

PURPOSE AND PHILOSOPHY OF RECREATION

Recreation and the use of leisure time have been considered an integral part of an individual's and a community's well-being from early civilization to today. In the earliest days, recreation was seen as an opportunity for rejuvenation, self-fulfillment and individual growth. Skipping ahead several centuries, the public sector became heavily involved in recreation as the United States became increasingly urbanized during the mid-19th and early 20th centuries. Since that time, public sector recreation has evolved through four stages:

- ◆ Regaining natural settings in the urbanized areas in order to allow people, mostly youth, to engage in play (recreation) activities that mimicked those available in rural settings;
- ◆ Overcoming negative urban influences by providing safe activities that improve the physical, intellectual, and moral life of urban residents;
- ◆ Meeting consumer demand for specific recreation activities and services; and, finally,
- ◆ Providing open space that can be used for whatever recreation purpose individuals find enjoyable and practical.



As governments reassessed their role in service delivery during the 2000's, public recreation agencies have continued to shift their focus away from solely being a provider of services. They are now providing citizens with access to recreation in ways that tap the full capacity of a community's public and private recreation resources. This often takes the form of joint operating agreements, common scheduling and publicity of activities with schools and private organizations, and contracting out public sector programming.

Today, Bellevue's recreation services reflect the legacy of these philosophies. The recreation offerings at Kelsey Creek Park provide a good example. This Park maintains a natural setting of woods and wetland. It is also a farm in the midst of the City, a living part of the community's history. Programming for children is geared to get them outside while introducing them to Bellevue's agricultural heritage as well as to provide safe and positive recreation programs. Programs offered at the park are run by both City staff and in partnership with 4-H Clubs and others. Finally, the open spaces and trails in this Park accommodate a variety of individually directed recreation pursuits ranging from physical fitness to family outings to bird watching.