

ANALYSIS OF FISCAL OPTIONS AVAILABLE TO THE PARKS & RECREATION
DEPARTMENT OF WEST SACRAMENTO DURING A PERIOD OF ECONOMIC
CONTRACTION

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A Thesis

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Abstract

of

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Statement of Problem

The national economic recession has created budget shortfalls for various levels of government. California municipal government has experienced significant declines in property and sales taxes. The City of West Sacramento is suffering this same fate. As a result, in November 2009 14% was cut from the operational budget of the West Sacramento Parks & Recreation Department. This forced the department to make hasty decisions to operate within the confines of their new budget. With the economy still very much in turmoil, it is vital that the department positions themselves in case they receive additional cuts. This study analyzes the situation and asks what are the best options for the West Sacramento Parks & Recreation Department to pursue in order to resolve the potential fiscal constraints that may be imposed upon them as a result of the current economic recession.

Sources of Data

Data comes from the City of West Sacramento Finance Department, the West Sacramento Parks & Recreation Department and from media sources.

Conclusions Reached

The results of this research show that there are some preferable options available to the West Sacramento Parks & Recreation Department to pursue in order to resolve fiscal constraints. Strong showings emerge for the department utilizing the alternatives of donations and gifts, using volunteers, and government grants. The strong showing for these alternatives relates to their top equity and political feasibility measures. It is surprising that the alternatives that produce the greatest financial benefits fare poorly in this study. These alternatives include raising taxes, closing the department, and cutting labor and services. This relates to their poor equity and political feasibility measures.

Altogether, this demonstrates the importance of incorporating equity and political feasibility considerations into the public decision-making process.

The broader implications are the applicability of this study to other park and recreation agencies, and even to other agencies of government. The results of this CAM analysis may provide useful insight into the tactics and strategies agencies can pursue in order to meet their fiscal challenges. Using this model, agencies can perform their own CAM analysis tailored to their own environment and realities.

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Date

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The plight of the economy continually grabs the headlines. Hidden under the surface of the news are countless stories of government entities that are struggling with their budgets, staffing, and their ability to provide the services their citizens' demand. The Parks & Recreation Department of West Sacramento is one of these untold dramas. In November 2009, city leadership mandated the Parks & Recreation Department to cut 14% from its operational budget. Like any agency fighting to maintain their value for the end user, this was a difficult process. Department officials had to take a hard look at their business model and consider decreasing staff size, re-evaluate fee structures, and re-tool labor schedules for mowing, watering and maintenance. Their goal was to maintain their ability to deliver key services, but the possibility of future cuts created uncertainties and tension.

In this environment, it is important to make reasoned decisions, considering all viable alternatives, using criteria based upon sound fiscal and managerial principles. The purpose of this thesis is to answer the question: What are the best options for the West Sacramento Parks & Recreation Department to pursue in order to resolve the potential fiscal constraints that may be the result of the current economic recession?

The City of West Sacramento offered itself as a learning lab for a group of Public Policy & Administration graduate students from Sacramento State University. I tailored this study to suit their needs. However, there are broader implications for this study. Park and recreation agencies, indeed many governmental departments, are enduring a

grueling stress test, with no end in sight. The analysis and results of this study may provide them with some insight into new tactics and strategies they can pursue in order to meet their fiscal challenges. I will discuss this further in my conclusion.

Overview of West Sacramento

The city of West Sacramento is located in north-central California. It is directly west of Sacramento, California, separated from that city by the Sacramento River, which also serves as the county line. Situated in Yolo County, primarily an agricultural area, West Sacramento is one of only four incorporated cities in the county, the others being Davis, Winters and Woodland. The city encompasses a total of 22.9 square miles; consisting of 20.9 square miles of land and 1.9 square miles of water (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011).

The population of West Sacramento in 2008 was 47,511 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). The 2000 census listed the population at 32,049. There have been population gains in every year in between, so this community has experienced a continuous, healthy growth. The Sacramento-Arden-Arcade-Roseville Metropolitan Statistical Area, which includes West Sacramento, has a 2010 population of approximately 2,149,127 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). The estimated median household income in 2009 for West Sacramento was \$51,871. Compare this to the 2009-estimated median income for all of California as \$58,931 (Advameg, Inc., 2011).

Major industries in the region include agriculture and transportation. West Sacramento is a key player in both industries. It is home to the Port of West Sacramento. This inland, deep-water port is located 79 nautical miles northeast of San Francisco and

provides ocean-going vessels direct access to this rich agricultural and industrial region. West Sacramento is the corporate home to six local and regional businesses. The city is business-friendly and is currently engaged in six redevelopment plans, which will improve quality of life for residents and promote business and industrial growth (West Sacramento Chamber of Commerce, 2011).

West Sacramento consists of three communities that were originally distinct towns: Broderick, Bryte, and West Sacramento. Citizens voted to incorporate in 1987 as a general law city. California charter cities have supreme authority over their municipal affairs. Their city charter acts as their constitution. In contrast, California laws bind a general law city, even with respect to municipal affairs (League of California Cities, 2011). A five-member City Council governs the city. City Council Members serve a four-year term. The Mayor serves a two-year term (City of West Sacramento, 2011).

Overview of West Sacramento Parks & Recreation Department

The Parks & Recreation Department offers community-specific programs and facilities within the borders of the city. These programs meet the needs of the entire community, as well as the needs of specific neighborhoods. Two divisions make up the department: the Parks Division and the Recreation Division. A small administrative team supports the department. The department consists of approximately 20 full-time staff and 35 part-time staff.

The city boasts about its 145 acres of developed parks. These parks contain a variety of amenities such as sports fields and courts, playgrounds, picnic areas, open grassy areas, and a boat ramp, just to name a few. The city also has invested in various

facilities to serve the needs of citizens. A recently completed Community Center offers special events, a variety of programs and meeting facilities. The Recreation Center offers fitness programs, personal training, rock climbing, swimming and other athletic activities.

In addition to those just mentioned, the Recreation Division offers diverse and innovative programs and services for its citizens. There are recreational and leisure opportunities, as well as services, available for children, teens, adults, seniors, people with special needs, sports leagues, and people who desire self-directed activities. There are also a variety of special events that are available, such as theater and musical performances, art exhibits, historic displays, and cultural events.

Recent Fiscal History of the Parks & Recreation Department

The Parks & Recreation Department experienced a period of growth from 2002 until 2006. Its revenues were steadily growing. It was offering more recreation services, more programs and even increasing the number of parks that were available to its citizens. The acreage of park space doubled over the past seven years. The Department planned for and built a new Recreation Center, which opened in 2009, and a new Community Center, which opened in 2011.

The first hint of fiscal trouble appeared in the early part of fiscal year 2008-2009. The Parks & Recreation Director observed that revenues were down because of the overall economy. The economy continued its slide throughout the fiscal year 2009-2010. The City Council decided that they could no longer utilize their reserves and chose to start looking into cuts of service levels. The City Manager held a series of budget-cutting sessions with the Parks & Recreation Department management staff from January

through March 2010. Initially they were looking for cuts of \$150,000 (5%) from their budget. This target soon increased to \$270,000 (9%). By March 2010, the City Manager mandated that each city department cut 11-14% from their budget. For Parks & Recreation this represented \$330,000 to \$420,000 that they must cut from their budget in short order.

The department began this task with the goal to do the most with the funding received. They cut expenditures in areas that are invisible to their citizens. The department purposefully decided to retain core services for customers, such as youth sports program and grass cutting. To their credit, staff did not make ludicrous cuts to highly visible services, such as closing rest rooms or not stocking free dog “poop” bags in the parks, which would send an immediate and painful message to the taxpayer that the city needs more money. As a methodology, they first made cuts to their small, neighborhood parks that have low usage. They made virtually no cuts to their highest use parks. They made no funding cuts to their flagship parks; River Walk, Bridgeway Lakes Park, or Bryte Park.

The expenditure cuts they finally decided upon include the following:

- Eliminated the position of the Parks Superintendent for an annual savings of \$150,000
- Made cuts to their seasonal staff (March to October) - reducing their number from 17 to 3 people for an annual savings of \$120,000
- Implemented a computer-controlled irrigation system - reducing water consumption by 18% and producing an annual savings of \$100,000

- Stopped a fertilization program that applied fertilizer to their parks three times per year at a cost of \$45,000 per application - annual savings amounted to \$135,000

Together, these measures reduced the Parks budget by \$505,000. These cuts were proposed and approved by the city council; becoming effective on July 1, 2010.

Part of the department's new emphasis on cost cutting has produced a sharp focus on all labor costs. Staff analyzed the time that it takes to perform each task and schedule accordingly. They have also switched their scheduling from a park-based schedule to a crew-based schedule. In the park-based scheduling model, one assigned person works at a particular park and stays there throughout their entire shift. The idea behind this scheduling model is that the assigned person has more ownership of that particular park and does a better job. Another advantage is that individual citizens become familiar with that person and will work with them to improve the park. The advantage of a crew-based scheduling model is efficiency and cost. Here a crew moves from park to park and performs specific tasks.

Following the advice of their City Manager, the Parks & Recreation Department also became very creative in looking for alternative ways (zero or low cost) to provide customer services. One of the cuts was to cancel a popular summer concert series that occurred at River Walk Park. The department is currently in negotiations with a commercial business that wants to fund this program. In return, the department allows this commercial business to sell items at this event as a vendor. The department is also negotiating with the Mormon Church regarding the church's "Helping Hand" program. The church will provide the labor, upwards of 750 people, to re-vamp one entire park.

For an expenditure of \$6,700 for supplies and equipment, the city will save \$100,000 in labor cost. The department is also collaborating with a school district and the Catholic Church in order to save money on a north-side park remodel.

The department has also studied the revenue side of the equation. Up to this point, staff determined not to initiate or raise usage fees to their customers. However, they did make one exception. They never had a fee for baseball leagues, until recently, when they pitched the proposal to the league. Both parties agreed upon a charge of \$3 per player for the entire season. In time, the department would like to raise these fees to \$10 per person.

The Parks & Recreation Department generated these ideas through a series of meetings where the leaders of the department would brainstorm ideas about possible savings and potentially new revenue sources. These meetings continue to this day. The economy has not improved enough for the city to go back to its pre-fiscal crisis budget. In fact, the Parks & Recreation Department wants to be ready in case additional cuts are necessary. If that happens the current plan is to continue to cut back on labor costs by laying-off additional part-time and full-time workers. The department will base the level of labor reduction upon the dollar amount of mandated cuts. If the cuts are small, the department believes it can institute a Park Host program, whereby volunteer citizens keep the parks clean. As the cuts get deeper, the department plans on closing parks and other facilities. They will do this in an incremental fashion; shutting down the least used, neighborhood first and moving up the list as necessary.

The planning performed by the parks and recreation department is commendable. However, are these plans the best options for them? Certainly, other actions will mitigate their financial woes. I will investigate actions undertaken by other park agencies in order to both get an understanding of the universe of actions available to an agency. I will then analyze and compare the strengths and weaknesses of these alternatives with those options considered by the department. Therefore, the central question of this thesis remains unanswered: what are the best options for the West Sacramento Parks & Recreation Department to pursue in order to resolve the potential fiscal constraints that may be the result of the current economic recession?

Organization of Thesis

The organization of the remainder of this thesis is as follows. Chapter 2 provides a literature review of academic articles that relate to parks and funding for parks. Chapter 3 introduces a list of alternatives that represent the range of policy options available to the City of West Sacramento in dealing with their funding cuts. Chapter 4 presents the process of developing a set of evaluative tools—the criteria, and then discusses each criterion and assigns a relative importance to each. Chapter 5 evaluates each alternative with respect to the established criteria, in order to rate and compare alternatives. Lastly, Chapter 6 presents conclusions of this process.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

When a fiscal crisis confronts a park and recreation agency, it is probably universal to ask some or all of the following questions. Is this crisis happening elsewhere? What is everyone else doing? Why can I not simply get more money from the city? How can I get more money from my operation? Are they going to shut us down? While there is a paucity of scholarly research regarding how a park and recreation agency facing severe economic uncertainties can maintain its ability to deliver key services, scholarly literature will help answer some of these questions. The popular media can be a good source to help provide other answers. In this section, I research the benefits that parks bring to a community and its residents. Next, I examine the extent of this fiscal crisis in other park and recreation agencies throughout California and the nation. I also consider the responses by these agencies to their specific situations. Next, I investigate the revenue sources for municipalities and special districts within California. I pay special attention to funds that are available to support park and recreation agencies. I then take a more detailed look at all the possible revenue sources for a park and recreation agency.

The Economic Effects of Parks on Communities

Are park and recreation agencies a drag on the community budget? Would citizens rather have their taxes spent on police and fire protection? This section will examine the economic effects that parks have on communities. There is literature that

suggests that parks add great value to a community, increase city property tax, and attract outside revenues to local businesses. This information could be useful to community leaders as they struggle with budget decisions during difficult economic periods.

According to the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA), local parks and recreation areas are vital to a community and its development. NRPA identifies three values that characterize parks as essential services to communities. These are social benefits, health and environmental benefits, and economic value (National Recreation and Park Association [NRPA], 2011). This advocacy organization offers an overview of the importance of parks to citizens and underscores the necessity of governmental support to fund parks and recreation activities. There is a variety of literature to support the values identified by the NRPA.

There are numerous park and recreation professional organizations and governmental units that have accumulated research and other evidence to support the notion of the importance of parks to communities. The NRPA (2011) presents a paper entitled “Why Parks and Recreation are Essential Public Services.” This point highlights various research results and facts that address the many benefits provided by parks to citizens and the community. Even NRPA’s slogan, “Parks Make Life Better,” underscores the benefits of parks to people. Another slogan that makes an even more dramatic assertion of the important benefits of parks is “Recreation: An Investment for Life.” This slogan is the copyright of the Saskatchewan Parks and Recreation Association, Inc. The mission statement of the California State Parks (2011) encompasses the benefits of parks as they promise to provide for the health, inspiration

and education of the people of California. The National Park Service (NPS) (2011) categorizes the benefits of parks under the headings: caring for the environment; preserving history; revitalizing communities; and inviting stewardship. NPS quotes writer and historian Wallace Stegner stating that our national parks are “the best idea we ever had.”

Parks bestow a great deal of social benefits onto a community. There is much literature regarding suppositions of the benefits of recreation and leisure services to a sense of community. A study performed for the Northeastern Recreation Research Symposium (2007) found that the perception of benefits derived from park use has a direct relationship with sense of community. Allen (1991) determined that recreation and leisure services play a substantive role in enhancing community life. Research performed by Marans and Mohai (1991) suggest that environmental and urban amenities can contribute to the overall quality of communities and improve the quality of life experiences for members of that community.

There is ample documentation of the health benefits to a community. The medical and public health fields have performed various researches to establish the association of health benefits with physical activity. Previous leisure research documented the role of park-based leisure in reducing stress, improving moods, and creating a sense of wellness (Orsega-Smith, Mowen, Payne, & Godbey, 2004). Some studies involving parks discuss how regular physical activity performed at parks is good for many segments of the community. Cohen (2007) found correlation between park use and park proximity to residences. He concluded that public parks are critical resources

for physical activity in minority communities. Another study found that conveniently located parks led to increased physical activity by both adults and children (Salis, Bauman, & Pratt, 1998).

Parks enhance the environmental benefits to a community. They help to preserve and purify the environment. Trees in parks play a role in reducing air pollution (United States Department of Agriculture [USDA], 1994). The development and preservation of urban parks and recreational trails has emerged as an integral component of smart growth programs (Daniels, & Lapping, 2005). The presence of urban parks and natural areas contributes to the quality of life in many ways, including many environmental and ecological benefits, which in turn increase the well-being of citizens (Chiesura, 2004).

Dramatic economic benefits occur to communities as a direct result of their parks and recreation areas. According to Pack and Schanuel (2005), trails, parks and playgrounds are among the top five community amenities considered when selecting a home. Crompton (2001) expands on the benefits to a community as he reports that values of homes that are close to parks are 10% to 20% higher in value. Consequently, the local government receives additional property tax revenues on these properties. The National Recreation and Park Association (2011) presents a fact sheet that cites three separate studies showing increased property values and property taxes for properties located near parks. The Philadelphia study showed property values up 5% and property taxes up \$18 million. A north Texas study found homes adjacent to parks were valued 22% more than homes further away. A New York City study showed a substantial increase in rental prices around Bryant Park compared to similar facilities further away. Karkoski (2011)

reports that homeowners in Sacramento living close to the American River Parkway incur a large, measurable boost to their home value as a direct result of this proximity.

Parks and recreation areas provide a community with increased tourism. Parks and recreation areas that are desirable will attract many more tourists. This creates economic growth, employment and entrepreneurial opportunities. Fridgen (1996) explains that the positive aspects of tourism on a community include a financial boost to the economy, exposure to new ideas via interactions with the tourists, and an increased interest and activities in the arts.

The Extent and Responses to Budget Shortfalls at Park & Recreation Agencies

To determine the best options to pursue by the West Sacramento Parks & Recreation Department, it is instructive to learn what is occurring at other parks and recreation programs in response to budget shortfalls. I expect to uncover some effective responses undertaken by other departments. This will provide effective alternatives for consideration by the West Sacramento Parks & Recreation Department. Conversely, I expect to uncover some ineffective responses. The department should avoid these.

The state government of California had a budget deficit of \$25 billion as of January 2011 (Kabuki without end, 2011). Governor Brown planned to solve the problem by cutting spending and extending temporary taxes. As part of these spending cuts, the California Department of Parks and Recreation plans to close up to 70 of its 278 parks in an effort to cut expenses by \$22 million per year in order to meet their mandated budget reductions (California Department of Parks and Recreation, 2011). This news release specified their closure methodology had three primary goals: “(1) protect the most

significant natural and cultural resources, (2) maintain public access and revenue generation to the greatest extent possible and (3) protect closed parks so that they remain attractive and usable for potential partners” (California Department of Parks and Recreation, 2011). The factors that were taken into account to determine closure included statewide significance, visitation, fiscal strength, ability to physically close, existing partnerships, infrastructure (money needed for repairs), and land use restrictions.

Lawmakers are proposing their own solutions to the state parks budget woes. Legislation is progressing through the California legislature that protects the parks and helps keep them open. AB 42 will allow the Department of Parks and Recreation to enter into agreements with nonprofit organizations to help operate parks. These are parks at risk for closure (Recreational Trails Advisory Committee, 2011). SB 580 regulates the use or disposal of state parks (California State Parks Foundation, 2011).

Other states are cutting funding for their state parks because of measures they are taking to close their budget gaps (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2010). Arizona is allowing private companies and Native American tribes to take over operations and management of certain state parks. Idaho cut \$4.5 million from their state parks triggering fee increases and job eliminations. Kentucky cut \$5.9 million causing closures of state parks two days per week during the winter, cutting work hours, contracting with private companies to run food services and allowing alcohol sales at four resort state parks. Massachusetts cuts its state parks by \$23 million. The senate majority leader in Nevada proposed closing all state parks. New York raised fees for state parks

and historic sites generating \$4 million. Pennsylvania cut \$3.6 million from their state parks.

An article in the *Sacramento Bee* makes interesting comparisons between the California State Parks and the East Bay Regional Park District, and makes the case for dedicated funding for parks (Weiser, 2011, May 28). California operates the nation's largest state park system, with 278 parks, second only to the national park system. After the most recent cuts, their budget will be \$99 million. This represents a 40% cut over four years. This budget is smaller than the East Bay Regional Park District's budget. The East Bay district is a local agency that runs 65 parks in Alameda and Contra Costa counties. This difference lies in the financial structure. The East Bay district receives dedicated property taxes approved by local voters, while California State Parks relies on annual legislative largesse from a financially stressed general fund.

Located just across the river from West Sacramento, the City of Sacramento continues to struggle with budget shortfalls. Over the last four years the Sacramento Park and Recreation Department has had its budget slashed by 65%. As a result, they are cutting half of the workforce (Wong, 2011). Currently the Park and Recreation Department is facing an additional cut of \$4.4 million, which will lower its 2012 budget to \$31 million (Kalb, 2011, May 12). To achieve these cuts, the department plans to cancel children's summer camps and youth sports league, cut 56 career positions, cut scores of part-time and seasonal jobs, open only 3 or 6 of the city's 13 pools, and close 13 of the city's 16 community centers. However, the city is considering a plan to have nonprofit and faith groups operate and keep open some of these community centers

(Lillis, 2011, June 7). The city is also considering contracting out golf maintenance with expected annual savings of \$500,000.

Sacramento County has been struggling with budget cuts for several years. In August 2009, the parks director, Janet Baker, enumerated her department's solutions to these cuts. They included reducing hours and programs, reducing maintenance and ranger jobs, and the closure of Gibson Ranch; a 345 acre park. She also said her department was looking for ways to increase revenues and fundraising; including taking online donations (Sacramento County, 2009). Currently, the department faces an additional \$1.2 million in cuts to their budget (Weiser, 2011, June 1). The county is looking at additional personnel cuts and other unspecified actions. The county recently announced that Gibson Ranch would be re-opening under a ten-year arrangement with a private, non-profit organization that would operate the park (Sacramento Business Journal, 2011). The county is also considering selling their share of the 127-acre Elk Grove Regional Park (Kalb, 2011, June 8). These cuts to the county parks have resulted in reduced park hours, higher crime rates, visible maintenance problems, closed restrooms, broken water fountains and more. These public have noticed these problems. A special interest group, Save the American River Association (SARA) worked with concerned citizens and formed the Grassroots Working group (GWG). The mission of this group was to explore ways to fund parks. The group hired a polling firm who determined that 73% of voters would support dedicated taxes for regional parks (Save the American River Association, 2011). After completion of their study, the GWG made a number of recommendations to the County Board of Supervisors. Their first

recommendation was to put the creation of an independent park district on the November 2012 countywide ballot. This ballot measure would include adding one-tenth percent to the existing sales tax. They propose to model this district after the successful East Bay Regional Park District.

Park departments and districts in other cities and counties in California have also experienced significant budget cuts and had to make difficult decisions. The Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks (RAP) experienced significant cuts over the last three years, receiving a 30% cut in its budget (People for Parks, 2011). The department's response to this was to eliminate about 20% of their staff, cancel programs and co-sponsorships, reduce operational hours at recreation centers, close pools and day care centers, and reduce cleaning and maintenance. The city council recently deleted another \$19 million from the department's 2012 budget, so the RAP must make additional decisions as to what to cut (Linthicum, 2011). Last year, the director of the city of San Carlos Parks and Recreation Department presented 10% and 20% reduction lists to his city council. His lists emphasized eliminating programs and services that were free or non-revenue producing. The lists included proposals to reduce staffing back to 1964 levels, shuttering two or four parks and a recreation center, reducing park repair and maintenance, and eliminating various programs (Durand, 2011). Similarly, the director of the Parks and Recreation Department for the city of San Diego presented plans to his city council that would eliminate jobs, close pools, and reduce programs and maintenance (Channel 10 News, 2011). The Kern County Parks and Recreation Department is proposing job layoffs and elimination of programs from senior centers because of budget

cuts (Foley, 2011). The county board of supervisors is delaying implementation of these cuts hoping that either they can locate additional funding or the county can lease the senior centers.

The San Francisco Recreation and Park Department (RPD) manages 220 parks, playgrounds and open spaces covering over 4,000 acres (Ginsburg, 2010). The RPD has experienced severe budget challenges since 2004, well before the current recession, and had a total of \$43 million cut from its cumulative budgets. A \$12.4 million cut in the 2011 budget brought their annual operating budget down to \$117 million (Gordon, 2010). RPD's response to these cuts over the years has been to cut staff, programs, services, maintenance, and reduce operating hours. In addition, RPD reorganized parts of their department and created operations that are more efficient. They implemented creative revenue generating initiatives (Ginsburg, 2010). These creative revenue generating initiatives include locating community partners, finding foundation and corporate sponsors, pursuing grants and philanthropic support, selling naming rights, contracting for food vendors, arranging public markets, charging for parking, and renting Segways and bicycles. Additional revenue generation comes from creative programming such as offering bingo games, pilates and fitness boot camps, night glow golf course, sleepovers in parks, and parents night out babysitting centers. The RPD is also increasing revenues from traditional sources such as increased or new user fees, increased park amenities, neighborhood events, promoting clubhouse rentals, establishing new day camps and after-school programs, and charging rent for open spaces (Kelkar, 2010).

Established in 1996, the Neighborhood Parks Council (NPC) has been advocating for San Francisco parks. This is an independent, nonprofit. They seek to align community needs with city government and the RPD (Neighborhood Parks Council, 2011). In 2010, the NPC conducted a survey of city residents with the goal of collecting constructive feedback from their park experiences. This 2010 Park User Survey specifically inquired about the revenue generating efforts of the RPD and the feedback was generally positive (Neighborhood Parks Council, 2010).

The California Park & Recreation Society (CPRS), a non-profit advocacy agency representing parks and recreation agencies, performed a survey in September 2010 to assess budget cuts to park agencies and the agency's response to these cuts (California Park & Recreation Society, 2010). Of the 153 agencies responding to the survey, 75% reported that their operating budget had decreased over the past 18-24 months, while 15% reported no change in their budget, and 9% indicated their operating budget increased.

The problems in California are not unique. The national recession has presented budget problems to parks and recreation agencies all over the country. New York City's Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) has experienced cuts since 2008. The department's budget this year of \$238 million represents a 6.8% reduction from last year. The response to these cuts have been layoffs, reduced operational hours, fee increases, and facility closures. New York State's Department of Parks and Recreation had their 2010-2011 budget reduced by \$33 million (12.5%) to \$230 million for the entire fiscal year. The department plans to cut staff, close several parks and visitor centers, and delay the next Parks Police Academy class (New Yorkers for Parks, 2011). The small town of

Schroepel, New York was deciding to cut the entire \$52,000 slated to operate their parks and recreation department as a means to balance their 2011 budget (Groom, 2010). The city of Baltimore, Maryland's plan to cut nearly one-third of the Recreation and Parks Department budget, along with cuts to police and fire, was met with spirited dissent by more than 500 residents. The plan would close more than half of the city's recreation centers and swimming pools and cut funding for park maintenance (Scharper, 2010). The city manager of Virginia Beach, Virginia is considering layoffs and reduction of park maintenance and cleaning to help close an \$84 million shortfall in their budget (WTKR-TV, 2011). The Chesterfield County Parks and Recreation Department, Virginia, is planning for \$1 million in cuts to its budget by eliminating jobs, programs and maintenance (Correa, 2010). Palm Beach County Parks and Recreation Department, Florida, will eliminate 32 jobs, cut back on park maintenance, and close two public pools and possibly three nature centers in an effort to reduce their budget by \$4.8 million (Dripic, 2011). The city of Pataskala, Ohio, closed its parks and recreation department two years ago to balance the budget. This year, due to agreements with private organizations and an army of volunteers, there are baseball and soccer leagues playing on well-maintained fields; all without using any city money. Similarly, Licking County Park District, Ohio, recently reopened six of its eleven facilities because volunteers stepped forward to mow grass, clean trails and open and close parks each day. The county commissioners had cut the district's budget by half and private organizations came to the rescue (Jarman, 2011). The city of Adrian Michigan cut their parks and recreation department's budget by \$144,000. The department made personnel cuts and eliminated

33 of about 99 recreational programs (Mulcahy, 2011). The Shawnee, Kansas, County Parks and Recreation Department's 2011 budget was cut by \$174,901 (7.8%) and planned to achieve this amount by eliminating some positions, trimming programs, and reducing hours of operation (Johnson, 2011). The city of Seattle reduced its parks and recreation district's 2011 budget by \$10.2 million. To achieve this Seattle eliminated or reduced hours down to 103 full-time equivalent positions, closed six community centers and 7 wading pools, reduced park maintenance, increased fees, and turned to community partners to keep a number of facilities open (Seattle Parks and Recreation, 2010, September 27).

While presenting their case for tough choices following budget reductions to their respective citizenry and staff, the parks directors of two large cities made some interesting comments to explain the breadth of problems throughout the country. The director of Seattle Parks and Recreation (Seattle Parks and Recreation, 2010) stated:

We are not alone in this.

Detroit closed 77 parks on July 1. Colorado Springs' parks budget dropped in 2010 from \$17 million to \$3 million. They have cut maintenance, stopped picking up trash, and closed community centers and all pools. In Dallas the proposed parks budget lays off 260 employees and drops by a third. Baltimore's proposed budget includes closure of half the community centers, pools, and wading pools. Los Angeles last month laid off 125 people. Sacramento is cutting 145 positions. Closer to home, the city of Woodinville has shuttered its five-year-old community center.

To avoid some layoffs and other reductions, parks and recreation agencies are finding, literally, survival strategies in the form of new ways to provide services:

- Colorado Springs has entered a partnership with a private swim school to keep three pools open. Foundations, nonprofits, and volunteers have raised money to keep community centers open.
- Phoenix is looking at programs that could be managed by nonprofits.
- Rockville, MD is turning over some maintenance functions to private companies.

- Miami-Dade Parks is issuing RFPs to negotiate public/private partnerships to restore lost recreation, swimming, and arts and culture services, and contracting out some maintenance tasks.

The Director of San Francisco's Recreation and Park District made the following observation (Neighborhood Parks Council, 2011, March):

Visiting with other big city park directors confirms that San Francisco's budget challenges are not unique. Budget cuts will force the City of Houston to close half of its recreation centers this year. The Los Angeles Parks Department expects hundreds of layoffs and significant park maintenance reductions. New York City has reduced seasonal hiring by 15% and cut back many permanent staff to part-time work schedules. Seattle has curtailed trash pick-up, ball field maintenance and restroom cleanings. Baltimore shut half its rec centers and pools, and Detroit closed 77 parks last year. According to a survey by the National League of Cities, 87 percent of cities were less able to meet their fiscal needs in 2010 than in the previous year.

Every park agency director I met last week is scrambling to offset cuts by raising revenue through concessions, special events, new partnerships, sponsorships and philanthropy. Seattle and Colorado Springs have non-profits running their rec centers. Denver will be generating revenue from more admission-based events in its parks. Miami is entering into public private partnerships to restore recreation, swimming, arts programs and park maintenance tasks.

All of this provides strong evidence that there are fiscal problems with parks and recreation agencies throughout the country. West Sacramento is but one of many who are trying to cope with jaw-dropping budget cuts. There seems to be a general pattern of actions taken by these agencies. A summary of this appears in Table 1. The overwhelming initial actions are to close parks and facilities; reduce operating days or hours; eliminate jobs or cut hours; reduce maintenance, cleaning, or law enforcement; and cancel programs or services. Some agencies sought to find additional revenue as a means of countering the budget cuts. Some agencies enlisted the aid of volunteers, or

outside groups to operate programs or facilities. I will assess these actions as possible alternatives for the West Sacramento Parks and Recreation District in their quest to discover the best solutions to counter budget constraints.

Table 1

National Response to Fiscal Stress by Park & Recreation Agencies

<u>Quantity</u>	<u>Agency's Response to Budget Cuts</u>
21	Close parks & facilities or reduce operating days or hours
20	Eliminate jobs (full & part-time) or cut hours
14	Reduce maintenance, cleaning or law enforcement
12	Cancel programs or services
6	Contract with private company or group to operate facilities
6	Use volunteers, non-profits, private organizations, or public-private partnership
6	Creative solutions (increase revenues through new programs & merchandise)
4	Increase existing fees or implement new fees
2	Eliminate entire agency
1	Reorganize to create more efficient operation
1	Attempt to create independent park district with dedicated taxes
1	Sell parks

Local Government Revenue Sources

To evaluate cuts to West Sacramento's Park and Recreation Department's budget, it is important to have some basic knowledge of the general sources of revenue for cities in California. Likewise, it is important to know where these revenue funds are spent. Additionally, it is important to learn the general sources of revenue for parks and recreation agencies. California government finance is a complex and seemingly mysterious process. I will unpeel this onion just a bit with a limited discussion of finance

issues for a typical California city and special district. To that end, this section will review literature that discusses these important topics.

Sources of Revenues – Municipalities.

The California Constitution and state law set the rules for municipal revenue sources. In general, the California code allows cities to impose any tax not otherwise prohibited by state law (League of California Cities, 2005). Cities have the general authority to charge fees under the cities' police powers granted them by the state Constitution; however, these fees must not exceed the reasonable cost of providing the service or facility. Within California, cities differ based upon, not only size and population, but upon the services that they offer. A full-service city is responsible for funding all of the major services such as police, fire, library, parks and recreation, and planning. However, special districts in many cities provide some of these services, such as fire, library, and parks and recreation.

A typical California city's revenues come from the following sources (League of California Cities, (2005) :

a) Sales and Use tax –Cities receive a share of the sales tax for sales transactions that occur within the city borders. The California state sales tax rate is currently 6.25% (California State Board of Equalization, 2011). Cities receive a very small portion of this money (.003%) as revenue restricted for use in public safety. Taxpayers pay an additional 1% on sales tax for use by local governments. This is the Bradley-Burns tax, which allocates .75% either to the county or city and .25% to county transportation funds. Cities and counties can also add a maximum of 1% additional onto the tax rate for local

use. Sales and use tax revenue received by cities is general-purpose revenue and is deposited into the general fund. For transactions where no sales tax is collected, purchasers pay a use tax. An example of this is an internet sale.

b) Property tax – This is a tax based upon the value of real property and tangible personal property (ad valorem). Counties collect property tax revenue. The state allocates these funds among cities, counties, school districts and special districts.

c) Business License tax – Most cities in California levy a business license tax. Each city determines this tax rate. The city collects this revenue and deposits it into their general fund. The total amount of this tax can represent anywhere from three to 6 percent of the city's annual general revenue.

d) Transient Occupancy tax – More than 380 cities impose this “hotel tax” on people staying 30 days or less. The city collects this revenue and deposits it into their general fund. The total amount of this tax can represent anywhere from seven to 17 percent of the city's annual general revenue.

e) Utility User tax – More than 150 cities impose this tax on users of various utilities, such as electric, gas, water, telephone, and cable television. The city collects this revenue and deposits it into their general fund. The total amount of this tax can represent anywhere from 15 to 22 percent of the city's annual general revenue.

f) Vehicle License Fee (VLF) – The VLF is a tax imposed by the state on the owners of vehicles. The Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) collects this tax. They keep 14% as administrative charges. Counties receive 75% of this tax to use in their health and welfare programs. Cities receive an allocation of this tax based upon their population. A

city deposits such monies into its general fund. The total amount of this tax represents about 1 percent of the average city's annual general revenue.

g) Property tax in lieu of VLF – In 1998 and again in 2004 the state cut the rate of VLF but maintained funding to counties and cities with state general fund monies (1998) and property tax monies (2004). The city deposits this money into their general fund. The total amount of the VLF tax combined with their share of property tax represents about 33 percent of a full-service city's annual general revenue.

h) Parcel tax – This is a special tax on property, generally based upon either a flat per-parcel rate or a variable rate according to size. Two-thirds of voters must approve a special benefit assessment. Cities use this tax for specific purposes such as parks, libraries, open-space protection, or police and fire services. Parcel taxes provide less than 1 percent of city revenue statewide.

i) Rents, Royalties and Concessions – Examples of these include revenue from concessionaires operating on city property, facility rentals, parking charges, sale of advertisements in city publications and fees for golf. The city deposits this money into its general fund.

j) Franchises – The city collects these fees as rent for the use of city property by refuse companies, cable television companies and other utility companies. The city deposits this money into their general fund.

k) Fines, Forfeitures and Penalties – The city sets the penalties for violation of municipal codes, but state law determines the distribution and use of these monies.

- l) Service Charges and Fees – Examples of these charges and fees include utility payments, plan checking and recreation classes. This revenue does not go into the general fund. Instead, its use is limited to paying for the specific service.
- m) Other locally raised revenues include licenses and permits, investment earnings, property transfer tax, and sale of surplus property.
- n) Intergovernmental revenue – Cities receive transfers of monies from state and federal governments in the form of grants for specific projects, reimbursements for cost of mandates, and other general support funds. This revenue does not go into the general fund. Instead, its use is limited to paying for the specific purpose.

The major sources of revenues that are deposited into the city general fund revenue include sales and use tax, property tax and local taxes, including business license tax, hotel tax and utility user taxes. Interestingly, the largest source of city revenues is from service charges; the fees and charges for city utilities (Institute for Local Government, 2008). However, this money cannot go into the general fund; its use is limited to covering the cost of providing these services. The sources of an average city's revenues can be summarized as follows: service charges (38%); taxes (35%); other revenue and financing sources (11%); intergovernmental revenue (9%); use of money and property (4%); and special benefit assessments, licenses, permits, fines, and forfeitures (3%) (California State Controller's Office, 2011).

There are laws that restrict where cities can spend certain revenues. To insure that revenues are spent correctly, cities segregate monies into separate accounts or funds, such as special revenue funds, enterprise funds, and the general fund. Special revenue

funds are used for revenues that have specific limitations on use according to law. In most California cities, about two-thirds of all revenues are restricted for either payment for services or for specific purposes, such as restricted state grants, bonds and parcel taxes. The enterprise fund collects all revenues from self-supporting activities. The general fund collects all monies not legally designated for specific purposes. A summary of expenditures for an average city's revenues includes public safety (27%); public utilities (19%); transportation (16%); general government (11%); health (10%); community development (8%); culture and leisure (8%); and other (1%) (California State Controller's Office, 2011).

Cities throughout the country have had to confront the effects of the economic downturn since 2008. City revenues are in decline due to struggling housing markets, slow consumer spending, and high levels of unemployment. The evidence of the effect on California cities is now available. Similarly, evidence of how California cities responded to both the recession and the ongoing state budget crisis is now available. The immediate effect of the recession was plummeting retail sales and automobile sales. To cities, this translated to an immediate steep decline in their sales tax revenues. Cities also received less property tax revenues because of the decline in property values. However, this revenue loss did not affect city coffers for almost two years because it takes at least eighteen months for taxes to reflect the value of the downturn in the home market (National League of Cities, 2010). Even so, major sources of city revenues declined substantially during 2008-2009. Since sales and property taxes make up such a large percentage of general fund revenues, cities had to take immediate and substantive action.

In 2008-2009, 60% of California cities substantially reduced or eliminated contributions to their reserve funds (Public Policy Institute of California [PPIC], 2009). Additional reactions by cities to this fiscal stress were to curtail services, raise fees, delay or cancel purchases and projects, and make cutbacks in public works, maintenance and personnel.

Sources of Revenue - Special Districts.

A special district is “an autonomous, separate function of government having a particular purpose” (Edginton, Jordan, DeGraaf, & Edginton, 1995). A park and recreation special district is a legal subdivision of the state that represents a specific population in a defined geographic area with its own governing board. More importantly, it has the authority to collect taxes and other revenues. The advantages of this arrangement are that a special district focuses solely on its parks. There is no political interference from a parent organization. They do not have to compete for funding with other departments. A disadvantage of this arrangement is the district cannot take advantage of other city resources, such as police and public works.

The California Park & Recreation Society (CPRS) describes special districts as coming “in all shapes, sizes and varieties” (California Park & Recreation Society, n.d.). Special districts may be either enterprise or non-enterprise and either dependent or independent. Fees, such as a water district, primarily support Enterprise districts. Taxes fund non-enterprise districts. A dependent district acts as an adjunct of a city or county, while an independent district is independent from a city or county and has its own elected governing board. Funds for special districts come from a variety of sources. These include property taxes; locally imposed benefit assessments; grants; revenue bonds;

developer fees (Quimby Act); program/user fees; proceeds from concessionaires; and contracting out services.

Sources of Revenue - Parks & Recreation Agencies.

Meyer, in his widely-used text from the late 1940's and 1950's, sets the baseline that all "public recreation" services are authorized by law, apply to all levels of government, and are supported by taxes (Meyer, 1956). In fact, he believes that tax funds should "provide the basic floor of public recreation services, programs, and facilities." Meyer continues with a listing and description of other methods of funding parks and recreation agencies. A special tax levy on property or a special tax (such as sales taxes on specific items or revenue from parking) can provide a reliable stream of income. Special assessments or bond issues can provide for improvements in facilities. Charges and fees assessed to customers are appropriate where there is justification for the charges. However, Meyer is quick to point out that "dependence upon fees and charges as a substitute for tax funds can only end in disaster." He further asserts, "Recreation can be no more self-supporting than can public education." He finishes his discussion on funding with a discussion on the concessionaires in public recreation and the policies that must be in place to protect the public's interest.

In the 1970's Hines expanded on Meyer's list of sources (Hines, 1974). While stating that tax collections provides the largest share of revenues, Hines classifies all sources of revenues into four categories: compulsory; contractual; gratuitous; and earned. Examples of compulsory revenues include taxes, special assessments, and fees for licenses and permits. Contractual examples include leases, rentals, and concessions.

Gratuitous examples include voluntary gifts or donations made to the government, such as land, tangible properties, or money. Examples of earned income include charges and fees. Hines provides a very detailed listing of examples of revenue producing facilities and activities.

More recently, Hemphill mirrored Hine's four major sources of local revenue for parks and recreation entities (Hemphill, 1985). Compulsory resources include tax revenues (from property, sales, income, and franchise), special assessments, dedication ordinances/regulations, and fines/penalties. Earned income includes fees and charges (admission, rental, user, sales, license fees, and special service fees), and investment interest. The third source is contractual receipts. This includes land leases, facility rentals, operating concessions, leasing concessions, and public/private ventures (leasebacks). The fourth source is financial assistance. This includes grants, entitlements, special appropriations, donations or gifts. These can be from other governmental entities, foundations or individuals.

In its fact sheet profiling California's park and recreation agencies, the California Park & Recreation Society enumerates the various traditional and non-traditional funding sources used by California cities (California Park & Recreation Society, n.d.). They group these into four major subdivisions: taxes, bonds, grants and assessments, and various revenues. Taxes include a portion of property taxes, and locally imposed taxes such as sales, utility, business license and hotel tax. Local bonds must be approved by a 2/3 vote of the local electorate. The grants and assessments include state and federal grants, locally imposed benefit assessments, charitable gifts, developer fees or

agreements (Quimby Act) and user fees. The various revenue sources include such things as fees for classes, facility rental fees, concessionaire contracts, grants or corporate sponsors.

Conclusion

Researchers have compiled much information regarding the importance of parks to a community. Contemporary writers have provided a large pool of reports documenting how local park agencies have reacted to their particular circumstances during the national recession. However, I found little academic research that could assist a park and recreation agency in its efforts to deliver key services to their customers during a difficult economic period. This research gap provides an opening to contribute to the literature on parks and recreation fiscal management. As the current economic downturn continues, additional agencies will face difficult decisions brought on by budget shortfalls and decreased revenues. They will benefit most from additional research into this area.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY AND ALTERNATIVES

This chapter introduces the Criteria Alternatives Matrix (CAM) methodology. I present a summation of the alternatives undertaken by the various park and recreation agencies detailed in the literature review chapter. Next, I provide a listing of the potential alternatives that West Sacramento Parks & Recreation Department may pursue. These represent a continuum of alternatives from cutting the expenses for the entire department to seeking new revenue sources. I present an explanation of each alternative and show the financial change that will occur if the West Sacramento Parks & Recreation District undertakes the alternative.

Overview of the Criteria Alternatives Matrix (CAM)

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines policy as “a definite course or method of action selected from among alternatives and in light of given conditions to guide and determine present and future decisions” (Merriam-Webster, 2011). When economic factors dictate that there must be a change in the budgeting of the Parks & Recreation Department various people or factions are likely to suggest a particular course of action that they believe is the best, most obvious and correct solution. A problem occurs when different, conflicting, and mutually exclusive courses of actions are proposed. I must use a methodology to analyze and assess each course of action in order to determine which course of action is superior. This methodology needs to be unbiased, measurable, and comprehensive so that all interested parties know that the process is fair and open to scrutiny (Munger, 2000).

One such methodology is the Criteria Alternative Matrix (CAM) analysis. In this method, I will assign a numerical value to various criteria and use them to judge each alternative. I assign weights to these criteria in order to account for the relative importance perceived between each criterion. The sum of these weighted values presents a numerical ranking of all of the alternatives. This ranking is the basis of easily comparing each alternative to each other. This, in turn, leads to the selection of the highest-ranked alternative as the best course of action to pursue on the policy issue.

In this thesis, I will utilize a CAM to compare alternatives and judge their relative merits based upon a pre-selected list of specific criteria (Munger, 2000). I will present this graphically using a matrix. This CAM analysis is a decision-making tool that allows me to structure choices in a manner that makes tradeoffs transparent. I will accomplish this by: 1) specifying and prioritizing their needs with a list of criteria; 2) evaluating, rating, and comparing the different solutions; and 3) identifying the optimal solution given the criteria used. I will set up the actual criterion-alternative matrix by listing the alternatives as row headings and the criteria as column headings. This creates cells where I can evaluate each alternative using the criterion.

Summation of Alternatives Undertaken from the Literature Review

The various actions taken by all of the parks and recreation agencies detailed in the literature review section provide a useful starting point for determining alternatives. This summary appears in Table 2. Notice that the greatest number of responses involved cutting labor costs, which resulted in cancelled programs, closed facilities, and reduced

cleaning, maintenance and law enforcement. Also, note that no agency increased taxes in order to compensate for their lost revenues.

Table 2

National Response to Fiscal Stress by Park & Recreation Agencies

<u>Quantity</u>	<u>Agency's Response to Budget Cuts</u>
21	Close parks & facilities or reduce operating days or hours
20	Eliminate jobs (full & part-time) or cut hours
14	Reduce maintenance, cleaning or law enforcement
12	Cancel programs or services
6	Contract with private company or group to operate facilities
6	Use volunteers, non-profits, private organizations, or public-private partnership
6	Creative solutions (increase revenues through new programs & merchandise)
4	Increase existing fees or implement new fees
2	Eliminate entire agency
1	Reorganize to create more efficient operation
1	Attempt to create independent park district with dedicated taxes
1	Sell parks

Introduction of Alternatives

Table 3 presents a listing of the potential alternatives available to the City of West Sacramento and the Parks & Recreation Department. I selected these alternatives from among the many alternatives found in the literature review. A more detailed explanation of each alternative follows the table.

The literature reveals a great diversity of actions undertaken by park and recreation agencies throughout the country to tailor their operations because of significant reductions to their budgets. It also reveals numerous ideas that various agencies are considering. It would be unwieldy to use each action or idea as a stand-alone alternative.

Furthermore, many of the actions or ideas might improve their situation by only a small amount. Grouping them with other actions or ideas will allow them to become significant. Indeed, the literature revealed that all agencies undertook multiple actions. I assembled the various actions and ideas into logical groupings. The first major delineation was whether the action or idea reduced expenses or increased revenues. Because the primary expense of a park and recreation agency is labor, I focused on this expense category. Therefore, my first alternative is to close the department. This is the extreme version of cutting labor. The next alternative is to cut labor by eliminating programs and services. This grouping includes all actions that primarily reduce labor expenditures; such as closing a park, cutting operational hours, reducing maintenance and cleaning, or canceling programs and services. The next alternative groups together all actions that reduce labor expenditures by utilizing volunteer labor. I grouped revenue producing actions and ideas into several logical groups. I grouped the various ways that government taxes citizens to support parks into the alternative called raising taxes. There are some fuzzy borders between increasing fees and the entrepreneurial alternative. However, the literature review yielded a wealth of entrepreneurial ideas that had great potential. I want to examine it separately. Lastly, donations/gifts and government grants are both logical groupings that could produce significant revenues.

Table 3

Alternatives Proposed for West Sacramento Parks & Recreation Dept.

	Alternative	Brief Description
1	Maintain Status Quo	Baseline scenario that occurs if no other alternatives are undertaken
2	Close Department	All facilities and parks close/personnel laid off

3	Cut Labor – Cut Services	Labor hours reduced – triggering cuts in services, programs, hours of operations and even closures
4	Cut Labor - Use Volunteers	Paid department employees are replaced by volunteers
5	Raise Taxes	Measure K tax re-implemented
6	Increase/Add New Fees	Current fees are increased and new fees are introduced
7	Entrepreneurship	Initiate new and profitable sales and programs
8	Donations & Gifts	Donated monies from individuals and businesses
9	Government Grants	Grants received from state & federal sources

- 1) Maintain status quo - This is the current position of the parks and recreation department. This is the baseline scenario. It will occur if an agency selects no other alternatives.
- 2) Eliminate the department - Eliminating the department is a drastic option. The city council will have to make this decision. The literature review contains information detailing two towns that chose this option; one town in New York and one in Ohio. There are several options if the city council were to select this alternative. One option completely shuts down the parks and recreation program by closing all facilities and cancelling all programs. If the council selected this option, it would save most of the money currently provided to the department. The city would still have some expenses associated with the upkeep of lands and facilities, but there would be no labor expenses. I estimate they could save as much as \$5 million annually.
- 3) Cut labor and cut services – Cutting labor and services are the top two responses of park and recreation agencies uncovered by the literature review, as they struggled with budget cuts. Cuts in labor will cause reductions in services, programs, hours of operations, and even facility closures.

4) Cut labor and use volunteers – This alternative replaces employees with volunteers in order to maintain current services. This alternative, that will cut labor costs, but maintain current services, sounds like a magical solution. In reality, it is simply a swap of volunteers and contracted workers for paid workers. More than two-thirds of expenditures made by the West Sacramento Parks & Recreation Department go towards personnel expenses. Any replacement of these paid employees by volunteers will save money for the department. This labor can come from a variety of sources. People will volunteer either individually or from organizations, such as community groups or non-profits. Examples of groups that want to help with parks and recreation are friends of the park organizations, sports leagues, and enthusiasts for specific programs. A park and recreation agency can also create a public-private partnership by contracting with a private company or a non-profit organization to operate select facilities. Examples of both of these situations appear in the literature review. Six agencies used volunteers and six agencies contracted for labor.

5) Raise taxes - Raising taxes would provide a dependable and long-term revenue source. It appears to be the most obvious way to correct the funding problems experienced by West Sacramento. Yet, the literature review did not reveal any location that has raised taxes as a solution. The reasons for this are straightforward. Raising taxes is politically difficult to do anytime; especially during a recession. In addition, California requires that two-thirds of voters must approve new taxes. Nonetheless, I recommend the exploration of this option because it can create a significant source of revenue for a park and recreation agency. It is important to distinguish between taxes and fees. A tax is a

required payment. It is not voluntary and failure to pay is punishable by law. A tax raises general revenue for a government entity and it does not have to be proportionate. Fees are voluntary and usually proportionate to the goods or service received.

The city has control over many taxes. These include a park improvement district, a community facilities district (CFD) (also known as a Mello-Roos district), or sales tax. The municipality may form a park improvement district to raise funds through assessments in order to acquire, construct and maintain a park facility (Justia US Law, 2011). A community facilities district is established by a sponsoring local government agency and with a 2/3 vote of the citizens in the proposed area (California Tax Data, 2011). The purpose of the CFD is to finance public improvements and services. Homeowners pay a special property tax assessment on their real estate to pay for these expenditures. Currently the West Sacramento Parks and Recreation Department receives a share of funds from a sales tax override. In November 2002, voters approved Measure K that added ½% onto the sales tax (City of West Sacramento-Measure K, 2011). Half of this tax will expire in ten years. This portion pays for capital purchases and projects. The other half of this tax does not expire. It supports ongoing programs and activities. The parks department uses about 6-8% of this money for various programs and projects.

6) Increase existing user fees or implement new fees - The literature review reveals that many park agencies increased existing user fees and implemented new fees. This is a viable alternative. Each park agency has direct control over them. Citizens are charged fees for recreation programs, entrance into a facility or park, rental fees, permit fees, and even fees for parking.

7) Entrepreneurship - Entrepreneurship refers to an agency coming up with new sources of revenues utilizing commercial retail concepts and ideas. This market-oriented strategy involves searching for changes and trends, and taking risks to create or improve products and services. Examples of this include concessionaires (self-operation or contracting it out), selling merchandise (or contracting it out), renting merchandise (such as bicycles or segways), holding fundraising events (such as garage sales or farmers' markets), and leasing facilities. Entrepreneurship also includes increasing creative recreation programming and charging enough to make a profit. Examples of programs include bingo, pilates, fitness boot camp, night-glow golf, sleepover in parks, parents-night-out babysitting, day camps, and after- school programs.

8) Donations & Gifts - Encouraging donations and gifts can be a very lucrative means of increasing revenues. Park agencies can sell sponsorship opportunities to community partners, corporate partners or foundation partners. Agencies can sell naming rights to parks and facilities. They can also encourage individuals to provide donations to parks; even encouraging people to bequest money to parks. To create a successful, long-term program, the department must develop an action plan to analyze potential sources and cultivate these sources.

9) Government Grants – Local parks and recreation agencies have traditionally received financial aid from the federal and state governments. Even though the state of California is unlikely to support a park agency with a grant, there are still numerous federal funding opportunities for parks and recreation agencies. Funds are available to support a variety of programs offered by eight separate federal departments and agencies. These include

departments of Agriculture, Education, Health and Human Services, Interior, Justice, Transportation, the Environmental Protection Agency, and even the U.S. Coast Guard.

Chapter 4

CRITERIA

The previous section introduced the set of alternatives that represent the range of policy options available to the City of West Sacramento Parks & Recreation Department for dealing with mandated funding cuts. In order to select the best alternatives among such a broad menu of policy options, a structured process will be necessary. Bardach (2000) and Munger (2000) suggest such a structured approach. This approach involves the systematic weighing of benefits and drawbacks of each of the alternatives according to some set of selected criteria. These criteria are evaluative measuring tools. They determine the feasibility of an alternative. The criteria will judge the outcome of the proposed alternative and not the alternative itself. Put another way, these criteria will determine if the alternative achieves its intended outcomes. Bardach (2000, p. 26) emphasizes that this is “the most important step for introducing values and philosophy into the policy analysis, because some possible “criteria” are evaluative standards used to judge the goodness of the projected policy outcomes associated with each of the alternatives.”

This section presents the process of developing a set of evaluative tools. I first discuss the importance of utilizing a consistent measurement methodology. This insures that dissimilar scales do not skew results. I then discuss each criterion and assign a relative importance to each. This process is critical to selecting the final policy recommendations.

Measuring the Criteria

It is very important to measure the criteria correctly. Incorrect measurements can introduce deception and errors of scale into the process. My goal is to measure all of the criteria using the same yardstick, so that I am comparing apples to apples. As such, I will choose to use interval/ratio measures. More specifically, I will use whole number values from one to five. The measurements/ratings that I use will appear in Table 4.

Table 4

Criterion Measurement & Rating Scale

Measurement	1	2	3	4	5
Rating	Very Weak	Somewhat Weak	Moderate	Somewhat Strong	Very Strong

Criteria Selection and Justification

I will utilize four criteria to assess the alternatives described in the previous section. I will present the rationale for the selection of each criterion. Finally, I introduce the weight assignment for each criterion in terms of its relative importance in the evaluation process.

(I) Efficiency.

Efficiency is the first criterion. It is included to account for the cost-effectiveness of the proposed alternative. In an economic context, this is the most cost-effective solution; the policy that maximizes the public investment. This policy delivers the greatest “bang for the buck.” This policy either saves the most amount of money (by reducing expenses) or generates the greatest additional revenue.

Table 5 displays the assignment of the measurement scheme to the total estimated annual change in funds for each alternative. The annual change in funds for each alternative is the combination of the annual change in revenues and the annual change in expenses. For example, the ideal alternative will have an increase in revenues and a decrease in expenses. To determine the annual change in funds, you must add the additional revenue amount to the positive savings of expenses. Another example occurs where there is an increase in revenues and an increase in expenses. In this case, you must subtract the additional annual expenses from the additional annual revenue. Most alternatives will have one change: either a decrease to annual expenses (a savings) or an increase to revenues.

Table 5

Criteria #1: Efficiency

<u>Rating</u>	<u>Measure</u>	<u>Change to Annual Funds</u>
Very weak	1	\$1 to \$75,000
Somewhat weak	2	\$75,001 to \$150,000
Moderate	3	\$150,001 to \$225,000
Somewhat strong	4	\$225,001 to \$300,000
Very strong	5	\$300,000 or more

(II) Equity.

Equity is the second criterion. It is included to account for fairness of the proposed alternative to all stakeholders. At a minimum, stakeholders include citizens of West Sacramento, department employees, city council and other city government officials. This criterion judges the outcomes of each alternative to measure how well these outcomes maximize equity. Is the treatment of stakeholder groups equal and fair?

Are some groups shouldering a disproportionate share of the burden for addressing fiscal problems? Do the most vulnerable groups (e.g., low income and disabled people) face a particular burden? The equity criterion is concerned with what is socially just in the distribution of parks and recreation services to all stakeholders, especially those in vulnerable groups. The interpretations of ratings for measures of equity appear in Table 6.

Table 6

Criteria #2: Equity

<u>Rating</u>	<u>Measure</u>	<u>Interpretation of Ratings</u>
Very weak	1	Some stakeholder groups shoulder a disproportionate share of the burden for implementing the alternative; moreover, such disproportionate burdens are concentrated among vulnerable groups such as low-income citizens.
Somewhat weak	2	Multiple stakeholder groups shoulder a disproportionate share of the burden
Moderate	3	Some stakeholders shoulder a higher share of the burden but these groups are able to accommodate that burden.
Somewhat strong	4	Most stakeholders are not adversely affected economically relative to their situation prior to implementation -
Very strong	5	Benefits of the outcome are equally available to all

(III) Political Feasibility.

Political feasibility is the third criterion. This is included because of the importance of the support required from key city officials and other stakeholders. Even if an alternative provides a large economic boost to the parks and recreation department, it is not succeed if there is strong political opposition to it. The more likely that an

alternative will gain political acceptability and be adopted, the higher assessment it will receive. The interpretations of ratings for measures of political feasibility appear in Table 7.

Table 7

Criteria #3: Political Feasibility

<u>Rating</u>	<u>Measure</u>	<u>Interpretation of Ratings</u>
Very weak	1	Acceptance extremely unlikely due to broad unpopularity
Somewhat weak	2	Not likely to be popular with city government and stakeholders
Moderate	3	Moderate support from city government and stakeholders
Somewhat strong	4	Acceptance likely based upon popularity with city government and stakeholders
Very strong	5	Broad endorsement extremely likely

(IV) Robustness.

Robustness is the fourth criterion. This involves assessing the alternative in the areas of administrative feasibility and durability. Can the parks and recreation staff implement this alternative? If the staff implements it, will the policy outcome last many years? These are important measures because even if an alternative rates high in efficiency, it will do little good to try to implement it if the parks staff is unable to do so or if the outcome is ephemeral. The interpretations of ratings for measures of robustness appear in Table 8.

Table 8

Criteria #4: Robustness

<u>Rating</u>	<u>Measure</u>	<u>Interpretation of Ratings</u>
Very weak	1	Implementation likely to be costly and difficult – Outcome expected to last one year or less
Somewhat weak	2	Implementation unlikely with current staff – Outcome expected to last only one to two years
Moderate	3	Implementation possible with current staff – Outcome expected to last at least three years
Somewhat strong	4	Implementation probable with current staff – Outcome expected to last at least four years
Very strong	5	Implementation achievable with current staff – Outcome expected to last more five years or more

Relative Weighting of Criteria

The next step is to assign relative weights to each criterion. Assigning weights is both a technical and ethical exercise (Bardach (2000, p. 12). The basic idea is to capture the overall degree of importance placed upon each of these criteria by the decision-makers, so that they can make the correct decisions for their constituency. The sum of all four weights must equal one. There are several possible ways to capture the overall degree of importance placed upon these criteria. Examples include surveys, voting results, or public meetings. The values assigned to these criteria will be determined based upon information received from the Parks & Recreation Department staff.

Table 9 displays the assignment of the relative weights to each of the criterion. Efficiency is valued at 0.35 (35% of the total weight) because of the emphasis to improve

the financial situation of the Park & Recreation Department in order to maintain or improve the parks and recreation programs in the city. Equity is valued at 0.3 (30% of the total weight) because all stakeholders want to be treated fairly by any alternative that is selected. Notice that efficiency and equity total 65% of the total weights, assigning them as the most important of considerations. Political feasibility is valued at 0.2 (20% of the total weight) as recognition of the various power centers within the community; such as the city council, powerful lobby groups, and a focused voter base. Robustness is valued at 0.15 (15% of the total weight) to signify the necessity of taking into account the duration of benefits received from an alternative and to acknowledge the importance of the city staff that must implement an alternative.

Table 9

Relative Weights of Criteria

CRITERIA	WEIGHT
Efficiency	0.35
Equity	0.3
Political Feasibility	0.2
Robustness	0.15
TOTAL	1.0

Chapter 5

ANALYSIS OF ALTERNATIVES

In this chapter, I introduce values for each of the alternatives. I explain the various sources that make up these values and discuss the source of the information. Next, I present the CAM analysis and discuss the results. Lastly, I present a detailed explanation of each alternative, and discuss how each criterion judges the alternatives.

Placing a Value on the Alternatives

Senior leadership of the West Sacramento Parks & Recreation Department provided estimates for the change in annual revenues and expenses that would occur if they selected and implemented each particular alternative. These estimates appear in Table 10. The basis of their estimates relies upon years of experience in the park and recreation field and detailed knowledge of their community and citizens. Immediately following this table is an explanation of the sources of the valuation and a discussion of limitations for each alternative.

Table 10

Estimated Annual Effect of Alternatives

ALTERNATIVE	VALUATION
Eliminate Department	\$5,000,000
Cut Labor – Cut Services	\$500,000
Cut Labor – Use Volunteers	\$200,000
Raise Taxes	\$400,000
Increase Existing Fees & Add New Fees	\$150,000
Entrepreneurship	\$60,000
Donations & Gifts	\$200,000
Government Grants	\$50,000

- a) Eliminate the Department – This value is approximately equal to the total operating budget for the department, minus the expenses associated with the upkeep of lands and facilities.
- b) Cut Labor and Cut Services – These are the top two responses of park and recreation agencies uncovered by the literature review, as they struggled with budget cuts. Senior management for the West Sacramento Parks & Recreation Department estimates that these are the next remaining options available, in the event of budget cuts. Cuts in labor will cause reductions in services, programs, hours of operations, and even facility closures.
- c) Cut Labor but Maintain Services – By establishing partnerships and collaborative efforts with private organizations, non-profits and community groups, or other public agencies the department could arrange for volunteer workers. Staff estimates this might allow the department to cut their seasonal labor costs by \$100,000 annually.
- d) Raise Taxes – The department could benefit from an additional ¼% increase onto the local sales tax. This would take effect after a ¼% sales tax from Measure K expires in 2012. The department's share of this additional sales tax hike equals approximately \$300,000 annually. The basis of this figure is the amount of revenue that they currently receive from the ¼% sales tax from Measure K set to expire in 2012. The department also has plans to will also pursue a park improvement district for the area around Bryte Park. The annual amount of this assessment that the department will use for maintenance expenses is approximately \$100,000.

- e) Increase Existing Fees/Add New Fees – Based upon studies performed by the department, the fees that they currently charge are approximately 30% lower than fees charged by other agencies in the region. Therefore, with an increase in fees and some selected new fees, the department estimates that they could collect an additional \$150,000 in revenues annually. Examples of new fees include rentals (bicycles, segways, boats, and jet skis), facility rental fees, parking at special events, and for new programs and events (after-school programs, camps, neighborhood garage sales, and flea markets).
- f) Entrepreneurship – The department is enthusiastic about increasing revenues through a variety of new programs, sales, rentals, concessions. However, they understand that it takes a while to achieve program success. They also understand that it takes an investment in staff time to start these programs, and staff time is not readily available. However, they estimate that this endeavor, properly executed, could bring in about \$60,000 annually.
- g) Donations & Gifts – Currently the department receives sporadic gifts, mostly in the form of donated labor for community clean-up efforts. However, the department believes that with some dedicated effort on their part, this could become a sustainable source of revenue. They estimate that it might be worth as much as \$200,000 annually. The source of this is from local businesses, community partners, corporate partners or foundation partners. Funds can also come from private citizens in the form of donations or even bequests.
- h) Government Grants – Securing a grant from a governmental agency takes much effort, it is never a sure thing, it is usually for a short duration, and it often is restricted to capital

purchases only. However, the department will always seek this kind of funding and estimates that it might be worth as much as \$50,000 per year.

The Results of the Criteria Alternative Matrix

With the valuation of the alternatives in hand, I can now set up a criteria-alternatives matrix that will make a comparison of the performance of these alternatives in satisfying the criteria. The CAM appears in Table 11. Note that the alternatives are in the rows while the criteria are columns. Also, note that I apply the weighting factors for the criteria in the matrix.

Table 11

Criteria/Alternative Matrix (CAM) – Resolving Fiscal Constraints

Ratings: (1) very weak, (2) somewhat weak, (3) moderate, (4) somewhat strong, (5) very strong

	Criterion 1: Efficiency	Criterion 2: Equity	Criterion 3: Political Feasibility	Criterion 4: Robustness	Total Score	Rank Order
Alternative 1: Close Department	Rating: 5 Weight:0.35 Total: 1.75	Rating: 1 Weight:0.3 Total: 0.3	Rating: 1 Weight:0.2 Total: 0.2	Rating: 4 Weight:0.15 Total: 0.60	2.85	5
Alternative 2: Cut Labor – Cut Services	Rating: 5 Weight:0.35 Total: 1.75	Rating: 1 Weight:0.3 Total: 0.3	Rating: 2 Weight:0.2 Total: 0.4	Rating: 1 Weight:0.15 Total: 0.15	2.6	7
Alternative 3: Cut Labor – Use Volunteers	Rating: 3 Weight:0.35 Total: 1.05	Rating: 5 Weight:0.3 Total: 1.5	Rating: 4 Weight:0.2 Total: 0.8	Rating: 2 Weight:0.15 Total: 0.3	3.65	2
Alternative 4: Raise Taxes	Rating: 5 Weight:0.35 Total: 1.75	Rating: 1 Weight:0.3 Total: 0.3	Rating: 1 Weight:0.2 Total: 0.2	Rating: 5 Weight:0.15 Total: 0.75	3	3
Alternative 5: Increase/Add Fees	Rating: 2 Weight:0.35 Total: 0.7	Rating: 1 Weight:0.3 Total: 0.3	Rating: 2 Weight:0.2 Total: 0.4	Rating: 5 Weight:0.15 Total: 0.75	2.15	8
Alternative 6: Entrepreneurship	Rating: 1 Weight:0.35 Total: 0.35	Rating: 4 Weight:0.3 Total: 1.2	Rating: 5 Weight:0.2 Total: 1	Rating: 2 Weight:0.15 Total: 0.3	2.85	5
Alternative 7: Donations & Gifts	Rating: 3 Weight:0.35 Total: 1.05	Rating: 5 Weight:0.3 Total: 1.5	Rating: 5 Weight:0.2 Total: 1	Rating: 2 Weight:0.15 Total: 0.3	3.85	1
Alternative 8: Government Grants	Rating: 1 Weight:0.35 Total: 0.35	Rating: 5 Weight:0.3 Total: 1.5	Rating: 5 Weight:0.2 Total: 1	Rating: 1 Weight:0.15 Total: 0.15	3	3

The total rating for each criterion appears in the second column from the right in the table. The highest rating signifies the best alternative, based upon the criteria used

and the choice of weights used on the criterion. Table 12 presents a listing of the alternatives based upon their total rating. In it, I list the alternatives in descending order with the best alternative, based upon narrow criteria, on top, followed by the next best, and so on.

Table 12

Summary of CAM Analysis – Alternatives Listed by Descending Ranking

RANKING	ALTERNATIVE	TOTAL RATING
1	Donations & Gifts	3.85
2	Cut Labor – Use Volunteers	3.65
3-Tie	Government Grants	3.0
3-Tie	Raise Taxes	3.0
5-Tie	Entrepreneurship	2.85
5-Tie	Close Department	2.85
7	Cut Labor – Cut Services	2.6
8	Increase Existing Fees & Add New Fees	2.15

A Discussion on Alternatives and Criteria

I will now discuss each alternative and explain where they fall in terms of the criteria. This will provide justification for their ranking.

a) Donations & Gifts – The department estimated annual revenue from this source of \$200,000, a moderate sum, which is equal to an efficiency measure of three. I assign the highest measure to equity. This is because the alternative does not adversely affect stakeholders. Their economic status does not worsen because of this alternative. This is certainly true at the local level, since local funds are not the direct source of these funds. In addition, this alternative fairly treats all stakeholder groups, especially those in vulnerable groups. I assign the highest measure to political feasibility because the

funding comes from an outside source and not from general funds. The department anticipates this to be an ongoing revenue source, but anticipates that it will take quite a bit of staff labor to implement and maintain. Therefore, I assign this a rating of two.

b) Cut Labor - Use Volunteers – The department estimated annual savings from this source of \$100,000, which is equal to an efficiency measure of three. The use of volunteers at the department will not adversely affect stakeholders, aside from those who lose their job. Furthermore, low income and vulnerable groups will receive the same benefits and experience the same outcomes under this option. Therefore, I assign a rating of five to the equity criterion. Acceptance of the idea of volunteer labor to support city services should be popular with stakeholders and city leaders. Therefore, I assign political feasibility a rating of four. The literature indicates that there have been administrative challenges with volunteers at other park and recreation agencies. These challenges involve turnover and the resulting training that is required. Therefore, I assign a measure of two to the robustness criterion.

h) Increase Existing Fees/Add New Fees – The department estimated annual revenue from this source of \$150,000, which is equal to an efficiency measure of two. An increase of fees disproportionately affects low-income citizens. Therefore, I assign a rating of one to this criterion. The notion of raising fees on citizens in vulnerable groups is not politically feasible. Therefore, I assign a rating of two to this criterion. The new fees will be easy to administer by the department and the new fees will probably be enduring. As a result, I assign a measure of five to the robustness criterion.

e) Entrepreneurship – The department estimated annual revenue from this source of \$60,000, which is equal to an efficiency measure of one. I assign a rating of four to equity because there will be some social justice concerns that citizens in vulnerable groups might not be able to afford the new service, even though it is optional. I assign the highest measure to political feasibility because the funding comes from outside sources and not from general funds. The department anticipates this to be an ongoing revenue source, but anticipates that it will take quite a bit of staff labor to implement and maintain. Therefore, I assign this a rating of two.

c) Government Grants – The department estimated annual revenue from this source of \$50,000, which is equal to an efficiency measure of one. I assign the highest measure to equity because the department will use the funds for the benefit of all citizens in the community. In addition, this alternative fairly treats all stakeholders groups, especially those in vulnerable groups. I assign the highest measure to political feasibility because the funding comes from outside sources and not from general funds. The department does not believe that this is a sustainable source of revenue. Many times the grant will be for only one year. Therefore, I assign a measure of one to this criterion.

d) Raise Taxes – Taxes are a reliable source of funds for the department. An increase in taxes of \$400,000 per year maximizes the criterion for efficiency. This includes a ¼% reinstatement of the Measure K sales tax worth \$300,000 and the establishment of a park improvement district worth \$100,000. Increasing taxes will make citizens less well off, and sales taxes are regressive, placing a particular burden on low-income citizens. Therefore, I assign the very weak rating for equity. Political feasibility also receives a

very weak rating because the implementation of new taxes is extremely unlikely due to broad unpopularity. I assign the highest measure to robustness because the length of the tax will probably be at least a five-year period, and there are few problems administering a new tax.

g) Cut Labor – Cut Services - I estimate the possibility of expenditure cut from the department's budget of upwards of \$500,000. This equals an efficiency measure of five. The department acknowledges that an additional cut of approximately \$500,000 from their operating budget will have significant detrimental effects on their staffing levels, operating hours and accessibility to facilities. These reactive measures will adversely affect several stakeholder groups, making them worse off with this alternative. Cuts in service can disproportionately affect low-income citizens. Therefore, I assign a measure of one to the equity criterion. These cuts will not be politically popular, but if the city council implements them, it probably means that economic forces outside of their control dictated their move. Therefore, I assign political feasibility a measure of two. Making severe cuts of this nature with scant time for planning is very difficult for the department to administer. This is why I assign a measure of one to the robustness criterion.

f) Eliminate the Department – I estimate annual expenditure cuts from this source of \$5 million, which is equal to an efficiency measure of five. Closure of the department leaves stakeholders adversely affected economically relative to their situation prior to closure. Taxpayers will make the same tax payment, but will not have access to the benefits of park usage. This decision can disproportionately affect low-income citizens. They are the citizens that have the most need for low-cost or free recreation

opportunities. This equates to an equity measure of one. The literature has made it clear that closures of recreation and park facilities are not popular with the public. Based upon that, I would assign a value of one to the political feasibility criterion. If the city council selects this alternative it will probably be in effect for several years. This is why I assign a measure of four to the robustness criterion.

Sensitivity Analysis

The Criteria-Alternative Matrix that I developed to investigate this situation is composed of ratings and weights that I consider the best estimates. They are, however, just that – estimates. This has several implications. First, it means that there is uncertainty in this model. Second, there could be errors in this model. The reader can justifiably inquire about what happens if a particular alternative does not cut out as much expense as estimated, or inquire about the soundness of a particular weight assignment. To help alleviate the concerns of the reader, increase confidence levels for the model, and show the robustness of the results, I will perform a sensitivity analysis on the data used in the CAM. A sensitivity analysis is a technique in which I systematically change variables in the model to determine the effects of each change. More specifically, applying different criteria weights can alter the total score for each alternative, and subsequently change the overall score determining the best option. Therefore, I will alter the weight variable to determine the effect on the outcomes. I will perform this examination in four areas; all involving weights for efficiency, equity or robustness. In each of these areas, I will perform several four tests. In the first test, I increase the weight of one criterion by 0.05 and decrease the other criterion by the same amount. In

each succeeding test, I increase the change by an additional 0.05. On the fourth and final test, I maximize the effect by setting one of the criteria to zero and assigning all of its value to the other criterion.

In table 13, I examine a scenario where the efficiency weight increases while the equity weight decreases. In general, notice that the order of results is slow to change. Note that the three alternatives with the highest efficiency rating all move closer to the top of the order. This is mathematically logical, but serves as a clear indication that if efficiency were our primary concern, our top selections would be increasing taxes, closing the department, and cutting labor and services.

Table 13

Increasing Efficiency Weight – Decreasing Equity Weight

	CAM Baseline	Change = 0.05	Change = 0.10	Change = 0.15	Max Change
<u>WEIGHTS</u>					
Efficiency	0.35	0.4	0.45	0.5	0.65
Equity	0.3	0.25	0.2	0.15	0
Political feas.	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2
Robustness	0.15	0.15	0.15	0.15	0.15
<u>RANKING ORDER</u>					
Close Dept.	5	4	4	3	2
Cut Labor	7	5	5	5	3
Volunteers	2	2	2	4	5
Taxes	3	3	3	1	1
Fees	8	8	8	8	6
Entrepreneur	5	7	7	6	7
Donate/Gifts	1	1	1	2	4
Gov't Grants	3	5	6	6	8

In table 14, I examine a scenario where the efficiency weight decreases while the equity weight increases. In general, notice that the order of results is very slow to change. This indicates that additional emphasis of equity at the expense of efficiency concerns will not significantly change the outcome.

Table 14

Decreasing Efficiency Weight – Increasing Equity Weight

	CAM Baseline	Change = 0.05	Change = 0.10	Change = 0.15	Max Change
<u>WEIGHTS</u>					
Efficiency	0.35	0.3	0.25	0.2	0
Equity	0.3	0.35	0.4	0.45	0.65
Political feas.	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2
Robustness	0.15	0.15	0.15	0.15	0.15
<u>RANKING ORDER</u>					
Close Dept.	5	6	6	6	7
Cut Labor	7	7	7	7	8
Volunteers	2	2	2	2	3
Taxes	3	5	5	5	6
Fees	8	8	8	7	5
Entrepreneur	5	4	4	4	4
Donate/Gifts	1	1	1	1	1
Gov't Grants	3	3	3	3	2

In table 15, I examine a scenario where the efficiency weight increases while the political feasibility weight decreases. In general, notice that the order of results is slow to change. Note that the three alternatives with the highest efficiency rating all move closer to the top of the order. This serves as a clear indication that if efficiency were our primary concern, our top selections would be increasing taxes, closing the department, and cutting labor and services.

Table 15

Increasing Efficiency Weight – Decreasing Political Feasibility Weight

	CAM Baseline	Change = 0.05	Change = 0.10	Change = 0.15	Max Change
<u>WEIGHTS</u>					
Efficiency	0.35	0.4	0.45	0.5	0.55
Equity	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3
Political feas.	0.2	0.15	0.1	0.05	0
Robustness	0.15	0.15	0.15	0.15	0.15
<u>RANKING ORDER</u>					
Close Dept.	5	4	4	4	2
Cut Labor	7	6	5	5	5
Volunteers	2	2	2	3	3
Taxes	3	3	3	1	1
Fees	8	8	8	8	7
Entrepreneur	5	7	7	7	8
Donate/Gifts	1	1	1	2	3
Gov't Grants	3	5	6	6	6

In table 16, I examine a scenario where the efficiency weight decreases while the political feasibility weight increases. Again, the order of results is very slow to change. This indicates that additional emphasis of political feasibility at the expense of efficiency concerns will not significantly change the outcome.

Table 16

Decreasing Efficiency Weight – Increasing Political Feasibility Weight

	CAM Baseline	Change = 0.05	Change = 0.10	Change = 0.15	Max Change
<u>WEIGHTS</u>					
Efficiency	0.35	0.3	0.25	0.2	0
Equity	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3
Political feas.	0.2	0.25	0.3	0.35	0.55

Robustness	0.15	0.15	0.15	0.15	0.15
<u>RANKING ORDER</u>					
Close Dept.	5	6	6	6	8
Cut Labor	7	7	7	7	7
Volunteers	2	2	2	2	4
Taxes	3	5	5	5	6
Fees	8	8	8	7	5
Entrepreneur	5	4	4	4	3
Donate/Gifts	1	1	1	1	1
Gov't Grants	3	3	3	3	2

Chapter 6

CONCLUSIONS

The results of the CAM analysis surprised me in many ways. I believed that the path to success was to embrace the entrepreneurial model, become creative, and sit back and count the cash. In fact, it came in with a mediocre score, tied for fifth place as the best alternative. I was surprised at both its small financial return and the amount of staff time required for its development. Other surprises were the strong showings for donations & gifts, using volunteers, and government grants. These scored as the top three alternatives, respectively. They also maintained their strong showing through the sensitivity analysis. I attribute their strong showing to their top equity measures and their high measures in political feasibility. They are alternatives that will help all stakeholders, especially those in vulnerable groups. Similarly, agencies can pursue any of these alternatives without fear of political repercussions. Their primary weak spot is financial. They will not produce a great deal of revenue or save a large amount of expenditures. They will also be a challenge to administer and their duration is questionable, especially for government grants. However, I believe that these alternatives will develop into long-term sources of respectable income or savings.

Perhaps my biggest surprise was the poor showing for the alternatives that will either cut the most expenses or bring in the most new revenue. These alternatives are raise taxes; close the department; and cut labor by cutting services. They scored third, tied for fifth, and seventh, respectively. Despite their top marks in efficiency, these alternatives earn very low marks in equity and political feasibility. As a result, they

earned a low ranking. This demonstrates the importance of utilizing equity and political feasibility considerations in the public decision-making process. It also demonstrates the usefulness of the CAM method to arrive at thoughtful decisions.

Based upon the results of this CAM analysis, I recommend that the West Sacramento Park & Recreation Department pursue the following alternatives: donations and gifts; utilizing volunteer labor; government grants; and entrepreneurship. The revenues or cost savings from one of these alternatives is not going to solve the department's financial woes. However, these alternatives can be developed and improved. Over time, they will become reliable sources of funds.

Since the economy is seemingly not getting better any time soon, I also recommend that the department prepare itself for future financial shocks. However, the department should not just prepare to survive, rather prepare to flourish. Utilizing the top-rated alternatives promulgated by this study is a great way to proceed on this journey. The department will also flourish by keeping their citizens informed, educated, and excited about parks and recreation.

Policy Implications

While the focus of this study has been on the West Sacramento Parks & Recreation Department and their options to resolve fiscal constraints, there are broader implications for this study. At the beginning of this study, I promised that I would discuss how the analysis and results of this study may provide other park and recreation agencies, and possibly other governmental departments, useful insight into the tactics and strategies they can pursue in order to meet their fiscal challenges. The results of my

CAM analysis provide a good starting point. Other agencies can quickly observe the alternatives with the higher rankings. They are able to see the rationale behind the measurements and understand the importance of including criteria that will incorporate the needs of citizens in vulnerable groups and the realities of their political situation. I invite other agencies to perform their own CAM analysis, tailored to their own environment and realities. Doing so will provide them with confidence that their solutions will be richer and broadly embraced by their citizens and government.

Based upon the results of this study and the literature review, I offer some additional remarks and recommendations. As agencies function through this grueling financial and operational stress test, I encourage them to be proactive. They should take advantage of this economy and consider transforming what they are doing. Agencies should undertake a systematic review of their programs and core services. The review must keep their vision, mission, and values at the forefront. They should meet with the public and their municipal leadership in order to establish priorities. This might be the right time to change expectations and create new roles with the community. In short, a park and recreation agency may achieve a long-term solution to their economic woes by building a new model for their organization. A CAM analysis can be a great starting point for this process.

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