

Recreation Department

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www.tampagov.net/dept_Recreation/

Key Public Service Areas

The Department's mission is to enhance the quality of life, well-being and enjoyment of individuals and families by providing quality recreational activities throughout the City.

Critical Issues and Areas of Concern

- Construction & Renovation of Recreation Facilities
- Adequate Maintenance of Facilities
- Creative Arts Theater
- Computer Centers
- Parking Facilities
- Skate Parks
- Parks and Recreation Centralized Office
- Additional Facilities
- Athletic Center

Scope of Department Operations

The Recreation Department has 291 employees with an annual budget of \$12.8 million. Offering a wide range of league and individual, competitive and non-competitive programs for people of all ages and abilities, the department offers 5 sports related activities and several special events to thousands of citizens each year. It operates and maintains 13 swimming pools, 2 beach parks, 4 art studios, 19 community centers, 38 playgrounds, 5 gyms, 1 wellness center, and 1 gymnastics and dance center. In addition the Department operates 2 major tennis facilities and manages a total of 84 clay/hard courts, and 28 racquetball courts.

Current Initiatives

- Completing the Recovery Action Program Study
- Expanding the Technology Plan/Computer Labs Program
- Completing the Recreation Construction Bond Projects
- Implementing the construction plan for CIT funds
- Developing aquatic programming at new year-round pools
- Expanding Gymnastic & Dance Program to New Tampa
- Developing Joe Abrahams Memorial Camps
- Providing staff development and training.

Status Report

Construction and Renovation of Recreation Facilities. In 1998, an initial estimate of the need to upgrade the City's recreation facilities was approximately \$60-65 million. A \$17 million bond program has resulted in 16 facilities being replaced or renovated. Although the Department receives CIT funding of \$1 million a year over the next 5 years (FY 03 through FY 08), these funds are not associated with the facilities previously identified. An additional \$43-\$48 million remains unfunded.

Adequate Maintenance of Facilities. As the Recreation Department systematically renovates and replaces the recreational facilities, there remains the issue of securing continued maintenance appropriations of community centers, gymnasiums, tennis courts, pools and athletic fields. Overall, there has been an increase in funding for programs and facilities but limited increases for maintenance. Maintenance operations for recreation facilities are located, organizationally, under either Parks or DPW, requiring coordination between the departments for the provision of maintenance. [\[CR-52\]](#)

Creative Arts Theater. The Creative Arts Theater is the Recreation Department's resident professional children theater company. With over 300 performances a year throughout the city and county, one of the Department's priorities is to bring the performing arts to as many of the community's economically and educationally disadvantaged students as possible. Currently the Creative Arts Theater does not have a facility where the community can participate in the workshop or see productions. The Recreation Department has earmarked \$500,000 for construction of a theater and offices for the Creative Arts Theater; however, additional funding is necessary to construct an appropriate facility that would house a community theater, offices and classrooms. The goal of the Creative Arts Theater is teaching creative forms of expression, fostering success at school, and

Recreation Department Status Report (continued)

and strengthening the links between youth, family, school, and community. Estimated cost of construction \$2 million.

Computer Centers. As society continues to advance technologically, the digital divide continues to grow. The Recreation Department has requested funds during the annual budget cycle for the past several years in order to develop and maintain computer labs, which would provide access and training to the community, however, these requests have been limited. Computer labs are currently operated in five community centers, but establishing labs in the remaining 14 sites is one of the Department's priorities.

Parking Facilities. Existing parking lots meet current code, but are inadequate to meet the parking demands because successful recreation programs offered at facilities throughout the City generate greater parking needs than current inventory allows. Large spikes in demand associated with popular programs, like Little League, are yet another dimension that further complicates this problem. The existing parking facilities are deteriorating. The estimated annual cost for improvements, maintenance and expansion of parking is \$100,000. Additionally, consideration should be given to exploring joint use of schools, churches, and other adjacent parking facilities, where applicable. In some areas purchasing land may be necessary.

Skate Parks. Skateboarding and BMX biking are no longer considered a fad. Many of Tampa's youth are actively involved in these sports, and the City is behind the industry standard in developing these types of facilities. One skateboard park should be developed in each quadrant of the city.

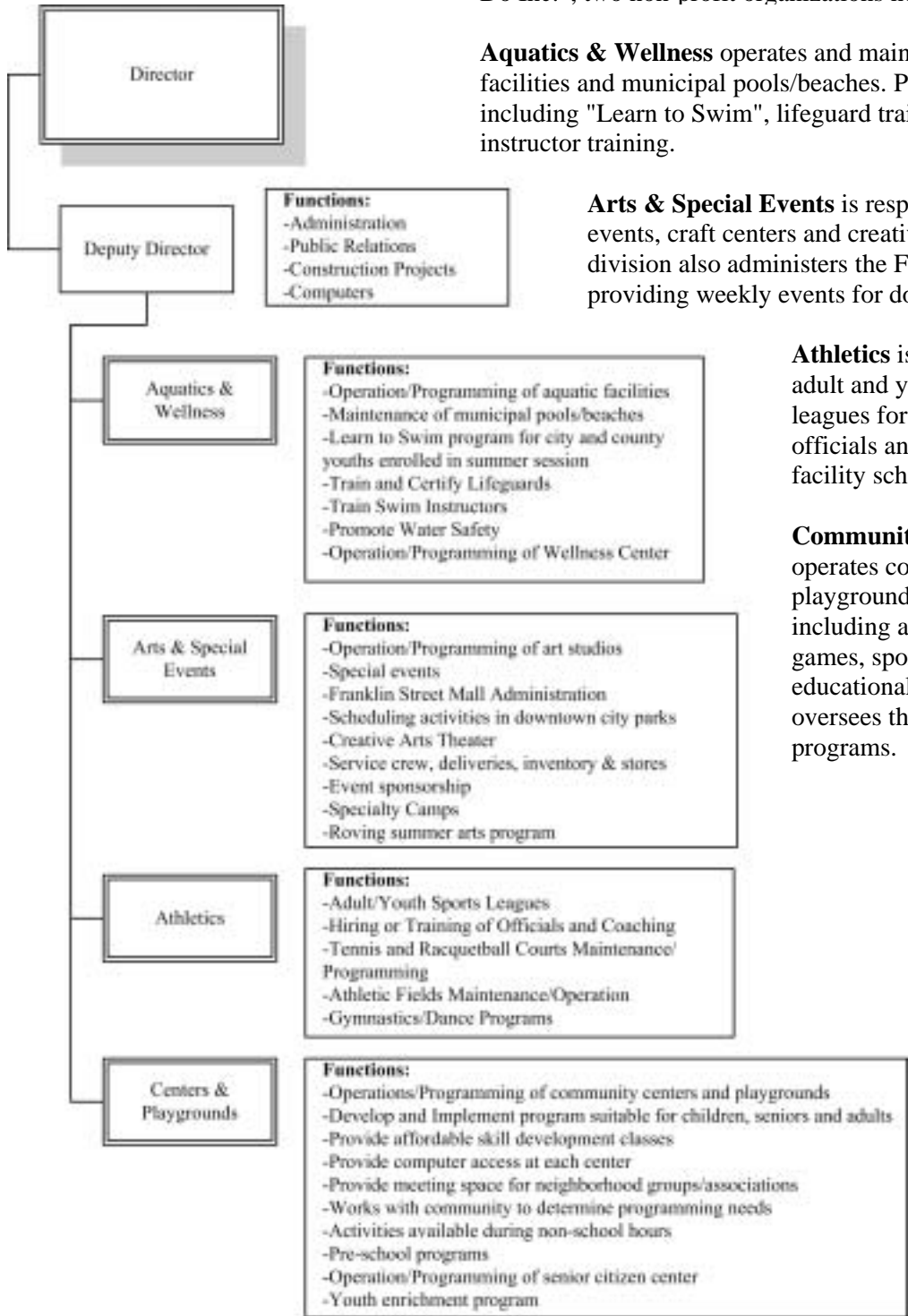
Parks and Recreation Centralized Office Space. Many of the activities administered by the Parks and Recreation Departments are closely related, and certain economies of scale might be achieved if the departments were located in the same building. The current separation of the departments does not promote the most efficient organization for managing facilities, programs, and personnel. An estimated 35,000 sq. feet would be required to accommodate the Parks and Recreation Central Office Staff. A search for potential sites should be undertaken. At the same time, there may be opportunities to evaluate Department functions in order to identify the most efficient operation and delivery of required services, including amount of money that could be saved from bringing the two departments under one roof. [\[CR-38\]](#)

Additional Facilities. When land is annexed into the City, it creates a future demand for recreation facilities and programs. The Recreation Department evaluates the demand and initiates construction of new facilities to meet the leisure-time options of the projected population. Costs are determined once sites are identified. Recently annexed lands prior to 2003 are expected to generate demands for recreational services, which will need to be considered in the development of future City budgets.

Athletic Center. As the number of families in Tampa's urban core continues to increase, the need and demand for a centrally located Athletic Center has become evident. The Center would accommodate football, soccer and track. Land would need to be secured for the facility. The cost to develop the venue (less land cost) is estimated at \$5 million.

Recreation Department Organization Chart

The Recreation Department is organized into four units: Aquatics & Wellness, Arts & Special Events, Athletics, Community Centers & Playgrounds. The Deputy Director oversees the Administration, Public Relations, Construction and Computer functions. In addition, the Director oversees "Friends of Tampa Recreation, Inc." and "Can Do Inc.", two non-profit organizations not shown on the chart.



Aquatics & Wellness operates and maintains aquatic and wellness facilities and municipal pools/beaches. Provides programming including "Learn to Swim", lifeguard training and certification, and instructor training.

Arts & Special Events is responsible for citywide special events, craft centers and creative programming. The division also administers the Franklin Street Mall, providing weekly events for downtown workers.

Athletics is responsible for providing adult and youth organized sports leagues for City residents, including officials and coaches, training and facility scheduling.

Community Center & Playgrounds operates community centers, playgrounds, and gymnasiums, including a variety of programs such as games, sports, arts and crafts, educational classes. The division also oversees the after school and summer programs.