

[Date]

Flagstaff City Council
211 W Aspen Ave
Flagstaff, AZ 86001

Dear Honorable Mayor and City Council Members,

On behalf of the Commission for Inclusion and Adaptive Living (CIAL), I am writing to request your support for enhancing therapeutic and inclusive recreation opportunities for the community of Flagstaff. CIAL has become more aware of the needs of the community through discussions in an Informal Working Group on Therapeutic Recreation. The informal working group included members of CIAL, PROSE department, Parks and Recreation commission, faculty at NAU, and local nonprofits providing recreation services for people with disabilities. CIAL is approaching the needs through the following definitions:

According to the American Therapeutic Recreation Association, "*Recreational therapy (RT), also known as therapeutic recreation (TR), is a systematic process that utilizes recreation and other activity-based interventions to address the assessed needs of individuals with illnesses and/or disabling conditions, as a means to psychological and physical health, recovery and well-being.*" The qualified provider of recreational therapy is a Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist (CTRS®) credentialed by the National Council for Therapeutic Recreation Certification.

The National Recreation and Park Association define inclusive recreation as *an approach to leisure activities that ensures equal access and opportunities for all participants, adapting practices, facilities, and equipment as necessary to enable diverse individuals to engage in recreational pursuits together, fostering a sense of belonging and community.* Recreational activities and programs are designed to accommodate and welcome individuals of all abilities, backgrounds, and needs. It aims to remove barriers and create environments where everyone can participate fully and equally, regardless of physical, cognitive, or social differences. Inclusive recreation is a practice to make recreational programming available to all individuals by proactively eliminating barriers and enhancing access.

Based on our Informal Working Group and CIAL public meetings since April, we have identified several recommendations that we believe will significantly improve the quality of life for our residents. Our recommendations have been sorted into actions we believe are achievable in the short-, mid-, and long-term.

Short-term Goals:

1. Support the presence of CIAL information tables at PROSE and City events throughout the year, such as the Concerts in the Park series, to gather insights from the disabled community. Support may include providing financial support for the development of marketing materials, physical supplies such as tables and chairs, etc.
2. Consider hiring an Inclusion Coordinator or a Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist for PROSE and/or the city to support ADA, universal design, and inclusive practices for the recreational needs for the community in Flagstaff.
3. Provide training and professional development for PROSE staff on inclusive programming, sensory-friendly events, and accommodating individuals with disabilities. We suggest partnering with organizations such as Kaibab Behavioral Services, Northern Arizona University's Parks and Recreation Management program (NAU), and welcomed here for trainings.
4. Conduct a comprehensive community survey to better understand the needs and preferences of individuals with disabilities and their families regarding TR services in Flagstaff. This could be done in collaboration with High Country Adaptive Sports (HCAS) or as a follow-up to the existing PROSE facility survey.
5. Adapt existing PROSE programs (e.g., Ice-skating, rock climbing, rec sports, group fitness classes), events, trails, playgrounds, and facilities (e.g., Aquaplex, Jay Lively, Montoya Center, Youth Center) to be more inclusive and accessible.
6. Develop an inclusive trail identification system for FUTS that cover elements such as accessibility, energy expenditure, and other identified inclusion markers.
7. Create an "inclusive practices policy" for organizations applying for event permits with explicit expectations for accessibility and inclusion with guidelines for enforcement.
8. Explore synergistic relationships with the planned Indigenous Culture Center at Thorpe Park for shared use of spaces.

Mid-term Goals:

1. Increase funding for Therapeutic Recreation (TR) services through grants, independently and/or in collaboration with organizations such as AZ Community Foundation and United Way. We also recommend exploring Arizona's waiver programs as potential funding sources for specific TR programs, such as respite services.
2. Facilitate professional development opportunities for PROSE staff to obtain the Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist (CTRS) credential through partnerships with NAU's Parks and Recreation Management – Graduate Certificate in Recreational Therapy program. Explore Arizona @ Work's Incumbent Worker Training Program to receive reimbursement for existing staff to gain job-related training (up to 90%).

3. Collaborate with the Parks and Recreation Management program at NAU to create opportunities for inclusive recreation programming.
4. Expand TR programming by leveraging existing and new partnerships with organizations like HCAS, Ability360, and Arizona Disabled Sports.

Long-term Goals:

1. Allocate resources to update and reopen the previously dedicated TR building (McPherson House) to provide a centralized hub for TR services.
2. Consider creating additional positions to support PROSE such as Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialists and inclusive services specialists.

We believe these recommendations will greatly enhance the inclusivity of our city's recreational offerings and improve the quality of life for our disabled community members. We kindly request your support in implementing these initiatives and would be happy to discuss them further at your convenience.

Thank you for your consideration and continued commitment to making Flagstaff an inclusive community for all.

Sincerely,

Chair, Commission for Inclusion and Adaptive Living

City of Flagstaff