Financing and Acquiring Park and Recreation Resources

John L. Crompton
Texas A&M University
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About the Author
Twenty years ago, I coauthored a book with Dennis Howard titled *Financing, Managing and Marketing Recreation and Park Resources*. At the time, it was considered a ground-breaking text because it was the first book to develop the idea of public-private partnerships and to introduce concepts of marketing to the park and recreation field. It remained in print for almost 20 years—an extraordinary length of time for a textbook—and was used in the curricula of more than 100 colleges. Publishers consistently report that professionals do not buy textbooks, but professionals purchased more than 3,000 copies of that book.

When I committed to revising the book, it quickly became apparent that the project needed to be conceptualized again. The array of financing, managing, and marketing tools and techniques that park and recreation agencies use had increased dramatically in the 20 years since the original book was written. It was obvious that writing a state-of-the-art book of manageable size, which would incorporate all three of these elements of administration, was not feasible. The quantity of material would require separate volumes for each element.

My own interests are confined to financing and marketing and do not extend to management techniques. Hence, I decided to write independent books that focus on each of these two areas. My intent is to produce a similar state-of-the-art text in the marketing area in the next three to five years to complement this book about financing and acquisition. Hence, the contents of this book do not include discussion of pricing or of retailing and merchandising opportunities, even though both of these elements provide revenue that contributes to the financing of services in many agencies. It was decided that these topics would be discussed more appropriately in the subsequent volume on marketing.

Park and recreation managers are confronted with the certain reality of being required to do more with less. This has been their *modus operandi* for the past two decades, and there is no evidence to suggest it will change. The declining availability of traditional tax-supported revenues, coupled with escalating costs, has placed park and recreation managers under intense pressure to obtain the financial resources necessary to sustain the level of service expected by clientele groups, the general public, and elected officials. More than ever, managers must assume a proactive, rather than a reactive, role in confronting the fiscal challenges facing them. Agencies that will flourish will have managers who adopt an entrepreneurial approach, relentlessly seeking out new resources, as well as aggressively exploiting existing sources, to ensure that constituents receive the most effective service or experience possible. This book is intended to provide comprehensive coverage of the many traditional and innovative financing and acquisition tools and techniques that are available to park and recreation managers.

The book aspires to be a benchmark that documents the state-of-the-art financing and acquisition techniques in this field at the end of the 20th century. In this respect, it seeks to continue a tradition that was started more than 70 years ago by J.H. Weir in his classic treatise *Parks: A Manual of Municipal and County Parks*, which was published in New York in 1928 by A.S. Barnes and Co.

I have made an effort to inventory comprehensively the array of "hands-on" practical techniques and tools that are being used to finance and acquire the resources necessary to facilitate delivery of park and recreation services. Comparisons with Weir's volume and with the original Howard and Crompton text noted earlier offer insights into the remarkable ingenuity, creativity, and innovation that professionals in this field have exhibited in recent years for developing and acquiring the resources to deliver public park and recreation services.

The book is directed at two audiences. First, it is intended to serve as a standard reference source
for professionals. Ideas have been collected from multiple sources across North America. By disseminating them in this format, I hope that professionals, citizen advocates, and legislators seeking to enhance their resources will find inspiration and solutions to problems from the experiences of others that are discussed here.

The second audience is students in upper-division and graduate college classes. Acquiring resources is the most challenging problem confronting the field, and it affects professionals working at all levels of management. Hence, it should be a central ingredient in curricula designed to prepare students to become effective professionals. Despite its omnipresence in the professional world, many college curricula have not developed specialized courses to address it. A primary reason for this has been the lack of a suitable text. Thus, I hope not only that this text will service existing administration courses that address financing, but also that its availability will stimulate the development of new courses in curricula focusing on the financing and acquisition of resources.