

CHAPTER 9

RECREATION SERVICES DELIVERY PLAN

STRATEGIC GOAL: Offer a broad range and level of structured recreation programs for individuals and groups to participate in active and passive activities that meet customer needs and interests.

OVERVIEW

The Township has made great strides in the years since the first comprehensive park and recreation plan was completed in 1991. At that time, the Township offered only about a half-dozen programs, including Horsham Day and educational courses dealing with health and safety issues, such as CPR and first aid. Recreation programming in the township was in its infancy then, as there was no full-time staff devoted to planning and implementing structured recreation activities. And there was no administrative department formally charged with the responsibility of programming.

Horsham now has a Parks and Recreation Department, staffed by a full-time Director since 1997. In addition to managing the park system, the Director was responsible for single-handedly expanding and supervising the variety of programs offered for roughly a five-year stretch. A full-time Recreation Program Coordinator was added to the department in 2002, thereby relieving the Director of day-to-day programming requirements. The Recreation Program Coordinator's primary duty is to oversee the recreation programming efforts.

The Township is much better equipped to serve the programming needs of its customers today than it was a decade ago. Not only does it have dedicated staff, but it also has experience and a successful track record of programming. Parks and Recreation Department staff knows the types of activities that are of interest to customers and when the activities should be provided throughout the year. Staff also has a sense of what could be done to enhance the programs that are provided. Another benefit to the Township is that staff has established good relationships with the multitude of other providers of recreation programs so that everyone can work together to better satisfy customers' needs throughout the community.

This chapter recommends actions that the Township should take to achieve the above-referenced strategic goal. The actions are focused on improving the future delivery of recreation programs and marketing efforts.

ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY: Collaborate with others to offer a broad spectrum of programs, when and where possible.

Recommendations

1. Working with others should be an integral part of the underlying philosophy of recreation services delivery in the Horsham. The mission statement in Chapter 6 explicitly states that the Township shall serve as **a partner** in providing recreation services, which implies that additional partners are also involved. Collaboration with community-based organizations is essential, as the Township is not able nor should be expected to be the sole provider all programs to serve customers' needs.

ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY: Encourage partnerships and develop formal agreements, as needed, with public and community service providers to supplement existing programming.

Recommendations

2. Because the Township only began playing a direct role in organizing and offering recreation programs in the mid-1990s, many special interests groups focused on youth sports activities were formed to offer structured activities in the community. These groups have established a special niche and have grown to be quite effective at what they do. Relationships with these groups should be maintained and enhanced so that they remain as service providers.
3. Partnerships with new organizations should be established. The Township and new providers can join forces and pool limited resources, thereby delivering expanded services at lower cost than if the Township were to do everything on its own.
4. Inventory and assess potential partners in the township by making a wish list of new programs and then identify those that might match the identified needs. Open the doors of communication by exchanging ideas and seeking mutual interests.
5. Evaluate existing and planned programs to target ones with the potential for joint sponsorship. Partial or full sponsorship of programs could be sought from entities that have been targeted but have no volunteers or too little of a manpower base to adequately run a program. Establish a formal sponsorship venture, such as an Adopt-a-Program program, as a means to help deliver services cost-effectively.
6. Coordinate with the Hatboro-Horsham School District and the Hatboro-Horsham Adult Evening School regarding cooperative programs and joint use and scheduling of facilities. Establish a good rapport with key personnel and work together to resolve conflicts and to build mutually beneficial policies.
7. Coordinate with adjoining communities on recreation-related initiatives, as appropriate. Expanding the service area to encompass a broader geography might be required to attain an adequate customer base for certain programs. For example, a regional approach to programming for people with disabilities may work best.

ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY: Equitably distribute programs by offering them at locations throughout the community, if possible, provided the facilities necessary to support the programs are available.

Recommendations

8. The delivery of certain recreation programs is largely dependent on the availability of facilities from which to conduct the activities. For example, certain programs logically require specialized facilities; like the need for a basketball court to run a basketball-oriented program. Aside from needing a principal facility, accessory facilities, such as vehicular parking, restrooms and the like, are also required to successfully run some programs. Other types of programs are fundamentally unrestricted by facility requirements that they can be offered anywhere, and the sponsor of the program has the flexibility of moving the location from place to place.

It is recommended that the Township capitalize on the availability of facilities throughout the community in order to bring the programs that it sponsors closer to home for its residents. Attempts should be made to offer neighborhood-based programs as much as possible, as customers are most likely to participate in the activities if they are more easily accessible. For popular and long-standing programs that are not dependent on the use of specialized facilities, a rotating schedule that changes the location of where the programs are offered so that they reach all geographic areas of the community may be appropriate. If possible, the location of facility-specific programs should be rotated among multiple sites throughout the community that are capable of accommodating the programs' needs, if more than one site qualifies. (It should be noted that implementation of this recommendation will be governed, in part, by the various programmatic needs determined by the P&R Department staff and other partners that may co-sponsor the activity.)

ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY: Offer an appropriate balance of recreation program types in accordance with a program classification system tailored to the special interests and demands of customers.

Recommendations

9. Figure 51 is a program matrix that outlines the variety of programs that should be offered to customers:
- The recreation programs are organized in descending priority order according to customer demand taken from the survey results.
 - The matrix divides the responsibility for offering the programs between the Township and other providers.
 - If responsibility is assigned to the Township, the recommended level of involvement from the P&R Department is assigned using either a letter "D"

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Figure 51
Program Matrix

or an “I” in the second column. The Township's role is either direct (i.e., the department actually organizes and runs the program) or indirect (i.e., the department cooperates and coordinates with others to facilitate the program).

- The code letters in the third and fifth columns identify whether the nature of the programs should be any one or a combination of seven formats. The formats are used to describe how a participant engages in the activity or what the primary benefit that is derived from participation is include the following:
 - Competitive (C) programs provide the opportunity for the participant to test their skill against others. They require organization and supervision.
 - Cultural (Cu) programs provide opportunities for customers to be both participants in or spectators of visual and performing arts activities. In the case of participatory programs, such as community theater productions, community talent shows, etc., they require organization and instruction is often provided. Spectator-oriented cultural programs (i.e., concerts, arts and craft shows, folk dance performances, etc.) typically involve organization as non-customers are the performers.
 - Fitness/Wellness (E) programs mostly require organization and supervision, as they tend to represent exercise activities such as aerobics, pilates, karate, a walking club, yoga, etc. Examples of fitness/wellness programs that do not require supervision include lectures on healthy eating, health matters, and wellness issues.
 - Instructional (I) programs teach the participant a skill, whether at the beginning, intermediate, or advanced stages. They require organization and specialized leadership.
 - Self-Directed programs take place at facilities that are reserved for specific times and made available to the general public to use for the personal satisfaction that one derives from participation in the recreational activity. An example of a program is a basketball court that is available for a two-hour period for "pick-up" games for participants that simply drop-in for the activity. These programs are usually informal or are provided to individuals and groups without leadership, but they still need to be organized. Other examples of self-directed programs include community events that are open to attendance without reservations, like celebrations, holiday events, etc.
 - Self-Improvement (SI) programs provide a forum for learning and stimulating personal growth. Speeches, lectures, concerts, plays, and exhibits constitute such programs, and require planning and organization.\
 - Social (S) programs encourage interaction among participants and foster community unity. Social programs can encompass trips, parties, dances, performances, parades, and special celebrations as well as regular gatherings and meetings for clubs, special interest groups and residents of given neighborhoods. They require planning and organization.

- The code letters in the fourth and sixth columns specify the age cohorts of the customers to be served by the program, such as P-preschoolers, C-children, T-teens, Y-young adults, O-older adults, S-seniors, H-handicapped, and A-all ages.
10. A diversified and balanced supply of year-round programs should be provided through a multitude of governmental agencies, school agencies, education-oriented associations, church and religious-oriented groups, private voluntary organizations, and commercial recreation enterprises, among others. The Township's specific function should be to remedy major program deficiencies by coordinating programs offered by other "providers" of recreation in the community and neighboring municipalities, and by planning and sponsoring its own activities
 11. Figure 50 is not meant to describe each recommended program according to how many participants it should serve or the dates and times it should be scheduled. The intent of the Program Matrix is to prescribe general types of activity that either are not already available or are provided and are expected to remain in demand by customers, and which are needed to fill a void in the program supply base. For this reason, some programs of similar nature may be offered at the present time by other programming entities.
 12. The Township should not attempt to duplicate recreation programming effort that is already effectively and professionally administered by the other providers. The Township should, however, encourage others to expand its programs to more adequately satisfy resident recreation needs as disclosed by the recreation survey.

ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY: Mainstream persons with special needs into programs when possible to provide access opportunities for all customers, but consider offering specialized programs, if warranted.

Recommendations

13. For more than the past decade, the Americans with Disabilities Act has helped bring to the forefront the need of disabled people regarding all aspects of daily life, including recreation programming. Recognizing the diversity of disabling conditions varies from individuals with mental, vision, speech, hearing, or mobility impairments, every effort should be made by the Township to make all recreational activities, interpretive programs, publications, and other information available and accessible to such persons.
14. Locations where programs are held should comply with accessibility standards and guidelines.
15. The Township should ensure that all printed and visual media available to the public is designed to accommodate ADA-related special needs through the use of TDDs and alternate media to facilitate communication.
16. Special needs populations shall include persons with disabilities as well as senior adults, low-income households, and non-English speaking persons.

17. Every effort should be given to provide equal opportunity to all to participate in recreation programs. Due to the relatively small special needs population in the community, persons with special needs tend to attend special programs oriented toward their needs outside of Horsham. As the special needs population increases, the Township may need to take a more active role in insuring that there is an adequate supply of accessible programs for all people with disabilities. Collaboration with other partners, such as surrounding municipalities, may be the most effective means of establishing a large enough population base to support special services.

ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY: Develop recreation programs that promote fitness and wellness values.

Recommendations

18. There is an increasing emphasis placed on improving the wellness and fitness of the population through recreation activity. The movement is within the schools where physical education classes are stressing the importance of life-long healthy habits at an early age. It also has always been an inherent aspect of many recreation programs, but not emphasized quite as much until recently. The Township should incorporate fitness and well being as a priority focus for recreation and park services.
19. The majority of recreation pursuits identified as a Township responsibility in Figure 51 involve some degree of physical activity. The Township should embrace this concept and adopt guidelines for making the customers healthier.
20. Expand and publicize the health benefits of all relevant programs. Program descriptions should emphasize the health benefits of participation. Program evaluation criteria should include measurable fitness/health benefits.

ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY: Develop programs that educate customers about the environment and teach a conservation ethic.

Recommendations

21. The Township should teach a conservation ethic through well-coordinated programming efforts. The more that customers understand the relationships between people and the environment, the more likely they are to respect and be responsible stewards of the land. Customer education will reap rewards for a more livable community, as the natural resources in the township will be safeguarded by an environmentally-conscious customer base, or “watch dogs.”
22. The Township should insure the provision of programs of conservation education on topics that may include recreational use of natural resources, resource value, and available natural areas.

23. Encourage the study of nature and conservation in the public and private school systems. Support the joint-use of Township open spaces and natural areas for school-based programs.
24. Initiate customer involvement in the implementation of this plan, particularly with recommendations regarding the restoration and management of natural areas.

ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY: Establish objectives for all programs to describe why they are offered.

Recommendations

25. It is important to develop a systematic approach to program planning. Formulate a clear and concise statement of the objectives of each program. The objectives should relate to the P&R Department’s mission statement and address both short-term and long-range goals. They will provide information about why the Township is offering the program.
26. Evaluate recreation programs on an on-going basis.
 - Determine if all customer groups are being served and what steps are necessary to meet the needs.
 - Establish a system for participant and leader evaluation of all programs.
 - Determine if programs are reaching all skill levels from initial experience through advanced participation. Evaluate all levels to insure that quality is maintained at all levels of the program.
 - Determine how programs should be revised, expanded, or dropped. Decisions about program offerings must consider the time the program needs to become established.
27. The P&R Department should have a work session each budget season to determine goals, priorities, and programs for the next fiscal year. New programs and programming trends should be identified. In addition to looking at the latest recreational activities, the Township should also be looking towards trends in community issues and partnerships. Determine the measures necessary to offer new programs in line with changing interest and opportunities.
28. Target groups within the Township should be brought into the program planning process to insure that programs are developed in partnership with customers.

ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY: Advertise and promote the benefits of program participation and recreation.

Recommendations

29. Make sure that people are aware of what recreation can do for them. Publicize these benefits, many of which can be taken directly from the program objectives described above.

ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY: Increase communication and the flow of information using technology and the media to publicize programs, events, services, policies, rules and regulations, volunteer opportunities, and meetings.

Recommendations

30. The provision of parks and recreation services is of little public benefit unless the people are aware of the opportunities that are available. Therefore, it is important that customers be informed about what is offered. The recreation survey that was conducted as part of this plan asked respondents to identify the best ways of informing them about recreation opportunities. The five most effective methods for getting the word out to the respondents (listed in descending order of effectiveness) are posters/signs, seasonal newsletters, cable TV channel, local newspapers, and the Township website. Rather than rely on only these five ways to advertise, the P&R Department should utilize a broader mix of publicity strategies, including the following:

- Posters/signs – Display posters at prominent locations throughout the community. Utilize kiosks at parks as a way to disseminate information to park users. Use a portable sign with letters that can be removed and rearranged to change messages to move around to visible locations in the community for passersby to see.
- Seasonal newsletters – Continue to publish the newsletters on a seasonal basis or more frequently to serve as a guide to the recreation programs offered, and distribute it widely.
- Local Media Sources – On-going public relations efforts should be carried out through the use of local media sources. Newsworthy events and stories should be made known to nearby newspapers and radio and television stations so that public exposure is achieved:
 - **Cable TV channel** – Have P&R Department activities and events listed with dates and descriptions. Advertise meetings and any efforts the Township is making to solicit input. Post volunteer opportunities. Display video clips of the parks and facilities that are available. Consider producing a video showcasing the park and recreation services of the Township and use it as a promotional tool.
 - **Local newspapers** – Distribute press releases for special meetings and important endeavors or accomplishments. Encourage press corps coverage of meetings, programs, and events.
 - **Radio** – Local radio stations should be tapped as a communication resource, particularly for announcements on their “community calendars.”
- Township Website – Expand and improve the P&R Department’s web page with links to programs and services, policies and procedures, events, and public meetings. Regularly update the website to supply current and accurate information.
- School Handouts – Provide announcements/bulletins for distribution to

school students who can take them home to the heads of the households. Maximize the use of school publications by jointly advertise Township-sponsored programs. Hatboro Horsham School District newsletters may also serve as a tool to heighten public awareness regarding the availability of school sites for recreation, as well as other municipal park projects.

- E-mail – Establish customer electronic mailing lists tailored to specific categories of services and provide broadcast e-mail notices, as appropriate.
- General flyers – Provide bulk supplies of flyers and brochures describing upcoming programs at select points of community gathering spots for casual pickup. In special cases, consider soliciting volunteers to hand out flyers for special.
- Announcements at Township events/meetings and programs – Take time at Township meetings to announce upcoming meetings and events and to briefly present status reports for park and recreation projects.
- Church bulletins – Use church bulletins to announce upcoming programs and park opportunities, if appropriate.
- Business community newsletters – Provide information to the business community about available parks and recreation services for inclusion in corporate publications, such as newsletters.
- Piggyback with other providers – In addition to using Township resources, piggyback on the publicity efforts of other providers/partners by having their websites supply links to the P&R Department web page. Have partners' newsletters make special mention of major, upcoming Township events and programs.
- Horsham Township Park Guide – Keep the guide booklet that describes the park system up-to-date, and include a map. Periodically distribute the guide to all Township households.

ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY: Target marketing efforts to non-users to engage their interest and make them users of the system.

Recommendations

31. Use participation data to identify sectors of the customer base that are not taking advantage of the programs offered. Reach out to these sectors of the population to find out why they do not participate. Try to remove barriers to participation to make them active customers of the Township's services.

ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY: Provide scheduling services to ensure balanced opportunities for access to facilities by Township-sponsored activities, programmed activities offered by other partners, and spontaneous drop-in users.

Recommendations

32. Park facilities should be provided to serve all customers, be they persons who utilize a facility as part of an organized team, participants in a program offered by the P&R Department, or casual drop-in users for pickup games with others. Insuring that adequate play time is available for a wide variety of users can be a challenge, particularly during seasons of peak ball field use. The most challenging part of making sure that facilities are available for shared use is in accommodating youth sports organization schedules, which is becoming more difficult to accomplish as a growing number of organizations focused on serving the same sport compete for time on the same fields.

This problem should be alleviated by coordinating the efforts of providers to make the best use of facilities and to resolve potential conflicts. The Township should try to maximize the availability of facilities through scheduling. Organization requests should be coordinated so that they are allocated only those fields/courts that they need, thereby discouraging “blanket” reservations. The issue of shared use must be sensitively approached by taking into account how some organizations have a vested interest in protecting the quality of facilities that they have been maintaining over the years as a partner with the P&R Department. Careful attention should also be given to scheduling to be sure that the carrying capacity is not exceeded, resulting in overuse and compromised playing surfaces. This especially applies to turf sports fields that should be kept in a safe, playing condition.

33. The Township should also consider improving the efficiency of the ball fields by providing small fields designated for practice which will help take the pressure off game fields and provide more places for children to play.

ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY: Accommodate special events and other appropriate activities at parks to increase a sense of community and to help the parks function as positive recreation environments.

Recommendations

34. Policies should be established to govern or guide the types of events that would be compatible with the mission of the P&R Department. Events with elements that are contrary to the general health, safety, and welfare of customers should be disallowed.
35. Establish a special permitting system that reflects guidelines approved by the Township for appropriate and authorized park uses and sponsorships.
36. Establish policies for commercial advertising in conjunction with special events, excluding any advertising associated with products or services that can have a demonstrated harmful effect on customer health or safety.

