

## **Reno Recreation and Parks Commission**

Dear Reno City Council Members:

As your primary advisory body for matters related to parks, the Recreation and Parks Commission is writing to encourage a reinvestment in our public parks. Each year since the 2016-2017 budget, this Commission has written to encourage a modest increase in the parks budget, however we continue to see no substantive increase in park funding. This year, our goal is to again highlight the fact that well-maintained, high quality parks provide essential services to all people living in Reno. In fact, the ReImagine Reno survey of City residents revealed that outdoor recreation was a top priority in our community. Given the community interest in our parks, the Commission is again respectfully requesting a modest 5% increase in the parks 2018-2019 fiscal year operations and maintenance budget.

Despite the now booming economy in Reno, the 2017-18 parks budget remains merely half of its pre-recession level of 2007. Our park maintenance staffing is 3.5 FTEs per 100 developed acres. This is less than half of our adopted standard (from 2003) of 7.5 FTEs, which was based on comparable agencies. This disinvestment has resulted in the general deterioration of our parks and recreation facilities, particularly to our aquatics centers that are not fulfilling public demand and are in a constant state of disrepair. While staff continue to perform admirably, these limitations on personnel and supplies make it impossible for them to come close to attaining park maintenance standards as set by the City Council. As you consider the coming year's budget, please consider the economic, health, and social benefits provided by our parks.

An adequately-funded park system will contribute to the economic growth and well-being of our city. When businesses and home buyers consider Reno as a place to relocate, they invariably weigh the quality of our parks in their decision making process. Due to budget and staffing cuts, the current demands on our parks are already two times higher than the resources available to support the park system. This means that season after season we are watching our parks slowly decline in quality, which reduces our potential for economic growth.

The quality of Reno parks directly affects the health and well-being of residents living in our community. The 86 parks and recreation facilities operated by the city not only provide common space for play, sports, concerts, swimming, and public events, they also act as places for relaxation and the enjoyment of nature. As people get outside and receive physical and mental health benefits of spending time in parks, citizens develop a deeper appreciation for our city and that strengthens our community as a whole.

We believe an investment in our parks is an investment in the future of Reno. As we move deeper into this exciting period of development, it is essential that we think about our public parks as drivers of economic growth and appreciate them for their environmental and community health benefits. In order for Reno to meet its economic potential and prove that it is a city that values a high quality of life, we need to increase the Parks, Recreation and Community Services budget from its current unsustainable level.

Considering the important needs outlined above, the Commission is strongly recommending no less than a 5% increase in fiscal year 2018-19 O&M budget.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Reno Recreation and Parks Commission