

**Parks  
Make  
Life  
Better!**<sup>SM</sup>



## Branding ToolKit



**Parks Make Life Better!**<sup>SM</sup> is a branding campaign created by the  
California Park & Recreation Society  
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## Why Brand Parks & Recreation?

*We've done the research.*

*We've listened to the public.*

*We've developed outreach tools.*

*It's now your turn.*

**2010 is the year for YOU to demonstrate all the ways Parks Make Life Better!™**

### ***The Importance of Branding Parks & Recreation***

The California Park & Recreation Society has three overarching goals. One is "members have tools and resources to brand parks and recreation as an essential community service." We want to move parks and recreation from being appreciated to being essential. In order to develop "tools and resources," CPRS needed to identify, from the consumer's point of view, what the **public** values about parks and recreation.

To find what the public values about parks and recreation, we conducted public opinion research in 2008-09. CPRS is the first park and recreation organization to have undertaken such a comprehensive study of public perceptions of parks and recreation.

This research is the foundation for the development of tools and resources for CPRS members: *a brand promise, a marketing slogan, a logo, a style guide, key messages, a community-centric PowerPoint, and a full line of promotional products.*

By branding the parks & recreation profession we can:

- Build loyalty for parks and recreation services
- Heighten the profession's bargaining power and independence
- Stimulate growth of programs and services
- Attract talented people to the profession
- Involve the public
- Achieve greater resources and support

Before we start, let's review a few definitions:

### ***What is a Brand?***

A brand is a 'promise' to the consumer. It is what you deliver each and every time to your customers.

In the words of CPRS' brand consultant, John Poimiroo, "a brand promise is the touchstone used to remind those living the brand of what others expect us to deliver." We often think of a "brand" as a logo (think Nike's 'swoosh' or Target's red and white circle). However, a brand is more than a logo, slogan, or spokesperson. The logo is a symbol of the brand – it is NOT the brand.

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## ***What Is Branding?***

Branding is a process that identifies what a product, service, organization or – in this case, a profession – stands for and what makes it stand out from all others. Branding reinforces what consumers' value about their parks and recreation experiences. Branding reminds them – in a very personal way – how we deliver on our promise. "Branding," states The Harvard Business School, "has become one of the most important aspects of business strategy. Yet it is also one of the most misunderstood."<sup>1</sup>

Our branding goal is to move from being "appreciated" (Point A) to being "essential" (Point B). This lack of being viewed as essential is particularly felt when establishing priorities, during economic chaos or fiscal uncertainty, and when re-organizing or down-sizing.

The greater our perceived value to the community and public officials, the greater our bargaining power in obtaining and maintaining our resources.

## ***Who Defines a Brand?***

An organization's, company's, or profession's brand is not what owners, employees, or board members think. It is the consumer -- or in this particular case, the public – who defines our brand. This is why CPRS' first objective was to understand how residents and elected officials perceive parks and recreation services.

Our research tells us that park and recreation agencies and professionals do provide essential community services. Through branding, CPRS members will be able to positively demonstrate the value of parks and recreation services to their community.

## ***The Profession's Brand Promise***

Our extensive market research study confirmed what we park and recreation professionals already "knew," but we did not have the data to support it. The public expects parks to make their lives better. They expect us to make their communities better now and in the future.

Using our research data, a brand promise was crafted and subsequently approved in 2009 by the CPRS Board of Directors:

Parks and recreation makes lives and communities better now and in the future by providing

- access to the serenity and inspiration of nature;
- outdoor space to play and exercise;
- facilities for self-directed and organized recreation;
- positive alternatives for youth which help lower crime and mischief; and
- activities that facilitate social connections, human development, the arts and lifelong learning

<sup>1</sup> Holt, Douglas. "Brands and Branding" Harvard Business School, 9-503-045. March 11, 2003

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### ***Communicating Our Promise Through a Memorable Slogan***

It would be challenging to communicate and promote the full brand promise to staff, stakeholders, users, and elected officials. In fact, a brand promise is not shown to your customers in print.

For the customer, the brand promise is shortened into a slogan, such as Nike's "Just Do It." That slogan embodies their brand which is "authentic, athletic performance." We buy, see and experience their brand in their products (for all types of athletes), their advertising, and in their consistent use of the slogan. From a consumer point of view, "Just Do It" creates that emotional bond – it is three words that say a lot and that create an emotional connection with the customer.

The Blake Project's Branding Strategy e-news<sup>2</sup> suggests a brand is effectively communicated through a two or three word phrase capturing the "essence" or "heart and soul" of the brand. This phrase is simple, concise, and aspirationally attainable. Using Nike's slogan again, "Just Do It" works for all types of people - a golfer, a runner, a marathoner, a tennis player, a swimmer, seasoned or a beginner athlete – it doesn't matter. What matters is that Nike has a product for ME.

The essence of our promise is this memorable slogan (can also be called a tagline):

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This phrase is simple, concise, timeless, enduring, and extendable. Eighteen letters, four words, one message for the parks and recreation profession!

It is at once a promise and the fulfillment of a promise. **Parks Make Life Better!**<sup>SM</sup> creates a strong emotional connection between what we do and the lives of those we serve. It makes clear that our work matters to individuals, families, neighborhoods and communities.

"Making life better" is a simplified yet unifying brand promise each of us in the profession can embrace. "Making life better" is the promise the senior center director, the aquatics supervisor, the park professional, the recreation supervisor or leader, the landscape architect and the therapeutic recreation supervisor can genuinely make every day.

### ***Ready, Set, Brand!***

Use the **Parks Make Life Better!**<sup>SM</sup> Branding ToolKit to develop your plan to brand your agency! The ToolKit contains a summary of the research, the promise, the slogan, a logo, style guide and key messages.

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.brandingstrategyinsider.com/brand\\_essence](http://www.brandingstrategyinsider.com/brand_essence)

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## Parks Make Life Better!<sup>SM</sup> is Research Based

### ***How the Research was Conducted***

CPRS engaged market researchers Lauren Schlau Consulting, Los Angeles and Hiner & Partners, Inc., Long Beach, to conduct a multi-phased research project. The complete findings as well as the Internet survey questions are included in the *Report on Results of Market Research to Support CPRS Building the Brand Initiative*.

**Phase One** consisted of qualitative interviews with a representative sample of recreation program and park users throughout California as well as locally elected officials from a variety of governmental types (cities, counties, and special districts). Through one-on-one, in-depth interviews, this first phase focused on uncovering the values individuals held about parks and recreation programs.

In branding research you seek to find the strengths of your product or service. Those that know your strengths are those who are familiar with your product and service. This is why we interviewed and surveyed residents who were familiar with their local parks and recreation services.

Phase One served as the foundation for the development of questions that were asked through an online survey in **Phase Two**. This phase provided the quantitative data needed to craft the brand promise.

CPRS then sampled via an Internet survey, 848 Californians, a representative sample of the population at large, with a margin of error of +/-3.37% at a 95% confidence interval. This means there is only a 5% chance that the percentages reported in the study were off by 3.37% for the opinions of all Californians.

Agencies may use the same survey questions for their own community if they choose to do so.

### ***The Market Research Key Findings***

Use these key findings in presentations or reports, particularly to government agencies and elected/appointed officials.

- Californians demonstrate that parks and recreation are essential to their lives
  - o 98% of respondents report having visited a local park during the past year
  - o 42% of respondents visited a park at least several days a week
  - o 26% visited a park at least once a week
  - o 68% visited a park at least monthly
- Half (50%) of California households reported that someone in their household participated in a structured recreation program at least once in the past year
  - o 38% of respondents attended a sports program for children or teens
  - o 29% attended a youth class, camp or instructional program
  - o 28% went to an adult art or fitness program; attended a lecture, class or other activity



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- Park visitation was recorded:
  - o A majority of respondents (55%) went to a park with a spouse/partner
  - o 53% were accompanied by their children
  - o 48% went with family
  - o 46% went with a friend
  - o Only 5% went to a park alone
- There are many different components that describe what constitutes a “park” or a “program”
- Most program users are also park users, but fewer park users utilize programs
- The benefits of parks are not the same benefits of programs
- Californians see the benefits of parks and recreation as personal, rather than communal. Users struggle to describe how parks and recreation programs benefit their community or neighborhood, but they could easily describe how they benefit their lives and those of their family and friends.

The research showed Californians have strong, well-informed opinions about what should be prioritized (or most valued) and about what is, and is not, currently delivered.

By considering these perspectives, park and recreation professionals can now emphasize how we are meeting those public values through existing or planned programs and thus reinforce that what they provide is essential to community residents, and thus communities.

### ***Priorities Were Found***

The research shows that the public views certain elements of the profession’s broad mission, as articulated in the VIP Strategic Action Plan: *Creating Community in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, as more valuable to them and they already see the profession delivering these elements. This was important to know in order to craft the profession’s brand promise. These perspectives may also be useful for agencies when determining priorities for funding or staff resources.

The values/priorities are:

- Preservation of and access to outdoor spaces
  - Two types of outdoor spaces were specifically indicated:
    - o Space that is minimally developed; in a natural state
    - o Space with facilities for play (especially for children), exercise, and group sports

Use of these facilities was prioritized as

- o Non-structured (self directed)
- o Structured/directed activities and programs targeted to juveniles as a positive alternative to crime and mischief

The benefits received from these spaces and places were:

- o The community is a better place to live now and in the future
- o The serenity and awe of nature must be available

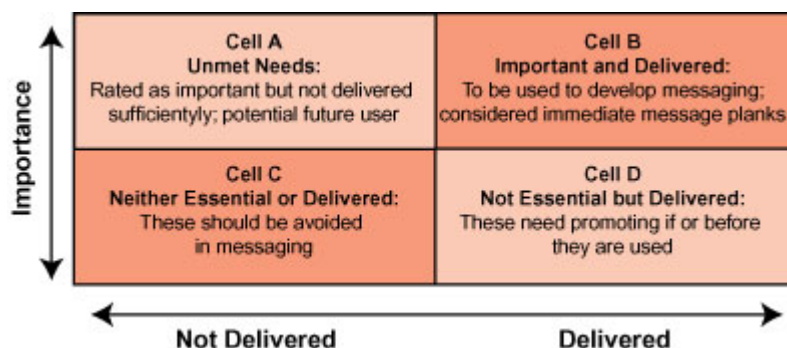


- o Children, especially, and adults need outdoor spaces for play and exercise
- o Friends and family need these spaces for group sports
- Activities to facilitate social/community connections, advance human development, lifelong learning, and other social objectives

### ***Using Research Data to Craft the Brand Promise & Slogan***

John Poimiroo, Poimiroo & Partners, a communications consultancy, used the research findings to craft the brand promise and slogan, which were brought to the CPRS Board of Directors in May 2009. The brand promise was crafted using those values/priorities that fell into the Valued/Delivered quadrant. The messages that fell into the other quadrants were not used as they were neither valued or parks and recreation was not seen as a provider.

**Figure 1**



This market research data, combined with the research for the VIP Strategic Action Plan: *Creating Community in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, gave CPRS a four-dimensional understanding of the parks and recreation brand.

CPRS has the perspectives of members, the media, elected officials and the public at large. From this broader view a meaningful brand promise for the profession was developed.

### ***Brand Implications from the Research***

Key concepts emerged from the research data which was used to craft the brand promise.

#### **A Better Place to Live.**

Californians see parks and recreation as making a community a better place to live, because it provides:

- Access to the serenity and awe of nature
- Outdoor spaces for play and exercise, especially for children
- Facilities for group sports
- Positive alternatives for juveniles, which serves to help lower crime and mischief



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### **Personal Benefits Over Community Benefits.**

Californians consistently place the personal benefits of parks and recreation to themselves and to their family and friends above the community benefit.

### **The Future.**

Virtually all of the highest park and recreation priorities had a connection to the future. Specifically, Californians see parks as making communities better places, providing benefits for children, and encouraging land preservation.

### **Self-directed vs. Directed Use.**

Californians prefer parks and recreation activities they can do on their own more so than directed activities.

Remember the saying "A rising tide lifts all boats"? We will ALL have success if we ALL apply the brand promise to our operations and marketing/promotions. Understanding the research data is critical to accepting the brand promise as personal to you and your agency. Discuss the research findings with your staff – is there agreement or disagreement? Is there buy-in? If not, keep talking.

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## Every Brand Needs a Voice<sup>3</sup>: Key Messages

Consistency and repetition are the keys to effective branding. This applies not only to the look of our colorful new Parks Make Life Better!<sup>SM</sup> logotype, but also to the language of the brand, known as **brand messages**.

Remember: Our goal is to build the strongest case possible with the public and with public officials. We want to move from being seen as “valuable” to being viewed as “essential.” Parks and recreation services are essential to our lives because they MAKE LIFE BETTER.

### ***Messages are the Voice of a Brand***

Messages provide the words that help users, customers, stakeholders, and visitors understand our brand’s value from 2 perspectives:

Why it is useful: Parks & Recreation makes [your] life better

What it values: what the profession believes in

Messages lead the “charge.” They are intended to capture the most important elements of the brand promise. They are brief. They convey the most important values as identified through our customer research.

Six main message concepts emerged from the research: **Play, Nature, Exercise, Positive Spaces, Gathering Places, and Forever.**

Where to use the messages? The list is endless! They can be used singularly or in combination in:

- Report headings
- Details for press releases; for example, to emphasize the features of a new park being opened or renovations to a community center, etc.
- Subheads/callouts in community focused materials such as
  - Event promotions
  - Activity guides
  - Flyers
  - Ads
  - Agency website
  - Presentations
  - Participant shirts
- Business cards
- Email signatures
- Signage

### ***The Rationale Behind the Parks Make Life Better!<sup>SM</sup> Key Messages***

The Parks Make Life Better!<sup>SM</sup> brand promise has two components: parks and recreation make lives and communities better **Now** and In the **Future**.

<sup>3</sup> Hinge Marketing, <http://www.hingemarketing.com>

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By providing

- Access to the serenity and inspiration of nature
- Outdoor space to play and exercise
- Facilities for self-directed and organized recreation
- Positive alternatives for youth which help lower crime and mischief
- Activities that facilitate
  - o social connections
  - o human development
  - o therapy
  - o the arts
  - o lifelong learning

The research showed of the 98% of Californians who use parks and recreation services, 55% go to park with spouse/partner, 53% with kids, 48% with family, 46% with a friend, with only 5% going alone.

The implication for message development is “We” statements:

- Emphasize FAMILY and FRIENDS
- PERSONAL over SOCIAL benefits
- SELF-DIRECTED over DIRECTED uses of parks
- Discuss the FUTURE – “connection to the future” is important to parks users
- “A BETTER PERSONAL FUTURE and a BETTER PLACE TO LIVE”

The benefits that motivate these preferences include:

- These types of spaces make a community a better place to live now and future
- Serenity and awe of nature is available (tactile) now and future
- People (children especially) NEED outdoor spaces
- Friends and family need these spaces for group sports and exercise

Thirty-one different statements were asked in the online survey. Each statement was scored on two perspectives: how important it was rated and was it being delivered. The highest scored statements from both perspectives were:

1. Provide places where children are free to play and be active
2. Places (facilities, trails) where you can exercise on your own
3. You and friends, neighbors or family can get together
4. Group and individual sports and activities facilities such as gyms, pools, baseball diamonds, etc.
5. Open spaces that beautify community
6. Access to calm natural settings (get away from chores)
7. Preserve land in its natural state for the future
8. See, hear, touch and smell nature
9. Awe-inspiring places of natural beauty
10. Preserve land in its original state and protect wildlife to reduce human impacts on our environment

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11. Make your community a better place to live now and in the future
12. Provide places/activities during non-school hours for kids/teens that are safe, healthy and fun

These statements have been woven into the brand promise.

### ***From Concepts to Messages***

The brand messages are based on a one or two-word answer to the question: how does parks and recreation make my life better?

#### **PLAY**

##### ***Safe, outdoor space***

For us, the biggest benefit is a safe, outdoor play space for our kids today... and as they grow.

#### **NATURE**

##### ***Beauty and serenity***

Being in nature makes me feel alive. I feel lucky to have this beautiful, serene place so close to home. I want my grandkids to have the same appreciation for parks.

#### **EXERCISE**

##### ***Healthy movement***

Parks are made for moving at my own pace -- our family walks, plays and cycles. The recreation programs make it easy to stay healthy.

#### **POSITIVE SPACES**

##### ***Free-time fun***

My neighborhood park is more than a place to chill. It keeps me thinking straight and away from trouble. It's free -- and it's really fun.

#### **GATHERING PLACES**

##### ***Socializing and learning***

Parks are like holidays, bringing us together to share good times. They are the common ground that connects us all.

#### **FOREVER**

##### ***Valued today and always***

Parks enrich our lives. They add value to our homes and neighborhoods. Individually and as a community, we'll always have that need.

These messages use the words that residents and elected officials used when discussing parks and recreation. These messages sum up the experiential characteristics of our brand promise. These messages bring forth the values as identified in our research. These messages are concise as our goal is to be remembered and desired. They are deliberately brief. These messages are authentic and focus on user experiences.

These messages have been incorporated into a community-centric PowerPoint presentation contained in this ToolKit. The images in the presentation can be changed to reflect your community's parks and programs.

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## Living the Brand

### ***EVERYTHING Supports or Detracts From Our Brand***

Once you begin to use the slogan and messages externally, delivery becomes necessary! We promise to make lives and communities better by delivering:

- Access to the serenity and inspiration of nature
- Outdoor space to play and exercise
- Facilities for self-directed and organized recreation
- Positive alternatives for youth which help lower crime and mischief
- Activities that facilitate
  - o social connections
  - o human development
  - o therapy
  - o the arts
  - o lifelong learning

This brand is our reputation. It will be our visibility in the community. It has the potential to attract new users, new partners, new stakeholders, and new opportunities. We are communicating an enticing vision that their use of parks and programs **WILL** make their life better. To be effective, we must **ALL** use the slogan, logo, and messages!

Branding involves everything an organization does. Think food franchises. Starbucks, as an example, provides the same customer experience whether the store is in Redding, Reedley, or Rancho Cucamonga. We are not suggesting every park and every recreation program must be a cookie cutter of the next however, we must understand that the physical appearance of your parks, facilities, trails, parking lots, restrooms, programs, special events, signage, staff appearance, text and photos in brochures, the messages, website, fliers, as well as customer service (how the phone is answered, how quickly questions or requests are handled, etc) reflect on our brand promise.

We will have to deliver on our promise. We have to deliver those expected services - access to nature, outdoor space, facilities, self-directed and organized recreation, and programs for youth.

### ***Find Brand Champions!***

Every park user, program participant, parent, child, senior, employee, volunteer, and partner is a potential brand "champion!" Each should know, really know, what the Parks Make Life Better!<sup>SM</sup> means to them and to the community.

Instill the brand in a variety of ways: how staff greets and interacts with citizens, how partners are treated, how the public is informed, how the volunteers are trained, how instructors teach, what programs or services are offered, the appearance of parks, facilities, trails, tennis courts, aquatic centers, senior centers, etc. It is through these contacts that customers understand, value, and experience our products. This is what will build our brand of making life better!

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### ***Personalize the Parks Make Life Better!<sup>SM</sup> Messages with Quotes***

These sample quotes can be used wherever you want to emphasize a certain segment of your user audience (for example, children's sports teams, seniors, teen programs). While these are "made up" quotes, they are based on the research and on the message statements.

Incorporate them [with pictures] into reports, brochures, agency fact sheets, press releases, activity guides, agency's website – or anywhere you want to call attention to a specific aspect or feature of your parks and/or recreation programs. Use these as inspiration for writing your own, localized quotes – maybe add a park or facility name, well known special event or activity.

TIP: Solicit real quotes from your own community members! Ask your FaceBook, Twitter, or LinkedIn subscribers. Ask children and youth to draw pictures about how parks make their life better. Showcase them in a display at a mall, government center, or special event.

#### **Play**

*"To me, parks are play spaces. I bring my son to let him burn off all that toddler energy. Where else is he going to learn to go down the slide all by himself?"*

*"Parks have played a huge role in my daughter's development. I can't tell you how many hours she has spent practicing drills until well after dark, preparing for those weekend tournaments. Parks build self-confidence. OR Parks built her self-confidence."*

#### **Nature**

*"My park is my private outdoor oasis. I go there to lose myself in the glory of nature, and forget that I live in a city. It always lifts my mood!"*

#### **Exercise**

*"Who needs a health club when you've got a park? It's so much nicer exercising out in the fresh air. Whether I'm on a walk, out with the baby stroller, or playing tennis, working my body outdoors feels great – and the scenery inspires me to keep going."*

#### **Positive Space**

*"I'm glad to have a place to go when I'm not in school. If they didn't have these programs I know I'd be out looking for other things to do. And I would end up in trouble."*

#### **Gathering Places**

*"Today's parks serve as social and learning centers. I've been delighted to see the variety of programs available. There's always something going on – art classes, water aerobics, dance lessons, and of course my Tai Chi."*

*"Birthday parties, graduations, family reunions. Our tradition is to hold them all in our local park. We've been doing it for years. Everybody loves it! The park also offers a lot of concerts and events. We like to attend as a family. It's a way to connect with other community members who like the same things we do."*



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**Forever**

*"Being in a park gives me a sense of permanence. It's like time stands still and I can imagine being in the same majestic setting 20, 40 or 100 years from now. The trees, grass, rocks and even the man-made structures are all still there for future generations to enjoy."*

"Parks are intensely personal, but at the same time they show a community's commitment to quality of life. When a family is deciding where to live, parks always rank high in importance. I'm glad our community sees parks as a high priority."

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## Your Branding Tools

### ***Parks Make Life Better!<sup>SM</sup> Style Guide***

The Parks Make Life Better!<sup>SM</sup> logotype and slogan will be most effective when faithfully reproduced in all media: print, online, advertising, and promotions. This Style Guide makes it easy for CPRS members to personalize and localize the various branding tools for your agency.

### ***Parks Make Life Better!<sup>SM</sup> Logos (Color & Black/White)***

Four color logo, Print

4pms.eps

Logo cmyk.eps

300 dpi cmyk.jpg

See the Style Guide for the PMS Colors (PMS Pantone Matching System™) & CMYK Color Builds

Black/White or One Color, Print

Logo-black.eps

Logo-white.eps

Logo-300 dpi black.jpg

Logo for Web or PowerPoint

72 dpi RGB.jpg

72 dpi black.jpg

300 dpi RGB.jpg (higher resolution for PowerPoint)

### ***Agency Ad or Flier Template***

### ***Press Release Template***

### ***Rack Card Template***

### ***Generic Word Template***

### ***Sample Press Release - Agency's Brand Launch***

### ***Community-Focused PowerPoint with Brand Logo, Visuals, and Messages***

A simple yet powerful PowerPoint presentation geared for Councils, Supervisors, Commissions, partners, and community groups using the logo, key messages and quotes. Agencies may easily substitute the provided pictures with pictures of their facilities, programs, parks, etc. Coming soon - a Spanish language version!

### ***Promotional Products to Build Your Brand***

CPRS in partnership with ADvisors Marketing Group is offering promotional products featuring the Parks Make Life Better!<sup>SM</sup> logo!