



# 4

## RECREATION & PROGRAMMING



# CHAPTER 4

# SUMMARY

## KEY CONCEPTS

- 1. The Department Offers A Diverse Range Of Programming** - across aquatics, recreation, ice, golf, and special events, serving tens of thousands of residents - but cost recovery remains below target across most divisions, pointing to a need for more formalized financial goals and policies.
- 2. Space And Staffing Constraints Are The Biggest Barriers To Programming Growth** - limited access to gyms, fields, and ice time, combined with ongoing seasonal hiring challenges, cap the department's ability to expand offerings and meet growing demand.
- 3. National Trends Favor Fitness, Outdoor Recreation, And Racquet Sports** - activities like pickleball, hiking, and wellness programming are surging in popularity, while traditional team sports are declining, signaling an opportunity to shift programming focus to better align with what residents want.
- 4. Facility Investment Is The Clearest Path To Program Expansion** - across ice, golf, and aquatics, staff identified facility upgrades and additions as the most impactful way to unlock new revenue, increase capacity, and improve the overall experience.

# PROGRAMMING AND RECREATION

The programming and recreation section of the master plan will focus on background information, trends in the industry, staffing, NRPA benchmark data, financials and recommendations.

## Background

The City of Rapid City currently offers programs that fall into the following categories:

- Ice
- Recreation
- Aquatics
- Golf
- Special Events

Passes and facility rentals are also core services.

Primary methods of advertising programs include:

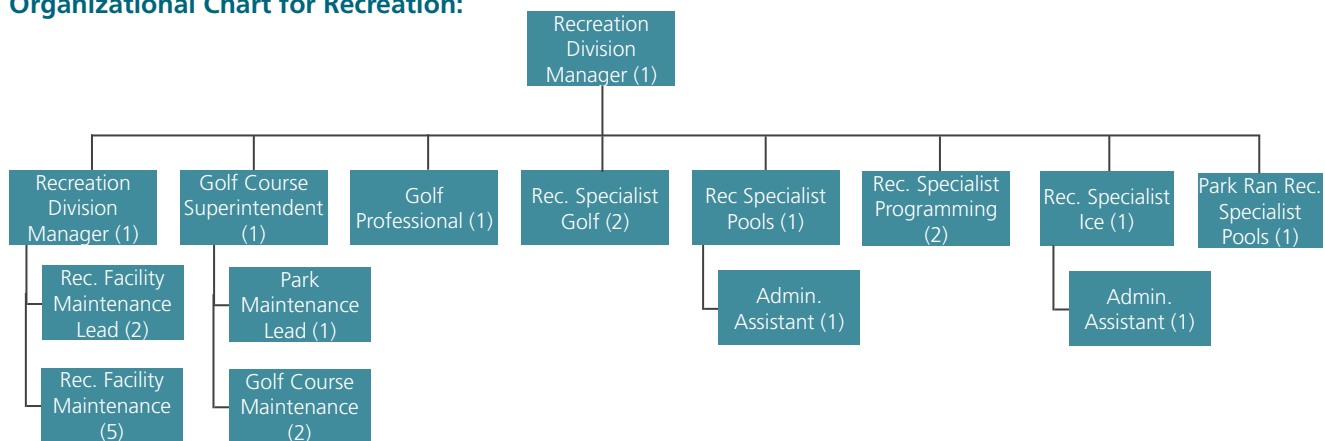
- Trimester Program Guides (winter, summer, fall)
- Social Media
- Word of Mouth

Primary methods of program delivery include:

- Staff Run
- Contract
- Rental

The Department offers, and should continue to offer, online registration for staff-run programs.

## Organizational Chart for Recreation:



While most areas rely heavily on part-time seasonal staff, the Aquatics and Recreation Divisions have the highest demand for part-time staff.

Like with many communities there are challenges with hiring part-time and full-time seasonal staff. Those challenges include the recruiting, hiring, and training of prospective employees. The communities that are not experiencing some of these challenges have a defined method for recruiting and advertising positions. They have also found a way to streamline and expedite the hiring and onboarding process. The expedited hiring process is particularly important when the primary audience for employees is teenagers and college students.

## Staff Engagement and Feedback:

### Aquatics:

- Roosevelt Swim Center – Year-round Operation
  - *Wet Amenities:*
    - » *Leisure Pool*
    - » *Lap Pool*
    - » *Hot Tub*
    - » *Lazy River*
  - *Dry Amenities:*
    - » *Fitness Area (small)*
    - » *Meeting Room (Party Room)*
    - » *Group Exercise Room*
    - » *Administrative Offices*
    - » *Racquetball Courts (2)*
- Four (4) Outdoor Pools
  - *Roosevelt (outdoor 50M)*
  - *Parkview Pool*
  - *Jimmy Hilton Pool*
  - *Horace Mann Pool*
  
  - *Season typically spans from Memorial Day to Labor Day.*
- Part-Time Positions
  - *Lifeguards (also teach swim lessons)*
  - *Head Lifeguards*
  - *Front Desk*
  - *Concessions*
  - *Slide Attendants*
  - *Pool Manager*
- Program Areas Include:
  - *Swim Lessons*
  - *Day Care Lessons*
  - *Open Swim*
  - *Evening Events*
  - *Pool Rentals*
- Passes are available to purchase at the Swim Center. Certain passholders get access to all amenities at the Swim Center as well as entrance at all other City pools. When passes are covered by a person's insurance, the passes can be only be used at the Swim Center.

### Challenges:

- Weather and the summer season can be a challenge. If the summer starts with cooler temperatures, participants can forget about pool use. Conversely a warm summer with lots of participation can wear on staff and lead to staffing shortages.
- Maintaining adequate staffing in August when many staff go back to school.
- Swim team practices are typically scheduled during prime-time usage, making it difficult to offer new City

programs at the same time. This can equate to those new programs being less successful because of when they have to be offered.

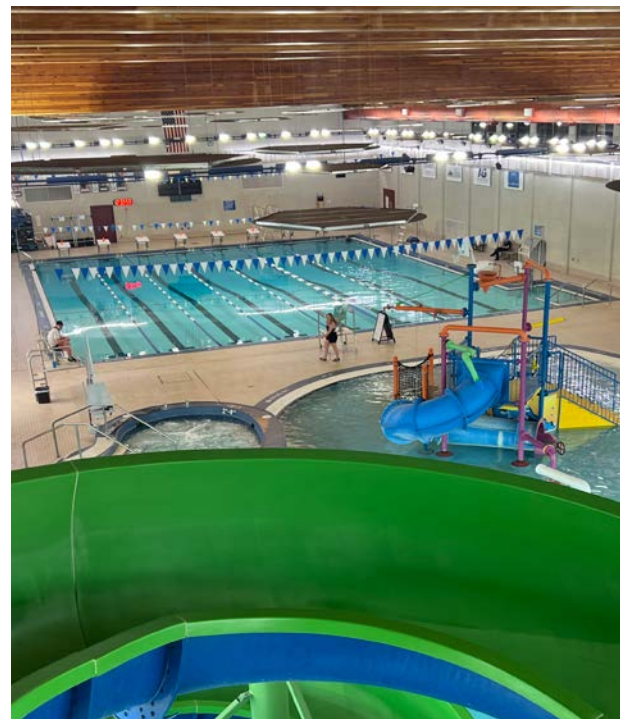
- There is significant pent-up demand for group and private swim lessons.
- Getting lap swimmers to share lap lanes.

### Budget:

- Aquatics does not break even, currently at 45% cost recovery.
- The Department has financial goals for aquatics, but they are not formal, nor are they integrated into a cost recovery policy.
- At one time, there were separate budget lines for each pool, but they have since lumped all pools into one aquatics line item.
- Program & Maintenance budgets are separated.

*We would like to do more of.....*

- Birthday parties on the weekend.
  - *Indoor – likely at capacity for birthday parties.*
  - *Outdoor – challenges with implementation and/or separation.*
- Home school programs.
- Tailored programs. Example: swim lessons that are tailored to a specific user group like home school or public-school groups.
- Water safety education opportunities.
- Seek out the possibility of partnering with the local colleges and universities to include use of the Swim





Center in their college recreation passes.

### Recreation:

- Gymnasium Space
  - Two (2) Community Gyms
- Locations:
  - » South Middle School
  - » West Middle School
- Multiuse Courts that can be configured as:
  - Two (2) Basketball Courts,
  - Three (3) Volleyball Courts, or
  - Three (3) Pickleball Courts
- Priority of Use:
  - 6:00 AM-6:00 PM  
Monday-Friday - School District
  - 6:00 PM-11:00 PM  
Monday-Friday - City
  - 6:00 AM-11:00 PM  
Saturday-Sunday - City
  - City also has all-day priority use during school breaks (winter, spring, summer) and holidays.
- LaCroix Clubhouse
- Outdoor Spaces Currently Utilized for Programs
  - Pickleball Courts – Six (6), unlighted courts in one location.
  - Sand Volleyball – Four (4), lighted courts.
  - Bocce Courts – Sixteen (16), lighted courts
  - Fields:
    - » One (1) rectangle field that is not leased to a league. This field can be split into two (2) football fields.
    - » Three (3) diamond fields that are not leased to a league. The City did not renew a lease for Whitehead Fields and instead moved

the user to a renter of space. Also, the Red Pesek Field is not leased and the Department is seeking a grant for renovation. Both locations will be used by Recreation for a developmental baseball program and will be available to rent.

- Leased Facilities
  - There are 12 partner groups (leaseholders) and around 4 sub-leaseholders that lease outdoor sports facilities in the City.
    - » Black Hills Junior Little League
    - » Black Hills Lacrosse Association
    - » Black Hills Soccer Federation Black Hills Sports (Post 22)
    - » Canyon Lake Little League
    - » Harney Little League
    - » Ignite Soccer Club
    - » Post 320 Baseball
    - » Rapid City BMX
    - » Rapid City Girls Junior Olympics Amateur Softball Association
    - » Rapid City High School Baseball Rapid City Softball Association
  - Diamonds – almost all the diamonds fields in the city are operated by a partner.
  - Rectangles – almost all the rectangle fields and complexes in the city are operated by a partner. Denver Street soccer field, East Minnesota St fields (LaCroix Park), and Mountain View Recreation Field are not leased out.
  - Upkeep and Scheduling at Leased Facilities
    - » The City does not offer programming at those locations, since primary use is granted to leaseholders at each respective facility. Each partner group is responsible for organizing and running their sports programs.

» *The partner groups are expected to address maintenance of the facilities. However, when things break and the repairs are beyond the abilities of the organization, the City fixes them. The groups are occasionally charged for Parks maintenance staff's time on site.*

» *The City provides water and leaseholders pay for all other utilities at these locations.*

- *Many of the leased sports facilities are located in parks that are encumbered by Land and Water Conservation Fund stipulations. In this case, the "encumbrance" is a requirement that parks and facilities which were developed or improved using LWCF funds must remain reasonably open for public use in perpetuity. There are some exceptions, such as designating a prime user (i.e. a league that leases the facility) who has priority use but cannot restrict public access to the fields outside of scheduled practice or game times. To facilitate this arrangement, leaseholders are encouraged to post their schedules in a place visible to the public. Prime users are also allowed to designate one or two fields as "premier fields", which they may lock or otherwise restrict access to, so long as other fields are present at that location and accessible to the public. Premier fields are typically used for championship play and are allowed to be locked up to prevent damage by the public.*

- Part-Time Positions
  - *Various Program Instructors*
  - *Officials*
  - *Camp Staff*
  - *Gym Supervisors*

### Challenges:

- Availability of space (diamonds, rectangles, community gyms, pickleball courts) to offer City-run programs.
- A poorly run program or tournament by the leaseholder could reflect negatively on the City, as it could be perceived that the City was responsible for the poor performance.
- Weather and the impact that it can have on the shoulder season (spring and fall) by limiting opportunities for use because of surfaces not being playable.
- There is an increased demand for upgraded facilities by users.

### Budget:

- Recreation does not break even, currently at 57% cost recovery.
- The Department has financial goals for recreation,

but they are not formal, nor are they integrated into a cost recovery policy.

- Program & Maintenance budgets are separated.

*We would like to do more of.....*

- Introductory level youth sports that utilize gymnasiums, diamonds, and rectangles.
- Rentals of gymnasium space but are currently balancing rentals and Department programming.
- Adult-focused programming (full age spectrum).

### Ice:

- Roosevelt Ice Arena
  - *One (1) NHL-Sized Rink*
  - *Approximately 375 Seats*
  - *Small Concession Stand*
  - *Skate Rental*
  - *Blade Sharpening*
  - *Front Office*
  - *Locker Rooms (5)*
  - *Storage Area (medium size)*
  - *Zamboni Room*
- The building opened in 2001 and is similar to other rinks in the area in terms of construction and amenities.
- The rink was spearheaded by the local hockey association and their need for more ice time. When the City's rink did not meet all their needs, they constructed their own rink. The rink is located on County property but is surrounded by property within the City limits. They have subsequently outgrown that space as well.
- Part-Time Positions
  - *Building Supervisors*
  - *Skate/Rink Guards/Game Operations*
  - *Concessions*
  - *Learn to Skate Staff*
  - *Maintenance*
- Program Areas Include:
  - *Ice Skating*
    - » *Open Skate*
    - » *Learn to Skate Lessons*
    - » *Figure Skating Clubs*
    - » *Freestyle Drop-In*
    - » *Rentals (school groups, private clubs, etc.)*
  - *Hockey*
    - » *Rentals (private, teams, individuals, schools)*
    - » *Learn to Skate Hockey*
    - » *Youth/Adult Drop-in Hockey*
    - » *Adult Stick n Puck*
    - » *Adult Mentor Program*
    - » *Adult Hockey League (City ran this league until 2025. When the staff person in charge*



*of hockey programs retired, the Division decided to transition to a contract delivery method run by the owner group of the Badlands Sabres)*

» *Junior Hockey Team (NA3HL) - Badlands Sabres (team operates out of the rink under a lease agreement. All home games are played at Roosevelt; team puts on youth camps as well)*

- *Curling – contract delivery*
- *Private Rentals*
- *Broom Ball*
- *Birthday Parties*
- Hockey is not a sanctioned high school sport in South Dakota. Private hockey clubs are not run through high schools.

### Challenges:

- The rink is operating at close to capacity right now.
- Demand for ice time is increasing, including private and team rentals, program time, and tournament time.
- Some members of the public refer to the rink as a “hockey rink,” while others think the facility only offers public skate.

### Budget:

- The ice rink does not break even, currently around 50% cost recovery, with a goal of achieving 60%.
- The Department has financial goals for the ice rink, but they are not formal, nor are they integrated into a cost recovery policy.
- Program & Maintenance budgets are separated.

*We would like to do more of.....*

When talking with the ice staff, the focus was less on programs and rentals that they would like to offer more of, but rather on upgrades that they could envision for the existing facility, which would improve operations and/or increase opportunities for revenue generation.

- Facility Improvements
  - *Add a second sheet of ice.*
  - *Increase seating at the existing facility.*
  - *Renovate and upgrade concessions.*
  - *More office, break room, meeting space.*
  - *Expanded locker rooms.*
  - *Add dryland training space that is purpose built, as opposed to how the lobby is currently used for this activity.*
  - *Dedicated pro-shop space.*
  - *Dedicated beer garden area and VIP area.*

### Golf:

- Meadowbrook Golf Course:
  - *18-hole championship course*
  - *6,400 yards from the championship tees*
  - *Two putting/chipping greens*
  - *Grass driving range*
  - *Side range for short iron work*
  - *Maintenance shop*
  - *Second maintenance shop – formerly clubhouse*
  - *Clubhouse*
    - » *Restaurant, bar, pro-shop*
    - » *Locker room section within the bathrooms*
- Executive Golf Course:
  - *9-hole Par 3 course*
    - » *(7) par 3’s*
    - » *(2) par 4’s*
  - *Maintenance shop*
  - *Chipping Green*
  - *Pro-shop and concession area*
- Expansion/Renovations
  - *Meadowbrook was opened for play in 1977*
  - *Executive was opened for play in 1987*
  - *In 2024 and 2025, Executive’s 37-year-old irrigation system was completely replaced in a project costing around \$1.2 million.*
- Trends
  - *According to staff, the rates of participation at Meadowbrook have increased over the last 5 years since the pandemic with 30,000-40,000 rounds annually .*
  - *Executive has seen increased play over the past 14 years.*

- Revenue Generation / Programming includes:
  - *Season Passes at both Meadowbrook and Executive locations.*
    - » *Both courses operate for 35 weeks of the year.*
  - *Meadowbrook:*
    - » *Tournament play*
    - » *Outside event space*
    - » *Leagues*
    - » *Lesson programs*
    - » *Private lessons*
    - » *High school program (Stevens High School, boys and girls)*
    - » *South Dakota High School Athletic Association – state tournament*
  - *Executive:*
    - » *Leagues (one league that the golf course runs, and three leagues that the course oversees but are run by that league itself)*
- Part-Time Positions
  - *Clubhouse Attendant*
  - *Starter/Marshal*
  - *Player’s Assistant*
  - *Cart Washer*
  - *Beverage Cart Worker*
  - *Seasonal Maintenance*

- The budget covers the operations and the annual maintenance.
  - *Some improvements are absorbed by the operational budget.*
- Major improvements are typically funded by the Parks and Recreation CIP budget.

*We would like to do more.....*

When talking with the golf staff, the focus was less on programs and rentals that they would like to offer more of, but rather on upgrades that they could envision for the existing facilities, which would improve operations and/or increase opportunities for revenue generation.

- Meadowbrook
  - *New irrigation*
  - *Improved wayfinding*
  - *Temporary structure for lessons and event shade*
  - *Several bridges need replacement*
  - *New or improved tee boxes*
  - *Fairway work when they address irrigation*
  - *Bathrooms added on the course*
  - *Range was impacted with new starter shack*
  - *Lights for after-hour use of range*
  - *Improved sightlines between the clubhouse and the 1st tee*
- Executive
  - *There is a challenge with homeless population making their way through the course and the impact on bathrooms*
  - *Extension of the maintenance building for storage*
  - *Bridge will need to be updated*
  - *National Recreation & Park Association (NRPA) Comparison Data Points*

### Challenges:

- Within a 10-mile radius, there are four (4) other championship golf courses.
  - » *1 – Country Club*
  - » *3 – HOA*

The waterway (Rapid Creek) running through Meadowbrook and Executive is an asset, but can also create challenges, such as occasional flooding, bank erosion threatening to undermine cart paths or other infrastructure, and safety concerns when golfers and recreational users of the creek are in proximity but doing different activities.

- Some aging infrastructure, in particular the clubhouse at Meadowbrook, bridges, and irrigation.
- Not having a “true” banquet facility at Meadowbrook can hinder them getting some events/rentals.

### Budget:

- Both courses are operated as separate enterprise funds. The expectation is that each course covers the cost of its operations. Depending on the year, they may struggle to hit that financial goal. Between 2022-2025 Meadowbrook has averaged a 95.5% cost recovery and Executive has averaged a 101.8% cost recovery rate.

When developing these comparisons, it is important to note that the project team used the best data available at the time of the study. Comparisons are being made with NRPA member agencies that are in the 50,000-99,999 population range.

Programs Offered by Departments	Percent that Offer
Themed Special Events	91.0%
Social Recreation Events	88.0%
Team Sports	86.0%
Health & Wellness Education	82.0%
Fitness Enhancement Classes	82.0%
Racquet Sports	76.0%
Safety Training	71.0%
Natural & Cultural History Activities	70.0%
Aquatics	68.0%
Cultural Crafts	67.0%
Visual Arts	65.0%
Performing Arts	64.0%
Trips & Tours	63.0%
Martial Arts	57.0%
Running/Cycling Races	55.0%
Golf	50.0%
E-Sports/E-Gaming	27.0%

This data is static and not tailored to the City, but it provides comparison for areas that agencies responding to the NRPA survey offer programs. The highlighted programs are currently offered, at least to some extent, by the Rapid City Recreation Division.

Programs Offered Annually	All Agencies	50,000 - 99,999
Median	250.0	409.0
Lower Quartile	60.0	98.0
Upper Quartile	1,410.0	1,708
Rapid City		1,708

While the number of programs offered by the City varies, they had approximately 253,931 registrations in 2024 over the four areas of aquatics, recreation, ice, and golf.

Fee Based Programs	All Agencies	50,000 - 99,999
Median	82.0%	84.0%
Lower Quartile	57.0%	67.0%
Upper Quartile	95.0%	95.0%

The City does offer a wide variety of programs many of which are fee based. The median percentage of fee based programs for communities of a similar size is 84.0%. It is common for agencies that have fee based programming to also have programs that are free of charge, or are subsidized in another way.

Programs for Children, Older Adults, and those w/ Disabilities	All Agencies	50,000 - 99,999
Summer Camp	83.0%	72.0%
Specific Senior Programs	77.0%	67.0%
Specific Teen Programs	68.0%	54.0%
Programs for People w/ Disabilities	67.0%	47.0%
STEM Programs	60.0%	43.0%
After-School Programs	54.0%	46.0%
Preschool	33.0%	30.0%
Before-School Programs	18.0%	16.0%
Full Daycare	8.0%	6.0%

This chart illustrates that there are some differences between all agencies and those with a population of 50,000-99,999. A common trend is that larger communities align more closely with all agencies, in comparison to smaller communities. The project team is not suggesting the City should or shouldn't begin to offer these types of programs, but is simply providing background into what agencies around the nation are doing.

**Programming Trends (national and regional):**

*Recreation Participation Numbers and Trends*

The following are some general summaries of recreation participation statistics from a variety of sources.

National Sporting Goods Association (NSGA): Their annual survey (2024) indicates the ranking of the top 10 sports activities nationally as well as the level of participation.

## Sports Participation Ranking in 2024

Sport	National Rank <sup>1</sup>	National Participation (in millions)
Exercise Walking	1	105.1
Hiking	2	54.9
Exercising w/ Equipment	3	50.7
Swimming	4	46.9
Bicycle Riding	5	40.6
Running/Jogging	6	40.4
Camping (Vacation/Overnight)	7	39.2
Weightlifting	8	37.6
Workout @ Club	9	30.7
Fishing (Fresh Water)	10	30.7

It is important to note that the top ten activities are dominated by fitness-related activities and outdoor recreation pursuits.

The NSGA also lists several sports activities and the percentage of growth or decline that each has experienced nationally over the last ten years (2015-2024).



<sup>1</sup> This rank is based upon the 57 activities reported on by NSGA in their 2024 survey instrument.

## Sports Activity Participation Changes Over Time

Activities Increasing in Participation	2015 Participation (in millions)	2024 Participation (in millions)	Percent Change
Pickleball	1.7	15.4	805.9%
Surfing	2.2	3.8	72.7%
Boxing	3.6	6.0	66.7%
Pilates	5.6	8.0	42.9%
Kayaking	9.2	12.6	37.0%
Strength Training	0.0 <sup>2</sup>	81.2	35.8%
Table Tennis/Ping Pong	10.5	14.2	35.2%
Cardio Fitness	78.1	105.5	35.1%
Hiking	42.0	54.9	30.7%
Skateboarding	5.7	7.2	26.3%
Skiing (cross country)	2.4	3.0	25.0%
Wrestling	3.0	3.7	23.3%
Scuba Diving (open water)	2.5	3.0	20.0%
Mountain Biking (off road)	5.6	6.7	19.6%
Paintball Games	5.1	6.1	19.6%
Target Shooting (air gun)	5.2	6.2	19.2%
Boating (motor/power)	14.1	16.6	17.7%
Tennis	12.8	15.0	17.2%
Skiing (alpine)	6.1	7.1	16.4%
Golf	18.6	21.6	16.1%
Ice/Figure Skating	7.6	8.8	15.8%
Dart Throwing	10.2	11.7	14.7%
Bicycle Riding	36.0	40.6	12.8%
In-Line Roller Skating	4.9	5.5	12.2%
Gymnastics	5.8	6.5	12.1%
Soccer	14.1	15.8	12.1%
Snowboarding	4.3	4.8	11.6%
Water Skiing	3.5	3.9	11.4%
Muzzleloading	2.7	3.0	11.1%
Hunting w/ Bow & Arrow	5.7	6.3	10.5%
Weightlifting	34.8	37.6	8.0%
Target Shooting (live ammunition)	20.4	21.7	6.4%
Fishing (salt water)	9.7	10.3	6.2%
Hockey (ice)	3.3	3.5	6.1%
Cheerleading	3.7	3.9	5.4%
Billiards/Pool	21.5	22.5	4.7%
Fishing (fresh water)	29.5	30.7	4.1%
Football (flag)	6.6	6.7	1.5%
Swimming	46.3	46.9	1.3%
Volleyball	10.7	10.8	0.9%

<sup>2</sup> NSGA did not collect data on this activity in 2015.

Over the last 10 years, key areas of program growth have occurred in fitness related activities.

Activities Decreasing in Participation	2015 Participation (in millions)	2024 Participation (in millions)	Percent Change
Exercise Walking	106.3	105.1	-1.1%
Canoeing	7.4	7.3	-1.4%
Camping (Vacation/Overnight)	40.1	39.2	-2.2%
Basketball	24.8	23.9	-3.6%
Martial Arts / MMA	6.6	6.3	-4.5%
Backpack/Wilderness Camping	12.3	11.5	-6.5%
Yoga	30.7	28.6	-6.8%
Running/Jogging	44.5	40.4	-9.2%
Exercising w/ Equipment	56.3	50.7	-9.9%
Baseball	11.8	10.6	-10.2%
Lacrosse	2.9	2.6	-10.3%
Football (tackle)	7.8	6.6	-15.4%
Workout @ Club	36.6	30.7	-16.1%
Bowling	35.2	28.8	-18.2%
Softball	9.8	7.9	-19.4%
Archery (Target)	8.4	6.7	-20.2%
Hunting w/ Firearms	17.7	13.2	-25.4%
Football (touch)	9.2	6.8	-26.1%

It is true that some of the activities that are showing declining participation over the past 10 years are still ranked in the top 10 sports activities by number of participants (ex. Exercise Walking, Running/Jogging, Camping, Workout at Club, and Exercising w/ Equipment).

Many of the declines in participation are related to traditional team sports such as baseball, football, basketball, and softball.

*Sports & Fitness Industry Association (SFIA)* – Their 2025 Sports, Fitness and Leisure Activities Top-Line Participation Report indicated the rate of participation by major sports activity categories over the last 5 years.

### National Participation Comparisons

Activity Category	2019 Percentage	2024 Percentage	Percentage Change
1.Fitness Sports	67.3%	68.8%	+2.2%
2.Outdoor Sports	50.7%	58.6%	+15.6%
3.Individual Sports	45.0%	42.8%	-4.9%
4.Team Sports	23.4%	27.8%	+18.8%
5.Racquet Sports	13.0%	19.7%	+51.5%
6.Water Sports	13.6%	16.5%	+21.3%
7.Winter Sports	8.2%	9.9%	+20.7%

Fitness related sports continued to be the most popular activity category, but racquet sports have shown the greatest percentage increase over the last five years due in large part to pickleball. Team sports, water sports, winter sports, and outdoor sports have all seen an increase as well. Individual sports have seen a decrease in participation.

Much of the participation data was affected by COVID-19 during 2020. Key impacts include:

- Fitness activities that require amenities typically found in fitness clubs (group exercise, stationary cycling, cross-training, aqua exercise, etc.) decreased in numbers.
- Fitness activities that require limited equipment and do not require a fitness center (running/jogging, free weights, and yoga) showed the greatest increases.
- Outdoor activities that experienced large increases were road biking, skateboarding, and surfing.
- Team sports had a mixed impact with basketball and soccer having increases (mostly attributed to pick-up play) while volleyball, swimming on a team, gymnastics and cheerleading all had decreases.

### Top Activities with Intent to Participate by Age (according to SFIA)

Rank	Age 6-12	Age 13-17	Age 18-24	Age 25-34	Age 35-44	Age 45-54	Age 55-64	Age 65+
<b>Rapid City Pop.</b>	6,432 8.4%	4,757 5.9%	7,595 9.5%	11,325 14.3%	10,772 13.6%	8,452 10.7%	8,339 10.6%	16,079 20.2%
1	Camping	Camping	Running/Jogging	Running/Jogging	Camping	Camping	Camping	Fishing
2	Fishing	Working out with free weights	Working out with free weights	Cardio Fitness	Fishing	Fishing	Fishing	Cardio Fitness
3	Running/Jogging	Swimming for Fitness	Cardio Fitness	Working out with free weights	Running/Jogging	Cardio Fitness	Treadmill	Treadmill
4	Soccer	Working out using machines	Treadmill	Treadmill	Cardio Fitness	Treadmill	Cardio Fitness	Camping
5	Swimming for Fitness	Hiking	Camping	Yoga	Working out with free weights	Working out with free weights	Swimming for Fitness	Working out with free weights
6	Basketball	Fishing	Working out using machines	Working out using machines	Treadmill	Hiking	Working out with free weights	
7	Hiking	Bicycling	Yoga	Camping	Yoga	Working out using weight resistance machines	Hiking	Yoga
8	Cheerleading	Cardio Fitness	Swimming for Fitness	Swimming for Fitness	Hiking	Yoga	Yoga	Hiking
9	Bicycling	Running/Jogging	Basketball	Fishing	Swimming for Fitness	Running/Jogging	Shooting	Working out using machines
10	Baseball	Basketball	Hiking	Basketball	Working out using machines	Swimming for Fitness	Working out using machines	Shooting

On the previous page the most popular (top 3) activities that all age groups intend to participate in are related to fitness or outdoor recreation. Of activities ranked #4-10 by all age groups, a majority of them are still in those categories. This data also shows the intent to participate in team sports like basketball and soccer largely drops off after age 35. However, activities that can be enjoyed in a social, group setting like yoga, hiking, camping, and cardio fitness remain highly ranked for adults 35 and above.

The chart also provides the population and percentage of population in the various age groups in Rapid City for comparison. This information can be used to help direct where new programming might focus.

Recreation Management Magazine – Annually, the magazine prints their State of the Industry Report that examines trends in parks and recreation. Their 2024 report indicated the following as it relates to recreation programs and services.

### Programming Most Commonly Offered in 2024

	Percent of All Agencies Nationally	Percent of All Agencies Nationally
1.	Holiday and Other Special Events	78.3%
2.	Group Exercise Programs	65.0%
3.	Educational Programs	61.8%
4.	Fitness Programs	61.5%
5.	Day Camps/Summer Camps	60.2%
6.	Youth Sports Teams	57.1%
7.	Arts & Crafts Programs	55.5%
8.	Mind-Body Balance Programs (Yoga)	54.1%
9.	Active Older Adult Programs	52.4%
10.	Sports Tournaments & Races	47.5%

### Most Commonly Planned Program Additions in 2024

	Activity Category	Percent of All Agencies Nationally
1.	Environmental Education Programs	26.4%
2.	Educational Programs	24.1%
3.	Holiday Events and Other Special Events	23.8%
4.	Fitness Programs	22.5%
5.	Mind-Body Balance Programs	22.2%
6.	Adult Sports Teams	22.2%
7.	Teen Programming	22.2%
8.	Programs for Active Older Adults	22.2%
9.	Group Exercise Programs	20.6%
10.	Special Needs Programs	19.6%

There is a wide range of program areas that public parks and recreation agencies planned to add in 2024.

Outdoor Foundation – The 2024 Outdoor Participation Report indicates the most popular outdoor activities by rate of participation.

Activity	National Participation (% of the U.S. population aged six and older)
1. Hiking	20.0%
2. Fishing	18.2%
3. Running	17.9%
4. Camping	17.7%
5. Biking	17.2%

Participation in all outdoor recreation grew 4.1% in 2023 to 175.8 million, amounting to 57.3% of the U.S. population. 22.2 million more Americans aged six and older are participating in outdoor recreation in 2023 than were participating in 2019. Participation soared in 2020 with the pandemic and many indoor venues having restrictions, and as these have been lifted, many questioned if participation would be sustained. This proves once individuals are introduced to a new activity, they tend to continue to participate.

The overall participant base is more diverse than ever in both race/ethnicity and age. Participants of color are driving an increase in overall outdoor recreation with 10.3% of participants being Black and 13.4% being Hispanic. In addition, the participation rate for those 65 and older grew by 11.5% in 2024.

Despite the overall increase in participation, not all information is positive. The Outdoor Foundation defines core participation as those individuals that participate in an activity 51 times or more over the course of a year. Core participation declined again as it has since peak participation levels of 2007. The total number of outdoor outings has also been declining.



## Specific Recreation Program Trends

Below are shown current recreation program trends by major program areas developed by Ballard\*King & Associates. However, it should be noted that each community is unique which has a strong bearing on individual trends and other operational factors.

Program Area	Specific Programs Experiencing Increased Demand
Sports	Youth Lacrosse
	Adult Soccer
	Adult Cricket
	Youth & Adult Rugby
	Pickleball
	Youth Camps and Clinics
	Individual Sports (Fencing)
	Adventure/Non-Traditional (BMX, Mountain Biking, Disc Golf, Ultimate Frisbee)
	E-Sports Competitions and Tournaments
	Youth Sports Specific Training
Fitness/Wellness	Functional Training Classes
	Personal/Small Group Training
	Yoga
	Nutrition/Cooking
	Healthy Lifestyle Education
Cultural Arts	Musical Production for Youth
	Digital Media
Youth Education	Before and After School Programs at Recreation Centers, Specialty Summer Camps
Outdoor	Camps, STEAM
	Eco-Tourism
Seniors	Environmental Education
	Fitness/Wellness
	Sports (pickleball)
Aquatics	Baby Boomer Focused Activities
	Therapy
General Interest	Triathlon Training
	Personal Finance
Special Events	Cooking
	Community Wide Events
Social Services	Health & Wellness
	Feeding Programs, Job Training, Educational Support, Childcare
Other	Virtual Programming

## Other Programming Trends

- Recreation departments now often serve as a coordinating agency and a clearinghouse for multiple recreation organizations and providers, to bring a comprehensive scope of recreation programs to a community. This has also increased the number of partnerships that are in place to deliver a broader base of programs in a more cost-effective manner.

- There has been a growing focus amongst parks and recreation agencies to adapt existing and create new programs for individuals with disabilities. In many cases departments are either partnering with an agency to help them adapt programs, or they are hiring a staff member with that focus.
- There is a greater emphasis on a fee for service concept in contrast to free programming or those with a significant subsidy, especially for more specialized programming. This is supported by a formal fee policy.
- Programming continues to emphasize the needs of youth and seniors but has also focused more on adults and the family unit.
- Specific programming development trends include:
  - Virtual programming remains even after COVID.
  - Developing programs that are single day or no more than four sessions in length.
  - Developing programs for youth during non-school days.
  - Offering a variety of summer camps with different areas of interest.
  - More Saturday programs and the introduction of some Sunday programming (especially in adult sports leagues).
  - Senior programming that occurs in the evening or on the weekends to appeal to seniors who are still in the work force.
  - Introducing programs that are oriented toward specific ethnic groups.
  - Developing a baseline of programs that appeal to the family unit.
  - Staggering the days and times of similar programs that are offered at multiple locations.
  - Pay per class fitness or purchasing a bundle of classes through a punch pass.
  - Expanded senior programming to include a greater focus on the Baby Boomer generation which often means programs and services that are available in the evenings and on weekends and those that have a more active orientation.
- There has been a concerted effort to integrate conventional recreation programming with community-based social service programs and education. Most of the social service programs are offered by other community-based agencies and education is often coordinated with school districts.
- Program performance measures are tracked including:
  - Program registration comparisons by year for each season.
  - Rates of fill (especially for fee-based programming).
  - Participation numbers and comparisons to past years/seasons.
  - Rate of program cancellations (for fee-based programming).

- Financial performance including cost per participant.
- Evaluations from participants.
- A life cycle analysis is completed for all programs offered by the agency. Programs are classified in three categories and agencies strive to have program offerings distributed equally among each category.
  - New – programs in the start-up phase that are just starting to build in popularity.
  - Mature – programs that have consistent high levels of registrations and are still growing in popularity.
  - Old – programs that are seeing a decline in popularity

### Rapid City Recreation Division Budget Analysis

The following pages provide budget analysis by functional area for Rapid City.

Aquatics	Revenue	Expense	Recovery %
2022	\$1,133,201	\$2,666,780	42%
2023	\$1,123,964	\$2,703,828	42%
2024	\$1,242,535	\$2,966,600	42%
2025	\$1,317,368	\$2,950,000	45%
2026	-	\$3,006,013	-

- From a national perspective most stand-alone aquatic facilities have a goal of recovering 50-75% of their operating expenditures which includes maintenance of the facility through revenue generation.
- The City currently lumps all pool operations into one budget, so while the overall recovery percentage is below 50%, it is quite possible that some of the facilities are exceeding the cost recovery goal while others fall short.
  - For example, the overall recovery rate for the outdoor pools was 46% in 2025. Individually, the recovery rates for the outdoor pools were as follows:
    - » Jimmy Hilton – 55%
    - » Parkview – 48%
    - » Horace Mann – 37%

Recreation	Revenue	Expense	Recovery %
2022	\$245,673	\$440,789	56%
2023	\$249,609	\$417,000	60%
2024	\$314,574	\$502,754	63%
2025	\$335,000	\$592,000	57%
2026	-	\$683,470	-

- Because the “recreation” category is broad, there are not defined “industry standards” for cost recovery in this area.

Ice Arena	Revenue	Expense	Recovery %
2022	\$408,087	\$778,811	52%
2023	\$480,848	\$926,316	52%
2024	\$489,339	\$972,353	50%
2025	\$430,000	\$953,000	45%
2026	-	\$1,164,460	-

- Most stand-alone ice facilities have a goal of recovering 75-100% of their operating expenditures through revenue generation.

### Golf:

Meadowbrook	Revenue	Expense	Recovery %
2022	\$1,187,607		95%
2023	\$1,268,849		91%
2024	\$1,268,849		97%
2025	\$1,445,127		99%
2026	-	1,493,904	-

Executive	Revenue	Expense	Recovery %
2022	\$293,477	\$291,493	101%
2023	\$345,889	\$323,786	107%
2024	\$316,473	\$324,436	98%
2025	\$379,026	\$375,000	101%
2026	-	\$447,664	

- Most stand-alone golf course operations within a municipality typically have a cost recovery goal of 100%. Rapid City’s two municipal courses have achieved or were close to achieving this recovery rate from 2022-2025. Executive Golf Course even made a profit in 2022, 2023, and 2025. 2024 was just short of the recovery goal, due to a shortened season caused by construction closures for the irrigation replacement project.

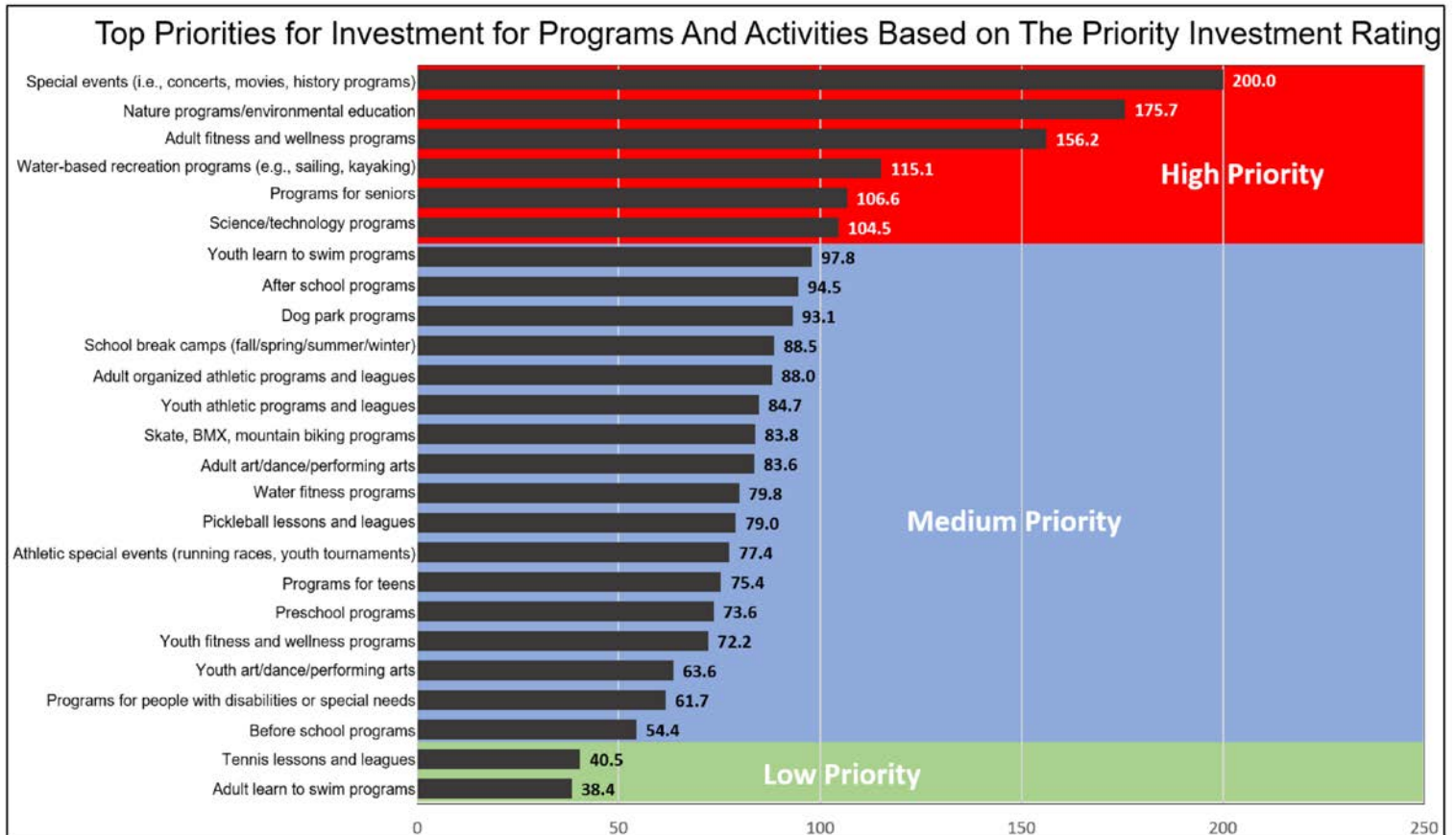


## Program Recommendations:

The following recommendations are for the Rapid City's programs. These recommendations are based on information gathered from the community, feedback from City staff, existing conditions, trends, and capacity. The project team recognizes that some of these recommendations are easily implemented, while others may require time and resources.

- As a point of reference, Rapid City has 250,000+ program participants on an annual basis for their existing programs.

This chart from the survey conducted by ETC Institute illustrates where the public would like to see additional program focus.



## Aquatics:

- The City currently operates their aquatic facilities and actively programs those spaces.
- Participation in aquatics is variable based on the season and the weather.
- Aquatic participation has a multi-generational focus.
- Recommendation:
  - Continue to offer the full complement of aquatic programs.
  - Continue with competitive aquatics w/ consideration the expansion of the masters program as they can be users of the facility at low-use times.
  - Consider re-writing learn to swim program to expand opportunities for instructors.
  - Continue to follow trends with group exercise.
    - » Trends could include stand up paddle board yoga, pool-lates, pool-kickboxing, incorporation of more male participants.
- Consider implementation/expansion of therapy programs
  - » These are typically achieved through a partnership with a health care provider. They can be as simple as offering dedicated water walking time to the public or can have one-on-one trainer participant focus.

## Ice:

- The City currently operates their ice facility and actively rents and programs that space.
- Participation trends in ice (primarily hockey, figure skating, and curling) can be cyclical, typically following the 4-year Olympic cycle.
- Participation in hockey and figure skating has a youth and young adult focus.
- There is a regional draw for both ice programs and facilities.
- Recommendation:
  - *The City should evaluate the operations of the ice rink. Specifically, they should identify low use times and patterns to determine if there are opportunities for additional programs and rentals, thereby increasing the cost recovery percentage.*
  - *Evaluate ice rental fees*
  - *Seek out opportunities to offer open skate at times that would maximize participation. The recommendation is not to increase the total amount of time scheduled for open skate but to increase open skate participation by scheduling it at more widely accessible times of day.*

## Golf:

- The City currently operates both of their golf facilities and offers a variety of leagues, memberships, individual play, and lesson opportunities.
- The golf participation trend has increased over the past five (5) years because of the pandemic. That participation increase is beginning to flatten.
- Golf participation has a multi-generational focus.
- Recommendations:
  - *To better compete with other providers, look for ways to maximize participation and differentiate the City's courses from other courses.*
  - *The project team would not recommend expansion of the existing courses .*
  - *Evaluate infrastructure to maintain market position with both programs and rentals. Having amenities that are up-to-date, comfortable, and flexible will help the golf courses remain competitive, maintain or improve regular participation, and help secure tournaments or other special events.*

## Special Events:

- The City currently offers special events to the community year-round.
- The bulk of the special events that they offer are youth and teen focused.

## Recommendations:

- *Consider additional events. Before adding, identify times of the year when there is a lull in the special event or program calendar.*
- *The Department currently has a special events coordinator on staff, but that is not their sole focus. If the events calendar expands, it may require a full-time dedicated staff member for special events.*

## Recreation:

- The City currently offers sports programs (outdoor/ indoor leagues) and summer camps.
- The programs are very sport-centric currently, but the demand for youth sports continues to grow. However, there is opportunity to expand similar sports activities to adults making the program offerings more multi-generational.
- A significant challenge with program expansion in recreation is the availability of indoor space.}]
- Recommendations:
  - *Consider offering more adult programming, primarily through partnerships.*
  - *Consider offering senior programming, again in a perfect scenario through partnerships.*
  - *Monitor the supply and demand for before school and after school programs.*
  - *The Department may want to consider the inclusion of more enrichment opportunities. This is an area that they currently do not offer programs. This could be accomplished through partnership or working with contract instruction.*
    - » *Examples of enrichment programming include; painting, drawing, cartooning, fiber arts, pottery, paper, etc.*

## Rentals:

- The City has multiple opportunities with the number of facilities the department offers – ice rink, pools, community gyms, diamonds, rectangles, pickleball courts, etc.
- Rentals can be a significant source of revenue generation if priced appropriately.
- The biggest challenge with rentals is the times that individuals or groups want. In many cases those times are concurrent with peak program times. This overlap in demand forces the Department to make a choice between rentals and programming. If the Department increases programming, it could mean a decrease in rentals. Conversely, if there is an increase in rentals it could mean a decrease in programming.

- Recommendations:
  - *Continue to offer rentals.*
  - *Aquatic and ice rentals should be significant revenue generating line items.*
    - » *Rental rates should be evaluated on an annual basis.*
    - » *Those rates should be compared to other providers or peer communities.*
    - » *Cost recovery goals should be considered in this process.*
    - » *Rental rate increases should be introduced on a bi-annual basis.*
    - » *Rental rate increases should be introduced to current renters of space well in advance of implementation, so that they can be planned for.*
  - *Indoor space rentals need to be monitored so that rentals do not displace existing programs or limit the Department's ability to introduce new programs.*

### Recreation Maintenance:

- Currently recreation maintenance is reflected in operating budgets. It would be valuable to the Department to know within each functional budget (aquatics, ice, recreation, golf, etc.) what percentage was going to maintenance.
- Having a dedicated maintenance staff for the recreation amenities is a best practice and should continue.
- The current staffing level is adequate but lean, which is to say they likely cannot absorb more with the current staffing levels.
- If the City were to move away from the model of leaseholders maintaining leased facilities to the City maintaining them, they do not currently have adequate staff to make that move. To accommodate this there would need to be a dedicated crew for the rectangle and diamond inventory.

### Overarching Program Recommendations:

- Continue to use the three delivery models of staff run, contract employees, and rental of space.
- The Department needs to develop formal cost recovery goals , which can then lead to policies that address:
  - *Establishing fees.*
  - *Development of new programs.*
  - *Elimination of poor performing programs.*
- Continue to monitor trends and introduce new programs as space, staffing, and budgets allow.
- Continue to foster partnerships in program delivery, while at the same time ensuring groups do not have exclusive use of facilities.
- Continue to track participation figures, adopt new performance measures (cost recovery and participation figures), and use those for decision making.

### Staffing:

- Continue to monitor staffing levels.
- Begin succession planning processes and encourage leadership development to illustrate upward mobility in the Department.

### Budgetary Practices:

- Continue to track budget as is currently done.
- Develop cost recovery goals by area.