



RECREATION STRATEGIC PLAN
Gunnison County Metropolitan Recreation District
April, 2020
Updated March, 2021

The Gunnison County Metropolitan Recreation District (District) has developed the following Recreation Strategic Plan to guide its work over the next three to five years.

Strategic Planning Process

The District’s public and stakeholder outreach effort to inform this strategic plan included:

- 1. Review of Regional Plans & Assessments-** The District reviewed regional plans and assessments relative to its mission to inform the strategic planning process and development of focus areas (a full list of the plans reviewed can be found on pg. 5).
- 2. Strategic Recreation Needs Assessment-** The District designed and implemented a strategic recreation needs assessment to better understand how it can best support the community’s recreation needs. Two online surveys were used to engage the public and recreation stakeholders.
- 3. Public Work Sessions-** The District conducted three strategic planning work sessions to allow stakeholders and the public to provide guidance on plan development implementation.

District Strategy

The District’s development as a recreation special district, funded by a 1 mil levy property tax and Colorado Lottery proceeds, makes it a dependable community cornerstone. With a service area that encompasses almost all of Gunnison County, *Met Rec harbors the unique ability to facilitate collaborative recreation initiatives across silos and jurisdictional boundaries*. Given Gunnison County’s steady population growth and continued value of recreation, this ability fills an important community need that our municipalities cannot achieve independently.

Encompassing five municipalities, Met Rec can harness support from across town and city boundaries to deliver a collective impact capable of delivering key, valley-wide recreation needs. Alternatively, Met Rec can work within its north and south sub-district boundaries to support community-specific recreation needs.

For these reasons, Met Rec has chosen to focus on recreation initiatives that achieve solutions needed by the entire valley, *inclusive of physical and cultural recreation needs*. We seek to serve as an integrator capable of innovating partnerships to accomplish vital community recreation opportunities while also leveraging funding from outside Gunnison County.

Recreation Focus Areas

1. Developed Recreation Amenities

Regional assessments and stakeholder outreach confirmed the demand for additional developed recreation amenities, such as field space, refrigerated ice, and indoor recreation facilities.

In alignment with its strategy, the District will work to provide leadership and coordinate responsible planning and implementation of recreation amenities that require regional support to achieve successful development and sustainable operation. This process seeks to ensure efficient utilization of existing facilities, the prevention of duplicative services, and an understanding of near and long-term capital, operating and replacement costs associated with new projects.

Action Items

- a. ***By July 2020 the District will have developed a process (i.e. template) that facilitates the planning for priority, large-scale*, developed recreation amenities.*** The process will serve as a tool for both regional organizations *and* the District. Organizations will benefit from increased and/or improved project planning capacity. The District will benefit by having a thorough understanding of developed recreation facility project needs. With a heightened understanding of project needs, the District will be positioned to assess the appropriate funding levels and mechanisms (i.e. voter initiative) required to accomplish them.

**Large-scale projects are considered to have a minimum project cost of \$250,000 - \$300,000.*

- b. ***By July 2022 the District seeks to have engaged partners in the piloting of the above described process (action item a) for at least two projects.*** The analyses completed by organizations will be used to assess the feasibility of a District administered voter initiative to accomplish the development of priority recreation facility projects.
- c. ***By August 2022 the District will have assessed the success of the assessment process (action item a).*** District staff will work with partner organizations to address needed improvements and determine next steps.
- d. ***By July 2021 the District will have developed a framework for a recreation reserve fund.*** A recreation reserve fund will grow the District's ability to financially support the planning of developed recreation facility projects that have significant community interest. The framework will include the fund's purpose, management and desired accumulation timeline.

2. Outdoor Recreation

Regional assessments have demonstrated significant interest in supporting trail maintenance and development, including community connector trails and trailhead infrastructure for people of all ages and abilities. The District will support outdoor recreation needs through its partnership with Gunnison County's Sustainable Tourism and Outdoor Recreation Committee (STOR)* and through its recreation focus area, community collaboration (pg. 4).

The District will maintain its partnership with STOR and the National Forest Foundation (NFF)* to facilitate the growth of the Gunnison Stewardship Fund. The Gunnison Stewardship Fund was developed collaboratively by STOR and the NFF to support stewardship of the area's National Forests and other public and conserved lands. It is funded by local businesses and entities and by the NFF who is matching funds on partial donations. Honoring the District's strategy, contributions to the Gunnison Stewardship Fund will leverage outside funding and support regional outdoor recreation and stewardship initiatives.

The District recognizes that certain outdoor recreation needs do *not* align with STOR's focus on public and conserved lands. Therefore, the District seeks to support alternative outdoor recreation needs as part of its community collaboration recreation focus area.

**The STOR Committee is a wide-ranging group that acts to address negative impacts and develop unique approaches to create a sustainable tourism economy and outdoor recreation experience while preserving the natural resources of Gunnison County.*

**The NFF is the non-profit partner of the U.S. Forest Service, chartered by Congress in 1992 with the mission to bring people together to restore and enhance our National Forests and Grasslands.*

Action Items

- a. ***By September 2021 the District will determine its 2022 funding contribution to the Gunnison Stewardship Fund.***
- b. ***Attend bi-annual Stewardship Fund Project Selection Committee meetings and monthly STOR Committee meetings.*** Continued involvement with the STOR Committee will inform the District of priority outdoor recreation projects and initiatives as well as additional community outdoor recreation needs.
- c. ***Engage District's Recreation Advisory Committees quarterly to identify additional outdoor recreation needs.*** With the understanding that not all outdoor recreation needs align with STOR's scope, the District will maintain regular communication with its north and south recreation advisory committees to ensure a comprehensive understanding of outdoor recreation needs.

3. Increase Access to Recreation

Improved access to recreation was supported by constituents throughout the District's service area, with particular concern for high program and equipment costs and inadequate transportation to recreation amenities and programs.

The District will invest in and support efforts that reduce local barriers faced by youth, elderly, and underserved communities in the planning and implementation of recreation programs and amenities.

Action Items

- a. *The District will encourage recreation stakeholders to address barriers to accessing recreation and provide funding through its community collaboration grant program and recreation initiatives to help address those barriers.*** The District's grant criteria will incentivize applicants to demonstrate clear solutions that address their identified barriers.
- b. *By August 2021 the District will have worked with key partners to identify 2-5 specific local barriers to accessing recreation as well as potential solutions.*** The District recognizes that said barriers are complex, requiring a collaborative approach to fully understand and adequately address. The District will engage a diversity of stakeholders to assist in this process.

4. Community Collaboration

Supporting valued community recreation opportunities is a core element of the District's work. Ensuring quality amenities and sustainable programming is a priority for the District. Engaging in, promoting, and financially supporting community-based recreation initiatives is critical to improving our citizen's quality of life. The District will continue to respond to proposals that fall outside of the 'developed recreation' focus area through its grant program.

Action Items

- a. *The District seeks to engage with a diversity of recreation groups and entities to stay informed of current and planned recreation project and programming needs.*** Continued outreach and engagement with recreation stakeholders will provide the District with a comprehensive understanding of community recreation opportunities and further its ability to catalyze and leverage creative partnerships.
- b. *By August 2021 the District will determine the framework and amount of funding available for a 2022 community collaboration grant program.*** A refined community grant program with clear criteria that aligns with the District's strategy and focus areas will be developed for publicizing in April, 2022.

Relevant Regional Plans & Assessments

City of Gunnison 2019 Community Recreation Center Addition Study Report

Gunnison County Economic Indicator Report, 2014

[Gunnison County Metropolitan Recreation District Recreation Needs Assessment, 2019](#)

[Gunnison Watershed School District REIJ Facility Master Plan, 2019](#)

[Sustainable Tourism and Outdoor Recreation Committee Charter](#)

[Town of Crested Butte 2010 Parks and Recreation Regional Master Plan](#)

[West Gunnison Park & Site Concept Master Plan, 2018](#)