

Enjoying Arts, Culture And Recreation

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Photograph courtesy of Stock.xchng

Arts, culture and recreation play an important role in our quality of life by providing entertainment and opportunities to come together as a community, promoting physical and mental health, and benefiting our economy. Cities around the world are competing to attract new businesses as well as bright young professionals. We know the winners will be communities that offer an abundance of arts, cultural and recreational activities. The following indicators help us understand what arts, culture and recreational opportunities exist, how they are supported and whether we participate.

There are ample opportunities for residents and visitors to participate in arts, culture and humanities events in the Pikes Peak region. These opportunities include experiencing visual and performing arts, maintaining health through outdoor and indoor recreation, and participating alongside neighbors in community events, holiday celebrations, or promoting different cultures.

When we invest in the arts, not only will our region reap the additional benefits of jobs, economic growth and quality of life, but the arts also foster vibrant neighborhoods and urban revitalization. There are several efforts afoot to develop creative districts within the community. Creative districts that come with tax incentives or are even purely recognized by name, can have a positive impact on a community.



Photograph courtesy of City of Colorado Springs Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Department

Parks, trails and open space are also major attractions both for residents and visitors to the Pikes Peak region. Our generally mild, dry climate provides a multitude of options to utilize outdoor spaces for recreation throughout the year. Additionally, these areas provide space for athletic activities that benefit the overall health of people in our community.

The founder of Colorado Springs, General William Jackson Palmer, loved the outdoors. His gifts of land to the city guaranteed future generations the opportunity to wander trails and play in beautiful parks. In the latest Community Visionary Survey, 83% said “parks, recreation, trails and open space are essential to my community.” These public spaces contribute to our quality of life, attract visitors and are a health and economic benefit for our community. A challenging economy has created difficult choices for the community. Parks and recreational programs have felt the effects of deep budget cuts. At the same time, volunteerism has increased and new, beneficial partnerships have formed. The early reputation of Colorado Springs as a healthy destination remains true today!

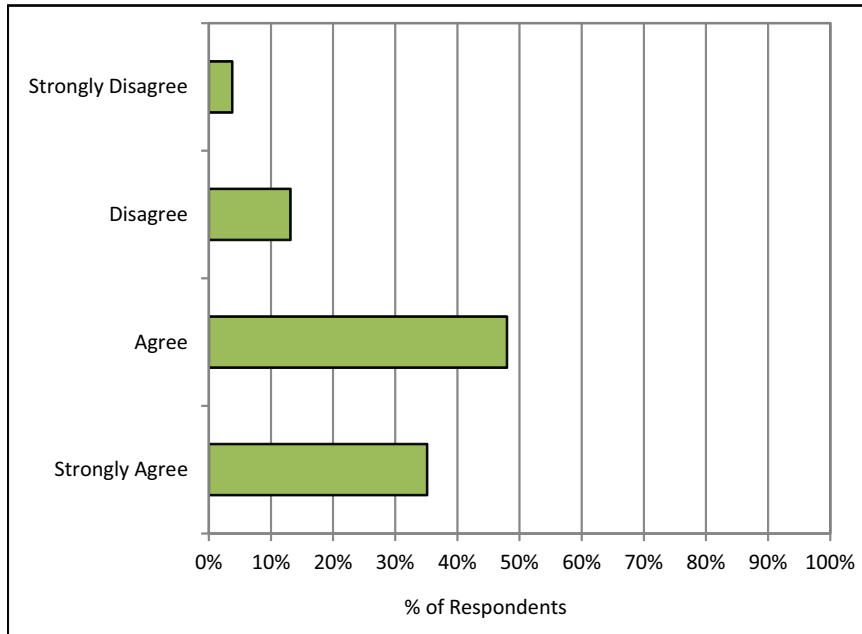


Photograph by Waldrons Photography

-Local Arts and Culture Activities-

Community Opinion on Arts, Culture and Recreational Activities

Arts and culture improve my quality of life.



Source: 2011 QLI Community Visioning Survey

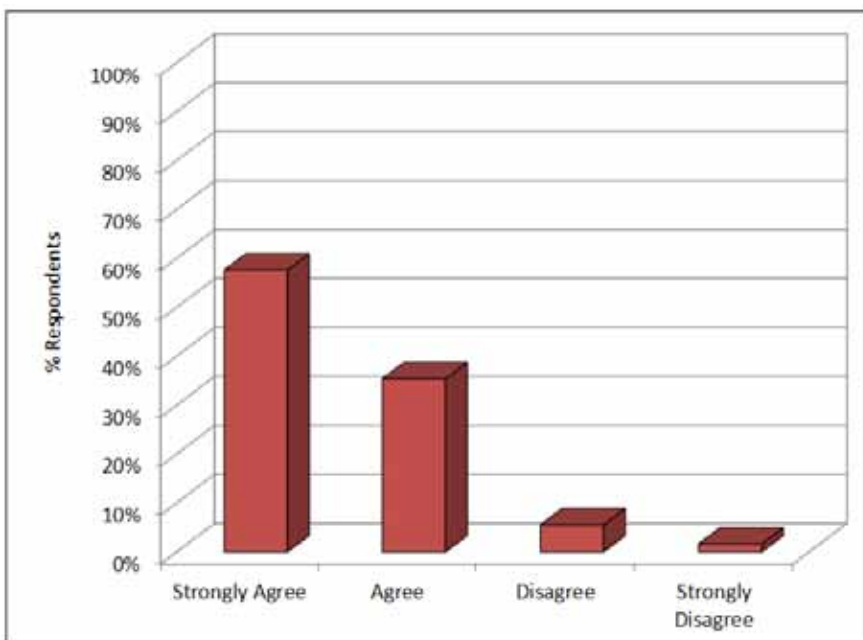
Knowing that arts are important how are we measuring up? 68.6% of respondents said they or a member of their family participated in arts and cultural activities at least once a month. This is a significant increase from 2010 when only 37% reported having attended at least one event each month. While the number of arts, culture and humanities organizations hasn't shown significant growth in the past year, attendance is up.

Potential for Action

In 2011, 82% of respondents agreed that arts and culture improve their quality of life. But why? Studies show that arts build community identity, inclusion and pride; creating a positive, unique and authentic regional brand. Survey respondents were asked to identify reasons why they believed these were true, and their answers included: enriches life, broadens exposure, helps people become better educated and open minded, and was a chance to do something new. Knowing there is a strong correlation between arts and culture and quality of life, we need to continue

to provide arts and cultural opportunities to individuals and families. Specifically, we need to educate people on what is available and develop ways to make those experiences more accessible.

Parks, recreation, trails and open spaces are essential to my community.



Source: 2011 QLI Community Visioning Survey

This chart shows that locals value the region's many opportunities for outdoor recreation. Colorado Springs has 135 neighborhood parks. Recent additions include Memorial Park's 40,000sf skate park, a universally-accessible playground to accommodate children with disabilities, and 3 new off-leash dog hiking areas.

Why is this important?

Non-traditional parks increase opportunities for exercise, recreation and community interaction, and increase neighborhood safety and property values.

The Stratmoor Valley neighborhood had no schools or recreation areas, forcing children to play primarily in the streets. Vehicle and pedestrian accidents, loitering and vandalism were a problem. With the help of a Great Outdoors Colorado grant, the neighborhood built the Stratmoor Valley Park, which received the 2010 Starburst Community Award from the Colorado Lottery.

How are we doing?

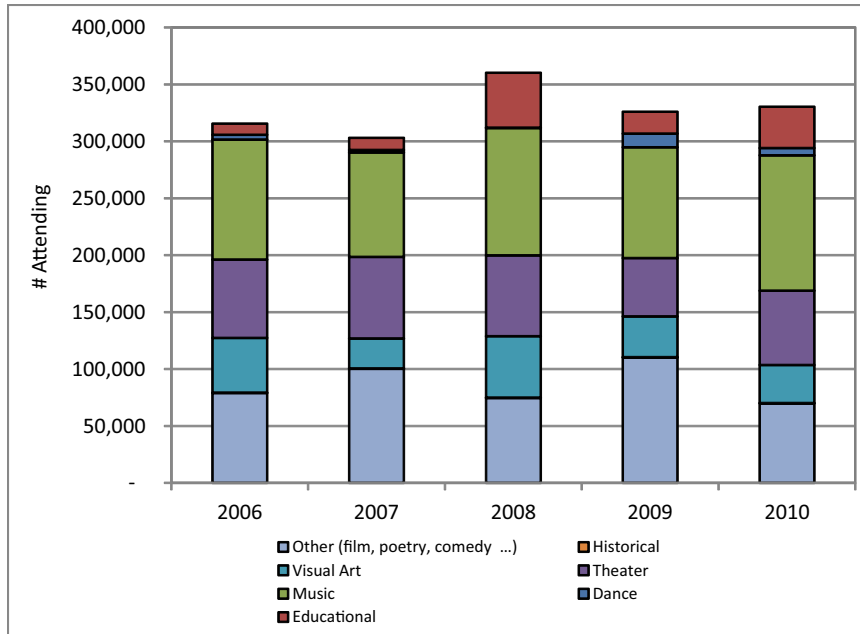
Approximately 90,000 individuals participated in volunteer projects and visited Bear Creek Dog Park alone during 2009, attesting to its popularity. The park was named one of the Top Ten Dog Parks in the United States by Dog Fancy Magazine. Stratmoor Valley Park has given residents the opportunity to meet, socialize and develop connections. Advertisements for housing in the area highlight the park as an amenity, and it provides a sense of community pride that in turn stimulates additional neighborhood improvements.

Potential for action

City parks need significant maintenance since much upkeep has been deferred over the last decade. These needs must be made a budget priority, or the number and cost of projects will continue to mount and facilities will continue to deteriorate.

Local Venue Attendance

Annual Event Attendance



Source: Statistics from Colorado Springs World Arena, Pikes Peak Center, Fine Arts Center, and Theatreworks

The first Chart shows the total annual attendance at the following venues: Colorado Springs World Arena; Pikes Peak Center for the Performing Arts; Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center; and UCCS Theatreworks.

The second Chart shows the total annual attendance at seven popular local area attractions.

Why is This Important?

Colorado Springs has a vibrant arts and culture community, with consistently high levels of participation for creative events and exhibits throughout the community. Many cultural activities take place outside of traditional ticketed venues and thus do not generate admission and visitation statistics. While this chart does not tell the whole story, it does give a snapshot of the many diverse ways in which arts and culture touch the lives of community residents and visitors.

Colorado Springs has many world-class tourist attractions that have seen the varying effects of

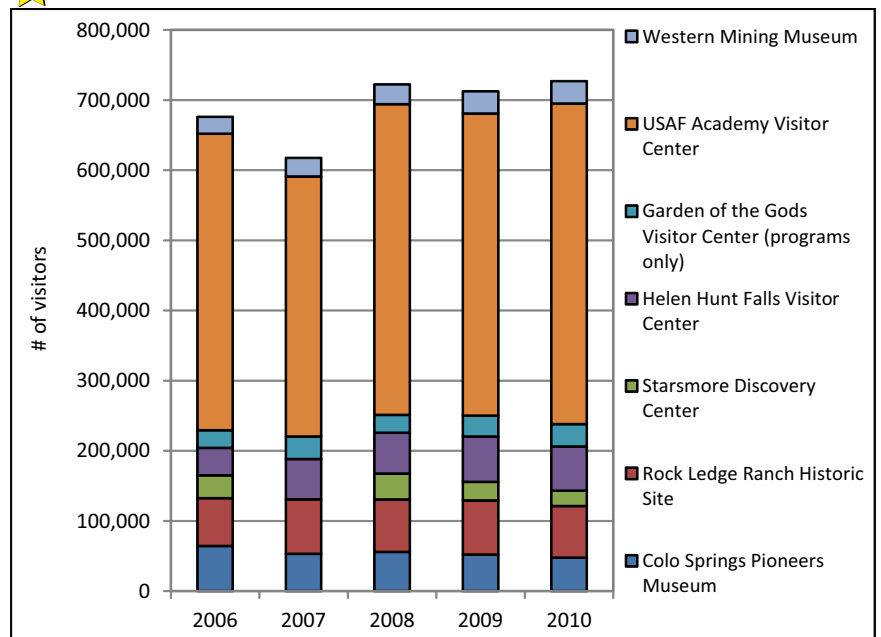
a slowly reawakening economy and of “staycations,” the continuing trend for families to vacation in their own communities and/or within a day’s drive of home. With a history of being a tourist destination since its founding by Gen. William Palmer, Colorado Springs has always had a wide variety of attractions, coupled with fine hotels, a strong cultural climate and plenty of natural beauty to make it a tourist hot spot.

★ Area Attractions Attendance

In the past decade, the ratio of in-state to out-of-state tourists has reversed for the majority of attractions and the in-state, and in many cases in-town, vacation destination has become a stronger reality. Couple this with the weakened economy and unstable fuel prices and the attendance numbers for 2010 come into better focus.

How are We Doing?

The 2010 statistics show a slight increase in attendance over the previous year but still remains lower than a peak in 2008, which was driven by surging attendance at the Fine Arts Center and World Arena. Attendance at music events reached a new highpoint in 2010, while most other categories remain steady. The sector’s overall healthy position may be driven by locals, who are responding to a sour economy by attending more meaningful events at home.



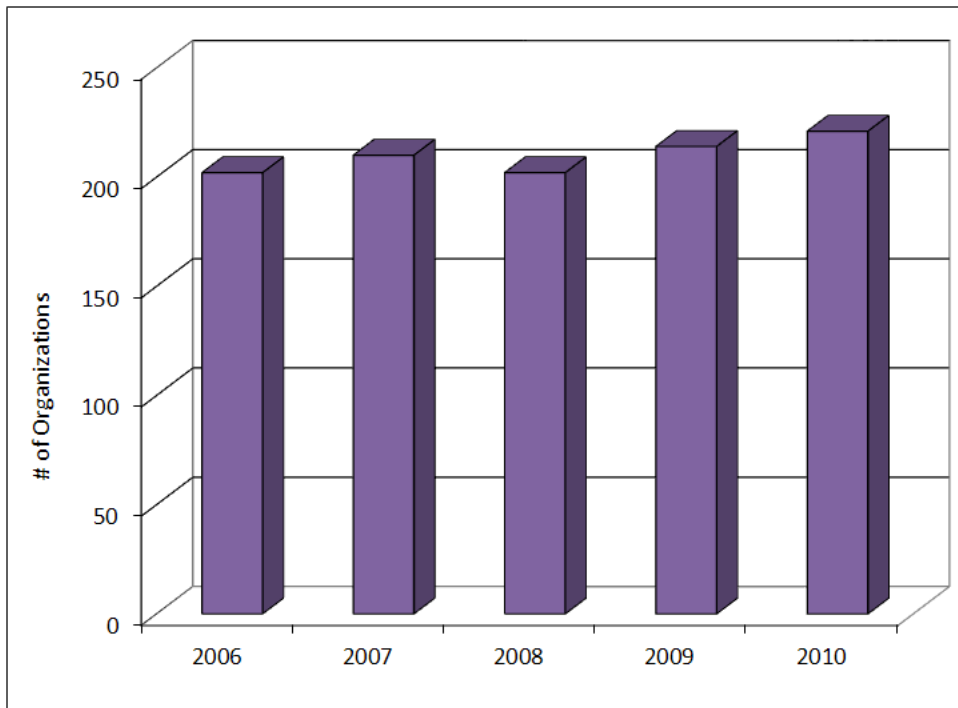
Source: Statistics from Pioneers Museum, Rock Ledge Ranch, Starsmore, Helen Hunt Falls, Garden of the Gods, USAF Academy, and Western Mining Museum

Of the increased attendance reports, the Air Force Academy Visitor Center and Cheyenne Mountain Zoo led the way with modest increases of 6% and 2% respectively. Of those reporting lowered attendance, attraction reports ranged from 2.9% to 18% reduction from their 2009 numbers. Again, various economic factors were certainly reflected in these numbers. Overall total attendance for these eight venues showed an increase of 2% over the previous year.

Potential for Action

Arts and culture organizations should be very proud of their ability to continue offering desirable programming during the recession. Moving forward, they must continue to seek out effective means to develop and deliver relevant programs.

Number of Arts, Culture and Humanities Organizations



Source: National Center for Charitable Statistics

This Chart shows the number of arts, culture and humanities organizations in El Paso County.

Arts: Theater companies, dinner theaters, dance companies, visual art galleries and similar organizations.

Culture: Art museums, zoos, botanical gardens, nature parks and similar organizations.

Humanities: History museums, historical sites, preservation organizations and other similar organizations.

Why is This Important?

While this gives a more apples-to-apples comparison of organizational numbers over a series of years, it does not provide complete insight into the rich tapestry of the local arts and culture groups that operate informally or without nonprofit certification. Besides coordinating and providing a strategic base

for the region, The Cultural Office of the Pikes Peak Region (COPPeR) provides a non-paralleled information source called the *COPPeR Pages: The Official Guide to Arts & Cultural Organizations in the Pikes Peak Region*. This 24-page document, available on its website (www.coppercolo.org), lists 147 different organizations within the creative community. COPPeR also has a comprehensive listing of the numerous arts-presenting organizations on their online calendar: www.PeakRadar.com.

How are We Doing?

The number of arts, culture and humanities organizations has shown strong growth, expanding in the last two decades consistently with increases in population in the county. Consequently, local arts leaders identified a pronounced need for a comprehensive strategy to strengthen the sector in order to enhance the overall community.

Henceforth, COPPeR and the Cultural Plan Steering Committee gathered information and conducted research for the last five years, resulting in the release of the Cultural Plan for the Pikes Peak Region, a 10-year plan identifying goals, strategies and tactics for supporting the growth and diversity of cultural activities and offerings in the Pikes Peak region, and, in turn, pointing to methods in which the arts can strengthen all sectors of the community.

COPPeR also worked with Americans for the Arts on the *Arts & Economic Prosperity III: The Economic Impact of Nonprofit Arts and Culture Organizations and Their Audiences* on the region, which found that the nonprofit arts industry generated \$94.7 million in economic impact and 2,639 jobs.

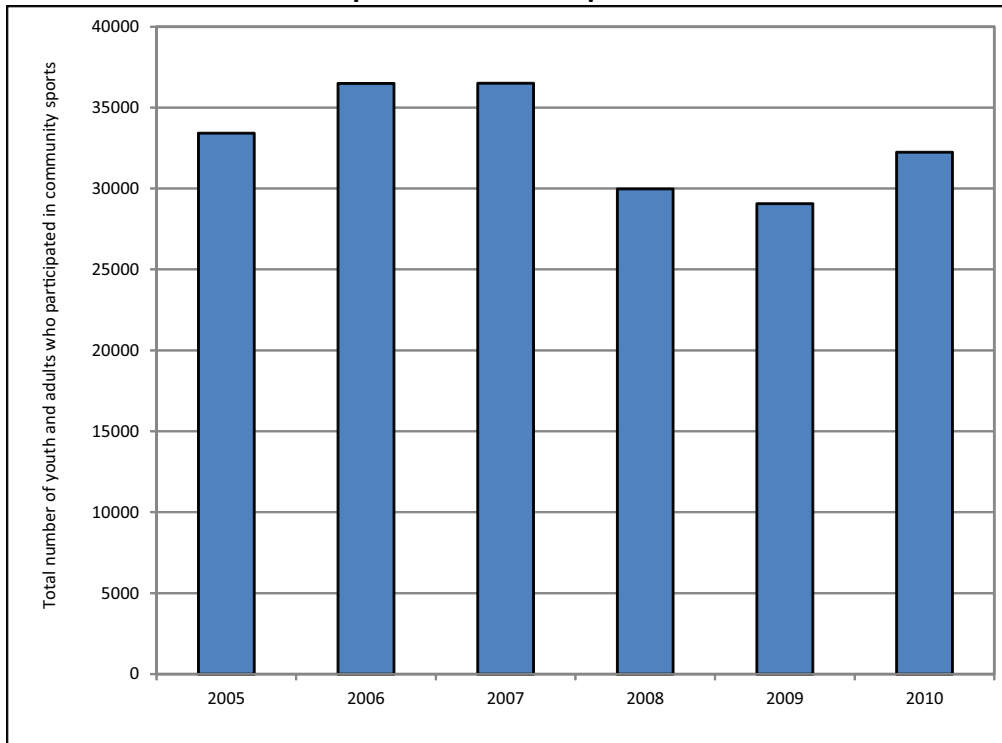
Also, according to the “Colorado Visual and Performing Arts Education Survey Statistical Report” presented by Cypress Research Group, 93% of elementary grade schools, 86% of middle school grades and 83% of high schools offer some formal arts education to its students. The focus of arts education in Colorado and the Pikes Peak region for the past two years has been on: 1) engaging partners, 2) inspiring advances in new standards 3) arts legislation and 4) developing a new creative industries division, as reported by Karol Gate, the State Department of Education’s Content Specialists for the Arts. Ms. Gates suggests that these events are creating “the perfect storm” for arts education to lead the way in the 21st century in our region.

Potential for Action

The arts are an ecosystem, and in order for that ecosystem to flourish, we require a unified vision for our sector’s many players including: individual artists, nonprofits, creative industries and a wide range of cultural consumers and arts participants. The diversity of so many organizations and individuals coming together to work on that shared vision will serve as a source of strength and inspiration. In addition to advancing the creative sector it will enhance the economic vitality of the entire region, developing a reputation for our region as a cultural destination. Educating our community about the Cultural Plan and then engaging the community to take action is the next step in developing a robust arts and culture community.

-Local Recreational Activities-

Youth and Adult Sports Participation



Source: City of Colorado Springs Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services

This Chart shows the total participation in sports sponsored by the City of Colorado Springs. These numbers do not include participation in private clubs or school-sponsored sports.

Why is This Important?

Access and participation are factors in creating healthy lifelong habits and a healthy community. Rising obesity rates make it important to have a range of affordable recreational opportunities for our community.

How are We Doing?

Participation fees for youth sports programs increased in 2009 and 2010 due to city budget constraints. The city is trying to balance “cost-neutral” programs with encouraging broad participation. As a result, a few programs were cancelled in 2010. Scholarship programs offer financially-challenged

youth the opportunity to participate. A reduced budget continues to affect the city’s ability to maintain high-quality sports fields.

Bicycling

Colorado Springs is home to a vibrant and diverse cycling community with opportunities for all levels of cyclists, including the United States Olympic Training Center, USA Cycling, Carmichael Training Systems and the 7-11 Velodrome. Colorado Springs maintains 85 miles of on-street bike lanes, 118 miles of urban bicycle trails and 61 miles of unpaved mountain bike trails. More information about cycling in the Region can be found on page 102.

How are We Doing?

In August 2011, Colorado hosted the opening prologue for the inaugural USA Pro Cycling Challenge, a seven-stage race hosting professional cyclists from around the world, as well as the 2nd Annual Assault on the Peak, a 24-mile hill climb that finishes at the summit of Pikes Peak.

Colorado Springs was awarded the Silver Level “Bicycle-Friendly Community” award by the League of American Bicyclists in 2008. Cyclists in Colorado Springs face challenges in the lack of trail connectivity. Also, Colorado Springs covers an area of 194 square miles, which makes cross-town commutes lengthy.

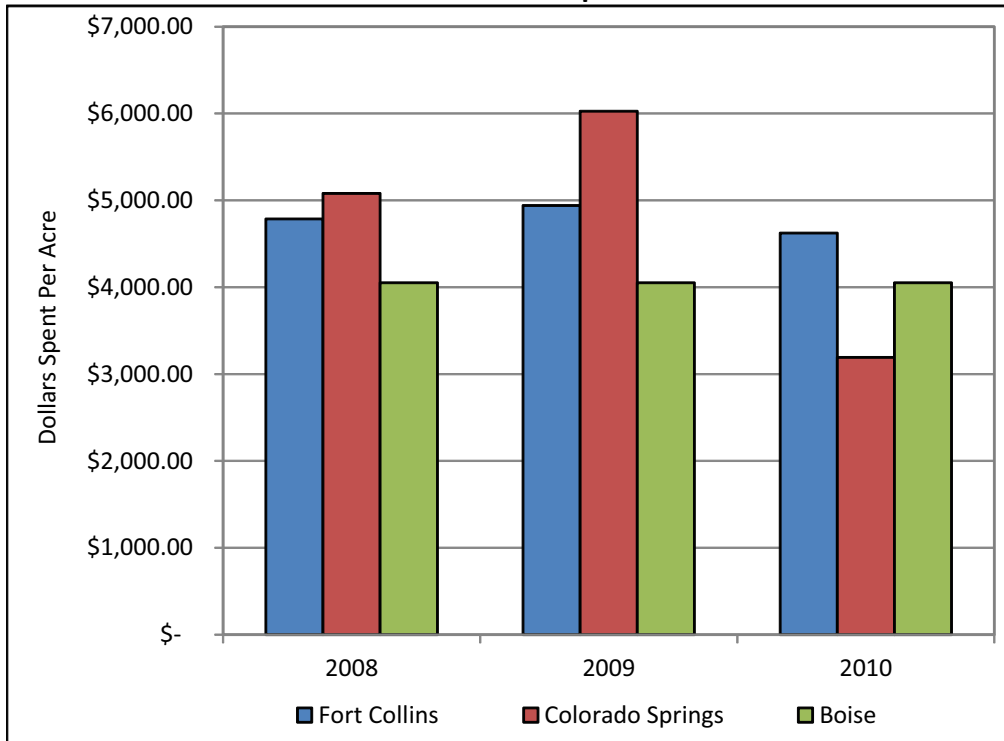
Potential for Action

Although trail connectivity has improved dramatically in recent years, there are still trail projects on the city’s master plan that have no start dates in the foreseeable future.



Photograph by Dmitry Naumov

Maintenance Cost Per Developed Park Acre



Source: City of Colorado Springs Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services

This Chart shows how much money is spent maintaining developed park land in Colorado Springs, Ft. Collins and Boise, Idaho.

Why is This Important?

When parks are maintained, they contribute to local property values and become less of a target for vandalism. When budget cuts lead to a reduction in maintenance, people are less likely to use parks without trash cans or with closed bathrooms.

How are We Doing?

City budget cuts reduced funding and staffing for park maintenance in 2010. Only basic maintenance was performed. Significant deferred maintenance continues to be a challenge. For example, 25 irrigation systems are more than 30 years old and need to be replaced to improve water efficiency. Twenty-two of the city's 168 playgrounds also need

to be replaced. Aging playgrounds increase liability costs. Grassy areas in parks and medians continue to deteriorate.

Irrigation improvements in city parks save water, money

During the 2010 watering season, Colorado Springs Utilities and the City of Colorado Springs worked together to upgrade irrigation systems in 67 city parks and medians and test a conservation rate.

Why is This Important?

Budget shortfalls in recent years have caused drastic cuts to the city's parks, recreation and cultural services budget, resulting in inadequate watering in most parks and medians.

How are We Doing?

Thanks to the lower cost, the city's total water bill was reduced by nearly half a million dollars, allowing irrigation of almost 27% more parks and medians. Inefficient irrigation equipment was replaced, with improvements including rain sensors, pressure regulators, new sprinkler heads and changes to spray patterns. On average, the upgrades improved water-use efficiency from 62% to 81%.

Parks received an average of about sixteen inches of supplemental irrigation from May through October. While that's still 30% less than ideal, its four inches more than would have been possible without the conservation rate. System upgrades are saving water now and will continue reducing consumption in the future.

Potential for Action

Additional efficiency upgrades were planned during the 2011 watering season, including a central irrigation control and conversion to non-potable water at Memorial Park.

Doing more with less

In 2010, El Paso County Recreation and Cultural Services staff and volunteers generated \$450,000 through programs, private donations, sponsorship, grants and in-kind donations. Using the federal standard rate of \$20.25 per hour, the value of the 2,250 who volunteered 26,700 hours was \$540,675. Volunteer efforts included park and waterway clean-ups, dog waste removal, nature center staffing and the El Paso County Fair Sustainability Program. Community collaborations to raise money and time saved programs, services and facilities threatened by deep cuts in city, county and non-profit budgets and staffing.

The El Paso County Fair Sustainability Program was honored with a National Association of Counties Achievement Award for Financial Sustainability for its creative model using sponsorships, vendors, gate revenue and year-round programming on the fairgrounds to raise \$240,000.



Stellar Propeller Studio 2011
Photograph by Stellar Propeller Studio



Photograph courtesy of City of Colorado Springs Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Department



Photograph by Douglas Knight