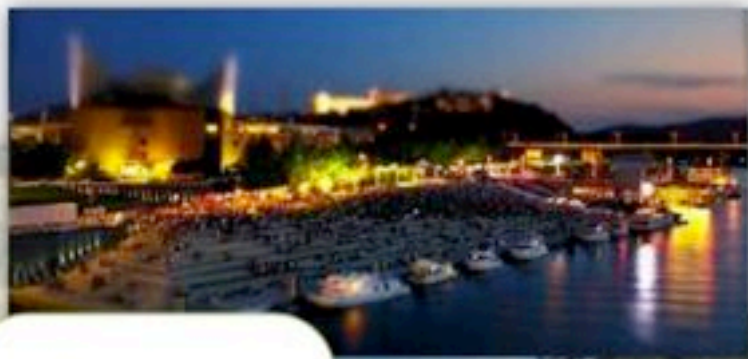


# Chattanooga Forward

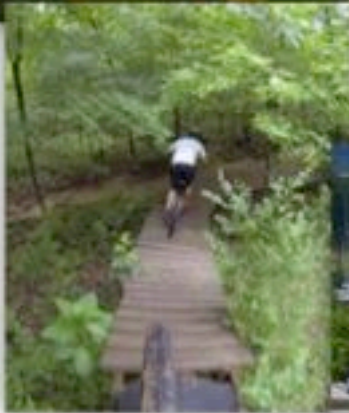
Sports & Outdoors Committee

Fall, 2014



*"The cities and mansions that people dream of are those in which they finally live."*

— Lewis Mumford



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## Committee Members and Charge:

For decades, our City has been defined by its unique natural beauty. We should continue to nurture and grow the special relationship we share with recreation and the outdoors. This task force will work to expand the frequency and the type of recreation opportunities. It will also strengthen the connections between Chattanooga and the outdoors.

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## Executive Summary:

Based on documented research and advice from experts in the field, the Sports and Outdoors Committee recommends the following:

1. Reassess the original call for an outdoor initiative (Woolf, 2004) to determine progress made, areas for improvement, and relevance to our modern context.
2. Revamp Outdoor Chattanooga to adhere closer to its original intent, thereby establishing broader reaching initiatives.
3. The City should provide the necessary support and resources to facilitate this transition, then work to make the initiative more sustainable.
4. Establish a Mayor's Wellness Campaign to strengthen and enhance the Outdoor Initiative, as well as combatting poor health trends in the region. This should include a multifaceted approach, involving health care providers, recreation programmers, and other relevant parties.
5. Streamline the event permitting process to make it more accessible, efficient, and standardized.
6. Invest in a robust, comprehensive communications plan for the city's sports, outdoors, and special events. This should include consistent branding, consistent terminology, modern and efficient methods of communication (i.e. user-friendly apps and websites), physical kiosks, and physical signage.
7. Prioritize facility developments to address: safety, high-impact areas, and low-hanging fruit.
8. Lay a foundation for continued sports and outdoor development through budgeting (i.e. enterprise funds) and diversified revenue generation strategies.
9. Build a coalition of community organizations to collaborate for programming, staffing & equipment, research, and regional development initiatives.

Details for implementing these recommendations are provided below.

## Why Sports & Outdoors?

Simply put, active lifestyles and engagement with the natural environment enhance quality of life. Chattanooga has become renowned for its natural resources, progressive city planning, tourism opportunities, and active citizenry. Sports and outdoors are ***Organic to our City*** in an inextricable way- an authentic virtue of our natural landscape. Leveraging this asset is a primary goal. Opportunities are ***Inclusive*** by nature and design. Parks are open to all residents, regardless of color, ability, or creed. Programming (e.g. Therapeutic Recreation) and intentional design further enhance accessibility. Our resources provide us with a ***Unique Brand*** and an active outdoor identity that many other cities strive to replicate. Developing and promoting this brand and our natural resources must occur in a ***Sustainable*** way; economically, socially, culturally, and environmentally. All ***Chattanooga's are Connected*** to these programs and resources via indirect benefits (e.g. economic & environmental) or direct use of services (e.g. 91% of Chattanooga households utilize parks and recreation). Our recommendations incorporate all of these principles, while emphasizing the need to incentivize entrepreneurship and enhance the ***Ongoing work of local organizations.***

The Sports and Outdoors Committee recognizes that there are many challenges and opportunities involved in developing this segment of municipal services. Significant cultural ***challenges*** include:

- Chattanooga is in the center of a large “health-poor hotspot” in the US.
  - TN is the fourth most obese state in the country with 27% of Hamilton County students being obese or overweight (CHCHD, 2011).
  - TN is among the 5 least active states in the country, with 30% of residents reporting ***Zero*** physical activity during leisure time (CDC, 2011).
  - TN ranks among the highest states in the country in rates of diabetes, Attention Deficit Disorder, depression, and prescription medication use (CDC, 2011).
  - Most Hamilton County students (58%) aren’t enrolled in any type of physical activity classes, 75% fail to meet the CDC recommended 60 minutes of physical activity each day, and 17% report getting no physical activity in a normal week (CHCHD, 2011).
- Transportation norms in Hamilton County impede physical activity and environmental sustainability. 83% of county residents drive alone to work, compared to a national average of 76% (CHCHD, 2011).
- Barriers to physical activity and park use in Chattanooga include: Lack of time, lack of good information, and safety concerns (RPA, 2013; Bailey, 2013).

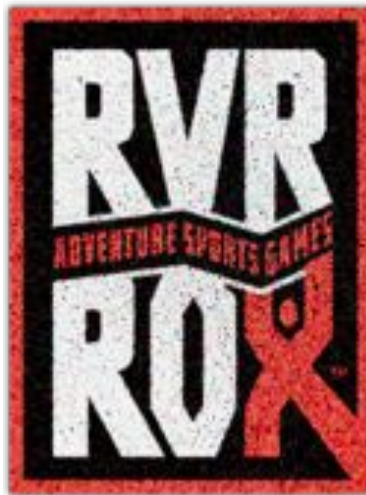
While these challenges seem discouraging, we have many tools and resources to address them. Sports and outdoor activities provide unique and enjoyable methods of countering these negative trends.

- Routine, moderate levels of physical activity (e.g. walking, biking) are robust preventers of physical illness (USDOJ, 2005).
- Time spent outdoors has been tied to lower levels of obesity, diabetes, and heart disease (Godbey, 2009).
- Adolescents who play sports are 8x more likely to be active at age 24 (Perkins, 2004).
- Natural environments boost mood and immune system, relieve stress and symptoms of ADHD, and improve recovery time from physical and mental illness (Godbey, 2009; Maas et al., 2010; Taylor et al., 2002; USDOJ, 2005).
- Greenways and trails enhance participation in physical activity while easing transportation loads on local infrastructure. In the first 3 months of use, the bike share program induced 1,000,000 burned calories, potentially substituted 10,000 trips by car, and saved 6,500 pounds of CO<sup>2</sup> from entering the atmosphere (c.f. BikeChattanooga.com).
- Parks and green spaces sustain the natural environment, improve public health, and lower infrastructure maintenance by enhancing air quality, reducing storm water runoff, and supporting a diverse ecosystem (Harnik & Welle, 2009).

### Economic Benefits

- The outdoor industry in TN generated \$8.2 billion in spending, \$2.5 billion in wages, supported 83,000 direct jobs, and generated \$535 million in state and local tax revenue in 2013 (OIA, 2014).
- Parks and recreational facilities improve property values (~15%), reduce costs associated with environmental abuse, and encourage tourism (Harnik & Welle, 2009).
- Hamilton County recently surpassed Knox County to become the 4<sup>th</sup> most visited county in the state. Much of this growth in tourism can be attributed to sport and adventure tourism.
- Sport tourism is the fastest growing market niche contributing a significant impact, as tournaments draw families to the area for several days (<http://canadiansporttourism.com/value-sport-tourism.html>).
- Adventure tourists make above average incomes, stay longer and spend more in travel destinations than other types of tourists (Lameraux, et al. 2009).
- TN state parks generate an estimated \$11 for every \$1 of funding (Fly et al., 2009). Regional and municipal parks have a similar impact.
- Active living mitigates health and infrastructure costs for residents. Hamilton County's obesity issue translates into a \$1,429 increase in medical expenses for obese residents (CHCHD, 2011).

- Economic impact studies on local events demonstrate the potential revenue that can be expected from sport and outdoor tourism.
  - The 2013 USA Cycling Championships generated a direct impact of **\$1,048,692** (Larson, 2013)
  - RiverRocks 2013 generated a direct impact of **\$4,303,376** (Bailey, 2014).
  - The average adventure tourist to the Chattanooga region has a household income of over \$110,000 and spends \$430 a day while in the area.





## History:

Chattanooga is blessed with a wealth of outdoor resources that attract tourists from all over the world and improve residents' quality of life. The Outdoor Initiative, first promoted by former mayor Bob Corker in 2004, did much to market these resources to the world and develop Chattanooga's identity as an active, outdoor city. Ten years later, we can gauge the progress made, recognize lost opportunities, and determine direction for the future. Our report builds on the original document addressing the vision and goals of the Outdoor Initiative (Woolf, 2004). Comparison of the goals from the original report with recent research conducted by the City of Chattanooga, Hamilton County, and UTC provide us with a current status of the region.

### Outdoor Initiative Goals (Woolf, 2004):

1. To assure that all segments of the region's population have access to and are benefiting from knowledgeable, safe and environmentally respectful participation in outdoor recreation activities at quality outdoor venues.
2. To stimulate economic activity by creating a signature outdoor lifestyle that attracts to this region entrepreneurs and their businesses; visitors; and businesses related to that lifestyle.

### Outdoor Initiative Objectives:

- *Improve the health and wellness of the region's population through greater participation in outdoor activities.*
  - ✓ 91% of households have used Chattanooga parks or facilities in the last 12 months (RPA, 2013)
  - ✓ 70% of City and County residents believe that parks improve their physical health and 72% believe parks improve their quality of life (Bailey, 2013).
  - We have no consistent participation indicators for comparison over time.
  - National data indicate that obesity, diabetes, inactivity, and ADHD are all above the national average in Tennessee and Hamilton County (Bailey, 2013).
- *Advance education and training as it relates to outdoor recreation activities, and natural/heritage resource stewardship and conservation.*
  - ✓ Outdoor Chattanooga provided programming to over 4250 participants in 2013 (Outdoor Chattanooga, 2014).
  - ✓ City recreation programming reached 34% of households in 2012 (RPA, 2013).
- *Serve as the region's primary clearing house of information, research and resources related to outdoor recreation.*
  - ✓ Research reports from the City, County, Trust for Public Land, UTC, and other organizations provide snapshots of regional participation rates and environmental impacts.
  - ✓ The Chattanooga Visitor's Bureau and other private entities (e.g.



- RootsRated) provide quality information on local resources.
  - There is no central coordinating body for outdoor information or research, rendering much of the information difficult to find and resulting in dispersal of resources.
  - Chattanooga is behind the curve on information access. Websites, apps, and easily navigable info sources should be a priority.
- *Assure access and availability of suitable outdoor recreation venues and activities for all segments of the population.*
  - ✓ 91% of households have used a park facility in the last year (RPA, 2013).
  - ✓ The avg. county resident visits a park 2 times each week (Bailey, 2013).
  - ✓ A recent joint use agreement allowing residents to use Hamilton County schools as park facilities after hours greatly eases access issues to green space.
  - While the parks are used by all ethnicities, outdoor activities (e.g. biking, hiking, fishing, etc.) are mainly enjoyed by Caucasians (Bailey, 2013).
  - Regional outdoor-related events attract mid-upper class Caucasians (Bailey, 2014). More research is needed to determine the nature of minority participation in outdoor activities regionally.
  - There is no coordinated effort to provide programming in the city. Outdoor Chattanooga, community centers, YMCA, and a dozen other organizations provide overlapping, non-collaborative programming.
- *Encourage and promote proper and coordinated management, conservation, maintenance and upkeep of resources used for outdoor recreation.*
  - ✓ Coordinated City/County projects have been extremely successful. The Riverwalk, for instance, is the most visited park in the County (Bailey, 2013).
  - A lack of coordination regarding new initiatives, programming, and priorities has led to duplicate, competing programs and inefficient use of resources.
- *Generate unity and collaborative action between and among the diverse stakeholder interests for outdoor activities and amenities.*
  - ✓ Collaborative action is being generated, as in the case of special events (e.g. RiverRocks) and attracting major sporting events (e.g. USA Cycling Championships, Head of the Hooch, Ironman).
  - Collaboration is currently ad hoc and there is no central figure coordinating all efforts.
- *Encourage a supportive local climate for business and economic development related to the outdoors.*
  - ✓ Research on special events has revealed substantial economic impacts of outdoor events, with minimal negative impacts reported by community members (Larson, 2013; Bailey, 2014).
  - ✓ Growth and entrepreneurship are demonstrated in the opening of outdoor-

industry franchises and the birth of many outdoor-related small businesses, such as: Gander Mountain, High Point Gym, L2 Boards, Tentsile, Organic, Goodhew, and American Bike Co., among others.

- *Establish Chattanooga region as a well-known site for outdoor events and competitions.*
  - ✓ Major events such as the Stump Jump and Triple Crown Bouldering series have been successful and well-attended for years.
  - ✓ The recent acquisition of major events (USA Cycling, IRONMAN) demonstrate the potential for larger scale events.
  - ✓ On any given weekend there are multiple 5k's, mini-triathlons, and adventure-type races in the region.
  - The lack of central special events office results in a lack of consistency and efficiency.
  - The permitting process for special events needs to be streamlined and standardized to facilitate efficient programming.
  
- *Promote the values and mission of the Outdoor Initiative and our region's exemplary outdoor amenities (marketing).*
  - ✓ Marketing of Chattanooga's outdoor resources has been one of the major successes of the Initiative to this point, as demonstrated by the accolades Chattanooga has received from major publications (c.f. <http://www.chattanooga.com/press-room/accolades>).
  - Chattanooga would benefit from having a better clarity and focus of the mission of this Initiative.
  
- *Advocate for greater public sector involvement, support and services (government relations) for outdoor activities and related venues.*
  - ✓ Outdoor Chattanooga acquired substantial funding from TDOT to establish the Bike Share program and promote biking in the region.
  - ✓ Ongoing municipal support enables Outdoor Chattanooga to continue programming and marketing campaigns.
  - ✓ Research is being conducted to elucidate the true impacts of outdoor tourism on the region and garner support for sustainable development.
  - With no central mechanism to coordinate programs & initiatives, multiple parties advocate for similar projects, thus dispersing resources.

## Recommendations:



### Outdoor Chattanooga:

Outdoor Chattanooga (OC) has served the city well over the last 10 years and continues to advocate for city planning initiatives, programming, education, and preservation. Some of the most notable successes include the Bike Share program (including the associated educational & infrastructure development), the Rapid Learn kayaking clinic, which is consistently well-attended, and annual outdoor events. These require substantial planning and management, and should be commended. The vision for OC was developed through the original Outdoor Initiative plan promoted by Bob Corker (Woolf, 2004). In that document, OC was referred to as the “central mechanism” through which all outdoor initiatives would be coordinated. In deference to that original plan, we recommend that OC be restructured to more closely resemble the original intent and to take a larger role in the direction of regional outdoor initiatives. Specifically, we recommend the following:

1. ***OC should be the coordinator and facilitator of all things outdoors.*** They should be the promoters, organizers, and connectors, but not the programmers. Currently, 40% of their labor is dedicated to running programs (OC, 2014). It is our belief that their resources should be directed more towards advocacy, infrastructure, planning, promotion, and organizing the array of outdoor initiatives in the community. In this way, they would support private organizations, which are better suited to offer programming, along with staffing and equipment required to do so effectively.
  - Outsource programming and focus on connecting, marketing, collaborating. Programming should empower local guiding services, retailers, experts, and colleges to leverage a best-in-class approach. This incentivizes entrepreneurship and enhances public-private partnerships.
  - Programming for special populations (i.e. Therapeutic Recreation, At-risk youth) should be subsidized by the City or facilitated by a branch of City government. Care should be taken to ensure that these populations have adequate opportunities, as the “market” often overlooks them.
  - Prioritize city-planning and infrastructure improvements, working with outlying communities to link trails, manage assets, combining resources and energy. OC should be THE gathering place for all outdoor clubs and serve as the conduit for events and programs.
  - As the “central outdoor mechanism”, OC should be charged with maximizing collaboration of activities and equipment across all

programs and venues. An inventory of faith-based organizations, educational institutions, and community organizations should be maintained by OC. In addition, OC should promote the sharing of resources across programs, in order to enhance access for all residents.

## **2. Facility:**

- The Facility is in a great location but signs and marketing are needed to ensure that people who are less familiar with the area can locate OC.
- To maximize use of the facility, the City should explore expanding the hours of operation, especially during peak outdoor activity seasons.
- To ensure a visitor centric experience, the front area of the facility should be staffed at all times.
- CARTA shuttles should include the facility so residents can access it easily.
- Remodel the interior to update audio-visual equipment and enhance the aspirational impact (e.g. posters of local heroes).
- Create space at the Enterprise South visitor center for an OC presence. This location would better serve residents external to downtown.

## **3. Budget:**

- OC cannot function at the desired capacity without significant support. We recommend a budget of \$1million dollars, to be gradually decreased as the operations become more self-sustaining. Creative revenue-generating ideas are discussed below (see “Sustainability”) .
- Events should be designed with a combination of free and paid programs to ensure inclusivity for all residents. A “grant” program should be developed and managed by OC to provide opportunities for residents to participate in city-planned and private-run outdoor events.

## **4. Staffing & Governance:**

- We suggest the City assess the organizational capacity of OC as to whether the requisite leadership and skill sets needed to implement the expanded mission and responsibilities of the organization are in place.
- An advisory group consisting of city officials, outdoor users and the CVB should be considered.
- To enhance the prominence of OC, the City should consider having it become a stand alone department.
- Friends of Outdoor Chattanooga has been a valued support organization to OC. Should the capacity of OC be enhanced and expanded, care should be taken to ensure FOC's continued alignment in supporting the focus, goals and strategic direction of OC.

### Mayor's Wellness Campaign:

Chattanooga should be a leader and exemplar of wellness. While many factors cannot be immediately managed, there are many steps that can be taken to improve the local attitude toward and participation in active leisure.



#### 1. **Leaders lead:**

Figure 1. Example wellness Campaign from Tenafly, NJ.

The fact that 30% of TN adults engage in zero physical activity outside of work denotes a cultural problem. Children emulate adults, and adults emulate leaders. Community leaders need to be role models for residents, highlighting regular participation in physical activity. This means not only the City and County Mayor's and elected officials, but also teachers, pastors, and other figures throughout the community. We recommend a wellness campaign which encourages and incentivizes participation in physical activity, sports, and outdoor recreation. This idea received an overwhelming majority of support at the recent public meetings and would address issues of rampant poor health. Ideas for encouragement and incentives could include:

- Highlighting community leaders, the stories of what they love to do to remain active, their struggles to stay active, and motivations. Other residents willing to share their stories could be included, as well. This could be a local news project or a joint initiative of Outdoor Chattanooga and community organizations (e.g. YMCA).
- Incentivize participation in programmed activities through a "merit badge" campaign. Locals could receive discounts to events, retail stores, etc. by participating in "accredited" programs run either by the city or private organizations.
- Establish a grant program through which all residents can apply for spaces in programs/activities that they can't afford. They could choose programs by activity (e.g. paddleboarding) or location. The city (or Outdoor Chattanooga) would manage the applications and work with local organizations (e.g. L2 boards, High Point Gym) to provide services.

#### 2. **Innovative Partnerships:**

Chattanooga should be at the forefront of innovative strategies for promoting active living. One such example is a successful project implemented by the Appalachian Mountain Club that involves medical prescriptions for outdoor activities (c.f.

<http://www.massgeneral.org/children/about/pressrelease.aspx?id=1621>).

Health insurance providers and medical services work together to establish a protocol enabling the funding of outdoor activities as preventative

healthcare. Current partnerships between Erlanger, UTC and private medical companies already promote exercise as prescription. Adding outdoor and recreational activities as a viable option and bringing insurance companies on board should be explored.

**3. Evidence-based practice:**

The city should work with public (Hamilton County schools, UTC) and private organizations (Erlanger, Trust for Public Land) to coordinate research measuring consistent health indicators over time, resident access to resources, park and recreation assets, environmental issues, etc. Many studies have been initiated independently, but a lack of coordination results in duplicate efforts, lack of consistent measures over time, and loss of connected information. One-off research projects provide a snapshot of information, but coordinated projects over a significant time span would provide better information for long-term decision-making.

**4. Outreach:**

The city should enhance corporate wellness initiatives, reaching out to large employers such as Hamilton County Dept. of Education, VW, BCBS, and UNUM. Outdoor Chattanooga could dedicate resources toward corporate outreach to provide guidance, information, and referrals for services. This would enhance visibility of OC, awareness of access to equipment and services, and promote active living in the community

**5. Inclusion:**

Youth and adults need to be taught the skills of active living. While many activities (e.g. walking) require minimal training and equipment, many fun and novel activities (e.g. paddleboarding) are much less accessible. While Chattanooga is a premier outdoor destination, many residents have no experience with outdoor recreation. National studies indicate that outdoor recreation is enjoyed primarily by the white, middle-class (OIA, 2014). Chattanooga has the natural and technical resources to buck that trend if desired. Our city is blessed with access to rivers, trails, and greenways in many locations. In addition to program grants (mentioned above), we recommend taking the gear and activities to the neighborhoods. This would be a city-driven program that encourages others to “Give It a Try”. Taking the gear and programming to the residents would ensure that they have the same access to educational and recreational activities across the board. This program would be coordinated by Outdoor Chattanooga and implemented on a regular schedule.

Other programs, such as Chattanooga’s RBI youth baseball program (cf. <http://web.mlbcommunity.org/programs/rbi.jsp?content=tournaments>), can serve as an example of successful inclusion. Additional programming could be introduced to specifically address the lack of diversity in outdoor activities. However, inclusion should be a priority in all programming.

Concerted efforts should be made to gain a true understanding of why diverse participation is lacking in outdoor programming. Once that issue has been explored, targeted efforts can be made to remove barriers and constraints to participation.



## Special events:

Chattanooga is host to a vast array of special events each year. Cultural, artistic, wellness, and outdoor themed events occur every weekend at different venues in the county. While many of these events are not outdoor-themed, they may utilize parks and outdoor spaces. In general, we favor a much more streamlined and coordinated process of special event management. These recommendations should be coordinated with those of other committees (i.e. downtown). The following recommendations include ideas from members with much local event experience and research into the process used by other cities (i.e. Nashville).

### **1. Special Events Committee**

The city should establish a centralized Special Events system to coordinate all city events, streamline permitting, and vet applications.

- All event permitting should be centralized through this system, to include: Alcohol board, special events committee, noise ordinance, special gathering, and any other permit associated with events.
- The goal of such a system is to improve efficiencies and communication amongst different City departments, community partners and person/entity requesting a permit.
- The events advisory board or oversight committee should consist of decision-makers from relevant departments who are empowered to get things done (e.g. Outdoor Chattanooga, Public Works, etc.).

### **2. Event Standards**

- The special events system should develop a list of criteria to determine those events which receive priority to encourage a best-in-class approach. These criteria should be fair and inclusive.
- Standards should also be developed to determine the amount of time any public space (e.g. Riverfront) can be “reserved”. Public spaces, paid for and managed for the community, should be available for routine resident use.
- Require recycling at all events. This was a top priority for residents polled at the Chattanooga Forward public meetings.

### **3. Permitting Process**

Much of the logistics for event permitting can be standardized and outsourced through foresight and good website design. The Special Events Committee would develop this process, but suggestions include:

- Online forms to schedule all activities & events.
- This should include a clear checklist of steps to run an event.
- All checklist items must be complete by 90 days before the event, or ideal timeline established by the advisory board.
- Use of online applications (e.g. Scribble maps) to plan and inform the community about street closures.

- All events should be posted online in one comprehensive calendar (see “technology and information” below) with alternative travel routes for each event.
- Automatic weekly distribution of information regarding any events that require road closures.
- Access to all forms should be available through the city website (c.f. Nashville.gov).
- Significant attention should be directed to the development and maintenance of apps (e.g. NashVitality) and online resources to enhance information access.

#### **4. *Community Impact***

Event planners should be conscious of the impact events have on residents.

- All residents and businesses should be made aware of events that will occur near them.
- Regular post-event meetings should be held to capitalize on “lessons learned”.
- Residents should have an easy method of providing feedback about event management (online form) to improve the process in the future.

## Facilities:

Recent studies conducted on City and County park systems provide a strong foundation for action. Residents prioritized 37% of funding to improve existing facilities, 21% to build new indoor facilities, 16% to acquisition of walking/biking trails, 14% to new park/open space, and 8% for new sports fields. In addition, 78% think greenways should connect to neighborhoods, and 63% want more small neighborhood parks connected to larger facilities (RPA, 2013). ***We recommend that Chattanooga invest in renovation of key existing facilities, add new facilities in areas of high impact, and address “areas of opportunity” that represent a significant and timely return on investment.***



### 1. Safety:

Both city and county residents listed safety concerns as one of the main reasons they don't visit parks and trails (Bailey, 2013; RPA, 2013). The perception of safety can go a long way to encourage active living. Promoting Chattanooga as an outdoor city should include the protection of park users and their property.

- A comprehensive solution would need to involve city law enforcement officials and patrol officers. Increasing the presence of law enforcement officers and vehicles would provide a deterrent to illegal activities.
- The presence of “Outdoor Ambassadors” at parks may prove just as effective. Parks and open spaces can effectively police themselves if there are enough eyes in the area to remain vigilant. This should also involve the cooperation of neighborhoods and neighborhood organizations.
- For areas that are difficult to police, we recommend installing trail cameras to deter vehicle break-ins and delinquent activity (c.f. <http://www.supercircuits.com/resources/learn/surveillance-for-parks-and-recreation-areas/surveillance-for-parks-recreation-trail-cameras>)

### 2. Renovation of Existing Facilities:

- Review a list of currently owned space to determine how additional investment could improve the space to increase the quality of life for City residents while also strengthening the community for economic development opportunities through sport.
- Evaluate additional opportunities that could enhance current infrastructure originally built on public/private partnerships.

Table 1. Level of Service for Chattanooga Park Classifications (RPA, 2013)

Park Type	Count	Acres	Existing Level (per 100k residents)	Proposed Standard	Additional Acres Needed
Neighborhood Parks	30	156.15	0.93	1.5	94.35
Community Parks	14	504.47	2.41	2	0
Pocket Parks	24	20.89	0.13	0.2	12.51

3. ***New facilities in high impact areas:***

We should initiate a Community Partnership Project to create an indoor and or outdoor multipurpose complex(es). Feasibility and market research have already been conducted by the Chattanooga Sports Committee and City of Chattanooga. One report is forthcoming, but will include recommendations to construct new multipurpose complexes to fulfill current sports needs amongst City residents.

- These facilities would address Chattanooga’s deficit of sport and recreation assets (RPA, 2013), while hosting an array of sports like but not limited to soccer, lacrosse, rugby, track & field, cross country, ultimate Frisbee, basketball, badminton, volleyball, etc.
- This project would enhance access to physical activity in areas of low activity participation, utilize vacant space that currently attracts delinquents, and improve neighborhood assets that enhance quality of life and property values (TPL, 2013).



Figure 2. Access may be as simple as encouraging bike transit with plentiful, aesthetic parking racks.

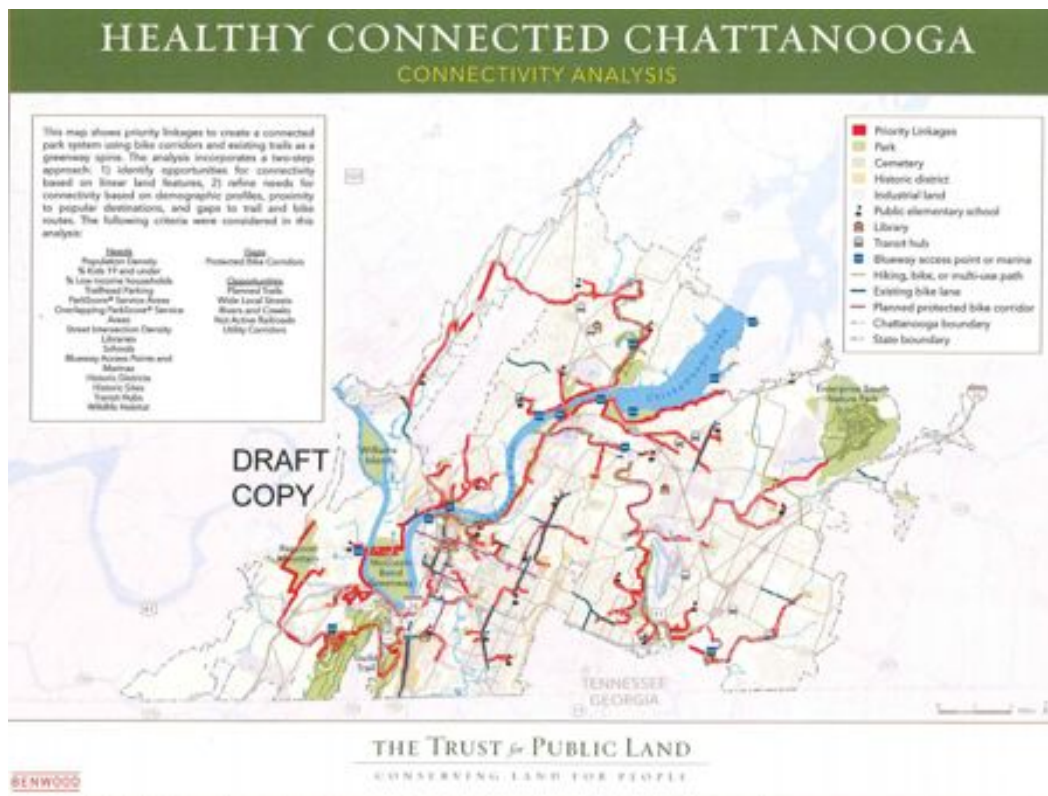


Figure 3. Kayakers hone their skills on man-made rapids in downtown Denver, CO

#### 4. Address areas of opportunity:

Residents with access to parks are 20% more likely to engage in outdoor recreation. Access to trails increases that likelihood to 25% (OIA, 2010). To address key areas of unique opportunity and enhance access and community health, we recommend:

- Install a water access point under the new Cummings Highway Bridge.
- Convert a city owned parcel at Shallowford and Airport Roads into launch pad and access point to the South Chickamauga Creek greenway. The current building could house boats and gear to enhance access to these activities for residents.
- Utilize the new Riverwalk extension as an opportunity to provide TN River access along the Blue Goose Landing and old Vulcan area.
- Residents at the Chattanooga Forward public meetings expressed interest in establishing a whitewater center. A more feasible option would be to modify the section of South Chickamauga Creek at Lightfoot Mill Road. In lieu of building a huge whitewater center, this stretch of creek could be adapted to provide rapids to suit all levels of paddling.
- Reevaluate currently owned passive green space to integrate low-cost recreational opportunities (i.e. disc golf) and connect existing trails and isolated pockets of green space. The Trust for Public Land has done great work to highlight projects that could provide immediate significant impact (TPL, 2013).
- Finally, further discussion should take place with each user group (skate parks, water access, social groups, etc.) to prioritize specific activity type access.





## Technology & Communication:

If there is one area where Chattanooga has an opportunity to make quick, vast improvements, it is technology and communication. Virtually all committee members agree that information management and access needs to be improved. Additionally, city and county residents reported lack of information as a major constraint to parks and recreation use (Bailey, 2013; RPA, 2013). Key recommendations include:

### 1. *Master Events calendar:*

On any given weekend, there are half a dozen sports, arts, and outdoor events happening in Chattanooga. Currently, there is no good resource (online or otherwise) to provide a comprehensive list of events. The Chattanooga Sports Committee maintains an updated calendar of sporting events, while ChattanoogaNow offers a calendar of general events. There is no updated calendar for outdoor events and many other events go unpublished on any calendar. We discussed various ways to address this problem and decided that it would be best for the City to maintain the control of the Master Calendar (and not a for-profit private company).

The city could identify key partners in various genres (Arts coalition, Outdoor Chattanooga, Sports Committee, etc.) and coordinate the development of an updated master calendar. This could be managed by a dedicated staff or each collaborative partner could simply update their own calendars to the master calendar on a regular basis. Technology is certainly available that would allow sharing of calendar information, given the necessary interest.

### 2. *Communications plan:*

We need to decide on a branding and communication strategy and be consistent across all media. Consistent language should be used for all locations, initiatives, programs, etc. in every form of promotion and communication. For example, signs throughout the city should have the same language, font, and color for showcasing attractions as is represented on websites, apps, and kiosks.

### 3. *Signage:*

Finding outdoor areas in the Chattanooga vicinity is notoriously difficult. Signs should be visible at key locations to point visitors and residents in the direction of outdoor amenities. These should be consistent with the communication plan. These



signs would highlight our outdoor identity and enhance access to local areas. Signage at the trailheads and activity locations should also be visible and maintained. Lack of directions should not be an excuse for lack of participation in outdoor pursuits. Whimsical signs could also be placed throughout the city (i.e. downtown, in front of OC) indicating the distance to key outdoor attractions from that location.

**4. Kiosks:**

Along with improving the information desk at Outdoor Chattanooga and potentially adding an OC desk at Enterprise South, we recommend the placement of kiosks throughout the city to provide information about events, outdoor activities and locations, and general city info. Kiosks are commonplace in cities with high levels of tourism (c.f. [www.parabit.com](http://www.parabit.com)). Information should be printable at each kiosk and/or able to email or text the info to a phone. Kiosks should be conspicuous, but also aesthetic and consistent with the communications plan described above.

**5. Outdoor Chattanooga Website:**

While we recognize the OC website was recently renovated, it is still subpar when compared to that of other cities. We recommend a small team of qualified members work with a private firm to identify key areas for improvement. OutdoorKnoxville.com has an informative, navigable site and there is a possibility we could purchase the coding for that site. Other sites should be explored, as well, to ensure that our online communication is fitting of our amazing resources.





**6. Apps:**

Apps for smartphones are the new information frontier, allowing for immediate access to relevant material. With so many apps already available, it would first be beneficial to utilize and integrate software that already exists. Instead of creating a new trails app specific to Chattanooga, for example, we should consider using existing apps such as MapMyRide and MapMyRun. Then, the City and Outdoor Chattanooga can produce a unique app that provides information not already available. A list of potential apps to utilize includes:

- MapMyRide, MapMyRun, Mountain Project, EveryTrail, RootsRated, MTB Project, ClimbApps TWallRight, ClimbApps SunsetLight, etc.

**7. Permitting:**

All event permit forms should be available and able to be submitted online. Links to access these forms would be on the city website, OC website, Chattanooga Sports Committee website, and the smartphone app.

## Sustainability:

Sports and outdoor activities improve residents' quality of life. These activities should be available and accessible for all citizens and tourists. The City of Chattanooga should make a commitment to invest in these resources, as they induce a strong return on investment. However, promotion and development of this sector should be done in a way that maximizes positive outcomes and minimizes negative impacts. Additionally, we realize that there are many worthy initiatives vying for a share of the government budget. In order to grow in a sustainable way (economically, environmentally, and socially) we have provided examples used by other cities for generating revenue to support the parks, facilities, and open spaces, as well as a coordinated assessment plan to determine true impacts.

## Budgeting:

***Recreation Enterprise Fund:*** There is much to be said for incentivizing good performance and re-evaluating subpar programs. One effective method of providing incentives is through performance-based budgeting. This can only be achieved if recreation funds are kept separate from the general budget of government funding. Enterprise funds have been used for decades by other municipalities to avoid the comingling of recreation funding with other government monies (c.f.

[http://www.municipalconsultants.net/enterprise\\_fund\\_accounting\\_systems.aspx](http://www.municipalconsultants.net/enterprise_fund_accounting_systems.aspx) ). This type of budget aids in long-term planning, helps to establish accountability of sub-programs, and aids in the identification of underserved programs and populations.

In addition, separate programs and initiatives within the recreation (or sports & outdoors) umbrella should be evaluated for their own return on investment. The performance criteria should be multifaceted (participation rates, revenue, psycho-social impact of outcomes, need, etc.) and each program should receive future funding from the recreation enterprise budget based on the performance metric. This provides a measure of accountability similar to that of the commercial sector, albeit directed at improving the public good in addition to being financially sustainable.

It should be noted that recreational services have historically been viewed as a public service worthy of investment regardless of their revenue. We certainly agree with this assertion and have no intention of undermining social assets. However, budgets will wax and wane with internal and external influences and quality performance metrics will aid in times of tough decisions. Additionally, a "report card" for parks would help identify areas of high need that don't have the ability to attract private funding (<http://www.ny4p.org/research/report-cards>).

## Revenue:

Sports, outdoor recreation, and special events have a significant economic impact on our region. Research is helping to illustrate the nature of these impacts, but they can be difficult to observe, as they are often indirect. A visitor to the Ironman event, for example, pays nothing to sit at Ross's landing and enjoy the festivities. They will often spend a large amount, though, on food, lodging, and entertainment, thereby benefiting the local community. Though the natural resources (TN river access, Riverwalk, etc.) attract these large-scale events and the tourists, there is no direct revenue associated with park usage. While this indirect economic impact is justification enough to fund public recreation, we believe additional revenue-generating ideas could contribute to the enterprise fund.

### 1. **Initial Capital:**

- Initial and recurring capital contributions will need to be provided by the city to ensure continued access for all citizens. In regards to a renewed push to organize this sports and outdoors vision, we recommend robust initial support (see Outdoor Chattanooga above) to be gradually reduced as the initiative becomes sustainable (e.g. from 100% to 70% over 5 years).
- Additional capital funding should be solicited from supportive partners such as local foundations and interested stakeholders.

### 2. **Ongoing Revenue:** Other cities across the country have resorted to a variety of innovative funding methods to ensure robust, diversified funding for public spaces. New Yorkers for Parks has released an invaluable report detailing many strategies for funding parks. What follows is a summary of ideas appropriate to our region. The full report can be accessed here: <http://www.ny4p.org/research/other-reports/or-altrevenue10.pdf>

- Concession permits: Pushcart food vendors generate \$4.5 million annually in permitting fees for NYC. Vendors bid for a limited number of permits at specific park locations. This has proven so lucrative for vendors that a single hot-dog vendor is willing to pay over \$250,000 for a permit in Central Park (from which he makes an additional \$250,000 in profits). These permit fees go directly to the recreation enterprise fund or to that specific park.
- Commercial Use Permits: Yoga on the Riverfront? Cross-training at Renaissance Park? Other cities limit commercial use of public spaces by requiring a permit to run programs in public spaces. Permits could be limited to high-profile areas



only, or there could be one permit for all public spaces. If Outdoor Chattanooga outsources programming to competent guides and private companies, this would be a win-win situation.

- Parks Improvement Districts: Since parks clearly enhance property values of nearby residents and businesses, development near these valued assets should contribute to the park's operational budget. A one-time development fee (up to \$15,000 per residence) is commonly charged in other municipalities for new construction near or adjacent to public open-space while existing residents contribute a percentage of property taxes to park funding.
- Special Event Fees: Correctly account for and collect special events cost-recovery charges; encourage and reward park improvements created by special events that will reduce long-term maintenance and operations needs.
- Property Tax Levy: The word "tax" automatically raises red flags, but many cities have successfully passed measures that provide regular funding for park programs. Newark, NJ raises \$1.1 million annually through a 1 cent per \$100 valuation annual tax levy. Even with a history of mismanagement, this measure passed in Newark by a margin of 84% (TPL, 2014). In Hamilton County, 80% of residents view outdoor spaces as central to our regional identity, 72% agree that parks improve their quality of life, and 54% agree that outdoor spaces are a major reason they reside here (Bailey, 2013). It is not beyond reason to assume they would vote to financially support these resources.
- Environmental Incentives: Partnering with social movements is becoming increasingly popular. One opportunity Chattanooga could embrace is the potential to earn rewards for recycling (c.f. <https://www.recyclebank.com/>). Through these programs, citizens earn points for recycling that are then redeemable through local vendors or can be donated to chosen causes.
- Tourism taxes: Revise hotel tax laws to dedicate to a portion of additional tourism income that is generated by flagship parks (i.e. riverfront). Alternatively, a tax on bar and restaurant proceeds would capitalize on tourism expenditures and luxuries for locals.
- User Fees: While no one wants to see park space become a for-profit commodity, some fee-based revenue generators have proven successful in other cities. Certain activities that require regular maintenance (i.e. mountain bike trails) or developed access (i.e. blueways, climbing areas) can have that cost offset through user fees. In this way, users aren't

charged for access to green space but are charged if they engage in certain high-maintenance activities. This could be combined with educational sessions and even “certifications” (through Outdoor Chattanooga) that enhance our regional outdoor brand. In this way, residents could have their user fee waived by attending an educational session on park management issues and/or demonstrating a minimum competence in the activity. Tourists would still pay the minimal activity fee.

Figure 3 illustrates the feedback garnered from a random selection of Hamilton County Residents (n=204) at Ironman Chattanooga. Given that these spectators were attending an outdoor event, they could be considered a biased sample. However, since over 90% of Chattanooga residents utilize public park and recreation facilities annually (RPA, 2013), these results may be representative of the population. Surprisingly, residents were not adamantly opposed to any form of revenue generation. Volunteer service, Food trucks, and bar and restaurant taxes were favored above other options. These results demonstrate that there is potential for community support of a dedicated revenue stream for sports and outdoor facilities, even if it comes through additional taxes.

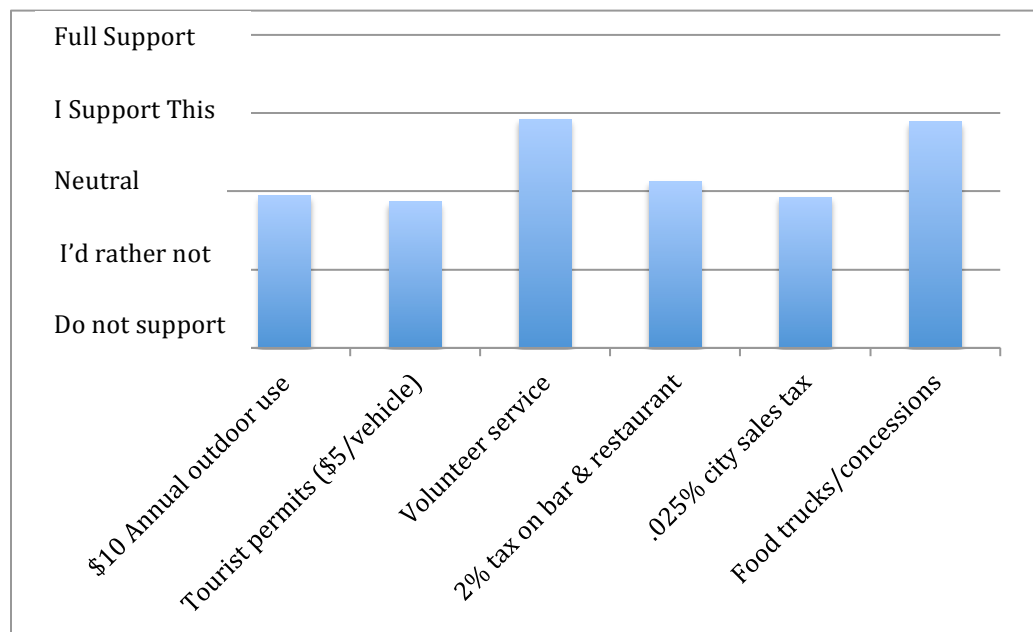


Figure 3. Preferred Revenue Sources for Chattanooga parks and recreation facilities.

## Research

All funding, marketing, and planning-related decision-making is contingent on reliable information. The City of Chattanooga should promote and support a sustained, coordinated research plan that documents the benefits, impacts, and sustainability of all sports and outdoor activities. This should be connected to other metrics gathered by the city, to enhance our understanding of the long-term effects of government initiatives. Good research is being conducted, but a lack of coordination prevents us from implementing a coherent plan. The city should partner with organizations who are imbedded in the community for long-term data-based inquiry, rather than conducting expensive, one-shot research plans. Organizations who could be involved in this process would include, but not be limited to:

- The Trust for Public Land
  - Erlanger
  - UTC
  - Blue Cross Blue Shield
  - Hamilton County Health Department
  - TDOT
  - Thrive 2055 Natural Treasures Initiative
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- Future projects should include a minor stipend for evaluation and assessment.
  - We should request access to all reports conducted on events and programs using our facilities and resources. This could be a line added to special events contracts.

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