish working relationships for linkage and access to BLM, USFS, and El Dorado managed lands
- Recreation Policy developed for parks, trails and open space, as needed

Phase II Implementation (4-8 years)

- Establish San Pedro River access points
- San Pedro Golf Course Trail implemented
- Turquoise Hills (abandoned golf course) acquired
- Fourth Street River Park completed
- Lions Park West Master Plan completed
- Complete Streets pilot project segment completed
- Land easements for Loop Trail acquired
- Recreation Policy developed for parks, trails and open space, as needed

Phase III Implementation (9-15 years)

- Develop Turquoise Hills Park
- Develop Hospital Park and Aquatic Center
- Continue implementation of Complete Streets Plan
- Acquire additional land for small park development
- Begin development of Loop Trail segments
- Develop Benson Trails Interpretation Signage Plan

- Recreation Policy developed for parks, trails and open space, as needed

Phase IV Implementation (16-20 years)

- Continue implementation of all unfinished components of the Parks, Trails and Open Spaces Master Plan and other related plans.

Successful implementation of this master plan, and the embedded plans within, require the City, and its residents, to maintain flexibility to accommodate a changing environment, and optimism that the goals are realistic and can be achieved. Balance between maintenance of older facilities and creation of new facilities will be necessary.

The City of Benson's participation in planning and implementation for the Butterfield Overland and Mail Route Trail, and the Sun Corridor trail will be on going as those processes move forward.

Summary

The Parks, Trails and Open Spaces Master Plan addresses most all of the Open Space Goals and Objectives from the Benson General Development Plan. The GDP recommendations and Open Space Policies, listed below, will guide implementation of this master plan.

To reach the stated goals and objectives for open space the GDP recommendations include:

- Observing fundamental assurances for open lands reservation and use will enhance all other aspects of the City of Benson General Development Plan;
- Establish a Parks and Trails Master Plan to establish the hierarchy of parks -- neighborhood, community, regional; and work toward maintaining acceptable levels of park acreage, facilities/ improvements, program operation and maintenance;
- Plan, acquire and develop multi-purpose pathways, trails and lineal open spaces along rivers and washes to achieve open space connectivity throughout Benson;
- Promote recreational and protected natural area assets as a primary attribute in the City's quality of life and tourism potential;

- Consider annexing fragile lands with adjacent development intended to support these preservation aims. Negotiate access to Federal Lands including holdings of Bureau of Land Management and the Coronado National Forest.

Open space policies stated in the GDP include:

- 1) As the growing populations' recreation space needs are met, equal or greater effort is expected in protecting and preserving natural areas in the Benson vicinity.
- 2) Evaluate development proposals for conformance with community open space criteria: land area, designated activity and the installation of needed access or improvements.
- 3) Provide incentives and encouragement to developers who include ample open space areas and meaningful public access to them in their development proposals.
- 4) Provide buffer space, including pathway linkages, to separate uses or intensities of use that are incompatible.
- 5) Work with conservation organizations and prospective developers to designate where human access to open spaces should or may be permitted. ²²

Parks, Trails and Open Spaces Master Plan Policies

In addition to the GDP Open Space policies, the Parks, Trails and Open Spaces Master Plan policies provide more specific details for implementation, related to national parks and recreation standards.

- To create equity of access for all citizens by ensuring a park will be accessible within a ¾ mile radius for active or passive space.
- Determine through benchmarking City of Benson recreation levels of service against similar sized communities and national standard, as well as growth projections, over the next 10 to 20 years, to stay current and competitive as a community to attract new residents and business.
- Conduct a parks, facilities and programs analysis during each proposed implementation phase, to determine immediate or urgent needs or gaps in service, and re-prioritize if necessary, according to available resources.
- Maintain strong communication among and between the City Departments, partners and the general public to achieve the multi-use, multi-purpose goals to maximize all City resources, planning process, and revenues.

Parks, Trails and Open Spaces Master Plan Recommendations

²² “City of Benson General Development Plan”. Adopted by the Benson City Council on: February 23, 2015 by Resolution 8-2015, p. 54.

- 1) Adopt the Parks, Trails and Open Spaces Master Plan to provide the necessary policy tool for grant applications and to establish the required quality of life amenities for any new development in the City of Benson.
- 2) Implement components of the Parks, Trails and Open Space Master Plan, by phases, according to available resources.
- 3) Create and adopt a Recreation Area Design Manual to provide uniform levels of recreation service across the City.
- 4) Adopt a Complete Streets Master Plan that will establish a downtown trails network that can be used to leverage alternative transportation grant funds.
- 5) Include Parks and Recreation Department in any downtown revitalization planning and project implementation to better achieve goals of the Parks, Trails and Open Spaces Master Plan.
- 6) Adopt an Interpretive Signage Master Plan to articulate various stories, lore, landmarks and signatures that distinctly represent the City of Benson – past and present.
- 7) Determine which of the Environmentally Sensitive Areas, Wildlife Corridors and Open Space areas identified on the General Development Plan Land Use Map are critical to implement the mission and goals of the Parks, Trails and Open Spaces Master Plan and acquire them for the recreation system.
- 8) Upgrade the City's Information Technology network to improve inter-departmental communications, scheduling, planning and project management, and other essential networking for multi-use/multi-purpose efficiency goals and improve communication access to the general public.
- 9) Establish a percentage (i.e. .5% to 1%, for example) of any revenues, generated to the City from new development, earmarked for implementation of the Parks, Trails and Open Spaces Master Plan – in addition to typical funding from the General Funds and the annual budget process.

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Appendix A

Steering Committee and Public Open House Meeting Notes

City of Benson Trails Planning Meeting Notes

10-29-15 Benson Community Center

Attendees: Barbara Arney, Rolland Arney, Bill Stephens, Richard Polheber, Michelle Johnson, Becky Smyth, Sara Kirk, Brent Smith, Dick Ferdon, Karin Tifft, Chris Frost, Kathy Webb, Judith Gilligan, Anica Lewis, Barbara Richardson, Laura Parkin, Cate Bradley (apologies for misspelled names)

Agenda

Introductions/Background

Discussion – Why are you here?

Discussion – What are you/your organization's goals?

Brainstorm – Who are other possible stakeholders for this project?

Discussion – What do you need to stay involved in this effort?

INTRODUCTIONS

Laura opened the meeting by asking for a round of introductions. She explained the City of Benson is embarking on a Trails, Parks and Open Space master planning process to envision the needs for the City as it grows. The City applied for technical assistance from the National Park Service Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program (RTCA) and has been awarded assistance for federal fiscal year 2016 (October 1 to September 30). Cate Bradley is NPS RTCA staff for this project, her role will be to facilitate meetings and public input, and help guide the planning process to develop a draft Master Plan.

Why Are You Here

Cate began the facilitated discussion by asking participants “Why are you here?” Following are the responses:

- Hospital mission is to motivate people to get active and engaged through programs and information
- The Hospital is trying to attract a YMCA facility here
- Want to discuss and find the space for various physical activity areas in town
- Legacy Foundation exists to help fund efforts for healthy populations and support community needs
- Need for non-team activities for youth and close to home recreation facilities such as sidewalks, and ability to walk to school
- City can connect to Kartchner Caverns via a trail (need to work on this prior to development at El Dorado)
- City can supply water and sewer utilities to Kartchner Cavern in the future to get them off using well water and protect those resources
- Have fun creating community for people to enjoy life
- Need infrastructure for activity and recreation
- City is projecting population growth to 75,000 over the next 20 years and need multiuse trails and other facilities to respond to community needs
- Undeveloped open space and wildlife area need to be protected as development occurs
- Youth scout programs need to do service projects (they need facilities for activities and badges)
- Cochise County Health Department is guided by a Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP), the Benson CHIP Committee is focused on quality of life resources and the Health Department has resources to support this Master Planning effort
- We need to make it easy for young families to get outdoors, increase their interest in the outdoors and their interest in stewardship of resources
- Scouts can help build trails for Eagle projects
- Young kids need access to nature and a way to explore Benson and our world
- Consider mountain bike needs and other users (OHV use areas need to be identified to protect other areas)

What Are Your/Your Organization’s Goals for a Trails, Parks and Open Space Master Plan

- Accessibility
- Compatible natural resource protection balanced with built environment to increase community engagement and encourage healthy population habits
- Promote trails, parks and open space as sustainable and valuable assets in the community in phases
- Trail layout is coordinated with land development
- System is inclusive of outlying communities and addresses how to get around without a car
- System supports various user skill levels
- Develop the plan with a phased approach to keep pace with growth for services provided
- Make Benson desirable (safe places for kids to bike ride, parks, outdoor recreation and trail opportunities, views, scenic and attractive approaches to parks [curb appeal])
- Consider weather issues and provide shade (tree planting) and safety around washes
- Identify themes to promote place making and describe “who/what is Benson?” (i.e. Benson schools are high quality, story of trains, stage coach, river, Kartchner Caverns, birding, etc.)
- Take advantage of the skills and knowledge of winter visitors who repeat their visits and become part of the community on a part time basis
- Plan for safe places even in the dark
- Provide access to drinking water fountains
- Create more jobs in Parks and Recreation

- Consider equestrian needs
- Consider border safety issues along all trails
- Work to increase access to Forest Service land from this side of the mountains
- Community interfaces with others to coordinate at/beyond City limits into the County
- Commercial spaces can be walker friendly (create this expectation among developers and consider other public health activities)

Who Are Other Possible Stakeholders for this Project

- Law enforcement and Border Patrol, fire services, etc. (safety, interconnectivity, search and rescue, etc.)
- Chamber of Commerce
- AEPCO
- Apache Powder
- Schools and Safe Routes to Schools
- Grey Hound/Amtrak
- Railroad
- SSVEC
- SEAGO
- Sierra Club
- Bike stores
- AZ State Land Department
- Residents in surrounding communities
- County Cooperative Extension Service
- Developers
- Gym owners and members
- Ft. Huachuca

What Do You Need To Stay Involved In This Effort

- ✓ Progress
- ✓ Clarity of vision
- ✓ Partners and roles

Next Steps

Field trips

Photos

Survey results

City of Benson Trails Planning Meeting Notes**12-16-15 Cochise Community College**

Attendees: Karin Tifft, Mary McCool, Michelle Johnson, Barbara Richardson, Peter Kane, Judith Gilligan, Susan Richards, Dick Ferdon, John Healy, Sabri Dickman, Brad Nielson, Jonathan Nolan, Sarah Kirk, Lyndon Denton, Micha Mortensen, Richard Polheber, Karen Lamberton, Laura Parkin, Cate Bradley (apologies for misspelled names)

Agenda

Introductions/Background

Overview and results from the Parks and Recreation Survey

Discussion – What are the desired activities for Benson?

Presentation of General Plan Future Land Use Plan map and concept map for projected recreation service needs

General Discussion

Update/Presentation from Border Patrol about activities/issues in the area

Next Agenda Items

Introductions

Laura welcomed participants and explained that the City is working on Trails, Parks and Open Space Master Plan in preparation for growth projects. She thanked everyone for participating in this planning process that is being supported by the National Park Service Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program. She asked for a round of introductions to get the meeting started. She said all information related to this planning process will be posted on the City's [website](#).

Overview and results from the Parks and Recreation Survey

Laura explained that the City contracted with ASU in 2013 to conduct a Parks and Recreation survey. Six hundred surveys were sent to residents on the City's utility bill contact list, with 135 respondents. Following is a summary of the results (full results can be found on the City's website link above):

- more family recreation opportunities
- increased opportunity for physical activity and more activities for seniors
- majority are walkers, scenic driving and special events
- also requests for more outdoor and social activities/opportunities
- increased need/demand for ball fields
- non-organized activity opportunities at parks and within the community (walkable streets, etc.)
- dog park requests
- funding should be sought from local foundations, private donations, ADOT grants – but not many support increased fees or bonds

The next survey will be conducted in 2018, Laura would like to expand the number of surveys sent to increase the response rate. It was suggested the next survey should be more detailed to get better, more reflective information about the community.

Richard said the hospital has information about the health profile of the community he is willing to share.

There was some discussion about using school yards for recreation activities during after school hours. Schools are closed campuses, by state law. There is a Sierra Vista School District School Community Coordinator in that could be contacted about how a partnership might work and be mutually beneficial. In any event, all the area schools should be included on the planning map.

What are the desired activities for Benson?

Non-organized:

- splash pad for all ages
- walking/jogging/running
- biking
- wildlife watching
- skate park

- swimming pool roller skating
- par courses
- OHV area(s), horse riding, shooting sports (these activities require more land area and are typically provided at the county recreation level)

Organized Sports:

- parkour
- par course
- tennis
- ball sports
- mini golf
- track and field
- volleyball
- cycling

Here but not up to standards:

- pool – too cold and needs shade
- ball fields – conflicting schedules in high season (can't meet demand), softball fields are not big enough for men's fast pitch, can't have children around when adults are playing because of safety due to layout, too close to parking
- need more shade at all facilities
- need practice space/fields in addition to playing fields
- high demand for facilities for adult ball leagues
- need soccer and lacrosse fields
- need more facilities to keep up with growth and increased demand

Presentation of General Plan Future Land Use Plan map and Concept Map for Projected Recreation Service Needs

Michelle presented the Future Land Use map from the City's 2015 General Plan (posted on the website). The map illustrates a large portion within the City limits of the proposed mixed use Villages at Vigneto development, some environmentally sensitive areas, many wildlife corridor/riparian drainage areas and other land uses. Michelle said that most all the land within the City boundary is either private or state trust land which means that any plans for trails, parks and open space will have to be land that is purchased.

Peter presented a concept map for proposed parks (posted on website) that he created to indicate areas within the City where various parks and recreation services are likely to be located based on population projections. Laura said the proposed areas and park sizes are according to national recreation standards for providing adequate services. Michelle said the many of the proposed parks from the concept map are in existing platted areas and there are no codes or regulations that require development to include parks or other recreation amenities. Any facilities within new developments will be for residents. Some developers may provide connectivity for trails, but it will be discretionary on their part. Laura said she has concerns about serving the needs of increased demand since existing facilities struggle to provide services for the existing population.

Update/Presentation from Border Patrol about activities/issues in the area

Concerns about impacts from border activities were raised at the October meeting. Border Patrol agents were asked to address those concerns. Sabri said there are many fewer illegal border activities now than before. In 2006 there were around 600,000 arrests and in 2014 there were less than 100,000 arrests across the border – in the Benson area there were around 1,000 arrests in 2014. Sabri said that people crossing the border don't want to be seen. They travel at night and want to go undetected. He said there are 85 county deputies and 1300 border agents in this area as well as more partnerships among all law enforcement agencies. He said the abandoned railroad bed may be used at night because it is a corridor, but during the day it is not likely to attract illegal users. Overall, he said that the general public should not hesitate to enjoy outdoor recreation and activities in this area, but always use caution, be aware of your surrounds and let others know when you plan to venture out – all the common sense behaviors of any outdoor experience.

Next Steps

- Gather more information about demographics – current and projected
- Talk to league organizers to understand better about school age use and demand, what groups and ages are playing what sports, etc.
- What is happening at the County level about biking and other project/events/recreation opportunities
- How does Pima County operate its mountain bike park

Next Meeting

Next meeting on Wednesday, January 13, 2016 at 3:30. Place to be announced. Agenda items TBA.

City of Benson Trails Planning Meeting Notes

1-13-16 Benson Unified School District Administration Building

Attendees: Karin Tifft, Michelle Johnson, Barbara Arney, Rolland Arney, Susan Richards, Dick Ferdon, Lisa Hill, Judith Gilligan, Dennis Krahn, Eric Hollensbe, Bill Stephens, Laura Parkin, Cate Bradley (apologies for misspelled names)

Agenda

- Introductions
- Review more specific demographic information (existing and projected)
- Overview of organized and non-organized sports in Benson
- Present community survey draft
- Miscellaneous
- Next steps

Introductions

Laura welcomed participants and gave a brief background of this project. Everyone introduced themselves. All information related to this planning process will be posted on the City's website on the home page (top right) Parks, Trails and Open Spaces Master Plan.

Review More Specific Demographic Information (Existing and Projected)

Cate presented demographic information from the recent Community Health Needs Assessment report provided by the Benson Hospital. The Hospital service area is very similar to the Benson Parks and Recreation Department service area so the population numbers from this report serve as the foundation for the Parks, Trails and Open Space Master Plan process.

- Service area population 12,500 – 16,500 with winter visitors (12,500 will be used for the master plan)
- 21.4% is < 20 years old (about 2,685)
- 21.4% is between 20-44 years old (about 2,685)
- 30.1% is between 45 and 64 years old (about 3,752)
- 27.1% is > 65 years old (about 3,377)

Overview of Organized and Non-Organized Sports in Benson

- About 37% of the current Benson youth are involved in organized league sports
- The Parks and Recreation Department strains to keep up with demand and provide facilities and programs for the local organized sports leagues, both youth and adult
- There is little information known about the activities and needs of the 63% of youth not in organized sports and the 78% of adults who are or need physical activity (a survey is being conducted to gain more information about these population sectors)
- The El Dorado Villages at Vigneto project estimates indicate population growth of about 4,043 new youth and from 55,000 to 62,000 new adults to the greater Benson area
- If 37% of the new youth (1,495) also get involved in organized league sports, there will be a need for about 3 times more sports fields
- There will also be other development and new population growth in the Benson area over the next 20 years, not as much as the El Dorado projects
- More sports fields, recreation facilities, programs and activities will be needed over the next 20 years to serve demand in the service area

Dennis from El Dorado said they are planning about 600 acres of parks, trails, ball fields and other recreation amenities for the Villages project and that those facilities will be available for use by existing residents of Benson. He said the whole project is over 12,000 acres and 20% will be open space including undeveloped washes, a multipurpose corridor connecting various community amenities. They are planning for connectivity of trails within their system and to other regional trails.

There was discussion about the El Dorado project plan. Some were glad to hear the existing Benson residents can use the new recreation facilities at the Villages. Some have concerns about having to drive out of the already developed Benson area for such facilities, and if they will be inclusive and accessible.

Laura presented the map created to identify where the underserved areas in Benson are currently for recreation facilities using a one to seven mile radius from housing to park or recreation center. She said public input has indicated a desire for opportunities that promote overall health in the community – prevention habits in early life and through the life cycle. This means various activities at various skill levels for various age groups in conveniently located sites.

Cate explained that the first focus for this master planning process has been on parks – strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, obstacles. Next focus and same process will be on trails and then on then the same for open space.

Present Community Survey Draft

Laura described a survey developed to learn more about physical activity habits of Benson's adult population and those youth not involved in organized sports. The survey is being conducted at the softball/baseball league sign up session. It has been given to some of the community ministers to spread the information through their congregations and there are other outreach efforts planned to gather this information. This will be very important information for the City to understand to provide adequate recreation facilities for the adult residents and youth who don't participate in organized sports.

Miscellaneous

Once again the group brainstormed needs and desired options for physical activity, following are those suggestions:

- Organized activities (not sports) for middle schoolers (band, reading club, etc.)
- 9 hole golf course
- Measured walking/running course
- Passport/stamps for park use and activities (to encourage use)
- New resident orientation about where trails are within the city, how to find trailheads, interconnectivity between destinations
- Group badminton, volleyball areas
- Some concerns about protecting the property values in Benson by providing enough services
- Partner with other community groups and institutions to offer services
- Need another pool (therapy pool, in-door all year round)
- Hours of existing services are not long enough to cover demand (stay open longer to use after work day)
- Reexamine fee schedule, provide scholarships for those in need

Next Steps

- Continue to implement the survey and gather information about future visions for Benson
- Continue to gather information about park needs, programs, activities and administration
- Begin gathering information about the trails and open space sections

Next Meeting

Next meeting on Wednesday, February 10, 2016 at 3:30 at the Sulphur Springs Valley Electric Cooperative.

City of Benson Trails Planning Meeting Notes

2-10-16 Sulphur Springs Valley Electric Cooperative Building

Attendees: Kyle Riesterer, Karin Coe, David Bryan, Micah Mortensen, Barbara Richardson, Mary Thoeny, Karen Lamberton, Dennis Donavan, Kristin Terpening, Sepp Sprietsma, Asher Arnold, Karin Tiftt, Michelle Johnson, Barbara Arney, Rolland Arney, Susan Richards, Dick Ferdon, Judith Gilligan, Eric Hollensbe, Dustin DeSpain, Laura Parkin, Cate Bradley (apologies for misspelled names)

Agenda

- Introductions/Background
- Struggle/Opportunity Model
- Findings To Date (Parks, Trails, Open Spaces)
- Group Discussion
- Next steps

Introductions

David, the meeting host and engineer with Sulfur Springs Valley Electric Cooperative, welcomed everyone to the SSVEC facility.

Laura welcomed participants and thanked them for their continued participation in this Parks, Trails and Open Space master planning process for the City of Benson. Cate gave a brief background of the project and explained her role.

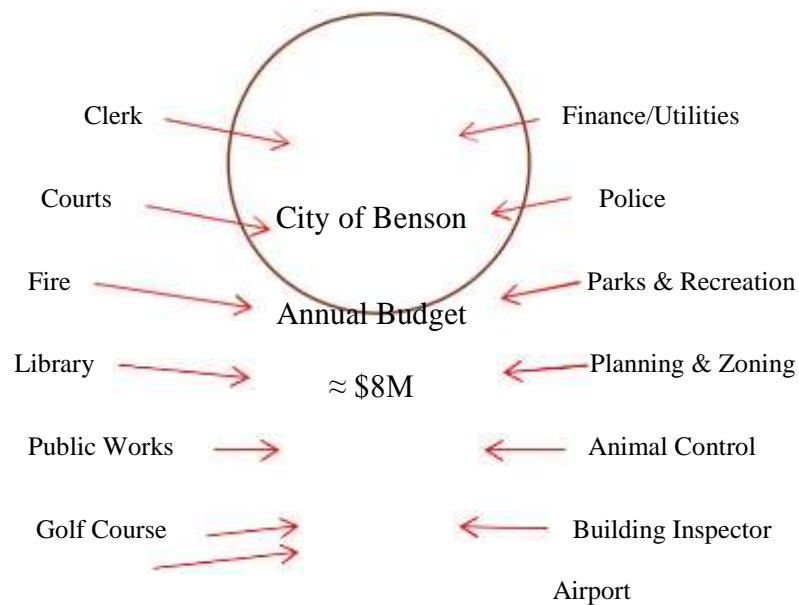
Everyone introduced themselves. All information related to this planning process will be posted on the City's website at <http://bit.ly/1QjKoCn>.

Struggle/Opportunity Model

Using a hypothetical situation, Cate presented concepts related to the similarity between struggle and opportunity and explained that they are usually two sides of the same coin – both start as seeds for change. Struggle can slip into a victim/bully or entitlement dilemma. Opportunity can be wasted on a dreamer who can't make things happen or a user that creates a win/lose situation. Cate asked for a brainstorming about how we, as people, begin to assess what is needed when there is a struggle at hand. She then described how public administration, such as the management of the City of Benson, is an ongoing struggle/opportunity dynamic.

Here is the structure:

CITY MANAGER/MAYOR & COUNCIL (ultimate financial decision makers)

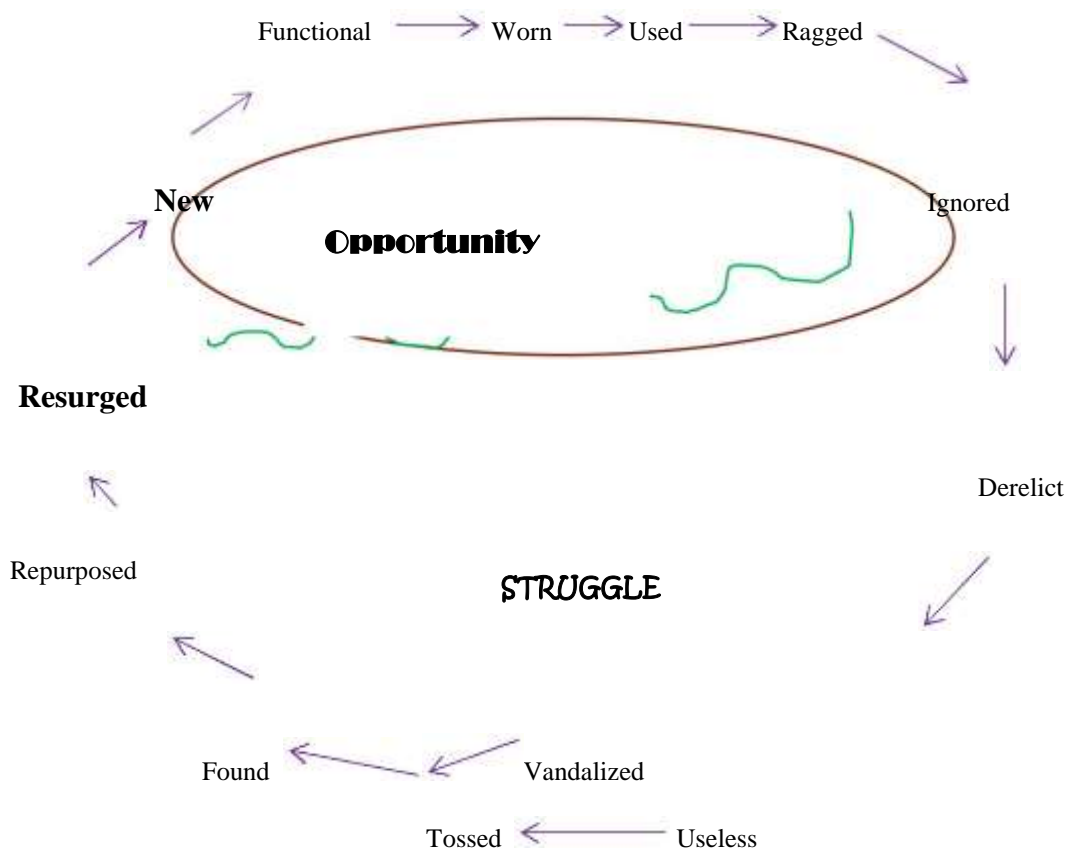


City department budgets are competing for the City's General Fund. There are almost always more department funding requests than there are financial resources in the General Fund. That means departments have to find other funding through grants, fees, or other fundraising methods, or modify or reduce services.

Cate asked "what is needed when there is competition for the same desired outcome – a well-balanced community?" Part of the answer is the need for clear communication, trust and patience, as well as strong leadership roles, responsibilities, and accountability to get to good and responsive decision making (which often requires imagination and adaptability). With this kind of demand, public involvement in the decision-making process becomes very important. Critical to that involvement is clear understanding about facts, process, legal limitations and other aspects involved in public decision making.

Benson is facing a significant growth phase. One large planned development, the Villages at Vigneto, is projected to increase the Benson population from 12,500 in 2015 to about 72,500 by 2032. This is a definite struggle/opportunity dynamic situation. The struggle will be to keep up with demand for services; the opportunity will be an increase in sales tax to the City General Fund as a result of that growth. However, development always has a public cost.

Every community, or sections of every community, goes through a “Community Rise-Fall-Rise Cycle” that creates a Struggle/Opportunity dynamic that is diagramed below:

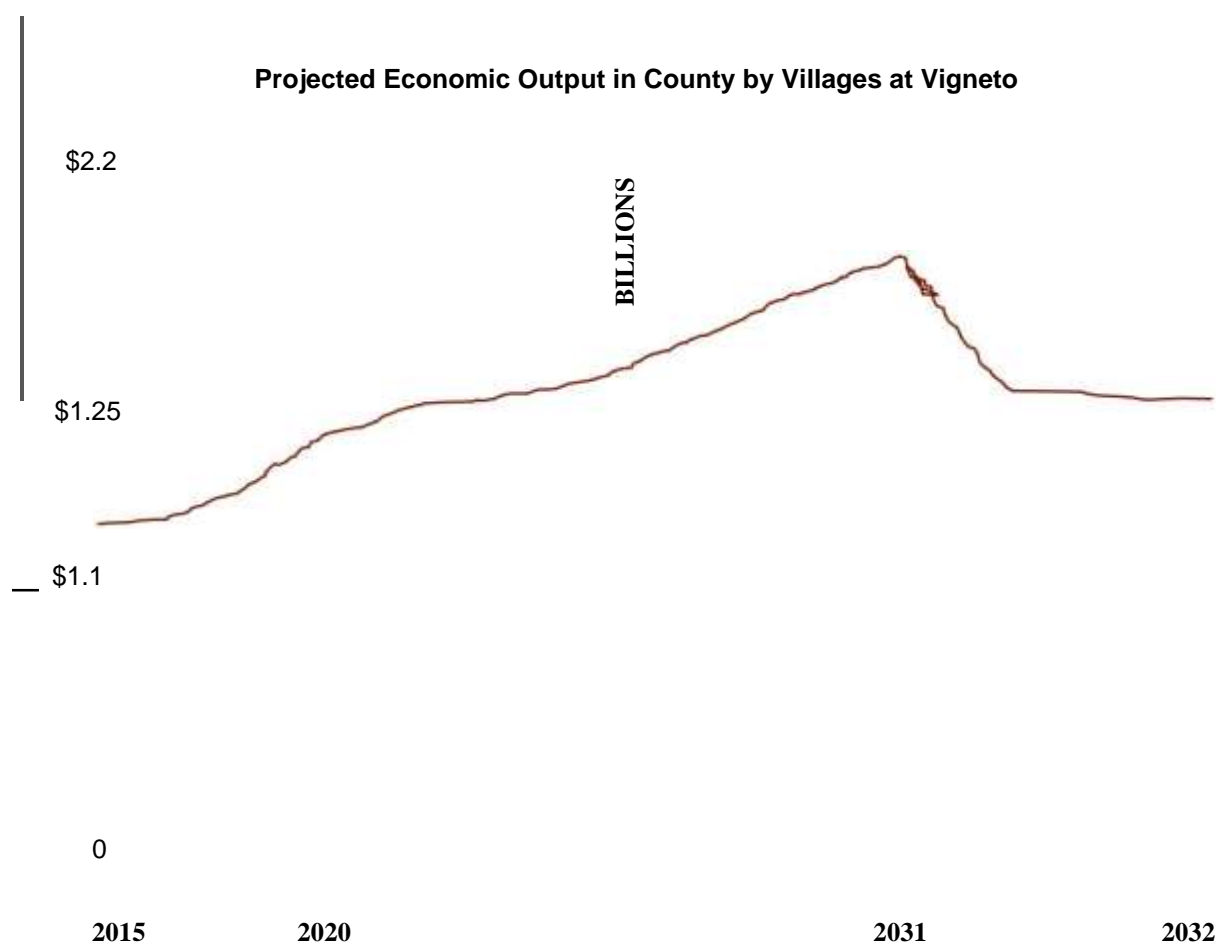


It will be important for residents and staff of Benson to keep this in mind as new population growth and land use changes cause a shift in the historic Benson areas. With public input and collaboration to work through the struggle using clear communication to explore creative and adaptable options, as well as strong leadership roles, responsibilities, and accountability to get to good and responsive decision making.

There was some discussion about reluctance, resistance or annoyance that might creep up that these processes have not been done for the people who were already in Benson. When big change happens, it's tempting to blame others or get jealous of what others' might have. This is an opportunity to stay focused and get clear on what the community wants and what opportunities and resources are available to reach the desired goals. A process like this will require confidence, courage, trust and patience.

The El Dorado plan for the Villages at Vigneto project includes economic impacts and benefits projections.

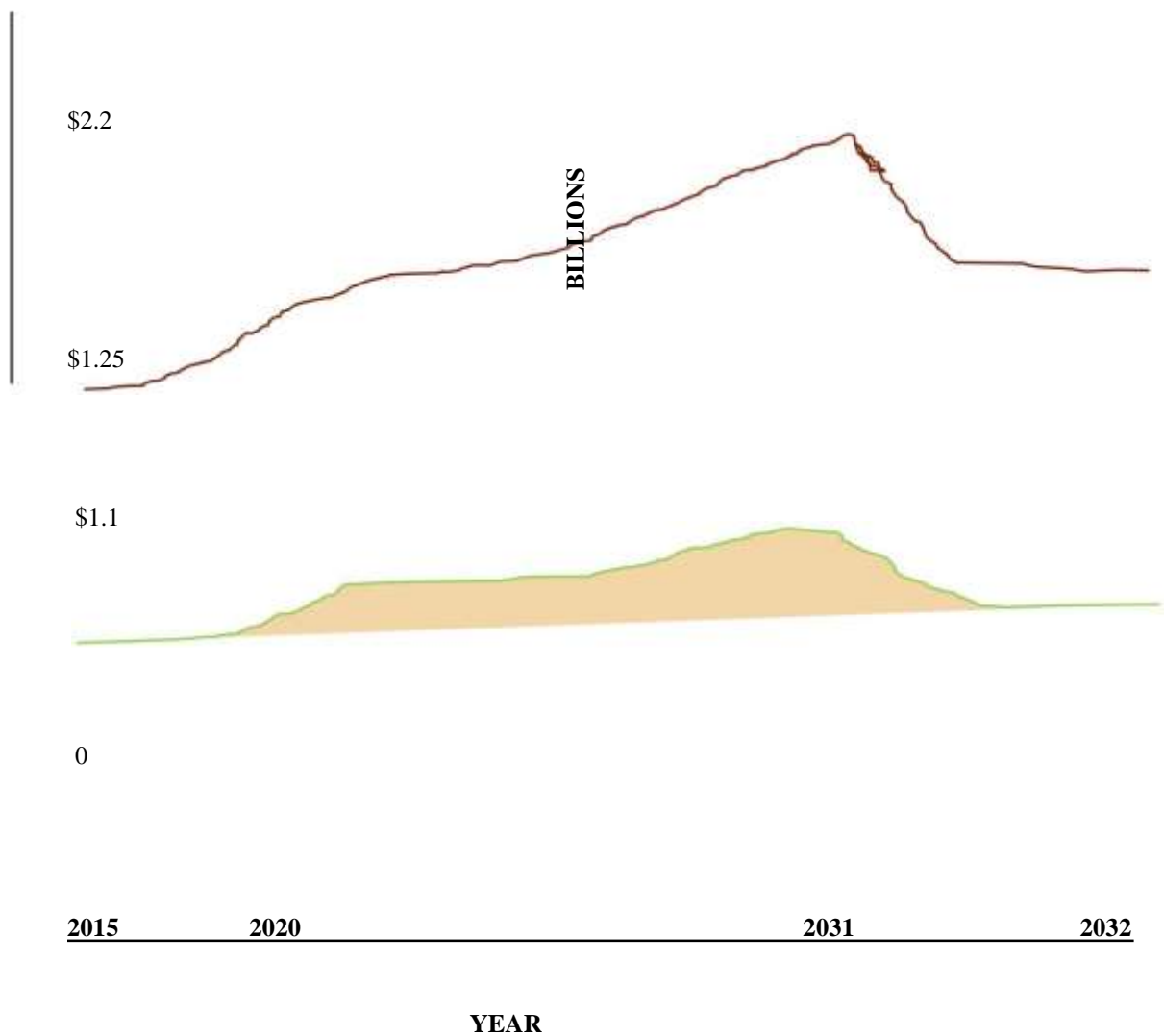
Each chart of the economic benefits looks very similar to the graph below:



YEAR

Benson's portion of the sales tax is 3.5% until 2018, and then it drops to 3.1%. Benson also receives 2% of the bed tax. Below is a graph that mimics the El Dorado economic benefits projects with the lower shaded area representing a symbol of "opportunity" that Benson may experience from increased sales generated from the Villages at Vigneto development. This could represent the opportunity (timing and funding) for Benson to complete community improvements or desired goals.

Possible Income Curve to Benson from Sales Generated from Villages at Vigneto



Findings to Date

To put this into perspective, Cate presented some of the information learned so far in this Parks, Trails and Open Space Master Plan process.

The 2015 population estimates for the greater Benson service area are 12,500 (plus about 4,000 winter visitors) according to the recent Community Health Needs Assessment contracted by the Benson Hospital.

Population by age breakdown for Benson:

- 21.4% is < 20 years old (about 2,685)
- 21.4% is between 20-44 years old (about 2,685)
- 30.1% is between 45 and 64 years old (about 3,752)
- 27.1% is > 65 years old (about 3,377)

Population Projections by Year Until 2032

Projected service area population in 2032 \approx 72,500 (Villages at Vigneto plus other Benson residents)

2016 85-100 new residential units at the Villages project
 2017 400 new residential units at the Villages project
 2018 1000 new residential units at the Villages project
 2019 1500 new residential units at the Villages project
 2020 2000 new residential units at the Villages project per year until 2031 (24,000 units total)
 2032 1000 new residential units at the Villages project

Parks— multi-purpose and ball fields, play grounds, tracks, basketball, tennis, volleyball courts, skate/BMX areas, shade, pools, etc.

Current Situation

About 37% of youth < 20 years old are in organized sports (\approx 711), (no information on activities of 63% of youth).

About 2.5-4% of adults are involved in organized sports (no information about activities of more than 95% of adults).

City of Benson manages 2 playing fields for all youth and adult league organized sports (existing facilities are at full maximum capacity). If the City has any more demand for organized sports there will be a need for more park space/ball fields.

Projections

25% of new residential units at the Villages project will be built for families with children (\approx 4043 new youth). If 37% of the new youth (\approx 1496) are involved with organized league sports, there will be a need for at least 2 new clover leaf facilities (8 more playing fields), plus park space for the other 63% of youth (\approx 2,547) and a portion of the \approx 58,000 new adults.

Trails – connectivity of places and large landscape blocks, linear parks, alternative transportation, greenways, green infrastructure, etc.

Current Situation

The City of Benson has no developed trails.

Concept Trails

- Butterfield Overland Mail Trail
- Benson Birding Trail
- Abandoned Rail Road Line
- Kartchner Caverns SP to SPRNCA (San Pedro River Natural Conservation Area)
- Sun Corridor Trail
- Benson Loop Trail
- Complete Streets Inner-Benson Trail System

Possible land easement partners for these trails (the City owns no land)

- AZ State Land Department
- Sulfur Springs Valley Electric Cooperative
- Private land owners

Open Space Opportunities – large landscape blocks of important environmental resources (vegetation, wildlife habitat, water, etc.) distinctive to the place or region

Current Situation

The City lies between the San Pedro River corridor (administered by BLM) to the east and the Whetstone Mountains (administered by the US Forest Service) to the west. There are also significant drainage areas, not suitable for development, which cross AZ state land and private land.

Opportunity

Southeast AZ is visited by 600,000 birders per year, many if not most, pass through Benson to get to the river at the SPRNCA. Access to the river in Benson will increase tourism economic development.

Group Discussion

Cate asked the group what needs to be considered for historic Benson's Struggle/Opportunity dynamics and

Community Rise-Fall-Rise cycle. Following are some of the values/ideas/desires mentioned:

- Benson offers its youth a “sense of place” and sense of belonging
- Meet the needs of a larger population with City services
- May be more job opportunities
- Provide services for mental health population needs (transportation, safety, smaller community scale, accessibility to services, protect against isolation, etc.)
- Tend to and manage the St. David Unified School District/Benson Unified School District “identity crisis” (who goes to what school, which school offers what programs, school/youth rivalry, etc.)
- Increase commitment to water resources management (low water use, recycling programs, birding tourism, etc.)
- Make sure health care needs are met
- Provide for connectivity between historic Benson and the Villages and other new developments (transportation and other integrating methods)
- This new growth phase is an opportunity to become problem solvers – historic Benson has to become part of the solution
- As a community, address the sense of loss that will be created by the change
- Acknowledge what is unique to Benson and work to protect those features and resources (for example, the undeveloped land behind the Post Office)
- Address the social tension – both for and against change (how to let voices be heard, understand and address the issues, keep the community cohesive)
- Learn from past failures of developers and developments (if the historic community is not included and heard in the planning process, the proposed plan could be challenged by voter referendum)
- There will be other development proposals – how will Benson and its residents be involved in those planning processes
- As a community, we need to identify what we love and work to preserve it
- Use the Villages plan as a discussion point for how to blend values (historic and new)
- Prevent “tribal” dynamics that would separate one group from another
- New developers to the area can be part of the regional solutions (i.e. connectivity of trails, etc.)
- Protect connectivity of wildlife from large landscape areas (San Pedro River, Whetstone Mts, major wash corridors) – address transportation conflict issues to protect wildlife
- Historic Benson is going to be challenged to change – identify what we want and need (what is our identity)
- Develop linear parks to connect to other community parks and other activity areas and neighborhoods
- Provide multi-skill level recreation opportunities at all recreation facilities and parks
- Provide access to the river and to washes
- Develop sidewalks in neighborhoods
- Visually improve trashy areas
- Plan for passive water features (drinking fountains, stormwater collection features, etc.)
- Create neighborhood pocket parks (include focus on accessibility, native plants, casual trails, interpretive signage, events, etc.)
- Plan for a splash pad and/or other signature recreation features that will draw visitors from other communities to use
- Understand, plan for and program various youth activities (various ages and skill levels, and compatible facilities) for their development and health outlet options
- Create nature trails
- Design a community venue for special events
- What is Benson's theme/identity

A key question that must be answered is “What are Historic Benson’s struggle/opportunity dynamics priorities?” Once those are clear, more effective planning can occur.

In 2001 The Tejido Group of the University of Arizona developed a downtown revitalization plan for Benson (posted on the City [website](#)).

This plan lays out rationales, themes, concepts and design sketches for revitalization of:

- **The Town Square at City Hall**
- **Fourth Street**
- **The Historic Trail**
- **San Pedro River Park**
- **Coyote Wash Recreational Corridor**
- **Coyote Shopping Center**
- **Hotel Arnold**
- **Adobe Plaza**
- **Gila Park**
- **Historic Tour Information Center**

Much of this plan is still relevant today and it could be used, modified if necessary, to prioritize what projects could be implemented to take advantage of the “opportunity” that may be created by increased sales taxes from the Villages of Vigneto development, shown in the graph above.

Next Steps

- Updates
- Present funding options for the Benson Parks, Trails and Open Space Master Plan
- Discuss and prioritize items from the 2-10-16 meeting (bullets above from the Group Discussion)
- Meeting logistics (time, day)

Next Meeting

Next meeting on Thursday, February 25, 2016 from 3:30 to 5:30 at the Benson Unified School District office 360 S. Patagonia St.

City of Benson Trails Planning Meeting Notes

2-25-16 Benson Unified School District Administration Office

Attendees: Lisa Hill, Lyndon Denton, Deb DiBiasie, Barbara Arney, Micah Mortensen, Sarah Kirk, Ken Goranson, Sepp Sprietsma, Michelle Johnson, Barbara Richardson, Laura Parkin, Cate Bradley (apologies for misspelled names)

Agenda

- Introductions/Background
- Updates
- Categorize Community Values/Ideas/Desired
- Funding Options
- Meeting Logistics
- Next Steps

Introductions

Laura gave a background of how the Parks, Trails and Open Space Master Plan process got started, including getting assistance from the National Park Service – Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program. All in attendance introduced themselves. She said the master plan will provide long-term guidelines for the City's Parks and Recreation Department based on the public and partner input from this process.

She said all information related to this planning process is and will be posted on the City's [website](#).

Update

s

Laura and Cate met with some students from the Benson Unified School District (4th, 6th, and high school) to get input from their perspective on what City parks should offer local youth for both organized and non-organized sports. Some of their feedback included comments about:

- accessibility to parks (or lack of it)
- facilities being out of date or in disrepair
- activities they are involved with

She also said the input from the Parks and Recreation community survey is on-going and maps are being developed to illustrate areas that are underserved by park resources.

Categorize Community Values/Ideas/Desired

Cate brought the list of values/ideas/desires mentioned at the 2-10-16 meeting for historic Benson's Struggle/Opportunity dynamics and Community Rise-Fall-Rise cycle discussed at that same meeting. She asked participants to identify those that seemed to fall into similar categories and then to name those categories. Following are the results of the exercise (alphabetized to avoid bias).

Recreation Activities

- multi-skill level options for recreation
- neighborhood /pocket parks (accessible, native plants, casual trails, interpretive signage)
- programs and activities
- soccer (AYSO) – fields, maintenance and water
- special events venue(s) – amphitheater by City Hall)
- splash pad
- water resources (recycling, low use, birding tourism)
- youth activities

Connectivity (getting from Point A to Point B)

- linear parks connecting other parks and activities
- nature trails
- river access and washes for recreation trails
- sidewalks in neighborhoods
- state and federal agencies (land ownership)
- transportation to connect historic to new
- wildlife corridors from large landscape blocks (transportation/vehicle conflict issues)

Development

- consider other future new developments
- crime and juvenile justice (adult system courts – jails?)
- learn from past mistakes of developers
- long term hydrology
- meet needs of growing population
- more job opportunities
- opportunity to become problem solvers (historic Benson has to become part of the solution)
- various developers can be part of the regional solution (connectivity of trails, etc.)

Community Emotion

- address the sense of loss
- sense of belonging
- sense of place

Community Identity

- acknowledge what is unique to Benson (how to save what is unique)
- identify what we love and why to preserve it
- theme/identity
- what is historic Benson's
- what are wants and needs of/for historic Benson (Benson has to change)

Communication

- address the “us”/“them” dynamics
- social tension (for/against change – how to voice /address the issues)
- St. David/Benson Unified School Districts identities (who will go to what schools, what programs are at what schools, rivalries, etc.)
- use Villages at Vigneto project as a model for how to blend values
(following are other ideas that were added by this group)
- empower high school student leaders to help get this information
- football reunion weekend events are a good time to gather this information
- knowledge (what's shared and what's not)
- local conversations focus on current residents and concerns of the past
- recruit seniors to help gather information
- revisit and re-ask ministers to help with these messages/process
- story telling as a means to gather information (video tape interviews with elders in community and show in schools and in the community)
- what are community concerns

Facilities (unique features)

- expansion of current facilities
- inventory of current facilities/opportunities
- needs assessment

Aesthetics

- passive water features (drinking fountains, water collection features)
- visually improve degraded areas (pick up trash)

Community services

- health care needs (promote healthy lifestyles)
- meet needs of mental health population (transportation, safety, accessible services, smaller scale, etc.)

Funding/budgets

Fuller discussion next topic.

Funding Options

Laura provided an overview of most of the funding options that could help fund implementation of the Parks, Trails and Open Space Master Plan recommendations. Following are the options presented.

Grants

- not always available or certain to be awarded
- competitive
- need to be included in the annual budget process

Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) Projects

- short range planned projects (4 to 10 years)
- can be used for improvement projects, purchase equipment
- funded by the General Fund and/or Construction Sales Tax
- projects are only possible when funds are available
- all projects are priority based
- only applies to projects over \$5,000

Bonds

- usually funds for schools and hospitals
- must be voter approved

- these create a secondary property tax based on the home value

Millage Tax

- a property tax based on amount of tax per thousand currency units of property value
- must be voter approved
- similar to a bond

Real Estate Transfer Fees/Taxes

- applied to sales of a home
- voter approved
- requires a change to the tax code

Example:	Sales Price	Applied to entire sales price
	\$50,000	0.250% (\$125)
	\$75,000	0.250% (\$125) 0.083% (\$20.75)(applied only to sales price exceeding \$50,000)

- based on home sales market
- can be used for specific purposes (open spaces and affordable housing, i.e.)
- takes 1 year to put in place

Sales Tax Increase

- currently at 3.5%
- .5% increase would generate .5mil/year in revenue
- Council approved
- can designate for a specific purpose such as parks

Revitalization District

- applied to designated established neighborhoods (for installing sidewalks, i.e.)

Construction Sales Tax

- cannot fund staffing
- is not permanent
- designation of funds is priority based

Utility Roundup

- generates pennies on the dollar
- 3,930 current customers (which decreases by 500 in the summer)
- Competes with other Roundup programs
- Can only be used for utility improvements

Private Funding

- example would be a Friends of Parks and Recreation group
- usually a 501(c)3
- raises funds to make improvements or complete projects.

Meeting Logistics

Laura suggested that more people seem to be available for Wednesday afternoon meetings and asked if moving the next meeting to Wednesday March 16 at 2:00 p.m. would be okay. Not everyone was available for that date, but most agreed to meet and keep the process moving forward.

Next Steps

- Education/outreach/engagement strategies for the Parks, Trails and Open Space Master Plan
- Partner and community roles in the Parks, Trails and Open Space Master Plan adoption and implementation

Next Meeting

Next meeting is on Wednesday, March 16, 2016 from 2:00 pm to 4:00 pm at the Cochise Community College at 1025 State Route 90 in rooms 113 and 115.

City of Benson Trails Planning Process

Meeting with Benson Unified School District Students

2-23-16 BUSD Administration Office

Laura Parkin – City of Benson Parks and Recreation Department Coordinator and Cate Bradley – Landscape Architect with the National Park Service – Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program, met with 9 students from elementary, middle and high school for one hour on Tuesday, February 23 at the BUSD Administration building.

The purpose of the meeting was to gather information from some of Benson’s youth about their ideas regarding city parks, trails and open space.

We started by asking how many of them played on sports teams. Six of the nine students said they play a team sport because they like the competition, they like the team work, satisfaction of winning/accomplishing, and say it is fun.

The other students are involved in group activities that are not sports oriented, but require and build their leadership skills and challenge their creativity to envision something and then make it happen – together as a group.

Most of the students use the city parks when there are large events or festivals, and to watch the city league sports. For most, Lions Park is easy to get to, mostly by car. However, it is not easy for those who live in J-six or Mescal.

There are some commercial establishments that are popular places to “hang out” with friends (G&F and R&R). They want more places at parks to sit and chat (need shade, places to sit, etc.)

Other activities they think would be good for a city park include:

- Community gardens
- Nature trails
- 4 field sports complex
- Improved volleyball courts
- Expanded city pool
- Public art/sculpture park

The students were asked how they feel about the winning/losing aspect of competition. They said:

- They feel upset when they lose
- It makes them try harder when they lose
- Competition is a motivator to accomplish a goal – the hard work is worth the effort for the payoff, and the appreciation of them from family and friends when they win

They were asked how they handle losing. They said:

- They talk to their team mates, coaches, parents to get feedback and encouragement
- For non-sports/non-organized activities, they said they need to teach themselves and learn skills where they can and from each other

The other team is not always their “enemy”. Instead they can be the motivation to do your best; they provide competition and a reason to work hard. Good sportsmanship is treating others how you want to be treated and accepting that you did your best.

They were asked how they motivate themselves and set personal goals. They said:

- They track their own improvement
- They set goals based on past performance
- Work harder and try to do better than the last time
- Losing motivates to get better
- The non-sports/non-organized participants said they set small goals in order to get to the bigger goal. That requires breaking down tasks and delegation of projects – that requires trusting each other.
- Team work requires knowing who is good at what and putting them in a position to achieve the goal – using everyone’s skills the best way

They were asked how they handle conflict. They said:

- They talk in a team huddle, break down the issues, talk about the goals
- Lead by example to encourage
- Treat people the way you want to be treated

About peer pressure, they said:

- When there are different points of view you have to listen to other peoples' ideas

About the proposed new development in Benson, they said:

- It sounds cool and exciting
- It will provide more competition, which can be good and bad
- More games, more competition, bigger challenge
- We may lose friends through transfers to other schools
- Rivalry makes more pressure to win, that can be good or result in anger
- Tension affects abilities to do things or causes insecurities, but is a change to learn and improve

They were asked how they feel about existing equipment and facilities compared with the new ones that will come with new development. They said:

- The auditorium is sufficient, but they lack outside resources to help students do what they want to do (for the drama productions) – they don't have the network or ways to connect to the community
- Others said they just need the basics
- Wealthy schools will get the basics plus more of the stuff they want
- They need more equipment (the middle school has to share with the high school for some stuff)
- City pool is too small and needs to be heated
- Need a softball complex
- An amphitheater for music under the stars would be great
- Play equipment is out of date and not what older kids want
- There needs to be more equipment and for different age groups
- Teens need places to hang out – an arcade, bowling alley, trampoline court
- Geocaching is a fun activity
- Let's get a splash pad
- Need places to sit and hang out
- Dog park
- Bird watching
- More vegetation/shade/beauty

The last words included:

- Benson has a lot of potential
- It's good to hear other thoughts and ideas

City of Benson Trails Planning Meeting Notes

3-16-16 Cochise College Benson Campus

Attendees: Susan Richards, Dick Ferdon, Sarah Kirk, Richard Polheber, Deb DiBasie, Bill Stephens, Laura Parkin, Cate Bradley

Agenda

- Introductions/Background
- Vision and Mission Statement draft review and input
- Summary of information from the process so far
- Discuss prioritization for the Master Plan
- Discuss presentation of information at public meetings
- Next steps

Introductions

Cate asked for everyone to introduce themselves and reviewed the meeting agenda. All information related to this planning process will be posted on the City's [website](#).

Vision and Mission Statement Draft Review and Input

Based on past meeting input about values that represent stakeholders and/or their organizations, a draft version of the City's Parks and Recreation Department Vision statement was presented for discussion. Edits and comments from meeting participants resulted in this final Vision Statement version:

The City of Benson Parks and Recreation Department Vision is:

To keep pace with demand for public and private spaces for parks, trails, recreation facilities and alternative transportation options for public health and safety, and to enhance partnerships and quality of life for our healthy, cohesive community.

The same process was conducted for a draft version of the Department's Mission statement. Following is the final results, which will guide the final Parks, Trails and Open Space Master Plan:

The Parks and Recreation Department Mission are four-fold, to:

- 1) *Understand and promote healthy lifestyles and lifelong active living for the residents of Benson and surrounding communities;*
- 2) *Understand and provide effective and representative recreation services to the residents of Benson and surrounding communities;*
- 3) *Cultivate outreach to maximize partnerships with community organizations and volunteers to meet diverse physical activity and recreation needs; and*
- 4) *Collaborate, through multi-use/multi-purpose planning and administration, across*

City Departments for effective and representative allocation of resources.

These versions of the Vision and Mission statement will be presented at community-wide public meetings for final input and results will be included in the Parks, Trails and Open Space Master Plan.

Summary of Information from the Process So Far

General Development Plan

Cate provided a folder of relevant information that has been used and/or generated for the purpose of this master planning process. She referred to it as the “story” of this process, beginning with excerpts from the City of Benson General Development Plan adopted by the Benson City Council in February 2015.

Of the nine plan elements identified in the General Development Plan (GDP) with specific goals and objectives: Land Use, Circulation, Economic Development, Housing, Water Resources, Cost of Development, Growth Areas, Open Space, and Environmental Planning – four of the plan elements (Land Use, Circulation, Open Space and Environmental Planning) identify one or more policies related to parks, trails and/or open space. These policies indicate opportunities for creative collaboration and multi-use, multi-purpose planning among and across City departments to achieve the goals of the Parks, Trails and Open Space Master Plan goals and objectives. This is necessary to maximize the City budget and resources - especially as the projected rapid growth happens.

GMP Land Use Map

The GMP Land Use Map indicates sensitive wildlife corridors and open space areas that could be considered as part of the open space areas for the Parks, Trails and Open Space Master Plan. More public input is needed for these discussions.

Small Area Transit Study

Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) conducted a Small Area Transit Study for Benson in 2007. One graph in the plan identifies the issues and indicated where future ADOT transportation projects will happen into 2030. These maps and the proposed roadway priority projects will be important to identify alternate modes (bike lanes and trails) components should be included in the early planning stages to help achieve the Parks, Trails and Open Space Master Plan goals.

There has been some discussion about extending Ocotillo Rd. further south to provide eastern access into the El Dorado planned area development. The same alternate modes components should be included in that planning, as well.

Summary on Population, Recreation Use and Impacts Projections

As part of the Parks, Trails and Open Space Master Planning process, this summary was developed in January 2016 using data from the recent Benson Hospital Community Health Needs Assessment report (2014) and recreation use records for the past 8 years.

The summary found that 21.4% of the population in the Benson service area is under the age of 20. And of that population, about 38% of Benson youth are involved in organized recreation activity. It is critical to understand what the recreation needs are for the other 78.6% of the Benson population. There is currently a survey being conducted by the Parks and Recreation Department to gather more information about that population sector over the age of twenty.

There is significant uncertainty for the Department and the City, regarding the impacts of the El Dorado planned area development on recreation facilities. The developer has plans for recreation facilities within the development, but they are not specific nor are they tied to projected age and population sectors at this point.

The summary also reports the existing over-demand for existing City recreation facilities between the youth league sports and the adult league sport for reservations of the developed ball fields at Lions Park, and other special events held there.

The Parks and Recreation Department developed a “Level of Services” map that indicates, according to national recreation standards, where new parks should be developed in Benson to reach the national goal of a park or recreation facility within .5 miles of residential neighborhoods. This map indicates the need for the City to consider adding up to 14 new park facilities from 1 acre to 40 acres, depending on the level of service determined for each facility.

Community Parks Master Plans

Lions Park is about 30 acres of City-owned land north of Hwy 80 off Pearl St and Adams St. A bit more than half of the available land is developed as ball fields, multi-use fields, basketball and tennis courts and a playground area with shade Ramadas. There is a current conflict of use on the west side of Lions Park where the City and County have a partnership to store road construction materials. There is no other place to stage the storage of that material. Until it can be moved, the Parks and Recreation Department cannot make plans to expand facilities and develop more needed ball fields.

The Community Center is located west of Ocotillo Rd. on Union St. It has a multi-purposed building about 1200 sq. ft. and an adjacent swimming pool and small playground area.

Apache Park is land adjacent to existing City Hall on west of Patagonia St on 6th St. the vacant undeveloped land is not used for recreation at this time.

In 1989, the City contracted with McGann & Associates Landscape Architects to survey the community for recreation needs and desires and develop a master plan for Lions Park. According to community input, the master plan calls for expanded softball fields, improved multi-use fields, and other areas that respond to and provide flexible recreation opportunity for all age groups and families.

The In 2001, another master plan for Lions Park was developed that includes several football fields, soccer fields, two softball fields, two multi-purpose fields and a playground area.

The stakeholder group for the Parks, Trails and Open Space Master Plan has a strong preference for the 1989 master plan layout. The Benson Hospital and other area health care professionals are significant and consistent partners in this master planning process. Among those professionals, and other stakeholders in this process, there is a serious concern about the data revealing the link between extended participation in football and brain damage. Because of that, it was recommended that the City of Benson develop and support a policy to not build any football fields as part of their recreation facilities. This recommendation does not make any implications for any other organization, institution or agency beyond facilities for which the City is directly responsible.

In 2008, the architect Wayne Scheibe was contracted to develop a master plan for Apache Park. The plan includes a central bandstand ramada with interior walking paths, lighting, trees and other vegetation, a memorial area and benches. This park could be used for community events and concerts, as well as other activities.

The San Pedro Golf Course is a City owned enterprise operation managed separately from the Parks and Recreation Department. There have been discussions about the possibility of a perimeter trail through the mesquite bosque for bird watching, walking and bike riding.

Downtown Redevelopment

In 2001 The Tejido Group, a student design program under the direction of Dr. Mark Frederickson at the University of Arizona (UofA) created a Concept Planning Document for the Benson Town Center. The plan sketches out possibilities for revitalization for a town center around the City Hall area, a linear park along 4th Street, Historic Information Center and Walking Tour, and connecting trails to and between the most common destinations in downtown Benson. The plan – also based on considerable community input – offers ideas about ways to highlight and connect important places downtown.

Historic Walking Tour and Map

The Benson Chamber of Commerce, and other partners, in 1995, commissioned Johns & Strittmatter, Historic Architects to identify existing structures and facilities that tell the story of Benson since 1880. The results were documented in photos and with text, all compiled in a brochure that included a walking tour map of 12 “must see” sights in Benson. This resource can be easily incorporated into the trails section of the Parks, Trails and Opens Space Master Plan as part of the multi-use, multi-purpose policy.

Complete Streets

Complete Streets is a transportation planning concept that incorporates designated roadways, depending on traffic counts and connectivity to other community destinations, to be built or improved and incorporate marked bike lanes, sidewalks, vegetation (shade) and signage as well as vehicular lanes for automobile traffic – and for those alternative modes of transportation to be included in the cost of the transportation project.

Creating a Complete Streets plan for Benson would help to create in inner-city trails networks that could be linked to perimeter trails and nature trails that will be identified in the Parks, Trails and Open Space Master Plan, including the policy of multi-use, multi-purpose planning.

There are multiple and relevant existing plans pertaining to various aspects improvements for the City Benson that can and will be foundations for recommendations in the Parks, Trails and Open Space Master Plan. Each has conducted substantial public input and there is no need to reinvent the wheel – or, more to the point – disregard the important information that has been gathered within the community.

Discuss Prioritization for the Master Plan

Parks

The stakeholder group was asked to recap what they see are the existing resources in the City for recreation and serving their respective organization’s needs. The obvious areas are: Lions Park, the Community Center and pool/playground, and Apache Park.

Mr. Stephens added that there are also some proposed ideas for re-location of City Hall (to along 4th St), Police Station (to old City Hall on 6th St) and Fire Department (stays) to consider. The City also owns land where the cemeteries are located on High St and 7th St (historic). And some land on Ocotillo and 11 acres by the golf course. There is also Inter-governmental Agreements (IGA) with the Benson Unified School District for some of the school recreation facilities.

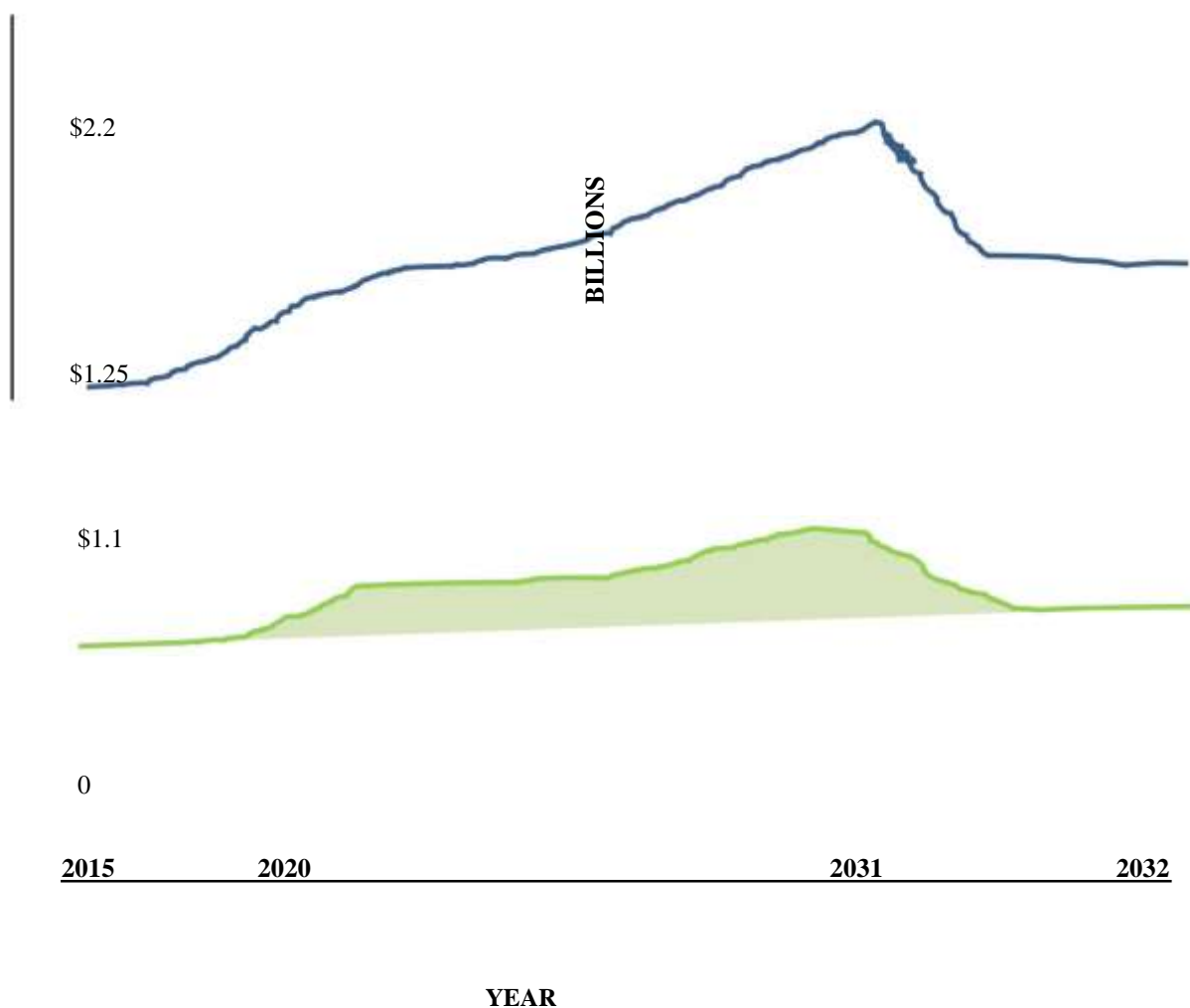
The participants were asked to consider what the priorities are for using the existing facilities to provide service and/or expansion of services and facilities through acquisition of lands (in reference to the “Levels of Service” map

mentioned above. There were comments about fixing what exists first as well as buy now before it's gone.

Suggestions to invest to bring in tourism as well as make plans now to take advantage of the projected financial opportunity Benson will experience from construction development for the El Dorado project.

Cate referenced the Possible Income Curve graph (see below) from the February meeting that shows the projected tax revenues to the City from construction and sales tax for the planned area development.

Possible Income Curve to Benson from Sales Generated from Villages at Vigneto



Trails

Aside from the Historic Walking Trail downtown, there are no official trails currently in Benson. There are some opportunities, however, that should be represented in the Parks, Trails and Open Space Master Plan as possibilities.

Those include:

- historic Butterfield Stage trail
- Sun Corridor Trail
- the abandoned railroad bed (which runs through the El Dorado property)
- birding trail at the San Pedro Golf Course
- Complete Streets trails potential
- Benson Hospital par course behind the hospital
- access to the San Pedro River

Improvement ideas for the Historic Walking trail downtown were discussed. Some suggestions included uniform signage, a way to evaluate if people are using the newly signed trail (partner with health care community to develop ways to evaluate usage, ask health care providers to “prescribe” walking the trail for their health benefits). This will give a better indication of the demand for an inner-city trail network.

The stakeholders said the Parks, Trails and Open Space Master Plan should suggest a mixture of effort and funds going to:

- Improve existing facilities (60%)
 - to address pent up demand as soon as possible
 - move the road material from west side of Lions Park to implement the McGann master plan from 1989
 - implement the Apache Park plan to create an event venue
 - design and implement uniform signage along the Historic Walking trail downtown
- Acquire new land for expansion opportunities (40%)
 - to provide more conveniently located recreation facilities and opportunity throughout Benson
 - create public access to the San Pedro River

Whenever possible, conduct multi-use, multi-purpose planning to incorporate recreation projects that collaborate and complement with other City departments.

Discuss Presentation of Information at Public Meetings

The stakeholders feel the baseline “story” of the Parks, Trails and Open Space Master Plan have been flushed out enough to present at community public meetings. The next meeting will be focused on dates and best ways to outreach to promote attendance at the public open house meetings.

Next Meeting

Next meeting on Thursday, March 24, 2016 from 2:00 to 3:30 in Mayor and Council Chambers at City Hall on 6th St.

City of Benson Trails Planning Meeting Notes

4-8-16 Cochise College

Attendees: Dick Ferdon, Richard Polheber, Kelsey Arzaga, Barbara Arney, Lyndon Denton, Susan

Richards, Michelle Johnson, Barbara Richardson, Laura Parkin, Cate Bradley

Agenda

- Review and finalize an “elevator speech” to build support for the Master Plan related to the Parks & Rec Mission statement
- Brainstorm Strategic Areas
- Review public open house meeting dates and presentation to Mayor and Council
- Master Plan draft map review
- Next Steps

All information related to this planning process is and will be posted on the City’s [website](#).

Review “elevator speech” and Parks and Recreation Mission Statement

At the last meeting the group discussed how to outreach in the community to key groups who could help raise awareness of the need for, and support of, the Parks, Trails and Open Space Master Plan. The local Drs, RNs, PAs, etc., education professionals, ministers, Chamber of Commerce members, and sports league coordinators will be contacted to help them understand what the Master Plan is and how it can help the people they serve.

From the prior meeting, the group brainstormed ideas for an elevator speech:

Benson cares about the health of its residents – both adults and youth. Right now we only have one park and one community center with a pool. At peak hours of use, those facilities are not enough to serve demand. Benson could grow in the future to more than 70,000 residents and the City needs to keep pace with recreation demands.

Our youth have limited options for physical and creative activities to help them be healthy, keep a positive focus and promote positive behaviors. We need more family-oriented parks, programs, events and activities – to help them become great leaders.

The Parks, Trails and Open Space Master Plan focuses on recreation needs, economic development for tournaments and tourism, and making Benson a thriving community where people want to live, work and raise their families.

Cate asked the group to compare the draft elevator speech to the Parks and Recreation Mission statement:

The Parks and Recreation Department Mission is to:

- 1) *Promote healthy lifestyles and lifelong active living for the citizens of Benson and surrounding communities;*
- 2) *Provide sufficient and representative recreation services to the residents of Benson and surrounding communities ;*
- 3) *Cultivate and maximize partnerships with community organizations and volunteers to meet diverse physical activity and recreation needs; and*

4) *Collaborate, through multi-use/multi-purpose planning and administration, across City Departments for effective and representative allocation of resources.*

There was discussion that this draft elevator speech does not answer important questions, such as:

- How will this be paid for?
Cate said the master plan represents a concept of how the City can keep up with growth, if the projections become reality. If the City has no Parks, Trails and Open Space Master Plan, they have no basis for requiring that new development provide enough parks and trails to serve the need and demand of new residents moving here. This Master Plan represents the community values, standards, and quality of life that Benson wants for its residents, especially in north Benson.

The new parks, facilities, trails and open space indicated in the Master Plan can be funded by the new revenues generated from increased sales, new development construction, bed tax and a portion of existing property taxes. There will be NO NEW TAXES levied for this plan. The City can take advantage of the window of opportunity from proposed new developments to implement the Master Plan directly and as a portion of other public works or economic development projects.

Right now the City owns Lions Park, Apache Park (undeveloped, by City Hall) and the Community Center and pool. Lions Park, the Community Center and pool are at maximum capacity to accommodate current residents. Improvements are being funded by grant money. If that is all the Recreation Coordinator has to work with, these three facilities will be improved as funds become available. The proposed expansion of parks, trails and open space called for in the Master Plan will have to wait until there is available funding.

- The summary information needs to reflect the language of the Parks and Recreation language (healthy life styles, provide recreation services, cultivate partnerships - internal and within the community, and internal collaboration for multi-use/multi-purpose planning and administration).
See next section of these meeting notes for this information.
- Need a good health needs assessment (County-wide) to develop responsive programs to address community health issues.
See next section of these meeting notes for this information.

Final version of the elevator speech is as follows:

The Benson Parks, Trails and Open Space Master Plan is a long-range vision for the community as it grows.

The Master Plan is a working plan for the Parks and Recreation Department that represents expressed community values. It will be implemented according to available resources and funds. Most of the funding to implement this plan will come from new revenues generated by new development sales and construction tax, the City's bed tax and existing property tax, the City's General Fund, and from grants.

The City needs an adopted Master Plan for two important reasons:

- 1) It is required for grant and foundation funding; and*
- 2) It describes the standards by which all new development will be required to provide recreation facilities and services – or something comparable to compensate for increased impacts – to accommodate population growth and community demand.*

Brainstorm Strategic Areas

Cate said the Master Plan will have some specific Strategic Areas of focus: policies, administration and management, targets and goals, and funding. Following are the concepts generated:

Policies

- Recreation Design Standards Manual - requirements for all new development (or in-lieu fees), COB would have to be brought up to these standards
- Safety
- Partnerships with health professionals and health provider communities to develop new active lifestyle programs (for adults and youth)
- Participate in a County-wide Health Needs Assessment
- Complete Streets plan
- Dedicate a percentage of taxes from new development appropriated to Parks & Recreation Department
- Determine the conditions under which the City will accept built facilities from new development to be operated and maintained by the Parks and Recreation Department
- Require new developments to carry insurance for non-City recreation facilities
- Partner with Cochise College for collaboration on program development and delivery on campus

Administration and Management

- Restructure Parks, Recreation, Tourism under one Department/Director as a long-term goal
- Include an annual budget line item designated for park maintenance, improvements, and new park acquisition
- Establish multi-use, multi-purpose collaboration (planning, scheduling, communication, etc.) between Parks & Recreation and Public Works, Transportation and Economic Development (downtown revitalization and tourism) Departments
- Add new Parks and Recreation Department staff and new positions to keep pace with population growth and service demands

- Develop a relevant Information Technology Plan to facilitate electronic scheduling, file sharing and improved inter-departmental communications to maximize efforts and resources

Targets and Goals

- Expand recreation opportunities and facilities to keep pace with community and population growth demands (trails/connectivity, programs for adults and non-organized sports, etc.)
- Establish working partnerships with Hospital, County, BUSD, St. David USD, Cochise College, Kartchner Caverns, BLM (SPRNCA), health care providers, employers, and civic organizations to promote healthy life styles
- Build new recreation center(s) with gym, activity/meeting rooms, kitchen, etc.
- Partner with Hospital to build and manage a traditional/therapeutic aquatic center
- Acquire land for new parks, trails and open spaces as necessary
- Establish facilities to accommodate events and tournaments that attract regional, state and national audiences

Funding Options

- Taxes generated by new development
- General Fund allocations
- Alternative Transportation funds
- AZ State Parks grant programs
- Legacy Foundation
- Local, State and national private foundations
- User fees
- Multi-use/multi-purpose collaboration across City departments

Review public open house meeting dates and presentation with Mayor and Council

The first public open house meeting for the City of Benson Parks, Trails and Open Space Master Plan will be held on Tuesday April 19, 2016 from 3:00 to 7:00 p.m. at the Benson Community Center located at 705 W.

Union St. There will be an information presentation on the hour with opportunity for question/answer and input about the concepts.

The second public open house meeting will be held on Tuesday May 3, 2016 from 3:00 to 7:00 p.m. at the Benson Community Center located at 705 W. Union St. The meeting will follow the same format as before.

Comments on the Parks, Trails and Open Space Master Plan can be submitted Mayor and Council by contacting City Hall electronically at vvivian@bensonz.gov cc comments to AParkin.

Master Plan draft map review

The group reviewed the draft Master Plan map which includes:

- A Complete Streets layout
- A connective loop trail linking the proposed Complete Streets grid to existing and proposed parks, open spaces and community destinations
- Existing and proposed parks
- Access to the San Pedro River
- Proposed trailhead with parking lots, signage and other amenities
- Proposed trail access point with signage and other minor amenities

Next Steps

- Present Master Plan concepts and map at public open house meetings on 4/19 and 5/3.
- Present Master Plan concepts and map to Mayor and Council on 5/23/16

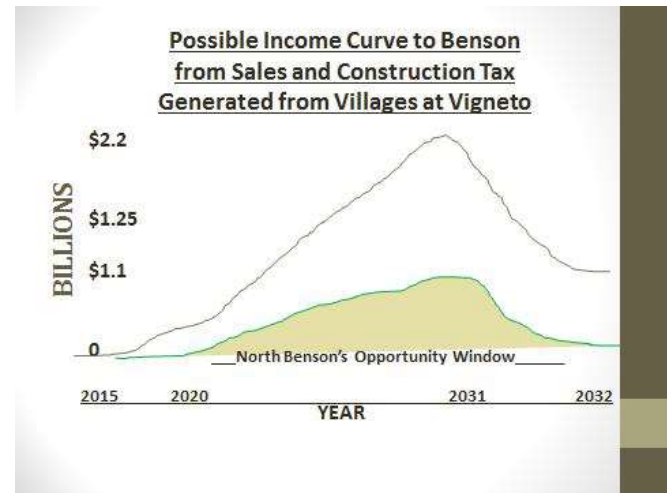
City of Benson Parks, Trails and Open Spaces Master Plan

April 19, 2016 Public Open House Meeting Notes

Thirty three residents attended the first of two public open house meetings to gather input on the proposed City of Benson Parks Trails and Open Spaces Master Plan. The City Parks and Recreation Department staff hosted the meeting and National Park Service – Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program staff presented PowerPoint slides of highlight concepts from the master plan.

Those highlights included background information to the planning effort such as:

- Benson population will grow from 4,927 to over 70,000 residents by 2035
- City services must keep pace with growth for economic development
- Growth will bring tax revenue to fund North Benson's Opportunity Window



The opportunity window was described as the increased revenues

that will be generated from sales, construction, hospitality and property taxes from new development within the City limits. While the actual amount of those funds is very hard to predict, the likelihood of significant funds, for about a 10 to 12 year period once new development begins, is very high, as shown in the concept graph. A portion of those funds are recommended to be earmarked for the City's Parks and Recreation Department to improve existing facilities and build new ones to keep pace with community needs and demands for recreation.

The Parks, Trails and Open Spaces Master Plan has been created based on community values expressed during the planning process. Those values include:

- Community health and wellbeing is high priority (health partners very involved)
- Historic Benson should remain vital and important as the population grows
- Need for more and varied recreation opportunity
- Benson provides wonderful prospects

While doing nothing to address Benson's existing and proposed recreation demands is always an option, it is currently a very poor option for the City. Existing conditions at Lions Park and the pool are in over-demand status. Little league teams are not being formed because there are no more time slots to add more. Adult league use is limited due to little league demand. And playground and ramadas are not safe near ball fields when adults play because of flying soft and hard balls.

While the percentage of community youth involved in organized sports is good, 38%, it could be improved to reduce the incidents of childhood obesity, diabetes, and to keep all of Benson's youth focused on positive behaviors. There is also a need for non-organized physical activity opportunities.

The greater portion of Benson's population, 75%, is over the age of 20 with a median age of 50. There are few services and activities for elder recreation preferences which would compete for user time at the existing facilities. For example, 98% of community pool use is youth with no room for adults, presently.

In the process of this master planning, the committed steering committee helped articulate the Benson Parks and Recreation Department Vision Statement:

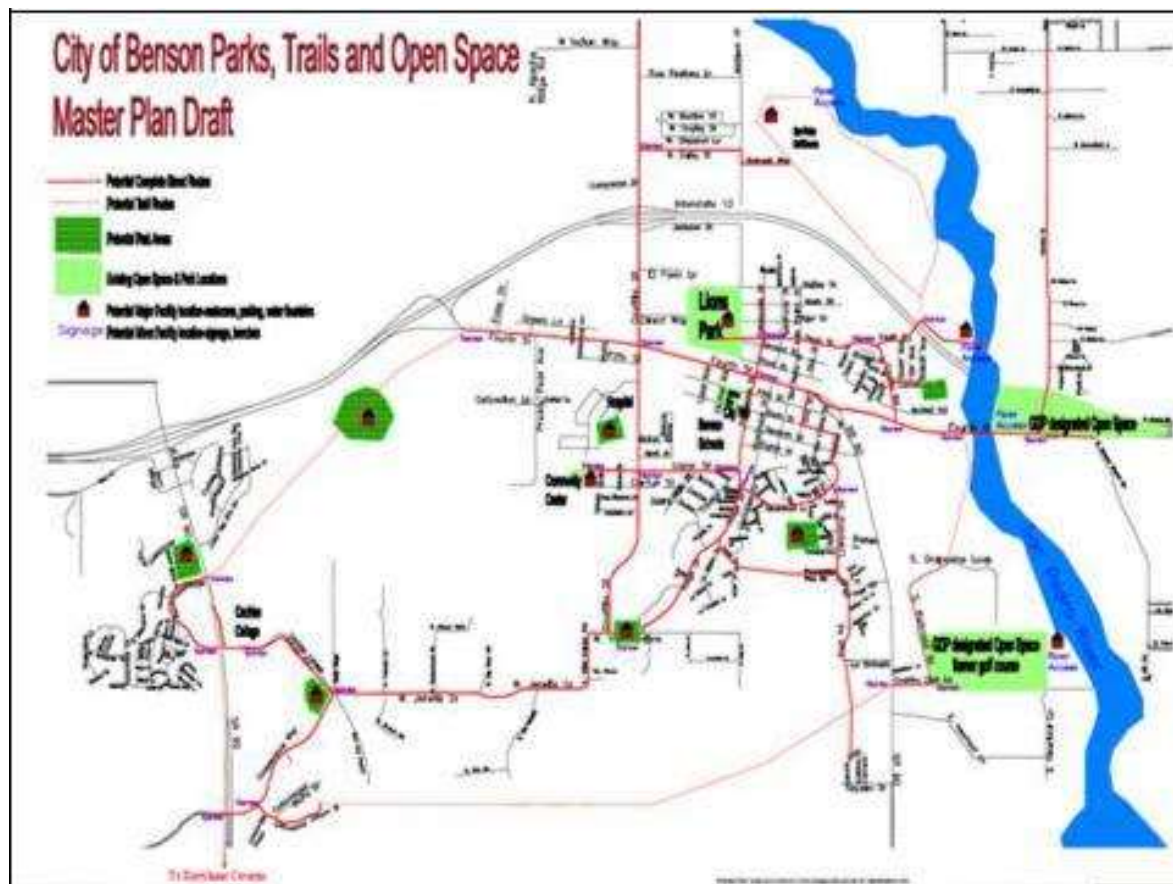
To keep pace with demand for public and private parks, trails, recreation facilities and alternative transportation options for public health and safety; and

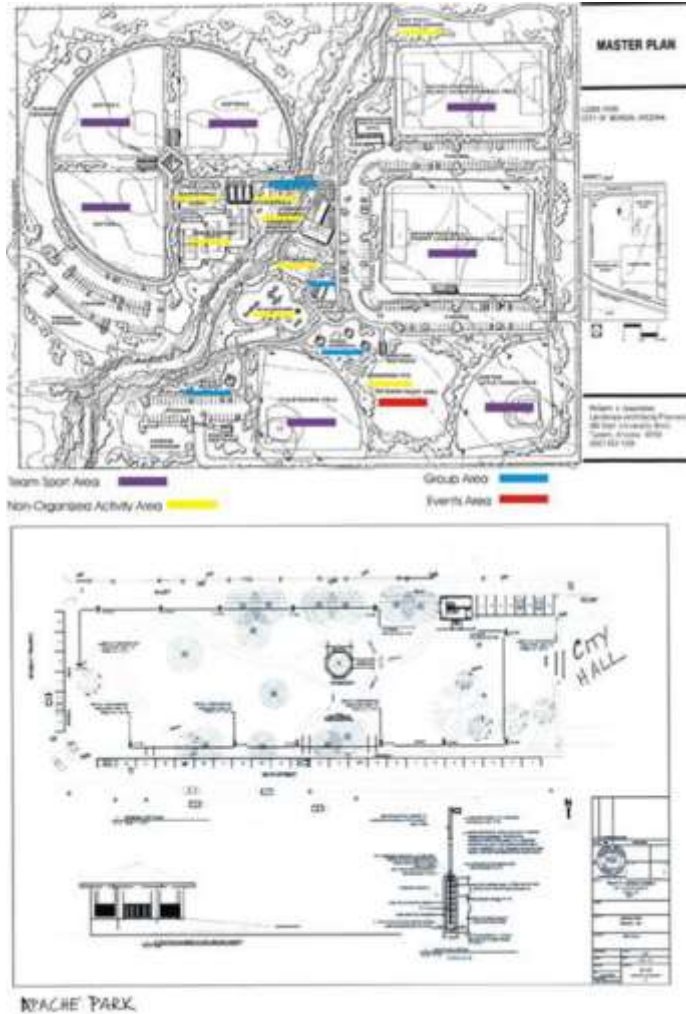
To enhance partnerships and quality of life for our healthy, cohesive community.

The Mission Statement, to support this Vision, is four-fold:

1. Understand and promote healthy lifestyles and lifelong active living for the residents of Benson and surrounding communities;
2. Understand and provide effective and representative recreation services to the residents of Benson and surrounding communities;
3. Cultivate outreach to maximize partnerships with community organizations and volunteers to meet diverse physical activity and recreation needs; and
4. Collaborate, through multi-use/multi-purpose planning and administration, across City Departments for effective and representative allocation of resources.

To achieve the Vision and Mission of the Parks and Recreation Department, the draft concept map identifies existing and proposed recreation facilities and opportunities.





Lions Park Master Plan

Apache Park Master Plan

Existing master plans for Lions Park (from 1989) and Apache Park 9 (from 2008) have been reviewed by the steering committee and included as part of the Master Plan.

The Parks, Trails and Open Spaces Master Plan incorporates 6 of the 9 elements from the City of Benson General Development Plan, drawing from relevant goals, objectives and recommendations in that plan. Those elements are:

- Land Use Policies
- Circulation
- Economic Development
- Cost of Development
- Open Space
- Environmental Planning

From all of these existing documents and input during the public process, the Parks, Trails and Open Spaces Master

Plan is guided by 5 Strategic Directions:

- Lifetime Customers
- Maximize Resources

- Signature Parks
- Trail Network Connectivity
- Natural Resources Protection
- Multi-use/Multi-purpose Facilities

This plan makes 9 recommendations:

- 1) Adopt the Parks, Trails and Open Spaces Master Plan to provide the necessary policy tool for grant applications and to establish the required quality of life amenities for any new development in the City of Benson.
- 2) Implement components of the Parks, Trails and Opens Spaces Master Plan, by phases, according to available resources.
- 3) Create and adopt a Recreation Area Design Manual to provide uniform levels of recreation service across the City.
- 4) Adopt a Complete Streets Master Plan that will establish a downtown trails network that can be used to leverage alternative transportation grant funds.
- 5) Include Parks and Recreation Department in any downtown revitalization planning and project implementation to better achieve the goals of the Parks, Trails and Open Spaces Master Plan.
- 6) Adopt an Interpretive Signage Master Plan to articulate various stories, lore, landmarks and signatures that distinctly represent the City of Benson – past and present.
- 7) Adopt a Complete Streets Master Plan that will establish a downtown trails network that can be used to leverage alternative transportation grant funds.
- 8) Include Parks and Recreation Department in any downtown revitalization planning and project implementation to better achieve the goals of the Parks, Trails and Open Spaces Master Plan.
- 9) Adopt an Interpretive Signage Master Plan to articulate various stories, lore, landmarks and signatures that distinctly represent the City of Benson – past and present.

Following are the funding options available to implement the Parks, Trails and Open Spaces Master Plan.

General Fund (existing revenues)

Other Options (competitive and not reliable)

Capital Improvement

Grants

Plan Projects

Bonds

Sales Tax

Sales Tax Increase

Bed Tax

Construction Sales Tax

Property Tax

Utility Roundup

Real

Estate Transfer Fees

Millage Tax (property)

Private Foundation Funding

Revitalization District

Special

Improvements District

As was mentioned before, the recommendation is to earmark increased revenues from new development to fund improvements and additions to recreation facilities, while funding generated from the General Fund continues to fund staff and other operations and maintenance needs.

The meeting participants offered the following input and comments:

- Of the 33 attendees, 13 indicated by a visual method, they agree with the Master Plan and recommendations, 1 disagreed
- Comments included:
 - "Butterfield Overland Mail Route may become a National Trail. Bill is in the Congress now. Trail went through Lions Park and Golf Course."
 - "Draw the visitors to Kartchner Caverns to come to downtown Benson - eat, sleep, museum, golf."
 - "Make a nice dog park at Apache Park. Add a nice area near City Hall for people to relax while using Internet and watching family/dogs. This area is already used as an unofficial dog park."
 - "Amphitheater would be great!"
 - "Love the idea of improving roads to accommodate bicyclists."
 - "Travelers - let's give the 1000's of travelers headed to Tombstone a reason to stop."
 - "New construction tax? What a great opportunity to improve our outdoor spaces for current and future residents."
 - "Multi-purpose trails."
 - "Bandshell at Apache Park for music venues."
 - "I would investigate pickleball courts instead of tennis - lots of tournament play."

Other input and suggestions were:

- Will the proposed housing around the San Pedro golf course link, via trails, to the proposed city trail around the perimeter?
- It would be good to add some par course stations to the Apache Park plan
- Add pickle ball courts somewhere at Lions Park
- Include the skate park in the Lions Park Master Plan
- Develop a complex to attract soft ball tournaments
- Coordinate the BUSD basketball tournament with Christmas on Main street to maximize visitor experiences
- Design all parks to be compatible with dark sky protection
- ATV (off highway vehicle use) was not incorporated into the City's master plan because it requires much more land – it's more of a county park activity
- The City owns land south of Lions Park that could be used for parking during large events
- The City owns land by Walmart

- We need to decide on the proper name for existing Benson compared with areas south where new development will occur
- Apache Park was owned by Apache Powder who sold it to the City for \$1
- Consider an archery range at the golf course somewhere along the river
- El Dorado is planning a cinema complex
- El Dorado is planning plentiful parks
- New El Dorado development will revitalize downtown Benson
- The wildlife corridors identified on the General Development Plan Land Use Map are under the jurisdiction of the Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE)
- El Dorado has worked with ACOE to mitigate on 144 acres, any impacts to drainages from the development
- Apache Park has a spot where people can sit and get onto the Internet
- Consider adding a dog park area to the Apache Park master plan

Next Public Open House Meeting on Tuesday May 3, 2016 from 3:00 to 7:00 p.m. at the Community Center.

Presentation to Mayor & Council on Monday May 23, 2016 7:00 p.m. meeting at City Hall.

City of Benson Parks, Trails and Open Spaces Master Plan

May 3 2016 Public Open House Meeting Notes

Seventeen people attended the May 3, 2016 public open house meeting on the proposed City of Benson Parks Trails and Open Spaces Master Plan. City Parks and Recreation Department staff hosted the meeting and National Park Service – Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program staff presented information slides of highlight concepts from the master plan.

The information included an overview of the need for a Parks, Trails and Open Space Master Plan for Benson, the possible funding opportunity from newly generated revenues from proposed development, the community values that emerged from the public planning process that focus the master plan, the master plan Vision and Mission statements, the master plan concept map as well as the existing master plan maps for Lions Park and Apache Park, the strategic directions from the public input process that guide the master plan including the nine recommendations and the four suggested phases to implement the plan.

There were no objections to the information presented and seven of the participants indicated that agree with the direction and concepts of the master plan.

1. Adopt the Parks, Trails and Open Spaces Master Plan to provide the necessary policy tool for grant applications and to establish the required quality of life amenities for any new development in the City of Benson.
2. Implement components of the Parks, Trails and Opens Spaces Master Plan, by phases, according to available resources.
3. Create and adopt a Recreation Area Design Manual to provide uniform levels of recreation service across the City.
4. Adopt a Complete Streets Master Plan that will establish a downtown trails network that can be used to leverage alternative transportation grant funds.
5. Include Parks and Recreation Department in any downtown revitalization planning and project implementation to better achieve the goals of the Parks, Trails and Open Spaces Master Plan.
6. Adopt an Interpretive Signage Master Plan to articulate various stories, lore, landmarks and signatures that distinctly represent the City of Benson – past and present.
7. Adopt a Complete Streets Master Plan that will establish a downtown trails network that can be used to leverage alternative transportation grant funds.
8. Include Parks and Recreation Department in any downtown revitalization planning and project implementation to better achieve the goals of the Parks, Trails and Open Spaces Master Plan.
9. Adopt an Interpretive Signage Master Plan to articulate various stories, lore, landmarks and signatures that distinctly represent the City of Benson – past and present.

Following are the priority projects, in no particular order, by phases.

Phase I Implementation (1-3 years)

- Apache Park Master Plan implementation
- Community Health Assessment participation
- Pool shade installation
- Lions Park fencing
- Lions Park lighting installation
- Complete Streets Plan development
- Fourth Street Signage Plan development and installation
- San Pedro Golf Course Trail Plan development
- Land easements identified for Loop Trail
- Establish working relationships for linkage and access to BLM, USFS, and El Dorado managed lands
- Recreation Policy developed for parks, trails and open space, as needed

Phase II Implementation (4-8 years)

- Establish San Pedro River access points
- San Pedro Golf Course Trail implemented
- Turquoise Hills (abandoned golf course) acquired
- Fourth Street River Park completed
- Lions Park West Master Plan completed
- Complete Streets pilot project segment completed
- Land easements for Loop Trail acquired
- Recreation Policy developed for parks, trails and open space, as needed

Phase III Implementation (9-15 years)

- Develop Turquoise Hills Park
- Develop Hospital Park and Aquatic Center
- Continue implementation of Complete Streets Plan
- Acquire additional land for small park development
- Begin development of Loop Trail segments
- Develop Benson Trails Interpretation Signage Plan
- Recreation Policy developed for parks, trails and open space, as needed

Phase IV Implementation (16-20 years)

- Continue implementation of all unfinished components of the Parks, Trails and Open Spaces Master Plan and other related plans.

Presentation to Mayor & Council on Monday May 23, 2016 7:00 p.m. meeting at City Hall.

Appendix B

Parks and Recreation Department Questionnaire

City of Benson Parks & Recreation Physical Activity Survey

**YOUR
FAMILY
SIZE**
of ADULTS: *please circle one* 1 2 3+

of CHILDREN: *please circle one* 1 2 3 4 5+

**WHAT
SPORT(S)
DOES YOUR
CHILD(REN)
PLAY?**
PLEASE LIST # of CHILDREN PLAYING THESE SPORTS:
FOOTBALL:
BASEBALL/SOFTBALL:
SOCCER:
OTHER SPORT:

How much time per day does your child(ren) spend being physically active?

WHAT ABOUT YOU AND OTHER HOUSEHOLD ADULTS?

 How much time per day do **you** spend being physically active? *please write in:*

 Types of physical activity or exercise you participate in: *please write in:*

 Do you prefer to exercise: *please circle one:* ALONE WITH OTHERS

 If you exercise with others: HOW MANY OTHERS? _____
please write in: HOW OFTEN? _____

 How much time per day is your **spouse/partner** physically active? *please write in:*

 Types of physical activity or exercise your spouse/partner participates in: *please write in:*

 Does your spouse/partner prefer to exercise: *please circle one:* ALONE WITH OTHERS

 If your spouse/partner exercises with others: HOW MANY OTHERS? _____
please write in: HOW OFTEN? _____

 What types of recreation activities would you like to see the City of Benson offer that are not currently being offered? *please list:*

How important is a healthy, active lifestyle to you? VERY SOMEWHAT NOT MUCH

RETURN COMPLETED SURVEY TO: City of Benson Recreation Center @ 705 W. Union OR
 THANK YOU!!! Benson City Hall Finance Department @ 120 W. 6th Street

Appendix C

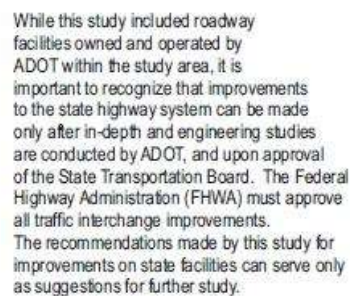
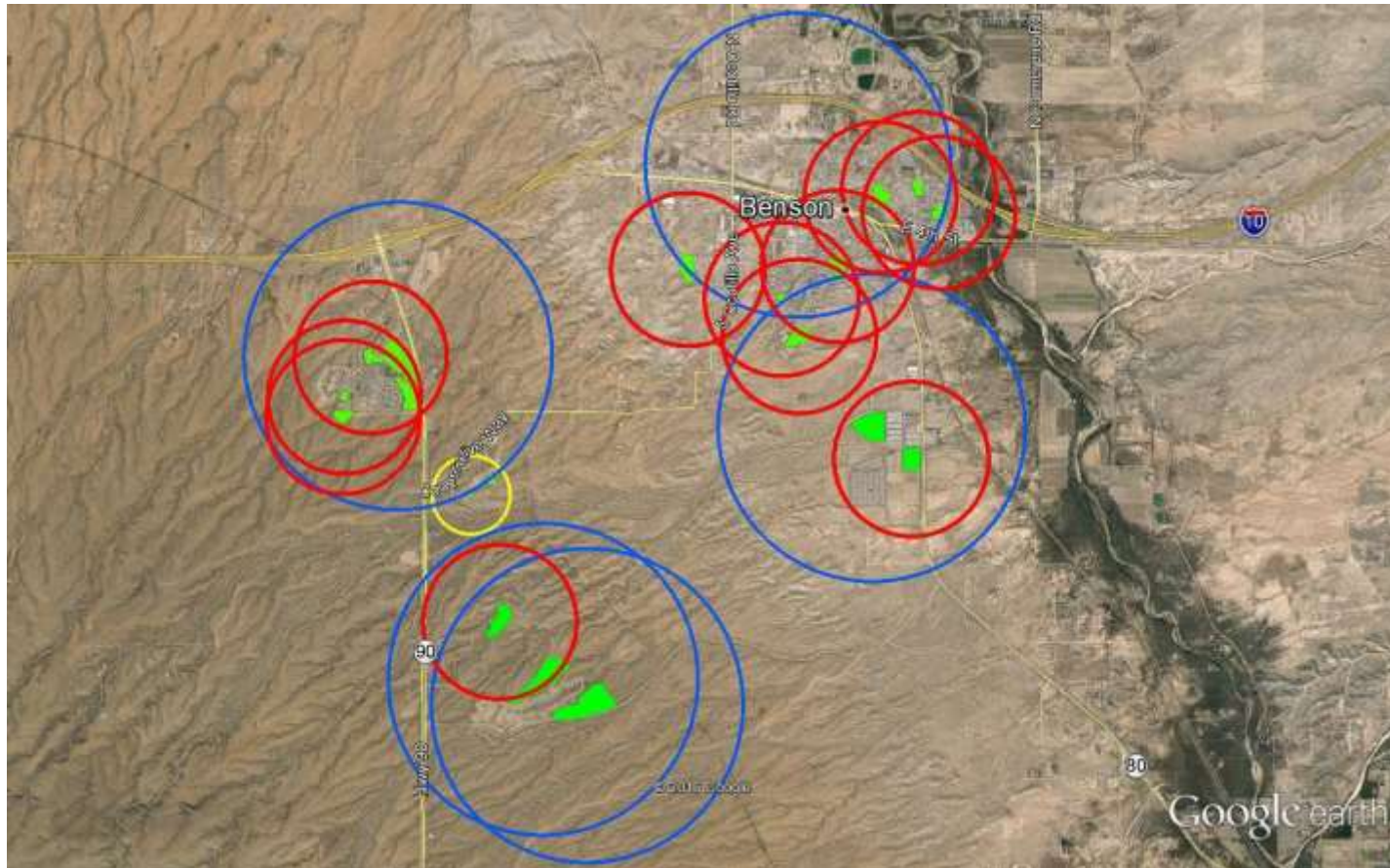


Figure 26: Long Range Plan 2030

Appendix E

Parks and Recreation Levels of Service Map for Benson



Map by Peter Kane

Red circles indicate the need and approximate locations for neighborhood level parks, one to five acres, which offer playground equipment and casual recreation service within $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ mile of a residential area. The blue circles indicate the need for larger regional level parks, 20 to 40 acres

or more, that provides multiple service facilities and ball fields for organized league sports.

These are standards recommended by the National Recreation and Parks Association.

Appendix F

2008 Lions Park Master Plan