

## **Sparks Parks and Recreation Commission**

Dear Sparks City Council:

As your primary advisory body for issues related to parks, the Sparks Parks and Recreation Commission is writing to encourage a reinvestment in our public parks. This Commission believes that well-maintained parks provide essential services to all citizens of Sparks. As we move further into this period of growth it is important that our parks system be adequately funded.

Despite the economic recovery, the current parks budget remains a fraction of what it was before the recession. Both the Community Services Department and the Parks and Recreation Department do amazing work on a shoestring budget. However, the Parks Division has only 14 full time staff members working in parks for 95,726 Sparks' residents. This equates to .68 staff for every 10,000 residents which is well below the national average of a typical city the size of Sparks, with 7.3 staff for every 10,000 residents (Source: 2017 National Recreation and Park Association Agency Performance Review). While staff continue to perform admirably, these personnel limitations make it impossible to sustain the quality of parks that our citizens expect. As you consider the coming year's budget, please keep in mind 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 Sparks as a place to relocate, they invariably weigh the quality of our parks in their decision-making process. Due to staffing cuts, the current demands on our parks are already much 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 Sparks parks directly affects the health and well-being of residents living in our community. The 51 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 the 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.

An investment in our parks is an investment in the future of Sparks. 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 Sparks to meet its economic potential and prove that it is a city that values a high quality of life, we need to make our parks a priority.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Sparks Parks and Recreation Commission