

## **Johnson City: Structure of Leisure Services Review 2005**

### Overview

The Johnson City City Manager asked MTAS to study the organizational structure of leisure services in Johnson City. The purpose of the study was to identify possible areas of improvement in the structural arrangement of leisure services.

In order to conduct the study the following methodologies were used:

- Interviews were conducted with key staff including the City Manager, Assistant City Manager, Director of Parks and Recreation, Senior Center Director, Senior Center Operations Manager, Director of Golf, and the Freedom Hall Civic Center Director.
- A review was undertaken of the organizational and operational components of each division.
- Six Tennessee cities were interviewed to determine the structural arrangements of their leisure services. Data, including survey questions and organizational charts, was collected and summarized.
- A review of the literature was conducted in order to identify emerging trends related to the structure of leisure services.
- Prior studies of the Johnson City Parks and Recreation Department were also reviewed.

### The Existing Structure

The structure of the leisure services divisions in Johnson City has been in a state of flux for some period of time. This has largely been due to changes in the key administrative staff of the City, who have altered leisure services divisions in a continued effort to find the best arrangement.

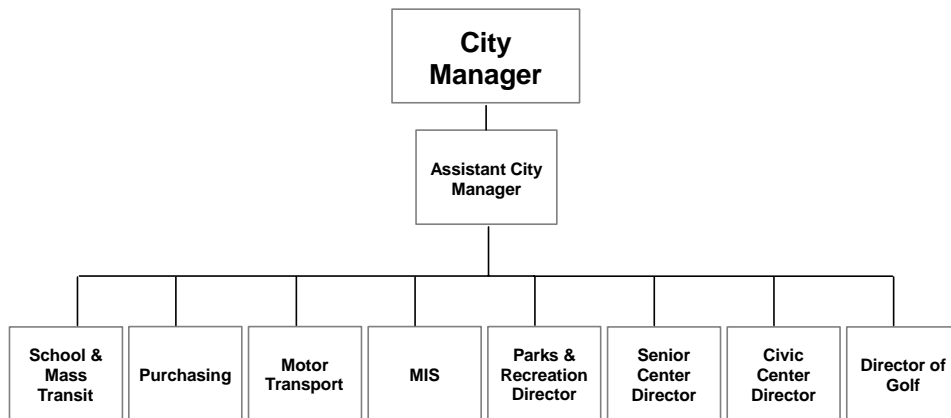
For the most part, there have been two structures which have dominated. The first arrangement (shown on the next page as “A”) reflects a desire to have each division report directly to the Assistant City Manager, thus moving each Director closer to the City’s upper management structure.

The second (shown on the next page as “B”) reflects a desire to coordinate the operations of each division under one leisure services related office. Thus the arrangement has each of the four major divisions reporting to the Director of Parks and Recreation (i.e. Parks and Recreation,

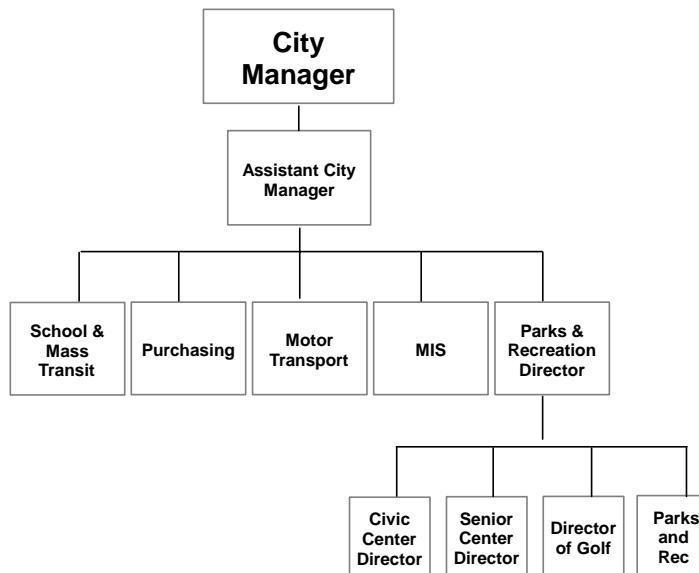
Golf, Senior Center, and the Civic Center).

Each of these arrangements are graphically depicted as follows:

City of Johnson City  
Recent Leisure Services Structure: A



City of Johnson City  
Recent Leisure Services Structure: B



There are positive and negative outcomes related to each of these arrangements: Here is a

brief list of the main pros and cons related to each:

### Arrangement A

#### Pros

- Moves each division closer to the City’s upper management structure, thus strengthening each.
- Provides the opportunity for coordination of resources and activities from a more “generalist” framework.
- Allows for improved coordination with the City’s other divisions.
- Allows for better coordination of Parks and Recreation activities by a Director who is not responsible for other divisions and can thus pay more attention to Parks and Recreation.

#### Cons

- Does not provide for coordination of divisions by a leisure services expert.
- Decreases communications among leisure services divisions due to a dispersal of these divisions with other divisions under the Assistant City Manager. In addition, the ACM position has a great number of other duties which distract the office from closer coordination of leisure services activities (these include responsibility for Motor Transport, School and Mass Transit, MIS, and Purchasing). This being the case, over time each division will probably experience a decreased interaction with the others and thus a “leisure services” department will not exist. Instead, independent divisions, each with “leisure services” components will provide their own services.
- A duplication of support services exists because each division must have its own.

### Arrangement B

#### Pros

- Coordinates the activities of leisure services related divisions under the guidance of a leisure services expert.
- Improved communications among leisure service divisions.
- Moves toward the establishment of a Leisure Services division, which would bring related activities under one umbrella.

#### Cons

- Each of the Supervisors reporting to the Parks and Recreation Director within Parks and Recreation itself must be strong managers because they will not receive as much attention from the Director due to the pull of additional responsibilities from this position.
- Under the current structure “B”, the existing Parks and Recreation Director was asked to assume responsibility for coordination of other divisions (Golf, Senior Center, and Civic Center). This is quite an additional level of responsibility and it may be that the existing Director is not qualified for the position, or may not even want the additional responsibility. This arrangement was put into place due largely to the elimination of other Assistant City Manager positions, thus increasing the responsibility on the one remaining Assistant City Manager. When this occurred, the transition to “B” was necessary in order to relieve the Assistant of responsibility for coordination of all leisure services activities.

There was also a time when some leisure services divisions, such as Golf and the Civic Center, reported directly to the City Manager. This arrangement was deemed unworkable due to the large span of control it imposed on the City Manager’s office.

#### Interviews With Key Staff

As mentioned earlier, a number of key staff were interviewed as a part of this study. Here are key points which emerged during these interviews:

- Two of the four directors are not sure who they report to.
- All of the directors feel strongly that coordination among the divisions is extremely important and should be a focal point of structure. This also means that whoever they report to should be available to devote adequate time to this coordination.
- When asked about which of the two recent structural arrangements work best, opinions are mixed. In general, communication and coordination between departments seems to be higher under structure B (each department reporting to the Parks and Recreation Director). However, in terms of resource allocation and having a voice near the city’s top management, structure A (reporting to the Assistant City Manager) seemed to be the preference. This arrangement was especially preferable during times of budget cuts or budget constraint.
- A number of comments were made giving reference to participation in the city’s overall strategic plan, and this participation would likely increase if reporting relationships were to either the Assistant City Manager or City Manager.
- The directors mentioned that when reporting to the Parks and Recreation Director there is duplication of effort, especially in the areas of purchasing, finance, and accounting. This slows down operations and is a vastly unnecessary amount of bureaucracy and

“oversight”. All would like to go back to working directly with city hall in this regard.

- Some of the directors also believe that the Directors of Golf, the Senior Center, and the Civic Center should be equal in title and pay to the Director of Parks and Recreation.
- Some believe that the Senior Center, Golf, and Civic Center could risk being “lost” under a Director of Parks and Recreation. Thus they should stay more independent or maybe move under a “Director of Leisure Services”.
- Many communications among the directors and between city hall management are by e-mail. A more personal approach is preferred.

Here are a number of other comments which were made during the interviews. Most of these were mentioned by only one individual:

- There is a shortage of manpower, especially in the areas of turf management and maintenance.
- Some staff are underpaid.
- The Parks and Recreation Director believes that the budget cycle for all departments worked better when it was coordinated through his office.
- Responsiveness is a problem. When new ideas are adopted or when actions are taken there is too long a lag time before implementation.
- The directors should be given fiscal “sign off authority” up to a certain amount (\$1,000 was suggested).

#### Data From Other Tennessee Cities

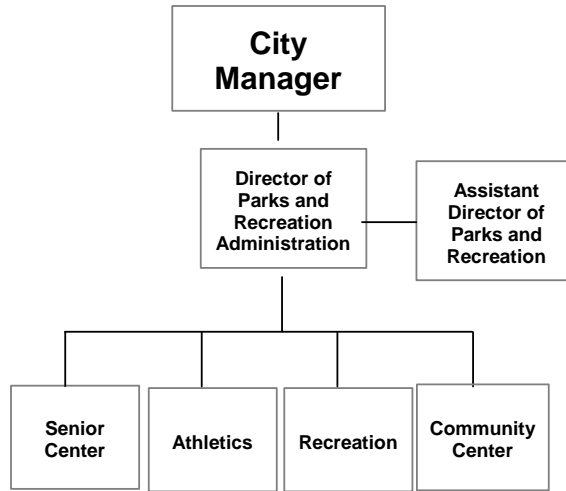
Six other Tennessee were interviewed to determine their structural arrangements for leisure services functions. The results of this data are graphically depicted on the following pages. Here are summary comments from this data:

- None of the cities provide a full range of leisure services similar to Johnson City, including a civic center, senior center, and golf.
- 4 of the 6 cities utilize an Assistant Director, sometimes called Deputy or even Development Administrator. However, only 1 city utilizes the position in a direct supervisory role. The rest use them in an administrative support role.
- Only Murfreesboro has an arrangement where some leisure services report directly to someone other than a leisure services professional (in this case the City Manager).

City of Bartlett (43,608)

Notes: The department is not responsible for golf and there is no civic center.

Title of Department:  
*City of Bartlett Parks and Recreation  
Administration Department*



City of Cleveland (37,311)

Notes: The department is

not responsible for the Senior Center and there is no Civic Center.

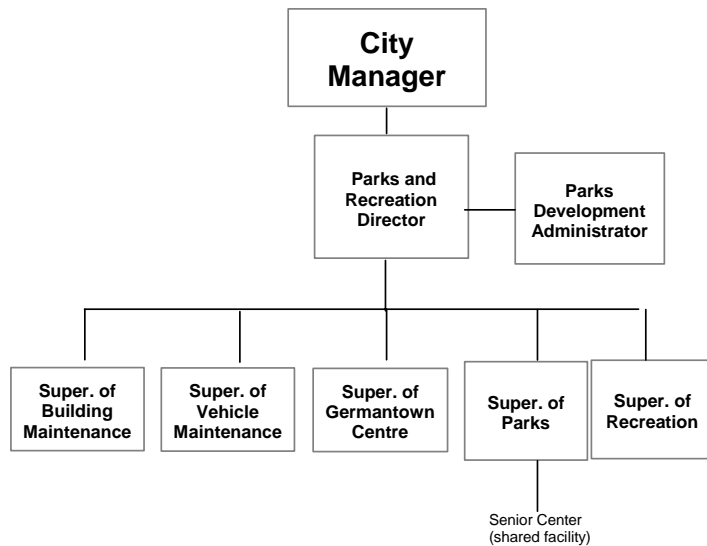
Title of Department:  
*City of Cleveland Parks and  
Recreation Department*



City of Germantown (40,203)

Notes: There is no golf. The Vehicle Maintenance division provides maintenance for all city vehicles (thus it is similar to Johnson City's Motor Transport Division).

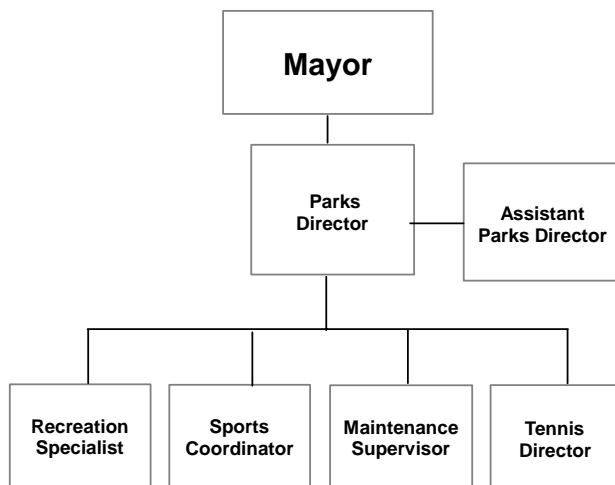
Title of Department:  
*City of Germantown Parks and Recreation Department*



City of Hendersonville  
 (40,849)

Notes: The department is not responsible for golf (the city owns a facility but its operation is contracted) and there is no civic center.

Title of Department:  
*City of Hendersonville Parks Department*

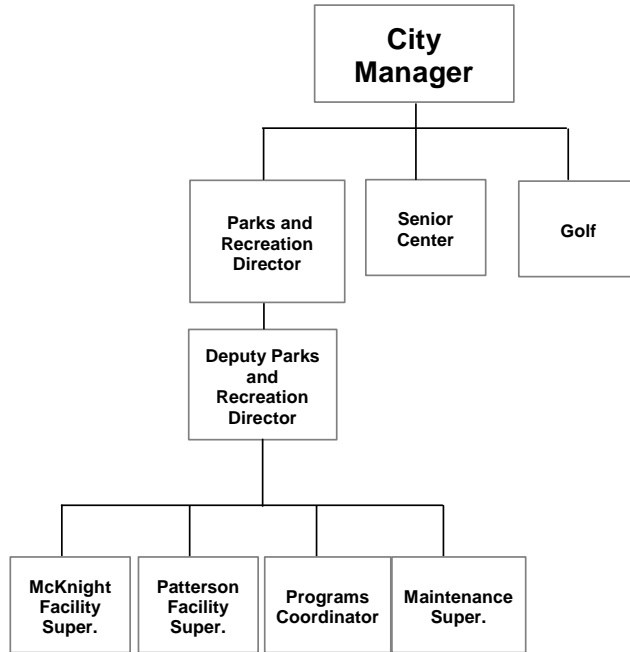


City of Murfreesboro

(75,083)

Notes: There is no Civic Center.

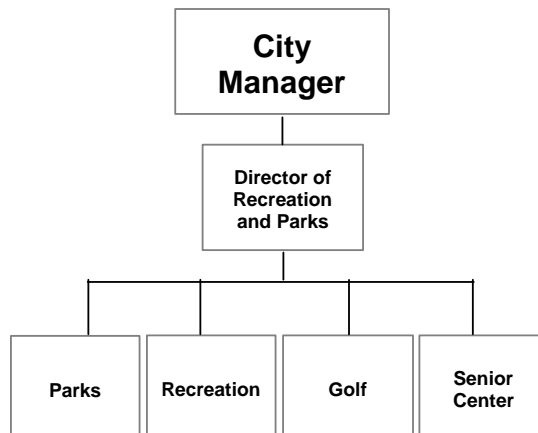
Title of Department:  
*City of Murfreesboro Parks and  
Recreation Department*



City of Oak Ridge (27,387)

Notes: There is no Civic Center.

Title of Department:  
*City of Oak Ridge Recreation and  
Parks Department*





## General Observations and Review of Prior Studies

A review of the literature related to the organizational structure of leisure services does not reveal an established or emerging trend. Instead it appears that most structures are still one of two types: “self-contained” or “centralized”. “Self-contained” refers to all of the component parts of an operation being performed under one roof. This includes all services and support components such as finance, purchasing, human resources, transportation, public relations, etc., each being performed separately for each leisure services function. Thus there is much duplication and additional cost but also a highly coordinated service from an internally functional perspective.

Under a “centralized” approach these functions are independent divisions which serve all of the leisure services components. Thus athletics and senior services, for example, share the leisure services human resource or purchasing functions. It is a highly efficient operation which requires coordination across divisions. Advancements in technology have made “centralized” alternatives more attractive to a greater number of organizations.

Johnson City appears to share characteristics from both of these arrangements. There is duplication of effort, especially in the areas of finance, purchasing and accounting. But there is also separation of function between divisions such as Golf, Senior Center, Civic Center, and Parks and Recreation. However they somewhat share certain support components with city hall, such as human resources.

Review of a 10-year old study of the Johnson City Parks and Recreation Department sheds light on the present struggle to find a suitable structural arrangement. Here are key considerations from the 1994 study:

- In 1994 there were two Assistant City Managers. Now there is one.
- In 1994 there was a Director of Parks and Recreation and two Assistant Directors. Today there is a Director and no Assistants.
- The key recommendation in the 1994 study, as it relates to structure, was for the addition of a Deputy Director position.

In summary then it should be noted that over the past ten years there has been a significant reduction of capacity within both Parks and Recreation and the City’s administrative division itself. In addition, this occurred at a time when Parks and Recreation did not have any responsibility for Golf, the Senior Center or the Civic Center.

## Alternatives For a New Structure

When examining alternatives for a new structure there are important underlying assumptions which need to be stated:

- The structure should contain a capacity to move each leisure service component forward. That is, to design and realize new initiatives and to reach new heights in terms of services and service delivery.
- A structure is needed which provides the capacity to coordinate activities, both administrative and service-related, in order to realize efficiencies.
- A structure is needed which will not burden other City operations and which will improve the capacity of the entire city structure to realize leisure services goals.

Here are structural alternatives:

#### Utilize One Of the Two Recent Structures

Neither of these structures appear to be workable. The first structure, with each division reporting to the Assistant City Manager, will largely result in reduced coordination between leisure services components due to the distraction of the Assistant when addressing other city-wide duties (which may also suffer under this structure). Under this arrangement there will not be a “leisure services” division. Rather, independent divisions, each with leisure services programs, will continue.

The second structure, which utilizes the current Parks and Recreation Director as the “coordinator”, is also ineffective. The current Director cannot devote adequate time to parks and recreation when they also have to attend to the coordination of Golf, Senior services, and the Civic Center. This means that the Director does not have the time to adequately get out and develop relationships with the various boards and committees who interact with leisure services divisions.

In addition, the current Director was not hired based on a capacity to operate a full-service leisure services department. Instead, they inherited that duty. It is not to say that the existing Director is incapable of operating a leisure services division, but it is meant to point out that a different and broader skill set is needed, and the current Director may or may not fill that bill. Many of the procedures utilized in the Parks and Recreation Department may not, for example, work when expanded to the fuller scope of leisure services activities.

#### Alternative Structure “A”

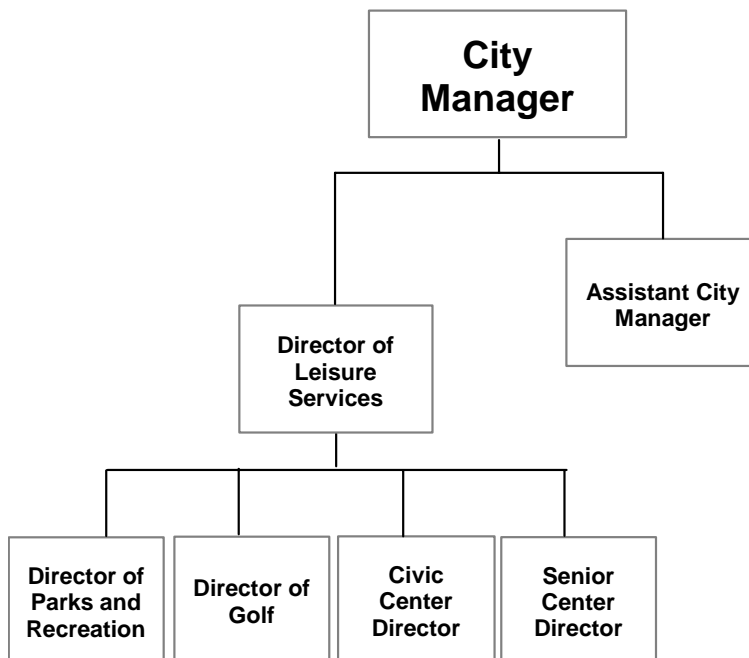
This alternative first creates a true Leisure Services division. At the head of this division is the position of Leisure Services Director. Each of the component Directors (Parks and Recreation, Golf, Civic Center, and Senior Center) will report to this position. This position will report directly to the City Manager. Although this increases the span of control of the Manager,

the new Leisure Services division will be large enough to necessitate direct engagement with the City Manager.

The Director of this Division should be housed somewhere other than Winged Deer Park in order that improved interaction with the City's upper management can occur.

This arrangement is depicted as follows:

*City of Johnson City  
Leisure Services Department  
Alternative "A"*



Other

benefits of this structure include:

- There will be opportunities to coordinate the efforts of the four departments in order to generate efficiencies.
- There will be opportunities for new administrative initiatives such as the networking of computers or the coordination of special events.

- The Directors of each Department will learn to operate more effectively as a team, thereby strengthening each other and learning to contribute to each other's success.
- The City's upper management can exert an improved level of positive leadership and support, as well as constructive feedback regarding Leisure Services operations.
- The capacity to move forward with new initiatives is built into the structure because the Director of Leisure Services does not have responsibility for the operation of any of the four departments.
- There will be greatly improved interactions with the various boards and commissions as well as other citizen groups. These groups can then be adequately assessed in terms of their effectiveness and strengthened where necessary.
- Support services can be shared among the departments and access to the City's upper administrative structure will allow sharing of city-wide resources as well, thus eliminating existing duplication of effort.
- By having the Leisure Services Director report directly to the City Manager, the Assistant City Manager will be able to more fully focus on administrative duties.

#### Alternative Structure "B"

This alternative also creates a Leisure Services division. At the head of this division is the position of Leisure Services Director. Each of the component Directors (Parks and Recreation, Golf, Civic Center, and Senior Center) will report to this position. This position will then report to the Assistant City Manager.

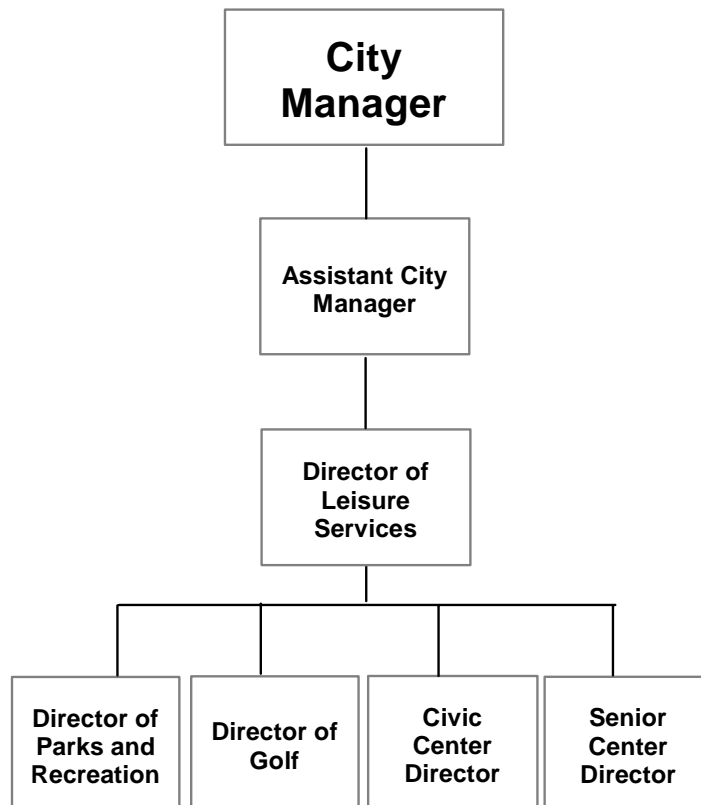
This arrangement is very similar to the existing arrangement if you were to add a new Assistant position in the Parks and Recreation Department. This would free the Parks and Recreation Director to attend matters of coordination between each of the four departments. However, you have essentially then created a "leisure services" division without the title. It would still be called the Parks and Recreation Department, and this dissolves much of the visibility of the other three departments. This being the case, it is recommended that this alternative also move forward with creation of a true leisure services division and that a true Leisure Services Director position be created.

A concern under this structure is the capacity of the Assistant City Manager to provide adequate attention to the new department. He or she will remain "stretched thin" due to the variety of other administrative duties to which they must attend. In addition, the new department would not have as much interaction with the City Manager, which in turn could diminish

opportunities to interact with other key departments and their resources.

The second alternative arrangement is depicted as follows:

*City of Johnson City  
Leisure Services Department  
Alternative "B"*



Summary

Based on the discussions above it is highly recommended that the City consider investing in Alternative “A”. This alternative will provide the capacity to move the full compliment of leisure services activities forward in order to realize their full potential.

In addition, the new Leisure Services Department will become a focal point for interactions with community groups, appointed boards and commissions and other City

departments whose resources Leisure Services will need. These include for example, police services, public works services, public relations, etc.

Finally, there will be a renewed opportunity to approach leisure services from a more “global” perspective. Use of tools such as strategic planning, visioning, and long-range land use development as it relates to leisure services will surely expand. In short, development of leisure services will occur.