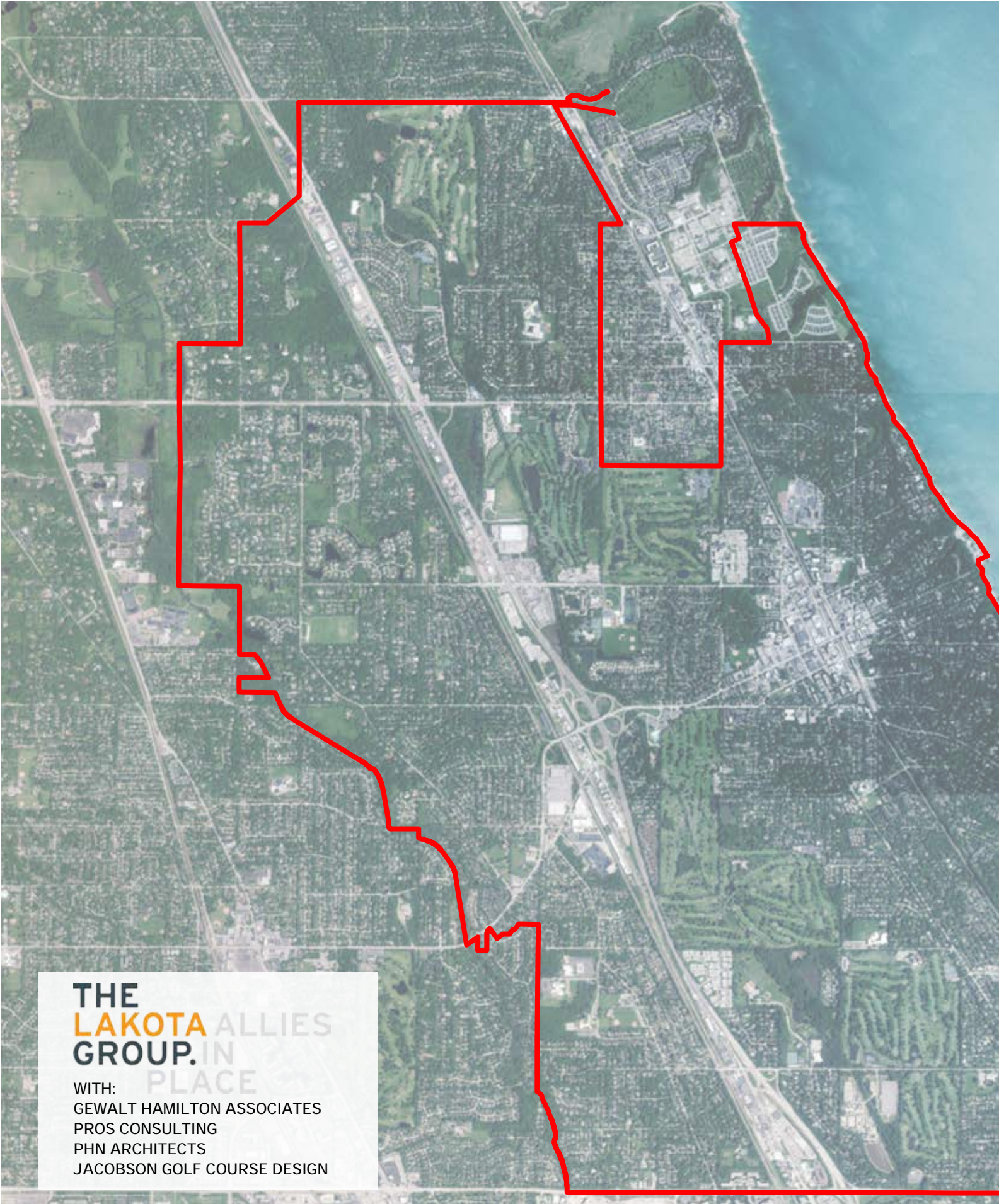




GREENPRINT 2024

A Community Vision for the Park District of Highland Park





THE
LAKOTA ALLIES
GROUP. IN
PLACE

WITH:
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PHN ARCHITECTS
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INTRODUCTION

IN MARCH OF 2013, THE PARK DISTRICT OF HIGHLAND PARK BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS (BOARD) AND PARK DISTRICT STAFF INITIATED A DISTRICT-WIDE MASTER PLANNING PROCESS, THE FIRST IN MANY YEARS. GREENPRINT 2024, A COMPREHENSIVE, 10-YEAR PLAN, WILL GUIDE FUTURE FACILITY AND PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT DECISIONS FOR THE PARK DISTRICT OF HIGHLAND PARK.



GreenPrint 2024

The project team, led by The Lakota Group, organized the planning process into four phases: Engage, Analyze, Envision, and Implement. Throughout the Engage project phase, the project team focused on community outreach, project promotion, and dialogue facilitation. During the second project phase, Analyze, the project team conducted a comprehensive inventory of parks, facilities, and programs owned or managed by the Park District noting needs and opportunities for further study. The Envision and Implement project phases included an evaluation of potential master plan projects which led to the development of this GreenPrint 2024 Vision.

This document describes a the project team's four phases of work. It includes a summary of community engagement and outreach, and an inventory and evaluation of Park District park land, facilities, programs, and operational practices. It also includes prioritized master plan recommendations for capital improvements, program improvements, and operational improvements for a ten-year time horizon informed by the project team's comprehensive analysis, and rooted in significant community input.

The project team has engaged a wide-range of community stakeholders and reviewed and evaluated each of the Park District's programs, parks, facilities, and Park District operations. This evaluation has helped the project team formulate up-to-date, community-relevant recommendations for the next ten years and beyond. These recommendations will guide the facility and programming decisions that will shape the future of the Park District and ensure future generations of Highland Park are well served.

Normally and customarily, when tackling the development of a community-driven master plan, a project of this caliber and detail proposes adoption within approximately one year. GreenPrint 2024 was initiated in spring 2013 and has set its sight on adoption in late fall 2015.

This extended timeline is the direct reflection of Board and staff leadership, reading the winds, and understanding that as a civic partner other forces and factors that can't be calculated may help shape a better vision. With that in mind, the planning team and staff navigated GreenPrint 2024 through many ongoing tangential, but critical, community conversations. Such as the future of neighborhood elementary schools, closure or transfer of the Highland Park Country Club, and development of a Community Family Service

Facility. Park District leadership listened carefully, identified potential synergies and conflicts, and steered a course that puts the Park District and this master plan in a position to support or enhance community benefit.

These dialogue and community issues will continue, and GreenPrint 2024, as a living document, is poised to adapt to changing conditions and allow Park District leadership to recalibrate its path on this journey.

THE PARK DISTRICT TODAY

The Park District of Highland Park (Park District) operates almost 700 acres of land in 44 park areas and offers approximately 2,800 recreation and seasonal programs. The Park District well serves the Highland Park community's 30,000 residents (and a small section of Deerfield) with a very diverse array of offerings, on over 20 acres of land per 1,000 residents. In the Midwest region, 12 - 15 acres per 1,000 residents is considered a good level of service.

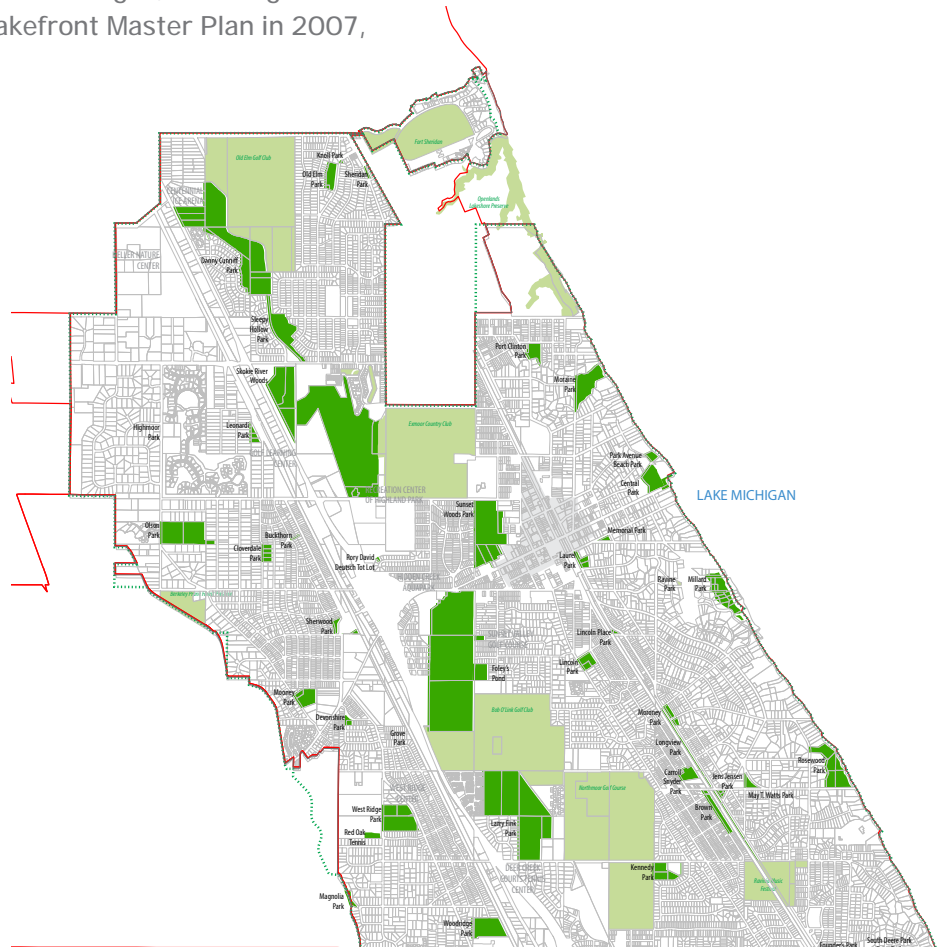
However, change is imminent. Like many other communities in the United States, Highland Park's demographic composition is shifting. Existing residents are aging in place, and younger populations are stabilizing. Today, approximately 1 in 5 Highland Park residents are over the age of 65 (higher than the national average of about one in eight). That number is expected to grow in coming years, with numbers of younger residents remaining stable.

There are also changes happening both with the City and the North

Shore School District 112, offering possibilities for land and facility acquisition or collaboration.

Park District leadership and staff recognize that these and other broad scale community changes affect the services and facilities desired by residents now and in years to come. In recent years the Park District has undertaken a number of measures to address these changes, including a Lakefront Master Plan in 2007,

a statistically-valid Community Survey in 2009, and a Strategic Plan in 2012. Construction of improvements at Rosewood Beach, a major Park District capital investment supported by both the Lakefront Plan and the 2009 Community Survey, was completed in 2015 to accolades from the Highland Park community.



The Park District of Highland Park operates almost 700 acres of land in 44 park areas and offers approximately 2,800 recreation and seasonal programs.

PARK DISTRICT MISSION, VISION, AND VALUES

The Park District's mission statement, vision statement, and core values statement were updated during the 2012 strategic planning process. These describe the purpose of the Park District as an organization, outline aspirations for the organization's future, and identify the Park District's organizational values. These mission, vision, and values statements guided the master planning process and support this plan's recommendations.

Park District Mission

"To enrich community life through healthy leisure pursuits and an appreciation of the natural world."

Park District Vision

"To provide extraordinary experiences in parks and recreation, consistently exceeding the public's expectations, while:

- Inspiring environmental stewardship and education using nimble decision making and creative solutions
- Creating a harmonious workplace with passionate, forward-thinking staff that share true camaraderie
- Enriching the quality of life for our community"

Park District Values

- Communication
- Accountability
- Innovation
- Integrity

While the Park District vision and values describe mostly organizational aspirations, the mission helps describe the fundamental goals of this planning process: community enrichment, the provision of opportunity for healthy leisure pursuits and an appreciation of the natural world.

GREENPRINT 2024 PLANNING GOALS

At the onset of the process, the Park District provided the project team with the following ten goals to be considered throughout the master planning process:

- Develop a plan that clearly responds to community input and desires
- Fully engage the community in a positive and energetic process, furthering a strong relationship with residents
- Continue to enhance synergies with the City and other agencies
- Meet community expectation and reestablish the Park District as a trend-setter, offering unique programs, services, and opportunities
- Increase program participation through improved facilities and creative programming
- Enhance the quality of life for residents and support healthy lifestyle choices
- Continue to promote a commitment to be socially, culturally, and economically responsible
- Fully understand return on investment of programming and facilities to help establish a clear direction for future decisions

- Identify opportunities for increased efficiency in Park District operations
- Establish proper sequencing for capital plan implementation and sound strategies for financing

With these goals and preliminary feedback from stakeholder, Park Board, and Park District staff in mind, the project team developed five master plan themes. These themes have helped shape the recommendations of this plan, ensuring the plan supports the Park District's mission, reflects community priorities, and addresses community needs. The five master plan themes include:

- Manage diversity of offerings
- Identify core services
- Align offerings with community needs
- Adopt a proactive management strategy
- Achieve financial sustainability

These five themes are interrelated, and address issues that have been identified through the planning process. Initiatives proposed by this plan have been evaluated in terms of whether or not they fulfill and support these goals.

PREVIOUS PLANS & REPORTS

The Park District has undertaken a number of other planning efforts over the past decade. Relevant past planning efforts include:

2005 Natural Areas Survey and Analysis

This survey documented the natural quality and diversity of natural areas on their properties. Restoration schedules and management priorities were developed and have been followed in a disciplined manner.

2007 Lakefront Plan

The Lakefront Plan establishes a series of long and short term recommendations for lakefront improvements, including both park-specific and system-wide recommendations addressed include: year-round programming, habitat protection and restoration, revenue generation, public safety, overall park aesthetics, and connectivity.

2009 Community Survey

The purpose of the survey was to identify needs and improvements regarding Park District facilities, programs, and services to assist the Park District in planning for and prioritizing future projects. The survey was designed to obtain statistically valid results from households throughout the Park District's service area. Key findings from the 2009 survey are summarized and included as part of the analysis section of this report.

2010 Energy Audits

In 2010 Shaw Environmental prepared energy audits for Centennial Ice Arena, Deer Creek Racquet Club, the Recreation Center of Highland Park and HPCC Clubhouse, and the West Ridge Center. The report outlines available incentives for facility improvements, an energy baseline and utility analysis, a building asset description, as well as energy cost reduction measures for each facility.

2011 Natural Areas Plan

In 2011 the Park District undertook a new Natural Areas Survey - a botanical inventory and site assessment. The survey indicated that Park District natural areas are well managed, and therefore thriving. The FQA metrics (floristic quality assessment) at all sites increased between 2005 and 2011. It is recommended that natural area management continue to maintain the native diversity and character of the unique landscapes.

2011 ADA Transition Plan

The Park District of Highland Park developed an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Transition Plan in 2011, with the goal of modifying all of the parks and facilities to meet ADA standards for accessibility. The Plan was organized by site and identified multiple phases of activities to move each site towards compliance with ADA standards. The Plan was amended in 2013 with phasing and prioritization further defined, identifying five phases as well as

specific year target goals other activities outside of the five phases.

2012 Strategic Plan

A four year plan to create direction for future allocation of resources, financial stability, staffing levels, internal support and communication, organizational culture effort, and the capacity for learning and growth.

2012 Golf Course Audit

An audit of both Sunset Valley Golf Course (SVGC) and Highland Park Country Club (HPCC), by Jacobson Golf Course Design and Pellucid. The study assessed the facilities, playability, and overall golf experience of each course. The study also analyzed the finances of both courses, and identified improvements to infrastructure needed at each course.

2013 Survey Update

An on-line survey validated the findings in the 2009 Community Attitude and Interest Survey to help identify needs and improvements regarding Park District facilities, programs, and services to assist the Park District in planning for and prioritizing future projects.

As part of the scope of work of this project, the consultant team reviewed all of these plans and reports. This master plan takes into consideration the successful projects born of past plans, as well as initiatives of these plans that are not yet realized.

ENGAGE

DURING THE ENGAGE PHASE OF WORK, THE PROJECT TEAM WORKED WITH STAKEHOLDERS, PARK DISTRICT STAFF, AND THE BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS THROUGH OPEN HOUSES, WORKSHOPS, INTERVIEWS, FOCUS GROUPS, AND A WEB-BASED SURVEY TO ESTABLISH A DRAFT LIST OF MASTER PLAN PROJECT IDEAS. THE PROJECT TEAM REFINED THAT DRAFT LIST INTO A FINAL LIST OF PROJECTS THAT ADDRESS COMMUNITY, STAFF, AND BOARD PRIORITIES, SUPPORT GREENPRINT MASTER-PLANNING GOALS, AND ALIGN WITH THE PARK DISTRICT'S MISSION, VISION, AND VALUES.

Community Stakeholder Outreach

Throughout the Engage project phase, the project team focused on community outreach, project exposure, and dialogue facilitation. Engagement with the community was conducted through one-on-one stakeholder interviews, small focus group meetings, public open house presentations, and web-based outreach. These conversations served important preliminary objectives: to help provide the team with an understanding of the needs of project stakeholders and the broader community, and to allow the project team to help these groups understand their role in the master planning process.

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUP OUTREACH

An involved community engagement strategy has helped the project team respond to planning process goals. Through stakeholder interviews and focus group meetings, the project team spoke to a broad spectrum of community members and project stakeholders. Park District staff provided the Lakota Group team with an initial list of 190 stakeholders, representing a variety of Park District parks and recreation-related advisory committee members as well as representatives from Park District staff, School District 112, School District 113, City of Highland Park staff and elected officials, and other representatives from the community at large. To date, the

project team has talked to more than 170 individuals through stakeholder interviews and focus group meetings. Advisory groups that were engaged include: the athletic advisory committee, Recreation Center advisory committee, Heller Nature Center advisory committee, Hidden Creek AquaPark advisory committee, Centennial Ice Arena advisory committee, Tennis advisory committee, Sunset Valley Golf Course advisory committee, Parks advisory committee, Rosewood advisory committee, Field sports advisory committee, Ice advisory committee, seniors, and other sports organizations.

PUBLIC OPEN HOUSES AND PUBLIC EVENT ENGAGEMENT

In addition to small focus groups and one-on-one meetings, the project team conducted three public open houses that corresponded to project phases: Engage, Analyze, and Envision. Input received from these events has been incorporated into the project team's analysis.

Public Open House #1 provided participants with an overview of the master planning process, with a focus on the Engage project phase. It was first conducted on May 2, 2013 at Heller Nature Center with a repeat open house offered on June 12, 2013 at Highland Park Country Club.

Public Open House #2 focused on the initial findings of the Analyze

project phase. The meeting was hosted on July 25, 2013 at the West Ridge Center.

Public Open House #3, occurred on June 30, 2015 at Highland Park Country Club and focused on the final elements and plan implementation. More than 200 people were in attendance.

In addition to the public open houses, the Park District also hosted booths collecting community comments at both the City of Highland Park Fourth of July celebration and the July 25th Sidewalk Sale event, asking people, "What's important to you and your family?"



WEB-BASED OUTREACH

Project-related web outreach included a Facebook page, a Twitter handle, a project website, and email blasts. Project updates were regularly posted to help keep the community informed on project process.

2013 On-line Community Survey Update

In addition to the project website and social media outreach, Park District staff conducted an update to the 2009 Community Attitude and Interest Survey, via an on-line survey. The purpose of the survey was to validate 2009 survey findings, and to gauge any significant change in attitudes towards parks and recreation in light of economic and demographic shifts that occurred between 2009 and 2013. The survey was launched on September 16, 2013. One survey was allowed per IP address. The survey closed on October 1, 2013.

The survey was posted on the Park District website, was advertised in the Park District Discover print newsletter (delivered to every household), was advertised in the City of Highland Park's print newsletter (delivered to every household), was pushed electronically to the Park District database, was pushed electronically to the City of Highland Park's database, and was distributed through social media. In addition, hard copies of the survey were made available at West Ridge Center, the Recreation Center of Highland Park, and at the

Highland Park library.

In total, 1,066 responses were received, 877 of which were resident responses. Only resident responses were quantified. A full summary of 2013 on-line survey results is included in the appendix of this document.

Based on these survey results, the project team outlined priority rankings for Park District indoor and outdoor facilities and programs. The rankings model evaluated the qualitative survey data that asked residents to list unmet needs and rank their importance. This information was supplemented with information derived from stakeholder input (in stakeholder interviews, focus group meetings, and community open houses), as well as demographic trends and projections for the Park District service area.

A weighted scoring system, developed by PROS Consulting and based upon their professional experience, was used to determine priorities. Out of a total of 100%, unmet needs make up 30% of the score, importance ranking makes up 30% of the score, and consultant evaluation makes up 40% of the score:

- Unmet needs for outdoor and indoor facilities, amenities, and programs is demonstrated in the survey results by the total number of participants (households) indicating they have a need for a facility, and the extent to which they indicated their need has been

met.

- Importance ranking for outdoor and indoor facilities, amenities, and programs is demonstrated in the survey results by the importance allocated to a facility by survey participants (households).
- Consultant evaluation is based on the evaluation of program and facility priority relative to demographics, trends, and overall community input.

Rating need helps to measure whether there is demand for an amenity or service in the marketplace. If survey responses indicate that need is high for a particular item or service, there may be a market gap or unmet consumer demand that could be fulfilled by the Park District. Conversely, if survey responses indicate that need is low for a particular item or service, this indicates that community members are well-served in this area of interest, either by the Park District or another provider. Rating importance helps to measure how respondents (and thus the community as a whole) value an



amenity or service. If survey responses indicate that an amenity or service is important, it is highly valued by the community. Priorities emerge when amenities or services rank as highly important and highly needed. The weighted scores have been summarized (a combined total of weighted scores for unmet needs, importance ranking, and consultant evaluation) to provide a priority ranking for Park District indoor and outdoor facilities.

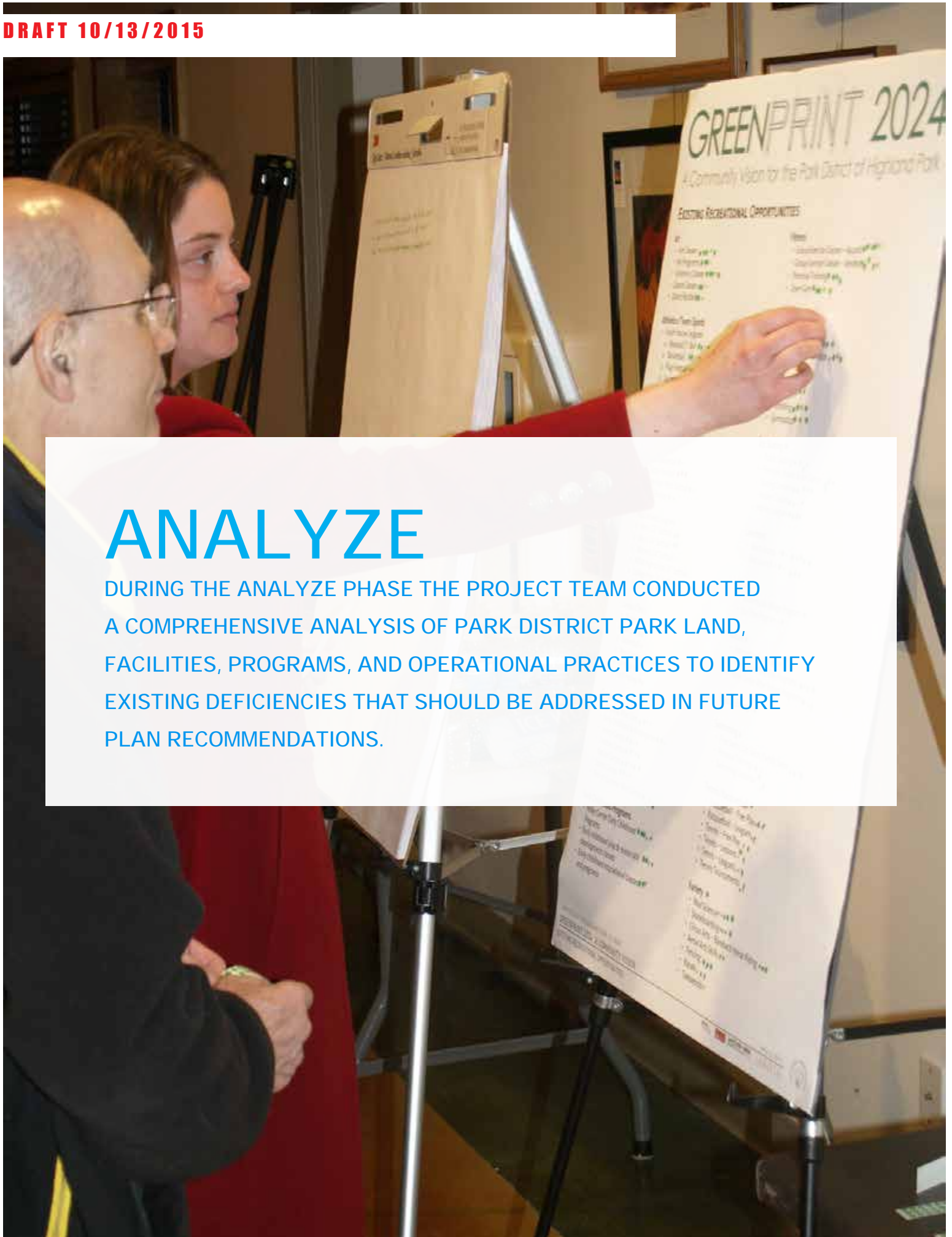
Indoor fitness and exercise facilities, indoor cultural arts facilities, indoor running / walking track, and indoor swimming pool / leisure lanes were the highest ranking indoor facilities. Lakefront parks, walking / biking trails, passive natural area, and outdoor swimming pool / water park ranked highest as outdoor facility priorities. Youth fitness and wellness programs, special events, summer camps, and youth sports were indicated as priorities for programming.

Priorities derived from the on-line

2013 Community Attitude and Interest Survey results align with priorities indicated by the 2009 Community Attitude and Interest Survey results. Results from both surveys are included in the Analyze section of this report, and support the project team's conclusions and recommendations.

2013 Attitude and Interest Survey Priority Rankings

Indoor Facility Priority Rankings	Outdoor Facility Priority Rankings	Program Priority Rankings
1. Fitness and exercise	Lakefront parks	Youth fitness and wellness
2. Cultural arts	Walking / biking trails	Special events
3. Running track	Passive natural areas	Summer camps
4. Swimming pool and lap lanes	Outdoor swimming pool	Youth sports
5. Multi-use athletic fields	Neighborhood parks	Youth cultural arts
6. Basketball / volleyball	Multi-use athletic field	Nature / environment
7. Ice arena	Park shelters / picnic area	Teen programming
8. Banquet / party room	Tennis courts	Tween programming
9. Gymnastics area	Golf course	Preschool
10. Tennis courts	Baseball / softball fields	Before and after school



ANALYZE

DURING THE ANALYZE PHASE THE PROJECT TEAM CONDUCTED A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS OF PARK DISTRICT PARK LAND, FACILITIES, PROGRAMS, AND OPERATIONAL PRACTICES TO IDENTIFY EXISTING DEFICIENCIES THAT SHOULD BE ADDRESSED IN FUTURE PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS.

Park Land Evaluation

The Park District of Highland Park operates almost 700 acres of land in 44 park areas. All of the park land operated by the Park District, which ranges from large scale active parks to small scale neighborhood parks, is considered a great asset by the community. Stewardship of this land will always remain a priority, and smart management of the land will continue to be important as community needs evolve.

STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK

Stakeholder interviews and focus group discussions overwhelmingly reinforced the fact that park land is highly valued by the community, and that many households use the parks at least once a week, some as much as once a day. Stakeholder comments largely echoed what the project team learned through

the survey update. Lakefront parks are a community priority; stakeholders appreciate the quality and quantity of parks and open space; and stakeholders enjoy the Park District's natural areas. Sunset Valley was also strongly represented through stakeholder feedback as the "community's golf course."

COMMUNITY ATTITUDE AND INTEREST SURVEY

Both the 2009 and the 2013 survey confirmed the Park District's parks are well used. The results of both surveys indicated that park usership is above both state and national averages. In 2009, 93% of households visited parks (this is a statistically higher rate than the national average of 72% and the Illinois average of 78%). In 2013, 96% of respondents reported that they, or a member of

their household, had visited a park during the past 12 months.

In both 2009 and 2013 residents said that lakefront parks and small neighborhood parks are most needed, and most important to the community.

Key take-aways related to Park District land:

- People appreciate small neighborhood parks.
- Lakefront park land is a community asset and requires increased stewardship.
- Restoration of natural areas has been a priority for the Park District, and major restoration has taken place on more than half of the priority natural areas.
- Opportunities for strategic land acquisition and partnerships may exist through arrangements with community partners including the City of Highland Park and the local School Districts.
- Floodway and floodplain are a significant impediment to some master plan opportunities.
- Park land is generally well-maintained.
- An updated land management strategy, tied to amended zoning, would benefit the Park District.

PARK LAND OVERVIEW

Park District lands accommodate a variety of uses. While the majority of Park District land is operated for recreational use, over 250 acres are currently dedicated to natural areas (in addition to smaller-scale natural areas that exist as amenities in active and passive parks), and 11 acres are dedicated as ornamental landscapes. A complete index of parks and their associated outdoor amenities / recreation facilities is in the appendix of this document.

To better understand how residents are served by Park District offerings, parks have been categorized according to national standards as neighborhood parks, community parks, passive natural areas, or special use parks. These classifications help staff and Park District officials evaluate whether or not different areas of the community are adequately served by different types of park land. The Park District defines the classifications following National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) standards:

- A neighborhood park is the basic unit of the park system and serves as the recreation and social center of the neighborhood. Focus is on informal activity and passive recreation. Neighborhood parks should be located up to 1/2 mile apart uninterrupted by non-residential roads and other physical barriers. 5 acres is considered the minimum size for a neighborhood park. 5 - 10 acres is optimal.
- A community park serves a broader purpose than a neighborhood park.

Focus is on meeting community-based recreation needs, as well as preserving unique landscapes and open spaces. Location is determined by the quality and suitability of the site. A community park usually serves two or more neighborhoods within a 3-mile distance. Sized as needed to accommodate desired uses, they are usually between 30 and 50 acres.

- The passive natural area category accommodates land set aside for preservation of significant natural resources, remnant landscapes, open space, and visual aesthetics or buffering.
- The special use area category covers a broad range of parks and recreation facilities. Currently, special use areas include historical, cultural, aquatic, boat launch, recreation centers, tennis centers, dedication areas, and golf courses. Location and size are variable depending on specific use.

The recreation industry has developed two different measures to help gauge how well these different types of parks serve the community. The first is by distance standards. Community areas within one-half mile of a neighborhood park and within 3 miles of a community park are considered to be well served by parks. By this measure, Highland Park is well-served, with community parks located central to the community and a number of neighborhood parks distributed evenly across the Park District. There are no distance standards available for passive natural areas or special use parks.

The second method measures area of park land against population using standards adapted from those developed state and national agencies. Both the NRPA national standard and the statewide standards as listed in the 2009-2014 Illinois Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) developed by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources were reviewed. Based on the data from these two sources, input from stakeholders, local project experience and understanding of recreational trends, the project team developed revised recommended service levels to evaluate the Park District land. Based on these recommended service levels, Highland Park is well-served by most park types. Only a small need exists for community parks and undeveloped land. This is consistent for both the 2012 population and when measured against the projected population in 2017.

As part of the overall analysis, the project team also reviewed how Park District land holdings compare to the holdings of its peer communities. The Park District operates the second largest amount of lakefront property among its peers and the most total park land per resident among peer communities. By many measures, Highland Park residents are well served by Park District land.

Park Land Service Level Standards

Park Type	Area (acres)	Current Service Level ^a (acres / 1,000 pop.)	Recommended Service Level ^{a,b} (acres / 1,000 pop.)	2012 Facility Standard
Neighborhood Parks	123.35	4.07	4.00	Meets standard
Community Parks	169.45	5.60	6.00	Need Exists
Natural Areas	250.00	8.33	3.00	Meets standard
Special Use Areas	186.63	6.17	4.00	Meets standard
Undeveloped	5.81	0.19	3.00	Need Exists

Source: PROS Consulting, 2013

^a Service level based on 2012 estimated population

^b Recommended service level revised the national standard to better suit the local service area.

Park District land is both highly valued and well-used by Highland Park residents. The Park District manages a significantly greater amount of park land as compared to local peer community benchmarks and national benchmarks.

Peer Community Park Land Benchmark Comparison

Peer Community	Area (acres)	Park Land per capita (acres / 1,000 pop.)
Glencoe	100	11
Winnetka	200	17
Deerfield	300	19
Lake Forest	400	20
Northbrook	500	15
Highland Park	600	21
Glenview	850	19

Peer Community Lakefront Park Land Benchmark Comparison

Peer Community	Area (acres)
Wilmette	63 acres
Highland Park	41 acres
Lake Forest	29 acres
Winnetka	23 acres
Lake Bluff	15 acres
Glencoe	15 acres

^a Service level based on 2012 estimated population

PARK DISTRICT CULTURAL ASSETS

The Park District land also houses a number of important cultural assets:

Laurel Park Rose Garden

This park is home to a contemporary sculpture by Peter Voulkos and the Francis Stupey log cabin--Highland Park's oldest standing structure. In addition, Laurel Park is home to Memorial Garden, which includes a rose garden, a wildflower and perennial garden and a natural garden with stonework in honor of Jens Jensen.

Memorial Park Monument and Bandstand

This feature honors Highland Park's World War I heroes. Names of area residents who served in the war are embossed on the monument. In 1980, the Bob Robinson bandstand was built.

Moraine Sculpture Park

This park is a sculpture garden on the top of Moraine Park Beach with six sculptures donated to the Park District in the early 2000s. Park design plans allow for future sculpture additions and development.

Jens Jensen Park

This park is named in honor of the famed landscape architect and is the only park in Highland Park designed by Jensen, a Ravinia resident and nationally known landscape architect. Although most of the original landscaping is gone, a stone council ring—a signature

element of Jensen's design—remains.

Rosewood Park Jensen Landscape

Upper Rosewood Park has a Jens Jensen reflecting pond, originally designed as a private garden, but now maintained by the Park District. The reflecting pond suffers from deferred maintenance.

Founders' Park

This park is adjacent to Founders' Daggitt Cemetery, the oldest cemetery in Highland Park. Founders' Park contains two sculptures and a formal, ornamental landscape.

These cultural assets are highly valued by the community. It should be noted, however, that such ornamental landscapes are expensive to maintain, and maintenance at some sites has been deferred.

PARK DISTRICT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSETS

Natural areas comprise a significant portion of Park District land, as both stand-alone natural areas and as smaller amenities within active and passive use park areas. In addition to providing passive recreation opportunities, these lands host a number of significant ecosystems.

As identified by the 2005 Natural Area Survey and Analysis and 2010 Natural Area Survey Update, ten distinct natural community types have been identified on Park District land. These communities

represent high-quality examples of native ecosystems. Each community has been mapped for the system as a whole and for each park.

Efforts to restore these communities have been very successful to date (as measured by the 2010 Survey Update). In the 2010 Natural Area Survey Update, eighteen high priority sites were identified within ten parks: Heller, Highmoor, Central, Rosewood, Leonardi, Millard, Moraine, May Watts, Sleepy Hollow, and Woodridge. These sites represent savanna, flatwood, lake bluff, sedge meadow, ravine forest, beach, and floodplain forest communities, or 70 percent of all of the Highland Park natural community types. These areas are being actively managed and maintained by the Park District.

The Park District's environmental assets are very important to the community. This has been evident throughout the master planning process, in both stakeholder feedback and through the results of the 2013 community survey update. It is also evidenced by the fact that community members donate an average of 2,000 hours of volunteer time to natural area maintenance and management annually.

LAKE FOREST

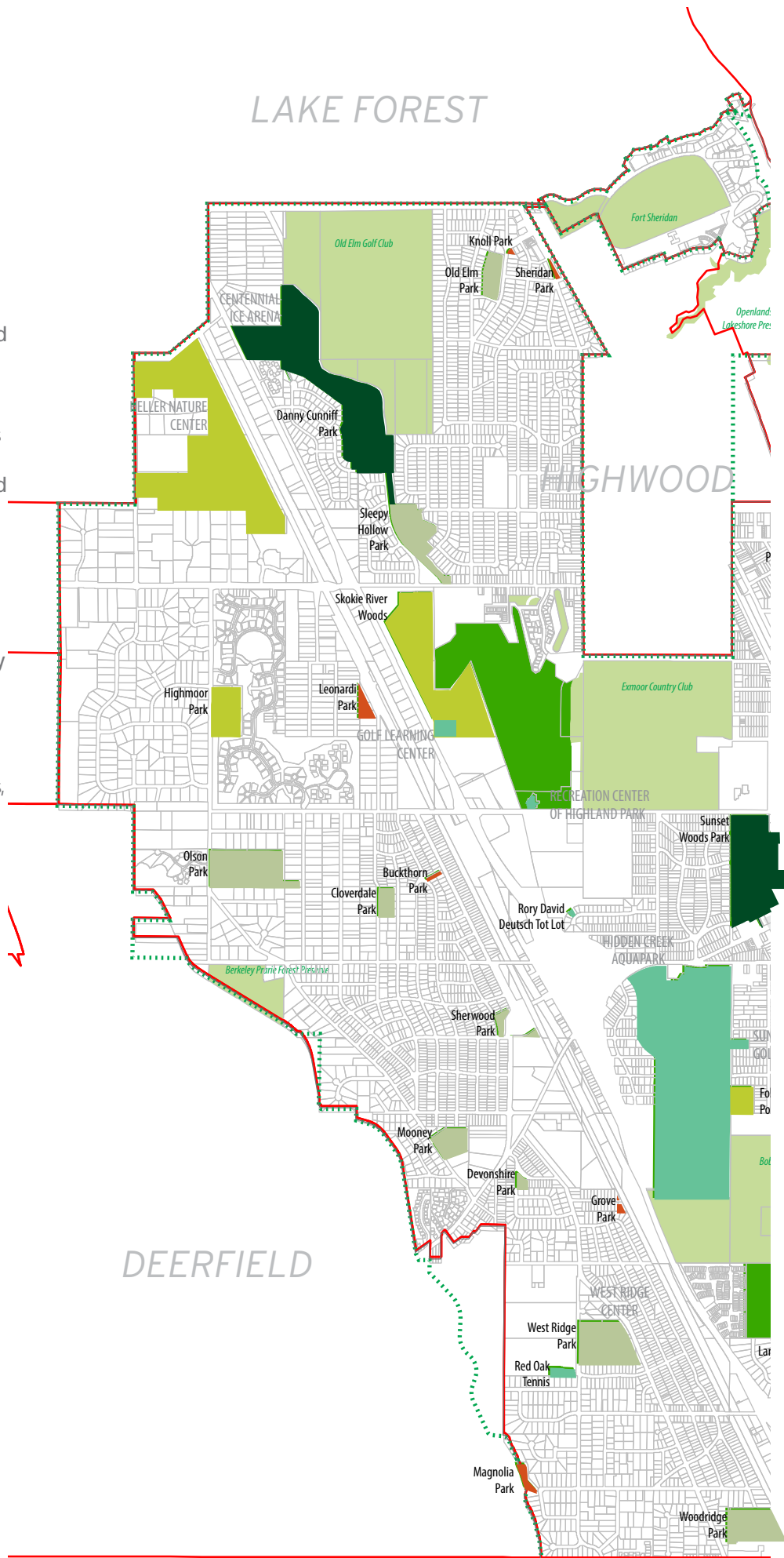
Neighborhood Park A neighborhood park is the basic unit of the park system and serves as the recreation and social center of the neighborhood. Focus is on informal activity and passive recreation. Neighborhood parks should be located up to 1/2 mile apart uninterrupted by non-residential roads and other physical barriers. 5 acres is considered the minimum size for a neighborhood park. 5 - 10 acres is optimal.

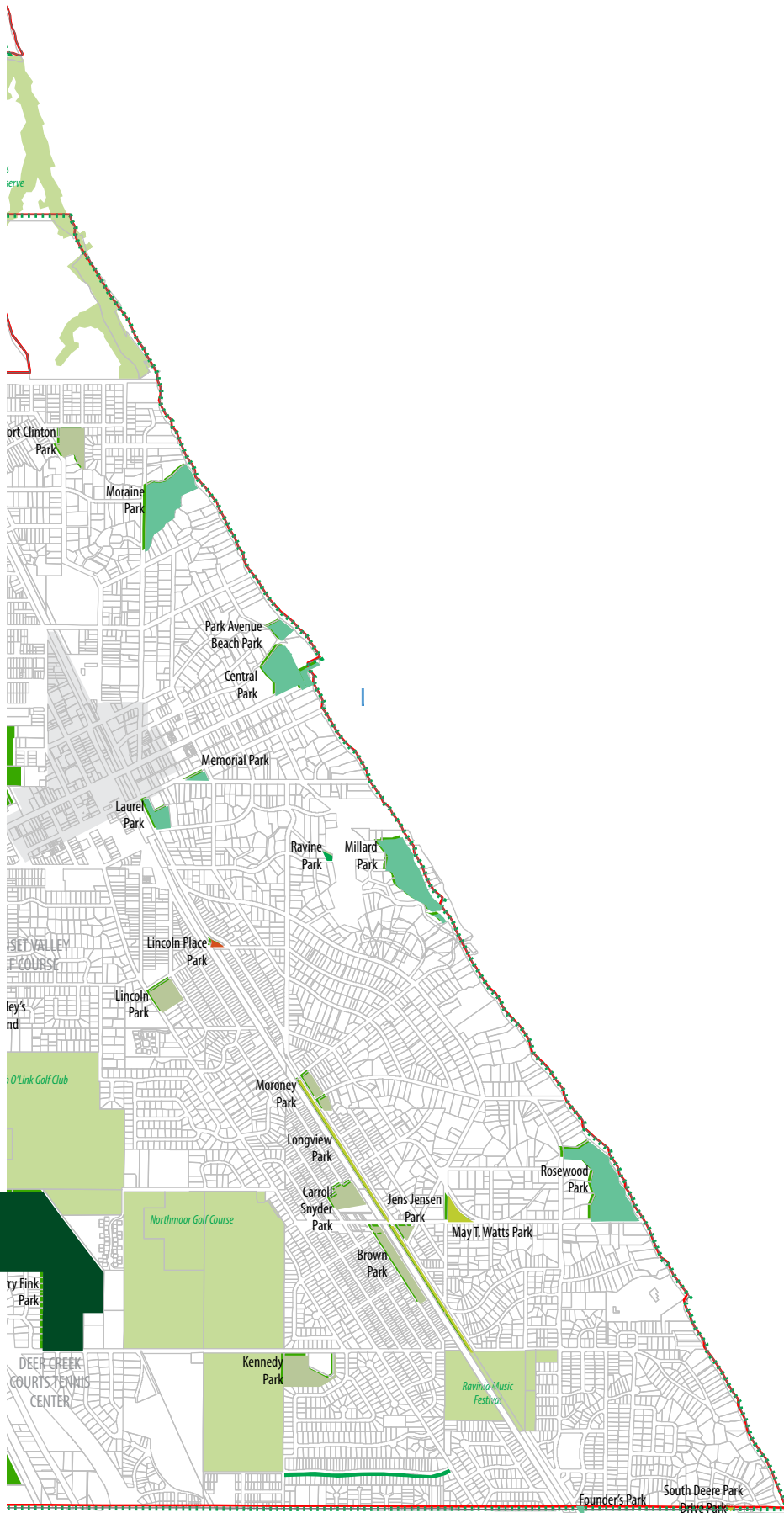
Community Park A community park serves a broader purpose than a neighborhood park. Focus is on meeting community-based recreation needs, as well as preserving unique landscapes and open spaces. Location is determined by the quality and suitability of the site. A community park usually serves two or more neighborhoods within a 3-mile distance. Sized as needed to accommodate desired uses, they are usually sized between 30 and 50 acres.

Passive Natural Area This category accommodates land set aside for preservation of significant natural resources, remnant landscapes, open space, and visual aesthetics or buffering.

Special Use Park This category covers a broad range of parks and recreation facilities. Currently, special use areas include historical, cultural, aquatic, boat launch, recreation centers, tennis centers, dedication areas, and golf courses. Location and size are variable depending on specific use.

Undeveloped Park







Park Facility Evaluation

The Park District offers a wide variety of recreation facilities, including recreation buildings and park amenities, to residents. This portion of the Analyze section provides an overview of Park District facilities including:

- A list of key take-aways related to facilities
- A description of stakeholder feedback related to facilities
- A summary of category-specific results from both the 2009 and 2013 community survey related to facilities
- An inventory of Park District facilities
- National benchmark comparisons

STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK

While stakeholder interviews and focus group discussions overwhelmingly confirmed that

park facilities are highly valued by the community, however, they voiced concern that facilities, partially due to deferred maintenance, are not up to the same standard of those operated by neighboring municipalities. Other comments addressed the growing need for senior services within the community and the role the Park District could play. Many participants commented on the importance of regional trails and the need to maintain them and expand the network.

COMMUNITY SURVEY

In 2009 indoor and outdoor facilities indicated as *needed most* by the community included: walking and biking trails (80%), nature center and trails (64%), indoor fitness and exercise facilities (58%), indoor running / walking track (58%), and outdoor swimming pools and water parks

(55%). Indoor and outdoor facilities ranked *most important* by the community included: walking and biking trails (80%), indoor fitness and exercise facilities (25%), and nature center and trails (20%).

In 2013, indoor park and recreation facility prioritized by the community included: fitness and exercise facilities, cultural arts facilities, running / walking track, and swimming pool / leisure and lap lanes. Outdoor park and recreation facilities prioritized by survey respondents included: lakefront parks, walking / biking trails, passive natural areas, and swimming pools / water parks.

Key take-aways related to Park District facilities:

- Recreation facilities, maintenance facilities, classroom facilities, and office facilities are aging and not up to the standard of peer community facilities.
- Centralization of some recreation facilities could be beneficial to operations and maintenance efficiency.
- The condition and quality of facilities do not align with Highland Park community character or resident expectations. Community priority facility concerns include the golf course, lakefront, and trails.
- Facilities do not take full advantage of the benefit of existing regional transportation access like public transit, which could better link the community to these assets.
- Existing facility wayfinding signage lacks cohesiveness and visibility.
- A system for tracking the cost of operating existing and new facilities, including maintenance and management, needs to be developed.
- Shared facility partnerships have the potential to be developed and enhanced.

PARK FACILITY OVERVIEW

The Park District operates a number of outdoor recreation amenities and indoor / major recreation facilities. A complete index of parks and their associated outdoor amenities / recreation facilities is listed in the appendix of this document.

In addition to outdoor amenities, Highland Park residents are served by a number and variety of indoor recreation spaces and other major recreation facilities that are evenly distributed throughout the community. Similar to park land and other facilities, Highland Park is well-served by indoor recreation amenities. The accepted standard for indoor recreation space is two square feet per resident, which totals 60,000 square feet for Highland Park. At this time, the Park District operates over 180,000 square feet of indoor recreation space, three times the standard.

Major recreation facilities operated by the Park District include:

- Sunset Valley Golf Course
- Highland Park Country Club
- Recreation Center of Highland Park
- West Ridge Center
- Hidden Creek AquaPark
- Park Avenue Beach and Boating Facility
- Centennial Ice Arena
- Deer Creek Racquet Club
- Heller Nature Center
- Rosewood Interpretive Center

Each of these major recreation facilities, as well as the Park District Maintenance Service Center and the Sunset Woods field house, have been evaluated by the project team.

Similar to park type classifications, national standards authored by National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) exist to help evaluate how well a community is served by outdoor recreation amenities. For the purposes of this survey, the project team evaluated major recreation facilities in terms of quantity of amenity per population.

Both the NRPA national standard and the statewide averages for facilities as listed in the 2009-2014 Illinois Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) developed by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources were reviewed. Based on the data from these two sources, input from stakeholders, local project experience and understanding of recreational trends, the project team developed revised recommended service levels used to evaluate the Park Districts facilities.

As with park land, Highland Park residents are very well-served by outdoor recreation amenities. It should be noted, however, that this analysis only speaks to quantity, not quality. Improvement of existing facilities was suggested by a number of stakeholders

throughout this planning process. Thus, both quantity and quality of park facilities are addressed by the master plan.

Recreation Facility Inventory

Outdoor Recreation Amenity	Quantity
Controlled Dog Park	3
Picnic Area	76
Shelter	15
Restrooms	12
Vending/Concessions	6
Playground – 5-12	17
Playground – 2-5	18
Ball Fields (Diamond)	12
Basketball Court	16
Indoor Tennis Courts	6
Outdoor Tennis Courts	39
Fishing	5
Disc Golf	2
Banquet/Catering	1
Golf	1
Educational Gardens	2
Boating Launch	1
Boating Storage Areas	1
Ice Skating	1
Open Fields w/ Backstop	10
Mixed-Use Field	26
Skate Park	1
Sled Hill	1
Outdoor Ice Rink	1

Indoor / Major Recreation Facility

West Ridge Center
Recreation Center
Centennial Ice Arena
Deer Creek Racquet Club
Hidden Creek AquaPark
Heller Nature Center
Sunset Valley Golf Course
Park Avenue Boating Facility
Rosewood Interpretive Center
Highland Park Country Club

Facility Service Level Standards

Park Type	Amenity Count	Current Service Level ^a	Recommended Service Level ^{a, b}	2012 Facility Standard
Picnic Areas	76	1 per 398	1 per 2,500	Meets Standard
Shelters	15	1 per 2,018	1 per 2,500	Meets Standard
Playgrounds	35	1 per 865	1 per 2,500	Meets Standard
Dog Parks	3	1 per 10,091	1 per 30,000	Meets Standard
Softball Fields	8	1 per 3,784	1 per 20,000	Meets Standard
Baseball Fields	4	1 per 7,568	1 per 10,000	Meets Standard
Multi-Purpose Fields	26	1 per 1,164	1 per 30,000	Meets Standard
Basketball Courts	16	1 per 1,892	1 per 4,000	Meets Standard
Tennis Courts	45	1 per 671	1 per 3,500	Meets Standard
Aquatic Park	1	1 per 30,272	1 per 50,000	Meets Standard
Ice Skating	1	1 per 30,272	1 per 50,000	Meets Standard
Skate Park	1	1 per 30,272	1 per 40,000	Meets Standard

Source: PROS Consulting, 2013

^a Service level based on 2012 estimated population

^b The national standard for recommended service level was revised by PROS based on local project experience to better suit the local service area

Although Park Facilities are well-used by the community, many are aging and not up to the standard of peer community facilities.



SUNSET VALLEY GOLF COURSE

Sunset Valley Golf Course (SVGC) currently serves as the Park District's public golf course. Construction of the course occurred in the late 1910's with the course opening to the public in 1921. SVGC has hosted many national events, qualifiers, and tournaments that included legendary golfers such as Walter Hagen and Tommy Armour. The golf course was evaluated by Jacobson Golf in 2012, noting the following challenges:

- Access to the golf clubhouse is logistically challenging
- The size and functionality of the clubhouse does not promote outside revenue such as banquets or even golf outings that can be very profitable
- The maintenance facility is antiquated and in very poor condition
- The lack of a player development facility does not build players for future generations

The site location makes the clubhouse difficult to find and parking is less than desired to accommodate patrons, which is largely due to the adjacent Park District maintenance service center. The clubhouse is limited to very basic functions and is not considered a full service clubhouse. The food and beverage operation is inadequate. Aesthetically, the clubhouse does not have a suitable character for a modern day clubhouse, especially the interior. The age of the original structure is approaching a century. Although the structure has been maintained adequately, there are a number of age-related issues that need to be addressed, especially facility mechanical systems.

Overall, the condition and function of the accessory building facilities need a great deal of attention and need to be part of any renovation to the Sunset Valley Golf Course. There are no major structural issues to note with the cart barn; however, its central, visible location is problematic. Replacement of the cart barn needs to be included as part of any renovation to the course. Despite these challenges, the assessment report noted that of the two golf courses (Highland Park Country Club and SVGC), the piece of property that offers the spatial opportunities to renovate and provide special, memorable traits is Sunset Valley Golf Course.

"The [SVGC] course renovation should build on the sites positive attributes while taking advantage of some of the open areas adjacent to the existing golf holes. This renovation would need to be accompanied by a commitment to a higher level of maintenance by the Park District. The ideal finished product would still remain an affordable, challenging yet fun golf course that every level of golfer would enjoy and want to play regularly." Jacobson, 2012

Jacobson's budget included tee improvement and fairway grading, infrastructure improvements (including drainage, irrigation, some cart path work, and bridge improvements), feature construction (greens, tees, and bunkers), and grassing. At that time, estimated cost for the improvements was between \$1 M - \$2.3 M. Sunset Valley Golf Course does not generate surplus revenue for the Park District.

Maintenance Service Center

The Park District Maintenance Service Center is located at Sunset Valley Golf Course, and serves as both the Park District's primary maintenance facility as well as the maintenance facility to the golf course. The existing facility falls short of truly meeting the District's needs and significantly challenges the staff to efficiently perform their duties. There is a tremendous lack of outdoor and indoor storage; the golf course parking lot is used as a holding area; there is no training room for staff; no loading dock; the golf course parking lot is used for employees; it is difficult for delivery and service vehicles to navigate the neighborhood streets and the confined entrance to the site. Its function is in direct conflict with the adjacent residential neighborhood. Replacement of the facility is slated for 2017 as part of the five-year capital plan.

The Park District also operates small maintenance facilities at Cuniff Park and Fink Park. These structures are satellite maintenance facilities, dedicated to Cuniff and Fink Parks. However, both have become a catch-all storage place for miscellaneous maintenance and park items. Due to the overall condition and inadequacy of park service facilities in the district, excessive demands have been placed on this facility. In addition to functional challenges, the condition of the structure is below average.

HIGHLAND PARK COUNTRY CLUB

Highland Park Country Club (HPCC) was constructed in 1961 with the hope of becoming one of the elite private clubs in the Chicagoland area. In the late 1990's the golf course was substantially altered to allow for the sale of a portion of the property for the development of single-family homes. As part of the alterations, a full scale practice facility was developed to the west. In 1992, the City of Highland Park purchased the Highland Park Country Club property. The City managed the golf facility through January 1, 2015, at which time the Park District became responsible for facility operations. The Park District will continue to operate the golf course and existing banquet space at least through 2017 (the banquet space is used primarily for bar and bat mitzvahs). The decision regarding how the Park District might operate HPCC in the future, beyond that time, either as a golf course or another type of recreation facility, was one of the driving forces behind the initiation of this planning process, and was identified as the number one consensus issue for the community by the 2012 Strategic Plan.

The golf course itself was evaluated by Jacobson Golf in 2012, noting the following challenges:

- The location of the golf course in the floodplain and floodway puts critical importance on the maintenance of a good drainage system
- The irrigation system is near the end of its life expectancy and will likely need major repair or replacement in the near future
- Teeing grounds need significant improvement as many are

undersized, inconsistent in shape and are poorly positioned.

- Tree growth has impacted health of the turf grass and playability of the course and thinning and selective clearing should occur.

In addition to challenges with the golf course, currently operations of HPCC - including banquet operations and golf - do not generate surplus revenue.

Developing HPCC for recreational use presents many opportunities. The property is regionally accessible from major arterial roadways, and the site is connected to the city-wide bike trail system. It will also provide the Park District with a significant amount of additional park land, and is home to the Recreation Center of Highland Park, a very popular community facility. The HPCC site also houses a full-scale golf practice facility at the west end of the site, which is heavily utilized by the community, and will be managed by the Park District with the rest of the property.

There are also challenges associated with site development for recreation purposes at HPCC. A significant portion of the entire property is in the floodplain (104 of 116 acres), and most of the playing areas lie below the ten-year flood level. A small area of land outside the floodplain, where the existing building is sited, will allow for a small footprint expansion or vertical expansion of the existing buildings without triggering Lake County Watershed Development Ordinance process required by developing in the floodplain. Development would still be subject to City planning and zoning review

processes.

Another set of challenges facing development of the HPCC for recreation purposes is the restrictive easements tied to the property. These easements were intended to ensure that the site remain dedicated as natural area or an area for low-intensity recreational use into the future. On the HPCC site there are two easements that the City entered into on June 19, 2002, each with differing restrictions:

- Highland Park Country Club Parcel (+/- 105 acres): The conservation easement covering HPCC parcel allows for some recreational use. Section 5(a)(9) of the easement or covenant restrictions states that in the event the Park District determines a golf course is no longer desired, with approval of the Lake County Forest Preserve District, the property may be converted to an alternative active recreational use (without buildings or structures). Intensity of allowable recreational use is also restricted by the easement.
- Highland Park Woods Parcel (+/- 3.5 acres): The 3.5 acre Highland Park Woods parcel, located at the south-east edge of the HPCC property must remain passive recreation.

Because of the site's unique nature, location and history, a longer approval process timeline can be expected.



WEST RIDGE CENTER

West Ridge Center, a former Highland Park elementary school site, currently serves as administrative offices for Park District staff, classroom and program space, and houses Park District preschool programs, performing arts and creative arts programs, and basketball programs.

Although the facility serves as the primary location for pre-school programs and administration offices, there are significant building inefficiencies and concern for safety and accessibility associated with the facility's current condition. Storage is not adequate or conveniently located throughout the facility, especially for the pre-school programs. Due to the building's age, condition, functionality, and poor infrastructure, serious consideration must be given to decommissioning all or part of the existing facility, or making major structural and utility improvements to correct these issues in the near future.



CENTENNIAL ICE ARENA

Centennial Ice Arena serves a dual role as the local indoor ice rink facility for residents of Highland Park and regional participation through the Falcons Ice Hockey Organization. The current facility also houses figure skating and gymnastics programming operated by the Park District. Centennial Ice Arena currently benefits the Park District by generating surplus revenue. Over the past several years, there has been discussion regarding the implementation of a second sheet of ice at Centennial to allow for expansion of hockey use. The expansion would primarily support private club hockey ice time demands, including tournaments.

There are several challenges the building faces due to a number of limitations with the building and site, including potential traffic pattern inefficiencies. These include the size of the existing gymnastics space, the height of the ice rink ceiling, the condition and size of the lobby, size of staff offices, condition and size of locker rooms, and lack of activity rooms for functions such as birthday parties.

This facility generates revenue for the Park District.



DEER CREEK RACQUET CLUB

Deer Creek Racquet Club serves as the local indoor tennis facility for residents of Highland Park. The lobby was renovated in 2014, however, there continue to be some functional issues, most notably a perceived desire for more “social space” within the facility. Ongoing maintenance is being addressed and several projects are underway or scheduled. Deer Creek Racquet Club currently generates surplus revenue for the Park District.

The facility serves the tennis community well, but does not serve all demands and expectations. The club is also missing out on opportunities to generate revenue by offering other amenities to its customer base. For instance, developing an interior feel or amenities package more commonly found in private clubs would create an added attraction and social atmosphere, and help generate more revenue. Opportunities to increase revenue could also be realized by remodeling or readapting the large, unused locker room space and racquetball courts to other more useful and desirable functions.

This facility generates revenue for the Park District.



HIDDEN CREEK AQUA PARK

Hidden Creek AquaPark is the Park District’s outdoor aquatics facility. The facility currently does not generate revenue for the Park District; however it is highly valued and well-used by the community.

Any future modifications will need to consider maximum bather load, which cannot be increased at this site. In estimating capacity for recreational use, a maximum density of 25 square feet of pool surface per person is assumed. When considering deep water capacity, the maximum density is assumed to be 100 square feet per person. Therefore, changes that affect the amount of deep water will impact bather load calculations, and will need to be balanced to ensure the maximum bather load does not increase.

The Park District engaged Hitchcock Design Group in 2011 to prepare concept plans to upgrade the sand play area with a new splash pad. These concept plans attempt to address maintenance issues related to the proximity of the sand and water play areas and overflow from the “bucket” feature into adjacent lawn areas. Hidden Creek re-opened in May 2015.



PARK AVENUE BEACH AND BOATING FACILITY

Park Avenue Boating Facility provides access to the lake for power boaters, sailors, kayakers, and paddle boarders. The Park District has recently established a task force to determine how the facility will be able to accommodate boat traffic as a result of City of Highland Park security enhancements for the water treatment facility.



ROSEWOOD BEACH AND INTERPRETIVE CENTER

Rosewood Beach was a collaborative effort between the Park District and the United States Army Corps of Engineers as administrators of the Great Lakes Fishery and Ecosystem Restoration program. The Army Corps constructed breakwaters extending 200 feet into the lake forming three protected coves - nature, swimming, and recreation. The beach was also expanded with 65,000 cubic yards of added sand. The Park District's portion of the project included the construction of new, environmentally-friendly facilities including a one of a kind beach-front Interpretive Center, concessions, restroom, and guard buildings - all connected by a 1,500 foot boardwalk and nestled against the wooded bluffs.

Rosewood Beach re-opened in June 2015 following the \$14.5 million renovation.



HELLER NATURE CENTER

Heller Nature Center serves as a special and unique environmental learning center for residents of Highland Park and the region. The Heller Nature Center is a tremendous asset to the District, but does not generate revenue for the Park District. The facility has space limitations, as it lacks adequate storage and ideal space for larger programs and special events such as weddings. The parking lot is also inadequate for supporting larger special events. The large meeting room is a desirable event space, but has acoustical problems with large groups. Generally, the overall structure is in good condition, and is well taken care of. The sun room at the main entry generates a significant amount of heat which builds up in the classrooms and causes discomfort for users. The electrical and mechanical systems are also operating at full capacity. Expansion should be considered to address accessibility and more storage needs.

Needs have also expanded over the years for the Classroom in the Woods building, which is currently being renovated to include outdoor public restrooms and improve accessibility.



RECREATION CENTER OF HIGHLAND PARK

The Recreation Center of Highland Park serves as a membership-based recreation center for Highland Park residents. The Recreation Center is a very popular facility, and there is community desire for center expansion. The Recreation Center houses a gymnasium with an indoor walking track, Two full basketball courts, six-lane lap pool, fitness center, fitness studios, locker rooms (in the lower level of the existing country club clubhouse), staff offices, multi-use rooms and public circulation/lobby space.

The public circulation / lobby space currently serves as a common entrance for both the Recreation Center and the Highland Park Country Club Clubhouse. Functionally, the common entrance does not work well. The location of the main entrance for the Recreation Center is remote from the main parking lot and secondary to the country club entrance. Due to the relationship of the main entry to the balance of the programmed Recreation Center, there is an excessive and underutilized amount of lobby space. Two points of access control are also necessary, one to monitor the main entrance, and one to monitor the entry to the fitness center.

During the interview process, many stakeholders also confirmed that they would like to see the Recreation Center expanded, to include greater stretching space, room for more free weights, and larger studio space.

This facility generates revenue for the Park District.



Program Evaluation

The Park District offers a wide variety of programs to residents. This portion of the Analyze section provides an overview of Park District programs including:

- A list of key take-aways related to Park District programming
- A description of stakeholder feedback related to programs
- A summary of category-specific results from both the 2009 and 2013 community survey related to programs
- An assessment of existing programs in terms of:
Identification of core programs, Highland Park demographics, and program life-cycle phase

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW FEEDBACK

Overall, feedback gleaned from stakeholder interviews indicated that although community members appreciate Park District offerings, there may be too much variety in Park District programming.

Programming that addresses a wide range of age groups, from tots to tweens to seniors, is desired by the community. A strong appreciation for natural area programming was also expressed by stakeholders.

COMMUNITY SURVEY

In 2009, 49% of households had participated in a Park District program in the last 12 months (that is significantly higher than the national average of 30%, and higher than the Illinois average of 38%). Park and recreation programs most important to the community included: adult fitness and wellness programs, youth sports programs, youth summer camps, and special events. Park and recreation programs needed most by the community included: adult fitness and wellness programs, special events, nature programs, and youth sports programs.

By comparison, in 2013, 25% of survey respondents (or a member of the respondent's household) participated in a Park District competitive sports program and 58% of respondents had participated in a Park District recreation program in the last 12 months. Park and recreation programs with the highest priority ranking included: youth fitness and wellness programs, special events, summer camps, and youth sports.

The majority (54%) of the respondents taking the on-line survey indicated they were pleased with the overall offerings of the District. Two of the top three barriers to participation were program related. Some respondents felt that program times are not convenient (21.3%) and some indicated that a desired program or facility is not offered (13.6%).

Key take-aways related to Park District programs:

- True cost of providing program services must be better understood and analyzed.
- The Park District needs to focus on meeting the needs of the community through an appropriate, streamlined, offering of programs and facilities.
- Program offerings could better align with current recreation trends.
- Some key community demographic groups, specifically seniors, are not appropriately served by existing Park District program offerings.
- Park District programs are highly valued and well-used by Highland Park residents (particularly their camp programs).
- Efficiency could be gained through partnerships and shared services.
- The Park District may be programming against itself, offering too many options for residents' time and recreation dollars.

The aim of this program assessment is to identify core program areas, gaps and overlaps in services, as well as system-wide issues such as customer feedback, performance measures and marketing that is vital to the success of the District’s program growth. The consultant team conducted an overall assessment of the Park District of Highland Park’s program offerings including identification of core programs, age and demographic market evaluation, and program life-cycle evaluation. Its findings are based on information derived from discussions with staff members, program assessment forms completed by Park District staff, and the 2013 on-line community survey. A summary of those findings, including a list of core programs, a demographic analysis, and program life cycle phase analysis, is described in this section of the master plan report.

CORE PROGRAMS

Identification of core programs help to identify future needs and prioritize resource allocation to meet those needs. This helps to focus resources around specific program areas of greatest importance to the community. It does not mean that non-core programs are not important – it simply allows the staff to establish priorities. Programs are categorized as core programs if they meet a majority of the following categories:

- The program has been provided for a long period of time (over

The Park District has a number of programs for the 55+ population as well, but as the population ages staff should be sue it is not leaving out this segment of the population - additional programming may be appropriate.

- 4-5 years).
- Offered 3-4 sessions per year.
- Wide demographic appeal.
- Includes 5% or more of recreation budget.
- Includes a tiered level of skill development.
- Requires full-time staff to manage the program.
- Has strong social value.
- High level of customer interface exists.
- High partnering capability.
- Facilities are designed to support the program.

The Park District staff provided a list of core programs / facilities to the consultant team. The core programs listed include: Arts Programs, Adult Athletic Programs, Camp Programs, Gymnastics, Ice Skating, Dance Programs, Tennis Programs, Early Childhood Programs, Fitness Programs, Learn to Swim Programs, Nature Programs, Special Events, Golf Programs, Youth Athletic Programs. These programs were used for the program life-cycle analysis examined below, and were also considered as key elements helping to substantiate master plan recommendations.

PROGRAMMING AND DEMOGRAPHICS

The age segment distribution analysis helps us to understand if any age segments of the community are currently under-served. It also takes into consideration how the community’s age distribution is expected to change over the next ten years. Currently, the senior population is the one most notably under-served by Park District programs, and is a population that is expected to grow

Programming and Age Segments

Demographic Segment	% Total Population	% Programming Targeting Demographic Segment
Preschool	5.3	12.8
Elementary School (grades k – 5)	7.5	12.8
Middle School (grades 6 – 8)	7.5	12.8
High School (grades 9 – 12)	6.1	11.7
Young Adult (age 18 – 24)	3.8	8.5
Adult (age 25 – 44)	18.6	10.8
Middle-Age Adult (age 45 – 64)	31.5	9.6
Senior Adult (Age 65+)	20.0	9.6

over the next ten years. Therefore, there is a community need for senior programming. And, although more revenue is generated by youth programs, older adult programming is an area that needs to be addressed.

Despite the demographics heavily skewed towards those who are 40+ (median age 45.0 years), most age segment program distribution is skewed towards youth. Based on the program list provided by the staff, 58.5% of all programming is geared towards ages 24 and below. It is typical nation-wide for agencies to focus heavily on youth and families.

The Park District does have a number of programs for the 55+ population as well, but as the population ages it would be appropriate for the staff to rethink how it serves seniors.

PROGRAM LIFECYCLE PHASE

The life-cycle phase analysis, based on program enrollment numbers, shows if a program is growing or in decline. A program listed as saturated or in decline either currently has no space to grow or is declining in enrollment. 35% of Park District programs are currently listed as saturated or in decline, which is higher than ideal (less than 20% of programs in saturated or decline life-cycle phase is an accepted standard).

The program life-cycle analysis was completed by staff members,

with the help of the consultant team. Selected Park District staff members were first asked to list core services and amenities. Then, these programs and amenities were evaluated through a series of questions about enrollment and perceived community interest. This assessment was not based on quantitative data, but based on staff's knowledge of their program areas. These lifecycles can, and often do, change over time or even from year to year depending on how the programs fare.

The following list shows the percentage distribution of the various life-cycle categories of the Park District's recreation programs as listed by the staff:

- Introduction stage (New program; modest participation) = 12%
- Take off stage (Rapid participation growth) = 9%
- Growth stage (Moderate, but consistent participation growth) = 23%
- Mature stage (Slow participation growth) = 21%
- Saturation stage (Minimal to no participation growth; extreme competition in recreation market) = 16%
- Decline stage (Declining participation) = 19%

The above percentages were obtained by comparing the number of programs in each individual stage with the total number of programs in the program worksheets. The project team recognizes that while there is no

statistically sound method for obtaining the percentage breakout of all programs by life-cycle stages, the overall pattern and trends are apparent in the Program Life-cycle table. The lifecycles depict a declining trend. Just under 20% of all programs are in the Decline stage, and an additional 16% in the Saturated stage which may be a concern as it shows that under-performing programs are being sustained for too long and that the existing programs may not be aligned with community need.

However, with 12% programs in the Introduction Stage, the District is doing an excellent job in replenishing the program pipeline and ensuring new trends and innovative ideas are constantly nurtured.

With 12% programs in the Introduction Stage, the District is doing an excellent job in replenishing the program pipeline and ensuring new trends and innovative ideas are constantly nurtured.



Operations, Maintenance, and Management Evaluation

This portion of the Analyze section provides an overview of Park District operations including:

- A list of key take-aways
- A description of stakeholder feedback
- A summary of category-specific results from both the 2009 and 2013 community survey
- Park District administration and staffing
- Park District marketing efforts
- Park District maintenance practices

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW FEEDBACK

Stakeholder feedback reinforced the fact that the Park District needs to maintain regular communication with community stakeholders, listen to stakeholder feedback, and prioritize responsible, community-based decision making.

COMMUNITY SURVEY

In 2009, the Park District program guide (82%) was by a wide margin the most frequently mentioned way respondents learn about Park District of Highland Park programs and activities. The other most frequently mentioned ways respondents learned about Park District programs and activities included: Friends and neighbors (40%), the Park District website (38%), and the Park District print newsletters (37%).

In 2013, The Park District program guide remains the most frequently mentioned way respondents learn about Park District of Highland Park programs and activities. The other most frequently mentioned ways respondents learn about Park District programs and activities are: Park District e-newsletters, flyers and posters at park district facilities, and the Park District website. Since 2009, electronic

communication is more widely used by the Park District and seems to be preferred by community members.

Key take-aways related to Park District operations:

- A Strategic Plan and stated goals drive the organization; however at times the Park District is perceived as a reactive organization, and must better apply business planning fundamentals into its strategic thinking, system development, and overall investment approach.
- The Park District must work to continuously improve communication with the public at a variety of levels.
- As community demographics change, the Park District will need to adjust its operations and program offerings to continue to respond to community needs and continue to operate in a fiscally responsible manner.
- While marketing efforts have improved, additional refinement to the Park District's marketing strategy needs to be considered.
- The Park District has operated for a number of years without raising its tax levy, and has not significantly increased program costs.
- Shared facility partnerships should be developed and enhanced.

ADMINISTRATION AND STAFFING

Park District staff operates under the direction of a seven-seat Board of Park Commissioners (five elected officials and two appointed officials (treasurer and secretary). With the leadership of an executive director, five directors (planning and projects, parks, finance, communications and marketing, and recreation services) manage Park District staff. Currently, Park District staff is comprised of 444 seasonal employees, 292 year round employees, and 76 full-time employees.

The 2012 Strategic Plan outlined a number of organizational initiatives that are currently being undertaken by Park District staff. The Strategic Plan, along with progress reports which track completion of Strategic Plan tasks, are available on the Park District Website.

MARKETING AND TECHNOLOGY

There are many indications that the Park District marketing and promotions outreach is fairly effective in creating awareness and generating increased participation from the community. For example, in the survey, less than 5% of respondents stated 'I do not know what is being offered' as a barrier to program participation. Additionally, the ability of the communication team to help garner over 800 resident responses to the 2013 on-line survey update is an indication that Park District outreach is effective

There are many indications that the Park District marketing and promotions outreach is effective in creating awareness and generating increased participation from the community.

and meaningful to community members. Staff indicated that most programs are promoted via print and on-line versions of the Program Guide, the website, flyers and brochures, and email blasts. There are also some instances of social media usage, public service announcements, and even some radio and paid advertisements.

Currently, there is not a system-wide approach to customer feedback but more through individual programs offered by the District. A comprehensive chart outlining how the Park District currently gathers customer feedback (as indicated by Park District staff) is included in the Appendix.

In spring 2015 the Park District launched a new mobile-friendly website and visitorship has increased 170%. In addition, the Park District has an operational plan in place to significantly improve technology infrastructure by 2017.

MAINTENANCE

Currently 20 full-time Park District staff members and additional seasonal staff are dedicated to maintenance. Maintenance staff serves parks and facilities district-wide, with the exception of golf course maintenance at Sunset Valley and Highland Park Country Club, which is contracted to an independent provider. Planning is underway to construct a combined parks and golf maintenance service center.

In recent years, trends in Park District labor hours have shifted, with more time spent on facility maintenance and less time spent on park grounds maintenance. Currently, three of the 20 total maintenance staff members are dedicated to facility maintenance, including a dedicated maintenance staff person at Heller Nature Center, a dedicated maintenance staff person at the Recreation Center, a maintenance staff person at Centennial Ice Arena. Sunset Valley Golf Course also has dedicated maintenance staff, including a mechanic. Three additional maintenance staff members work primarily on facility maintenance, but still share responsibility for park grounds maintenance as well.

In general, parks and facilities are well-served by available staff hours, with only a small shortage of staff indicated by the data. Demand for facility maintenance was analyzed by the team in terms of hours spent on non-

repeating (neither scheduled, nor routine) maintenance requests. Of the major facilities, Deer Creek Racquet Club, Hidden Creek AquaPark, and the West Ridge Center required the most time for this type of maintenance between April 2013 and October 2013. Heller Nature Center and the Recreation Center, the two facilities with a dedicated maintenance staff person, required the lowest proportion of this type of maintenance (Park Avenue Boating Facility was discounted, since it was not operating during the 2013 season).

This information is significant, because time spent on non-repeating facility maintenance tasks detracts from maintenance time available for park grounds tasks, leading to the decreased ability of maintenance staff to maintain park grounds at a high level. There is currently no system to help manage service requests.

It should be noted as well, that although the two departments occasionally share maintenance staff, there is currently no formal arrangement between parks management and natural areas management.

Non-Repeating Facility Service Requests for Major Facilities (4/2013 – 10/2013)

Facility	% Total Time Spent on Non-Repeating Major Facility Maintenance Request
Centennial Ice Arena	10.6
Deer Creek Racquet Club	31.7
Heller Nature Center	2.9
Hidden Creek AquaPark	19.7
Park Avenue Boating Facility	1.7
Sunset Valley Golf Course	2.0
Recreation Center	0.4
West Ridge Center	17.1

Stakeholder feedback reinforced the fact that the Park District needs to maintain regular communication with community stakeholders, listen to stakeholder feedback, and prioritize responsible, community-based decision making.

ENVISION

DURING THE ENVISION PROJECT PHASE, THE PROJECT TEAM WORKED WITH THE BOARD AND PARK DISTRICT STAFF TO PREPARE A REFINED PROJECT LIST INCLUDING PROJECTS THAT ADDRESS COMMUNITY, STAFF, AND BOARD PRIORITIES, SUPPORT GREENPRINT MASTER-PLANNING GOALS, AND ALIGN WITH THE PARK DISTRICT'S MISSION, VISION, AND VALUES.

Developing a Vision

In the fall of 2013, following the public open houses of the Engage and Analyze phases, the project team engaged Park District staff and the Board in two visioning charrettes or working sessions. After reviewing the project team's analysis and a list of preliminary project ideas prepared by the project team based on community input, participants were asked to volunteer their "big ideas" for the future of the Park District. These ideas were compiled as an overall list they categorized into different types of initiatives.

Following the visioning charrettes, the project team developed conceptual project plans and prepared schematic "order of magnitude" cost opinions to help both the Board and Park District staff envision and evaluate the gravity of potential master plan initiatives. In November 2013, the project team met with Park District staff to evaluate the potential master plan initiatives developed following the Board and staff visioning charrettes.

The project team reviewed significant input and data gathered during the planning process including:

- Planning Team review and assessment of programs and facilities
- Alignment with community surveys
- Alignment with Park District mission and Strategic Plan
- Alignment with City of Highland Park and Lake County Master Plan Policy
- Demographic profiles, statistics and trends in Highland Park and other north shore communities
- Analysis of competitive recreation services marketplace
- Understanding of adjacent community park district initiatives and master plans
- Review and understanding of other City Highland Park and Park District Master plan studies and projects
- Significant community stakeholder web-based input and face to face dialogue
- Dialogue with School Districts
- Staff Workshops and study sessions
- Board Workshops and study sessions
- Available funding strategies

Although many of the ideas shared have merit and offer unique opportunities and synergies, a refined list of GreenPrint 2024 priority projects was finalized during the meeting.

As identified earlier in this plan, during the Analyze phase of work, the project team conducted research and established a range of benchmarks to help prioritize GreenPrint Initiatives. Each initiative was measured against each benchmark in a comparative matrix. Initiatives supporting the highest amount of benchmarks were ranked highest priority.

The community vision for Highland Park thinks big, considers existing resources, and first takes care of its valuable existing assets.

DETERMINING PRIORITIES

The project ideas developed by the project team were organized and placed into the three categories of initiatives (as noted above):

Capital Plan Initiatives, GreenPrint Planning Initiatives, and GreenPrint Capital Development Initiatives.

Capital Plan Initiatives are projects listed in the Park District's Capital Plan which in turn represents projected spending for investment in administration and technology, routine capital repair

and replacement and the purchase of maintenance equipment, over a five-year time horizon. The Capital Plan is revised by staff and approved by the board every year to reflect accomplishments of the past year and to identify any emerging priorities for the near-term future.

GreenPrint Planning Initiatives are planning projects that address community priorities, support GreenPrint master-planning goals, and support the Park District's

mission, vision and values. These Initiatives support the funding and implementation of capital projects, and will help to guide future investment in the Park District's parks and facilities.

GreenPrint Capital Development Initiatives are construction projects that address community, priorities, support GreenPrint master-planning goals, support the Park District's mission, vision and values. When implemented, GreenPrint Capital Development

Capital Plan Initiatives

The **Capital Plan** represents the Park District's projected spending for:

- Investment in administration and technology
- Routine capital repair and replacement
- Purchase of Maintenance equipment

The Capital Plan (Year 1 - 5) is revised by PDHP staff and approved by the board every year to reflect accomplishments of the past year and to identify any emerging priorities for the near-term future.

Includes: Administration, District-Wide Facility Maintenance, Capital Planning, Community Park Improvements, Neighborhood Park Improvements, Lakefront Park Improvements, Historical / Cultural Asset Improvements, Special Use Park Improvements, Passive Natural Area Improvements, Undeveloped Park Improvements, Facility Improvements, such as:

- Playground replacement
- Tennis court maintenance
- Basketball court maintenance
- Sport field maintenance
- Landscape maintenance
- Repair and replacement of site furnishings
- Technology improvements
- Maintenance equipment upgrades
- Routine maintenance of indoor facilities
- Improvements supporting ADA compliance and energy audits

GreenPrint Planning Initiatives

GreenPrint Planning Initiatives are **Planning Projects** that, to the highest degree possible:

- Address community, staff, and board priorities
- Support GreenPrint master-planning goals
- Support the Park District's mission, vision and values

Planning initiatives support the funding and implementation of priority capital development, and will help to guide future investment in the Park District's parks and facilities.

GreenPrint Capital Development Initiatives

GreenPrint Capital Development Initiatives are **Construction Projects** that, to the highest degree possible:

- Address community, staff, and board priorities
- Support GreenPrint master-planning goals
- Support the Park District's mission, vision and values

When implemented, GreenPrint capital development initiatives will express the high-level of quality of the Park District's brand to the greatest extent possible.

Initiative will express the high level of quality of the Park District's brand to the greatest extent possible.

IDEA EVALUATION AND PRIORITY RANKING

A comparative matrix was developed to evaluate each of the identified Master Plan Initiatives and their individual action items against a broad range of internal, local, and national benchmarks and

trends. The comparative matrix was vetted by the project team individually, staff individually, and then a combined review to ensure consistency in determination of compliance.

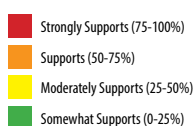
Following the Benchmark Analysis, GreenPrint Planning Initiatives and Capital Development Initiatives were weighted to reflect the extent to which they meet the benchmark trends. These degrees of support

were used as a basis for refining the initiatives and further exploring their priority, timing, sequence, and return on investment.

GreenPrint **Planning** Initiatives

GreenPrint **Capital Development** Initiatives

	Land Management Strategy Plan	Stormwater Management Strategy	District-Wide Signage Master Plan / Design Guidelines	District-Wide Trails Master Plan	Sports Field Master Plan	Lakefront Master Plan Update	West Ridge Building Space Planning	Recreation C Interior Space Planning	Highland Park Country Club Multi-purpose facility*	Recreation Center of Highland Park Improvements*	Sunset Valley Golf Course Improvements	Lakefront Park Enhancements	Athletic Field Improvements	Centennial Ice Arena Indoor Ice (w/ Falcons)	Centennial Ice Arena Lobby and Gymnastics Improvements
Community-Wide Attitude and Interest Survey	100%	100%	100%	100%	30%	43%	43%	10%	63%	100%	33%	50%	37%	43%	37%
Peer Community Recreation Trends	100%	100%	100%	100%	40%	40%	36%	27%	72%	60%	60%	70%	60%	60%	30%
National Recreation Trends	100%	100%	100%	100%	30%	30%	15%	23%	54%	38%	31%	38%	31%	38%	31%
Park District Staff Priorities	100%	100%	90%	20%	30%	40%	50%	40%	100%	60%	70%	40%	50%	50%	50%
Stakeholder Priorities	100%	100%	100%	70%	30%	60%	20%	40%	70%	30%	60%	70%	30%	20%	20%



*This is assuming the Park District obtains fee simple ownership of HPCC or the City allows changes to the HPCC

LONG AND SHORT
RANGE PLANNING AND
PROGRAMMING TO GUIDE
AND SUPPORT CORE
MISSION, COMMUNITY
NEEDS, AND PRIORITY
INVESTMENT

GreenPrint Planning Initiatives

GreenPrint Planning Initiatives are **Planning Projects** that, to the highest degree possible:

- Address community, staff, and board priorities
- Support GreenPrint master-planning goals
- Support the Park District's mission, vision and values

GreenPrint Capital Planning Initiatives support the funding and implementation of priority capital development, and will help to guide future investment in the Park District's parks and facilities.

Planning Initiatives: Facility and Park Land

GreenPrint Planning Initiatives are Planning Projects that, to the highest degree possible: address community, staff, and board priorities, support GreenPrint master-planning goals, and support the Park District's mission, vision and values. GreenPrint planning initiatives support the funding and implementation of priority capital development, and will help to guide future investment in the Park District's parks and facilities.

These recommendations represent long and short range planning and programming to guide and support core mission, community needs, and priority investment.

LAND MANAGEMENT STRATEGY PLANNING

With the exception of the Recreation Center and a portion of the Park Avenue Beach, most Park District properties are zoned under single-family residential zoning districts (including, but not limited, to the R-1, R-2, R-4, and R-5 districts). The Recreation Center is the only Park District facility currently zoned under public activity (PA-district). The PA-district was established to create predictability for public uses and to provide for the variety and flexibility needed for institutional development. To date, use of this zoning classification has been limited. Instead, the bulk of the Highland Park community land area, including Park District land holdings, is zoned under residential districts (R-district(s)), which by

right allow a range of permitted uses, including residential uses, schools, open space, and parks.

Different bulk regulations and uses are allowed by right in R-districts and PA-districts, while others are only allowed through variances, special use permits, or as planned developments. As an example, the front yard setback requirement in an R-district can be as much as double the setback requirement of a PA-district. In addition, uses allowed in R-districts are geared towards housing, whereas uses allowed in PA-district zoning focus on civic lands and facilities, which may include parks, beaches, open spaces, public parking areas, and schools.

City of Highland Park Community Development staff, strongly suggest that the Park District rezone all Park District lands to the PA- district. For the Park District, this rezoning would simplify the public review and approval process for these institutional properties. A rezone to PA-district was included as part of the recent Recreation Center public entitlement process.

Implementing a re-zone of all Park District properties would lay the foundation for efficient entitlement of land in the future, without having to revisit zoning discussions on a project-by-project basis. The rezone would help to: establish common development regulations and standards for all Park District land; establish an allowable range of clearly definable uses;

establish predictability of uses on Park District lands; establish a streamlined zoning and public hearing review and entitlement process; expedite implementation timelines; and ensure consistent integration of universal Park District policy, design, and management standards.

While a re-zone of Park District land would clearly benefit the public entitlement process for the Park District, the rezoning strategy cannot occur without a dialogue with other community partners such as the local School Districts and the City. As envisioned by the City, this re-zone strategy could also be shared with the local school districts, whose properties are currently regulated under R-district zoning. However, since the Park District and School District have different authority related to land dispensation - school districts are not limited in their authority to dispose of land in the way Park Districts are - a local school district might be concerned by a potential loss of property value of their land holdings. This, in a time when local school districts are facing critical funding challenges, might be seen as hindrance to their long term sustainability. Therefore, careful analysis of issues and opportunities related to public land rezoning must be undertaken prior to moving forward with this critical land management strategy.

Finally, it should be noted that some Park District properties, including properties improved for recreation purposes using state

Open Space Land Acquisition and Development (OSLAD) grant monies or federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) grant monies, may not be eligible for rezoning due to restrictions tied to the grants. This should be confirmed by the Park District.

The Park District's stance on property re-zoning needs to be established as part of an overall Park District Land Management Strategy Plan to be written by Park District staff with assistance from the Park Board.

Land Disposition or Acquisition

While most Park District assets provide value back to the community there are instances of specific "left over" parcels that provide little value to the community. In some respects these small, disconnected, and relatively unmanaged areas are a drain on Park District resources. While all of these parcels are small, and the Park District may have limited authority to dispose of them, a simple plan needs to be put in place to strategically transition these lands out of Park District ownership or control. Key park parcels include but are not limited to:

- Grove Park
- Knoll Park
- Red Oak Park

Many opportunities or mechanisms for land disposition exist. Land could be donated to local non-profit entities such as the Community Partners for Affordable Housing.

A large portion of Park District land, especially land centrally near the Skokie River corridor, is located within regulatory floodplain and floodway limits.

Land could also be sold, leased, or granted through restrictive covenants to adjacent owners or homeowners' associations. These options need to be carefully evaluated, as part of an overall land management strategy plan, in terms of the individual property or parcel restrictions to determine the allowable rights and impacts on development.

Conversely, the Park District must also adopt a long-term key parcel acquisition strategy. This strategy should identify desirable parcels congruent to existing Park District facilities, so that when the parcels and necessary resources become available, the District can quickly determine the value the new land resource would add to an existing facility, program, ecosystem linkage, or trail system and move forward with decision-making. A sound land or parcel acquisition strategy will serve as a long-term guide, and must align closely with other community partners' needs or shared opportunities.

The Park District's stance

on property disposition and acquisition, including the identification of parcels desirable for acquisition, needs to be established and recorded as part of an overall Park District Land Management Strategy Plan to be written by Park District staff with assistance from the Park Board and tied to a long-term funding strategy.

STORMWATER MANAGEMENT PLANNING

A large portion of Park District land, especially land centrally near the Skokie River corridor, is located within regulatory floodplain and floodway limits. Development within this area requires special permitting from Lake County, and is tied to mitigation requirements outlined below.

Regulatory floodplain is land lying below the base flood event or an event that has a 1% chance of occurring in any given year (often referred to as the 100-year event). Development in the floodplain requires that existing flood storage volumes be maintained, and fill placed within a floodplain requires the creation of new storage (compensatory storage) at a rate of 1.2 times the volume lost.

Regulatory floodway is that portion of the floodplain designated as being needed to convey and store the base flood event. As such, floodway has much more restrictive development standards than floodplain, and development in this zone is generally avoided.

Development allowed in the floodway is limited to those “appropriate uses” defined in the Lake County Watershed Development Ordinance (WDO). Examples of appropriate uses include flood control projects, sewer outfalls, and bridges. The WDO prohibits buildings in the floodway, though it allows recreation facilities and open air pavilions in the floodway if they are designed in a manner that does not reduce the flood flow or storage. Placing fill in the floodway may only be done if it can be demonstrated that the fill will not raise the base flood elevation (BFE, a level set by the Federal Emergency Management Agency based on 100 year flood models) nor increase water velocity.

The Park District’s understanding of restrictions and opportunities related to floodway and floodplain limits, need to be established and recorded as part of an overall Park District Land Management Strategy Plan to be written by Park District staff with assistance from the Park Board, and tied to a long-term funding strategy.

SUSTAINABILITY PLANNING

A sound, practical sustainability strategy outlining Park District policy and goals should be developed to help preserve the Park District’s natural assets, and communicate a clear message to the community about the Park District’s commitment to environmental sustainability. This effort should build upon existing

local initiatives.

In 2009, the Lake County Planning Department completed a process identifying common language and policy for sustainability in its Lake County Sustainability Plan. The planning process examined how the practices of sustainability were being used throughout the county at the individual municipal level. The plan includes recommendations related to creating a common sustainability dialogue among Lake County municipalities, with particular focus on those in unincorporated areas, so that policy direction and regulation could be effectively communicated and managed at a regional level.

At the same time, Highland Park initiated a similar process, and in 2010 the City adopted a Community Sustainability Strategic Plan. The plan is a 20-year road map that provides direction in ten specific goal areas as to how the Alliance partners (including the Park District) can improve levels of sustainability. The plan also includes a greenhouse gas inventory and collection of data indicators that provide a baseline for the community’s current practices pertaining to sustainable lifestyles.

Building upon these efforts, the Park District’s sustainability strategy should integrate City and County initiatives and define how sustainability is integrated into Park District:

- Policy and Procedures

- Maintenance and Operations
- Fiscal and Economic Considerations
- Land Acquisition and Sale
- Funding Strategies
- Marketing, Promotion and Branding

A newly invigorated partnership between the Park District and the City of Highland Park could help shape and craft a common language for sustainability and how it meets the needs of the Highland Park community and region. This dialogue should share common themes, like those identified above, so that policy, procedures, initiatives and funding are all communicated on an equal playing field. Current policies vary across area agencies, boards and institutions causing friction, concern or misinformation. The Park District could lead this discussion with its community partners to shape a clear, compelling direction for how sustainability supports the

A sustainability strategy outlining Park District policy and goals should be developed to help preserve the Park District’s natural assets, and communicate a clear message to the community about the Park District’s commitment to environmental sustainability.

community's best long-term interests.

LAKEFRONT PLANNING

The Park District's lakefront resources including parks, beaches, and ravine ecosystems are high-priority community assets. While these resources have languished somewhat in recent years, the 2007 Lakefront Master Plan has built momentum which this master plan intends to help sustain.

The first major project guided by the Lakefront Master Plan, the implementation of the Rosewood Beach Improvement Plan, was recently completed. The Rosewood Beach implementation strategy included effective partnerships and funding strategies to maximize return of the community's investment. Rosewood Beach hosts a range of active and passive amenities geared towards lakefront recreation, environmental stewardship, and environmental education.

In the short to mid-term, capitalizing on synergies between projects planned along the lakefront by other agencies and master plan initiatives contained herein will be essential to maximizing value and achieving the best cost efficiencies for lakefront improvements. It is imperative that the Park District stay committed to working with the City of Highland Park.

The long term 2007 Lakefront Plan identifies many improvements for three remaining beach-front parks

The Park District's lakefront resources including parks, beaches, and ravine ecosystems are high-priority community assets.

that should be revisited by the Park District. They include:

- Millard Park and Ravine Beach
- Larger-scale improvements at Central Park and Park Avenue Park and Beach
- Moraine Park and Beach

Each of these parks and beaches is a unique and special community asset that provides the community with opportunities for both active and passive recreation, and many good opportunities for improvements at these locations are reflected in the Lakefront Master Plan. However, since 2007 some community priorities have changed, and the plan should be revisited and updated.

Therefore, it is recommended that the Park District prepare a Lakefront Master Plan Update to better build upon recent accomplishments, and to better reflect current community priorities and the changing nature of the lakefront.

NATURAL AREA PLANNING

Natural areas are a community

priority identified by a range of stakeholders throughout the planning process. Moving forward, the following will be important considerations for natural area management:

- As the Park District continues to take on more natural area management, it will be important to continue tracking natural resources. The natural area survey needs to be updated every 5 years. It was last updated in 2012, and must be updated again in 2017.
- The Park District needs to consider integrating maintenance and management planning between the parks program and the natural areas program.
- A larger budget for contractual maintenance will be necessary with the addition of over 100 acres of natural area at the HPCC site, if implemented.
- Additional staff with natural area management knowledge will be helpful for growing the natural area program (looking for grant opportunities, managing volunteer efforts) in the future.

The Park District's management strategy specific to natural areas and conservation needs to be established and recorded as part of an overall Park District Land Management Strategy Plan to be written by Park District staff with assistance from the Park Board, and tied to a long-term funding strategy.

CULTURAL ASSET PLANNING

Cultural resources managed by the Park District, particularly the Jens Jensen parks and landscapes, are highly valued by the community. While these types of ornamental landscapes are an asset to the Park District, they are also costly to maintain.

The Park District should take advantage of community interest, and consider formal partnerships with community groups or “friends-of” groups for maintenance and stewardship of these properties. The Park District’s management strategy specific for cultural assets need to be established and recorded as part of an overall Park District Land Management Strategy Plan to be written by Park District staff with assistance from the Park Board, and tied to a long-term funding strategy.

SPORTS FIELD PLANNING

The Park District provides both informal and programmed competition level sports fields at locations throughout the community, including some lighted facilities:

- Larry Fink Park (rectangular fields, lighted ball diamonds)
- Danny Cuniff Park (lighted rectangular fields, lighted ball diamonds)
- West Ridge (rectangular fields, lighted ball diamonds)
- Lincoln Park (rectangular fields, ball diamonds)
- Sunset Woods Park (lighted rectangular fields / lighted ball

diamonds)

- Old Elm (ball diamonds)

The Park District needs to calibrate demand for different types of ball fields relative to program growth and decline at both local and national levels. This will help the Park District best allocate space, location, and resources to different sport programs.

Currently, the Park District is over-served in terms of sports fields according to NPRA level of service standards. Program analysis indicates that a number of sports programs are declining in enrollment, while other programs are experiencing demand for more field facilities and time.

In addition, stakeholders, staff, and the Board feedback identified a desire to cluster sport fields by type. Providing a cluster of similar programs at single location would provide many benefits to the Park District, including efficiencies gained in scheduling, program management, and tournament opportunities; site planning configurations for fields and ancillary amenities and infrastructure; land management and maintenance strategies; directional and regional wayfinding integration; infrastructure design and solutions for storm water, lighting and utilities; as well as improved parking management strategies, lessening the impact of traffic on surrounding neighborhoods.

Suggested potential locations for

consolidated sport field clusters are identified below. Locations selected provide the greatest opportunity to successfully integrate the above benefits in a reasonable and cost efficient timeline. Potential locations for field clusters include:

- Larry Fink Park
- Danny Cuniff Park
- West Ridge Park
- Olson Park
- Lincoln School Park

For the time horizon of this master plan no reduction in current programmed field quantities are suggested. Prioritization and realignment of existing fields have been proposed to meet current and projected program needs.

Additionally, this conversation should identify a cluster or shared synthetic turf facility. Synthetic turf fields in the region’s high schools have become a standard facility requirement for many of the benchmark or neighboring communities. The benefits of synthetic turf not only increase

The Park District needs to calibrate demand for different types of ball fields relative to program growth and decline at both local and national levels.

usability throughout a longer season, but also offer better and more efficient programming, reduced maintenance costs, and reduced use of chemical treatments. These facilities also provide a solid revenue generation to offset district costs. The demand for this field time continues to grow from private club sport programs and new sports user groups.

The Park District's management strategy specific to sports fields should be established and recorded as part of an overall Sports Field Management Strategy Plan to be written by Park District staff with assistance from the Park Board.

As with all master planning initiatives identified in this report, the Board and staff should conduct an annual evaluation of all existing programs, other major civic initiatives, and demographic, fiscal and economic conditions that may require adjustment to the suggested priorities and associated timelines. The master plan is a living document, and as civic, economic, demographic conditions change, the plan should be flexible to allow the Board the ability to adjust the course of its plan to accommodate the best for the community.

TRAIL PLANNING

On par with national trends, walking and biking trails are a high-priority asset for the full age spectrum of the Highland Park community. Trails and community linkages are

On par with national trends, walking and biking trails are a high-priority asset for all age spectrum of the Highland Park community.

also a high priority of the City of Highland Park. The City recently adopted a community-wide bike and pedestrian trail plan. This plan identifies critical connections and gaps that, when implemented, will allow community residents to navigate Highland Park on a well-managed bike and pedestrian trail system. An opportunity exists for the Park District to tie into this important community plan, partnering with the City to make connections, identify trail nodes, fill missing gaps, and promote alternative forms of transportation.

Additionally, in the long term, there is an opportunity for the Park District to help lobby for the creation of a new non-motorized trail connection across Highway 41. Highway 41 continues to be the greatest barrier between the east and west sides of the Highland Park community. An additional well-designed and located connection over Highway 41 would connect the two regional north-south trail systems, and also connect neighborhoods, residents, and

community institutions to the wealth of open space experiences the Park District has to offer on both sides of the divide.

Although costly, this connection would provide great potential for the Park District and City to work together and leverage their assets. It would also benefit both entities by helping to manage land use patterns, promote economic development within the Highway 41 corridor and downtown, enhance the Highland Park brand and promote a sustainable, healthy community.

A number of state and federal grant programs, aimed at supporting healthy communities, promoting alternative forms of transportation and providing safe routes to school, are available to help support these initiatives.

In the short term, the Park District should prioritize maintenance and enhancement of its current trail infrastructure. The Park District should focus on identifying key linkages, filling gaps, integrating a Park District-wide trail wayfinding and signage program with the City's program, and looking for a range of new trail opportunities and experiences to meet the multi-generational needs of the community.

The Park District's potential opportunity to acquire the Highland Park Country Club (HPCC) offers an opportunity for significant trail improvement. The existing golf

course accommodates a large amount of paved trails, formerly cart paths, within a large open space system. These trails, proposed as part of a restored natural area, will provide walking, biking, and nature trail experiences for all age groups. The new trails will tie into other natural area systems, including the Skokie River Woods and Highland Park Woods preservation areas. Trails through the HPCC site could also tie into existing north-south connections providing a new trail connection linking Danny Cuniff Park on the north to Larry Fink Park on the south.

In order to fully maximize its trail resources, the Park District should partner with other community agencies, focusing on realizing opportunities. Partnership opportunities should be explored with the following agencies:

- The City of Highland Park
- The Lake County Forest Preserve District
- The Highland Park School Districts 112-113
- Illinois Department of Transportation
- Openlands
- The Chicago Botanic Garden
- The Bicycle Federation/Active Transportation Alliance
- Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning
- Adjacent municipalities with trail access/routes

The District as a community partner should engage in a similar dialogue as part of a

universal sustainable strategy and incorporate this goal into the GreenPrint 2024 universal timeline. The Park District's management strategy specific to trails should be established and recorded as part of an overall Park District Trails Master Plan to be written by Park District staff with assistance from the Park Board and tied to a long-term funding strategy.

The importance of trails and passive natural areas is supported by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources 2009-2014 Illinois Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) which discusses how "walking is one of the simplest yet most powerful ways to improve health."

The importance of trails and passive natural areas is supported by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources 2009-2014 Illinois Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) which discusses how "walking is one of the simplest yet most powerful ways to improve health."

Planning Initiatives: Programs and Services

Based on the project team's program assessment, a number of recommendations related to Park District programs and services have been developed to help to create a dynamic recreation program plan that results in increased registration, drives customer retention, improves customer satisfaction, and offers the potential to increase Park District revenues.

PROGRAM SCHEDULING

According to 2013 survey results, modifying program times to better fit customer needs and identifying gaps in program offerings would go a long way in significantly removing the barriers to participation for current and future participants.

PROGRAM AND AGE SEGMENT DISTRIBUTION REVIEW

As the Highland Park population ages it will be appropriate for Park District staff to view the age segment distributions on an annual basis to ensure continued re-balancing among skewed categories. Also, if possible, given the differences in how the active adults (55+) participate in recreation programs, the trend is moving toward having at least two different age-group segments of older adults. The Department could evaluate further splitting program offerings into 55–74 and 75 plus program segments.

Program Life-cycle Tracking
Park District staff should track

With an increased focus on wellness as well as healthy living including diet and nutrition, it may be beneficial to expand Fitness and Wellness programming.

program lifecycles on an annual basis to ensure there are a decreasing number of programs in the “saturated to decline” stage while ensuring an increased number of programs in the “introduction” stage. It is recommended that programs from “Saturated to Decline” should comprise no more than 10% of the total program mix. Additionally, the bottom 5% of all poorly performing programs must be eliminated or repositioned to ensure the cycle of program innovation continues. It would also be helpful to establish a performance metric to ensure a set percentage of progress only should be in the “Decline” stage and any programs staying in that stage for two years should be repositioned or eliminated in favor of new programs.

NEW PROGRAM AREA RECOMMENDATION

Based on nationwide trends, an area witnessing continued growth in participation is Outdoor Adventure programming. All versions of adventure and obstacle racing and orienteering are hugely

popular. Activities in natural or artificial environment such as ropes courses, rock climbing or climbing walls etc. to continue to show growth trends). The Heller Nature Center does provide opportunities for environmental education and adventure programming, but additional outdoor adventure components, including leveraging the lake front, would be a valuable addition to the program and special event offerings in Highland Park.

REPOSITIONED PROGRAM AREA

With an increased focus on wellness as well as healthy living including diet and nutrition, it may be beneficial to rename and expand the Fitness Program Area into a Fitness and Wellness area. There may be an opportunity to have separate Youth Fitness and Wellness programs and Adult Fitness and Wellness programs, as well.

Planning Initiatives: Operations

MARKETING

Given the limited marketing dollars available, the Park District should undertake a marketing return on investment assessment to evaluate the effectiveness of marketing strategies and tailor future marketing spending to focus on the most effective mediums. This could be done by ensuring every registrant and as many on-site users as possible are asked 'How did you hear about us?' Tying the participant responses to marketing mediums would allow for a better understanding of marketing spending and enable greater effectiveness of existing methods while eliminating non-effective mediums.

Cross promoting at Special Events is highly recommended. The Park District should take advantage of the presence of high numbers of participants in the special event environment to promote its other offerings, programs, facilities and rentals. Similar cross-promoting programs targeted towards the same age group audiences is also encouraged. An example would be cross-promoting gymnastics programs at summer camps and vice versa.

The Park District staff's email signatures should be consistent and used to promote the website, social media presence, as well as upcoming events. The current website is very user-friendly and drop-down menus make it very

easy to access any information desired by a user. Sections such as Most Popular make it even easier for the user to access areas most frequently used. The use of banners highlighting key initiatives (including GreenPrint 2024) is an excellent practice which directly drives user attention to areas of most importance. The use of Web 2.0 technology must be increased. The key to successful implementation of a social network is to move the participants from awareness to action by creating greater user engagement. This could be done by:

- Allowing controlled 'user generated content' by encouraging users to send in their pictures from the District's special events or programs
- Introducing Facebook-only promotions to drive greater visitation to Facebook
- Leveraging the website to obtain customer feedback for programs, parks and facilities and customer service
- Expanding opportunities for crowd-sourcing
- Providing opportunities for donations or crowd-funding through the website
- Maximizing the website's revenue generating capabilities, by adding a retail link for users to purchase merchandise and athletic wear on-line
- Evaluating the use of Google AdSense to allow for placements of relevant ads on the website
- Continuing to expand the use

for Google Analytics for the website

- Adding a Google Translate functionality on the site to allow the diverse user base to translate pages into a language of choice
- Conducting an annual website strategy workshop with the staff to identify ways and means that the website can support the Park District

FACILITY APPEARANCE, ACCESSIBILITY, AND MAINTENANCE

Although Park District land and facilities are generally high-quality and in good condition, there are some opportunities for improvement.

Deferred maintenance is an issue for some areas and can be caused by factors such as shifting maintenance staff priorities and the introduction of new maintenance methods.

The Park District should author and adopt design standards for all facilities, including uniform signage, landscape, and other appearance standards. The Park District also should maintain momentum implementing its accessibility plan and energy audit recommendations. These issues will be addressed as part of the Strategic Plan.



GreenPrint Capital Development Initiatives

GreenPrint Capital Development Initiatives are **Construction Projects** that , to the highest degree possible:

- Address community, staff, and board priorities
- Support GreenPrint master-planning goals
- Support the Park District's mission, vision and values

When implemented, GreenPrint Capital Development Initiative will express the high-level of quality of the Park District's brand to the greatest extent possible.

Capital Development Initiatives: Track One and Track Two

GreenPrint Capital Development Initiatives are Construction Projects that to the highest degree possible address community, staff, and board priorities, support GreenPrint master-planning goals, and support the Park District's mission, vision and values. When implemented, GreenPrint Capital Development Initiative will express the high-level of quality of the Park District's brand to the greatest extent possible. These projects are supported by master plan goals and respond to stated community priorities and needs. These priority projects also seek to maximize the community investment by strategically fulfilling the demand for new, improved, or enhanced recreation opportunities or programs that cater to all age spectrum of the Highland Park community.

GreenPrint Capital Development Initiatives are sorted into two "tracks." Track One will utilize the current funding mechanisms available to the Park District over the next ten years. Track Two projects will require partnerships, synergies with other agencies, or alternative funding sources, and may be sequenced into a shorter or longer time horizon depending on funding availability.

The project team developed an illustrative concept plan, schematic cost opinion, and brief description for each of the capital development

initiatives. In addition, an action strategy timeline for each priority project is included in the Implementation section of this document. These plan concepts are intended for planning purposes only. They identify key goals, ideas, and order of magnitude costs at a conceptual level to help provide a framework for evaluation and to help establish recommendations to move forward into an approved master plan direction.

Additional detailed programming, design, engineering, and public approval will be required to move each of the individual priority projects forward. The Board and Park District staff should re-evaluate the priority projects on an annual or semi-annual basis, to track progress, re-evaluate priorities, and maintain a desired implementation momentum, tied to available funding and resources.

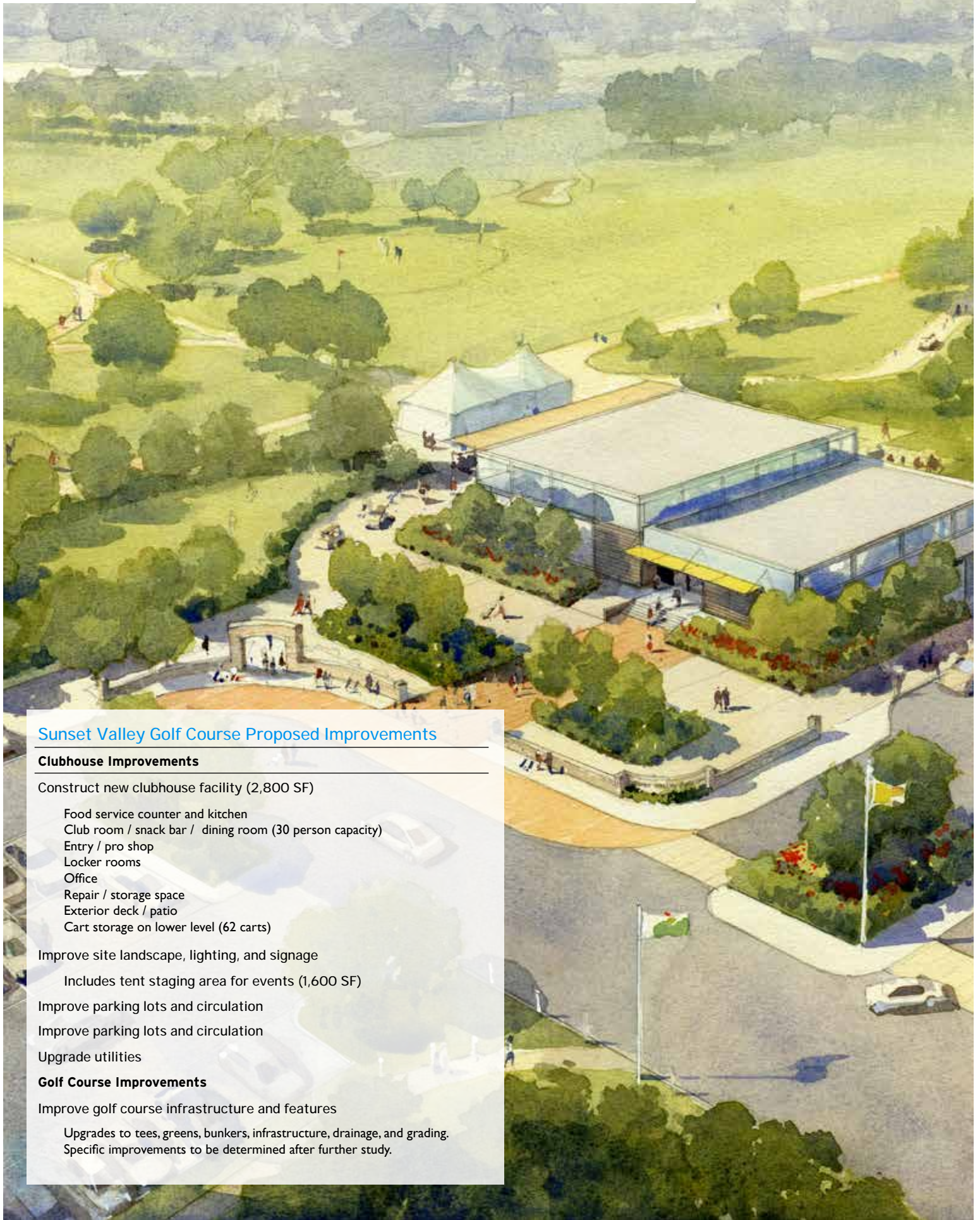
TRACK ONE INITIATIVES

- Sunset Valley Golf Course Improvements
- Centennial Ice Arena entrance, locker room, washroom, office, and gymnastics facility improvements
- Recreation Center of Highland Park improvements

TRACK TWO INITIATIVES

- Highland Park Country Club new multi-purpose facility and site improvements
- Centennial Ice Arena ice expansion
- Lakefront Enhancements
- Athletic Field Improvements

GreenPrint Capital Development Initiatives are sorted into two "tracks." Track One will utilize the current funding mechanisms available to the Park District over the next ten years. Track Two projects will require partnerships, synergies with other agencies, or alternative funding sources, and may be sequenced into a shorter or longer time horizon depending on funding availability.



Sunset Valley Golf Course Proposed Improvements

Clubhouse Improvements

Construct new clubhouse facility (2,800 SF)

- Food service counter and kitchen
- Club room / snack bar / dining room (30 person capacity)
- Entry / pro shop
- Locker rooms
- Office
- Repair / storage space
- Exterior deck / patio
- Cart storage on lower level (62 carts)

Improve site landscape, lighting, and signage

- Includes tent staging area for events (1,600 SF)

Improve parking lots and circulation

Improve parking lots and circulation

Upgrade utilities

Golf Course Improvements

Improve golf course infrastructure and features

- Upgrades to tees, greens, bunkers, infrastructure, drainage, and grading.
- Specific improvements to be determined after further study.

TRACK ONE: SUNSET VALLEY GOLF COURSE AND CLUBHOUSE IMPROVEMENTS

Although golf did not rank at the top of the priorities as defined by the 2013 community survey, SVGC is valued as an historic part of the community, and is considered a core facility by Park District staff and a subset of the community dedicated to golf. This community or “Legacy” course continues to provide an attractive and challenging golf experience for all ages of Highland Park residents, and was repeatedly referred to as “our course” by community stakeholders throughout the master planning process.

Analysis of the market feasibility and cost efficiency of operating two golf courses was studied previously by the Park District and significantly informed this master planning initiative discussion. These studies, along with input from stakeholders, community survey results, and the golf course audit prepared by Jacobson Golf Consulting support the notion that the renovation of Sunset Valley Golf Course offers the best return on investment for the Park District. The proposed reinvestment in this facility is strategically linked to, but not dependent on, the planned closure of the Highland Park Country Club, once the Park District acquires the property.

Additionally, concurrent capital planning is focused on demolition of the Park District’s deteriorated and inefficient maintenance building, and inefficient service at Sunset Valley. Removal of this facility to a new, improved, centralized location will not only create efficiencies for the Park District, but will return open land to the golf course area for stormwater improvements and significantly improve the neighborhood streetscape character in the southeast area of Sunset Valley.

The overall plan for SVGC envisions a new clubhouse facility, at the existing clubhouse site. Moving a new clubhouse to an alternate location was discussed; however, after evaluation the project team concluded that both changing the clubhouse location and altering access to the clubhouse would be a cost prohibitive effort. Demolition of the Park District maintenance facility is happening concurrently or prior to implementation of this Track 1 initiative as part of the improvements of the five-year capital plan.

The new clubhouse will provide expanded event space (planned to accommodate +/- 75 people) for club use and rental opportunities. A new seasonal venue (paddle tennis courts) may be considered for future expansion but requires an in-depth study of local paddle club market conditions. Specific

site improvements will address wayfinding signage, parking improvements, removal of the existing Park District cart storage facility, as well as new or improved course maintenance and cart storage facilities. In addition, plans call for course improvements and enhancements as suggested in the Jacobson plan. New naturalized areas of the course may be integrated into an overall natural areas management strategy and stormwater management improvements.

Project opportunities include:

- New Clubhouse facility and parking improvements at existing clubhouse location
- New paddle tennis courts
- Removal of Maintenance Service Center / new SVGC golf course maintenance facility
- Strategic course enhancements / improvements
- Improved course wayfinding and directional signage
- Improved stormwater management

Program opportunities include:

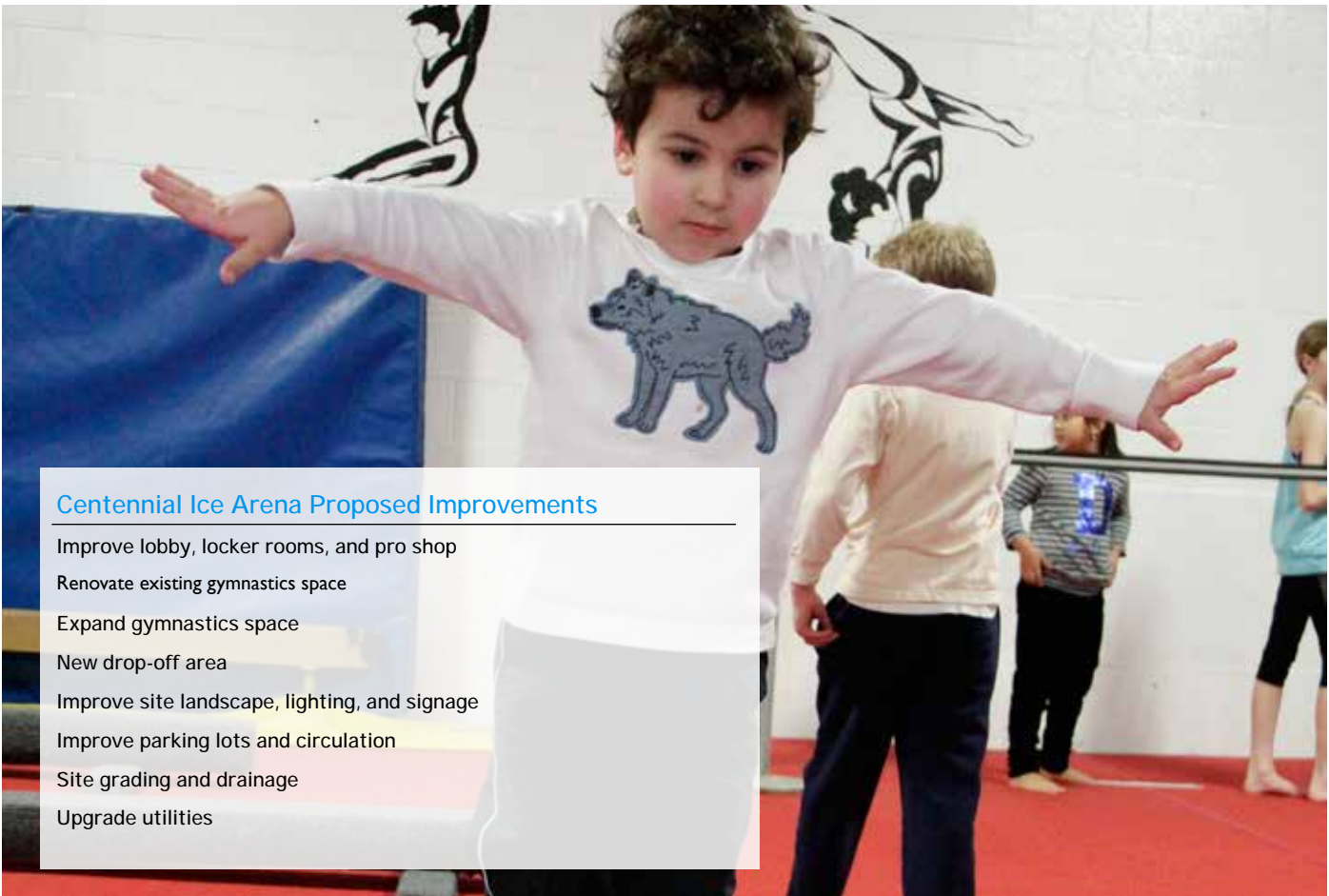
- Bar and grill
- Flexible event space
- Cross country skiing / equipment rentals
- Nature and environmental programming

TRACK ONE: CENTENNIAL ICE ARENA LOBBY AND GYMNASTICS

Although indoor ice did not rank at the top of the priorities defined by the 2013 community survey, Centennial Ice Arena is valued and is an important asset of PDHP that supports revenue-generating activities, and is a building in need of re-investment. The master plan envisions developing a new entry drop-off sequence, parking facility improvements, and improved lobby, locker rooms, and gymnastics space.

The existing gymnastics program is housed in the Centennial Ice Arena in the former practice rink area and does not provide enough space for existing gymnastics program needs. Coupled with other marginal quality components of the facility such as the lobby, locker rooms, lighting and restrooms, Centennial’s “front door” is not up to par with other competing facilities in the region.

The gymnastics program is currently well-enrolled, and based on stakeholder feedback, there appears to be a desire to identify and program a new gymnastics space or facility. The ideal venue would provide ample space for the program, and would complement or leverage other Park District programs at an existing Park District or community partner facility.



Centennial Ice Arena Proposed Improvements

- Improve lobby, locker rooms, and pro shop
- Renovate existing gymnastics space
- Expand gymnastics space
- New drop-off area
- Improve site landscape, lighting, and signage
- Improve parking lots and circulation
- Site grading and drainage
- Upgrade utilities

TRACK ONE: RECREATION CENTER OF HIGHLAND PARK IMPROVEMENTS*

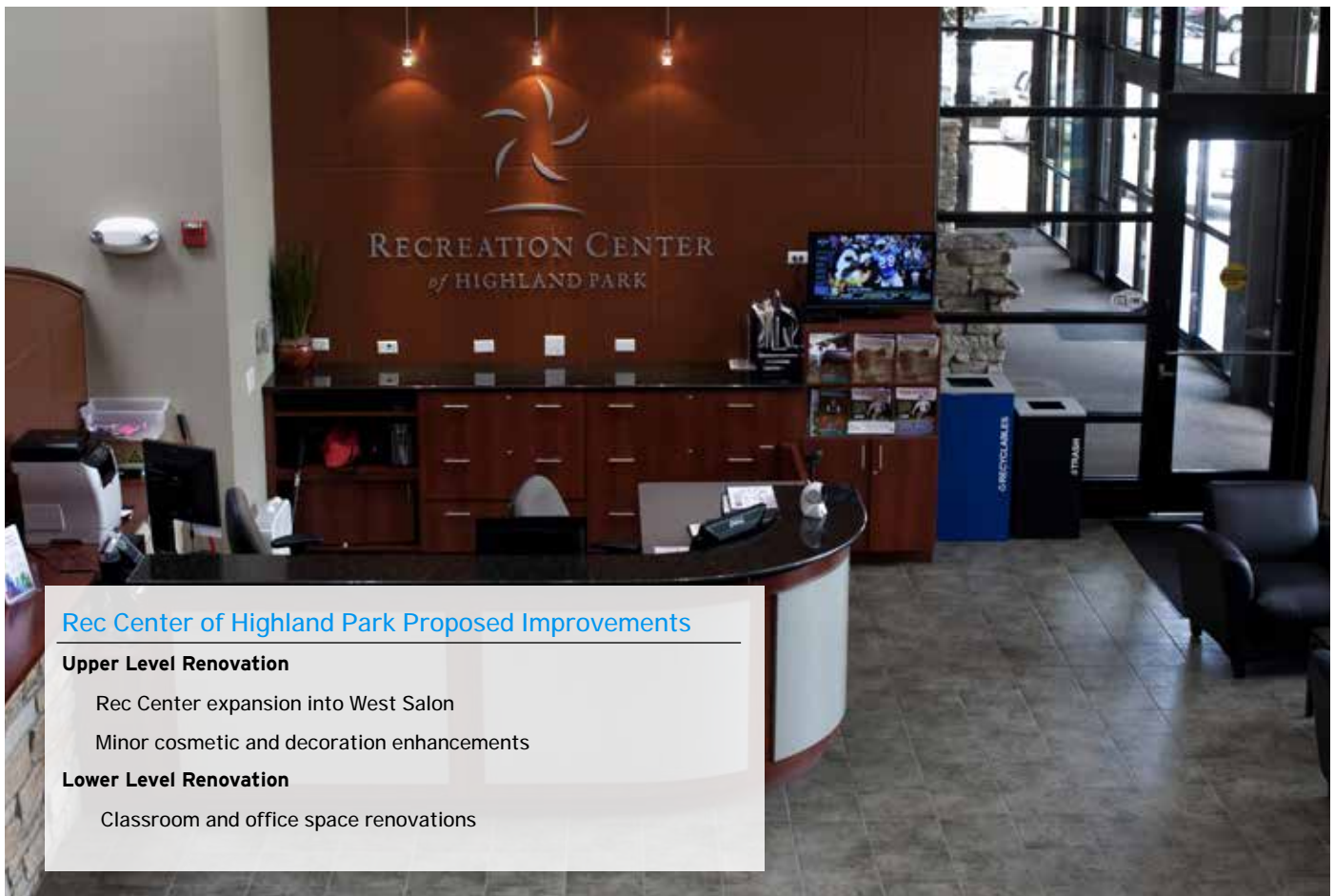
Indoor fitness was ranked as a top priority in the community attitude and interest survey, and the current Recreation Center of Highland Park is a valued community asset that is using all available space. Upon acquisition of the Highland Park Country Club from the City of Highland Park, this plan visions recapturing some of the underutilized space on the first and second floor of the Clubhouse building.

The overall plan envisions expanding fitness space into the upper level of the Highland Park Country Club building, the Park District should renovate the entire lower level space to create new, bright, and flexible multi-purpose space for additional PDHP programming.

On the second floor, a portion of the west banquet room should be remodeled and opened to the recreation center to allow expansion of improved fitness and classroom space.

This short-term plan for the existing facility would maintain the current and future banquet bookings at the clubhouse building through the 2017 calendar year. Minor repairs and cosmetic improvements are suggested for both the main entry, common area, and banquet halls. No significant kitchen repairs or upgrades are planned.

*This is assuming the PDHP obtains fee simple ownership of HPCC or the City allows changes to the HPCC



TRACK ONE: SUNSET WOODS PARK MASTER PLAN AND IMPROVEMENTS

Sunset Woods Park serves as Highland Park’s central park, and is one of the Park District’s most well-used facilities. Planned improvements include playground enhancements, improved connections to downtown, and ballfield improvements.

Sunset Woods Park offers an opportunity to support economic development efforts underway in downtown Highland Park. It offers

key public open space, creates a sense of place that supports City goals of new infill residential development, and leads to a more pleasant and walkable downtown experience. Currently, however, the park turns its back to the downtown, and there is little direct access physically or visually to shoppers or downtown residents. This physical and visual connection can be improved via new walkway connections and improved pedestrian lighting. A new seasonal, refrigerated ice rink is also envisioned as part of this

plan, as an activity-generating facility and seasonal gathering place. Additionally, the Park District should consider relocating its planning staff from the Field House to an alternate Park District facility, and look for other programming activities that might fit into the historic park building’s character.





TRACK TWO: HIGHLAND PARK COUNTRY CLUB NEW MULTI-PURPOSE FACILITY AND SITE IMPROVEMENTS

The concept for HPCC envisions a context-sensitive redevelopment of the HPCC Clubhouse and site into a new or expanded multi-generational facility. This, of course, assumes that the Park District obtains fee simple ownership or the City allows changes to the HPCC. The proposed facility would include programmable interior recreation space set into a naturalized conservation-based site plan. The outdoor passive recreation experience would re-purpose the vast array of trails (former cart paths of the golf course site) providing the community with a new walking, biking, and fitness opportunities. There may even be an opportunity for outdoor adventure programming on site. Additional trails will provide access to the adjacent Skokie River Woods and Highland Park Woods conservation areas, city bike trails, and the golf practice facility, as part of the community recreation center campus.

Project opportunities include:

1. Renovation or expansion of existing HPCC Clubhouse to accommodate Park District programs
2. Conversion of the HPCC golf course into new conservation-based naturalized area
3. Expansion of storm water facilities to support HPCC building expansion and operations building construction
4. Golf practice facility improvements

This multi-generational indoor recreation facility would be located at the existing HPCC clubhouse, and could be implemented as either a renovation of the HPCC club house facility, or as a new facility developed on the club house site. There may also be potential to expand the new facility south of the existing footprint towards Park Avenue. The proposed facility expansion will accommodate a volume of space that could be programmed for a variety of uses without significant alteration to the existing site.

The golf course would be converted to a naturalized passive recreation area with walking and biking trails. Fairways and greens could be restored as natural areas, pond edges naturalized, existing cart paths improved as paved walking / biking trails, and limited amenities added that might include an overlook, fishing pier, or shelter. In order to create this new, high-quality naturalized venue and to support associated programming, it is anticipated that additional experienced and specialized environmental management staff will be required.

The Park District's mission, along with program priorities, facility priorities, demographics, and staff opinion, support the development of this type of multi-generational, multi-use facility. The HPCC site provides an opportunity for the development of a first class multi-generational facility, supporting four-season indoor and outdoor recreation opportunities for a full-range of age groups.

TRACK TWO: CENTENNIAL ICE ARENA ICE EXPANSION

Although indoor ice did not rank at the top of the priorities defined The Falcons Hockey Association (which has seen significant growth in its membership in recent years, owing some of its popularity to recent Blackhawks' success) would like to work with the Park District to develop a second sheet of ice at Centennial Ice Arena. While a preliminary look at site plan

impacts suggests that a second sheet will fit, this plan would most likely require other significant upgrades to the existing facility, site, and utilities as well as potentially requiring the relocation of the Park District's gymnastics program.

The project offers the District a potential partnership opportunity that should be further explored. A business plan should be modeled carefully to reflect actual costs of construction, operation, and long term maintenance



TRACK TWO: LAKEFRONT ENHANCEMENTS

Each lakefront park and beach is a unique and special community asset that provides the community with opportunities for both active and passive recreation, and many good opportunities for improvements at these locations are reflected in the Lakefront Master Plan. However, since 2007 some community priorities have changed, and the plan should be revisited and updated.

In the short to mid-term, capitalizing on synergies between projects planned along the lakefront by other agencies and master plan initiatives contained herein will be essential to maximizing value and achieving the best cost efficiencies for lakefront improvements.



TRACK TWO: ATHLETIC FIELD IMPROVEMENTS

Stakeholder, staff, and Board feedback identified a desire to cluster sport fields by type. Providing a cluster of similar programs at single location would provide many benefits to the Park District, including efficiencies gained in scheduling, program management, and tournament opportunities; site planning configurations for fields and ancillary amenities and

infrastructure; land management and maintenance strategies; directional and regional wayfinding integration; infrastructure design and solutions for storm water, lighting and utilities; as well as improved parking management strategies, lessening the impact of traffic on surrounding neighborhoods.

Suggested potential locations for consolidated sport field clusters are identified below. Locations selected provide the greatest opportunity to successfully integrate the above benefits in a reasonable and cost efficient timeline. Potential locations for field clusters include:

- Larry Fink Park
- Danny Cuniff Park
- West Ridge Park
- Olson Park
- Lincoln School Park



IMPLEMENT

DURING THE IMPLEMENT PROJECT PHASE THE PROJECT TEAM DEVELOPED A PROJECT PRIORITY TIMELINE AND TASK CHART OUTLINING PROJECT SEQUENCING TO HELP MOVE THESE PROJECTS FORWARD. THE TIMELINE REPRESENTS AN ESTIMATE OF PROJECT SCHEDULING BASED ON THE PLANNING TEAM'S EXPERIENCE ON SIMILAR ASSIGNMENTS AND AVAILABILITY OF FUNDING. FACTORS SUCH AS TIMING OF COMMUNITY MEETINGS, PUBLIC APPROVAL PROCESSES, DETAILED SURVEYS, PERMITTING, CHANGE IN CIVIC LEADERSHIP AND BOARD DECISION-MAKING MAY ALTER THE ANTICIPATED SEQUENCING.

Priorities and Timelines

A suggested sequencing for Track One projects has been developed to illustrate a potential path to project implementation. The priority timeline covers a total of ten fiscal years. Following the first five years, a master plan update and community engagement process is recommended. Track One projects have been sequenced outlining general phases for implementation which include:

- Project Start – Planning and Programming
- Design Development, Budgeting and Entitlements
- Construction Documents, Bidding and Contract Negotiations
- Construction Implementation

Each of these tasks are shown with suggested start dates and timelines for completion. Some tasks may be handled in-house, and some may require the engagement of consultants. While the critical path timeline of events reflects the project team's understanding of strategic sequencing, the Board and staff should constantly monitor local and community issues which may affect or change prioritization, initiation, or completion of any project.

Each of the Track One projects identified is shown starting in the first quarter of fiscal 2016 (January 2016). Initial work tasks for all projects will start with detailed programming, space or site planning and business modeling as required. The intensity and duration of each of these tasks will vary by project type. It is critical to begin this more detailed analysis and programming for each project early, to determine any financial, jurisdictional or space needs that will be required before moving forward.

Although illustrated as staggered for management and scheduling, design development, preliminary engineering, and public entitlement may start concurrently for many of the projects. The length of entitlement processes may vary based number of factors which may include:

- Scheduling of public meetings and commission dates
- Political or community concerns
- Additional studies or meetings requested by review and regulating boards

The project team has tried to anticipate which of these target projects may be impacted the most by the entitlement process and have adjusted the sequencing timeline accordingly.

Tasks included in the construction documentation and bidding phase are anticipated to start simultaneously with the entitlement process and end with bidding and procurement of required contractors. These timelines may be altered and sequenced based on seasonal timing and start of any construction schedule. The schedules identified align with normal document development and bidding duration for similar type projects.

The construction implementation phase sets in motion the physical development of each of the initiatives. Construction sequencing is outlined for the priority projects to provide seasonal efficiency, putting these facilities back in operation as quickly as possible.

Some projects will need to start before others so that no facility is down or out of commission and putting strain on the overall District's programming. For

instance, the Maintenance Service Center improvement at Sunset Valley Golf Course needs to be initiated and sequenced simultaneously with the Sunset Valley Golf Course Clubhouse and Course Improvements. Therefore, design, programming, permitting, and approval for the Maintenance Service Center needs to be completed prior to, or in tandem with design of Sunset Valley Improvements. It should be noted that permitting these projects simultaneously could lead to efficiencies in implementation.

In addition to capital development projects, several other planning-related priority projects should be pursued by the Park District. Development of these plans will help to support and guide priority project development, as design of these projects moves beyond the initial planning phase. Some of these planning projects may be accomplished in-house, and some will require the engagement of a consultant.

These projects have also been included in the implementation timeline. They are strategically linked and sequenced with the (capital construction related) Priority Projects:

- Land management program strategy plan
- Park District signage master plan and design standards
- Park District sustainability program and plan
- Lakefront Plan update
- Park District trails master plan

A preliminary implementation timeline has been developed by the project team to help guide the Park District through project implementation based on priorities developed through the planning process. The action items listed below generally outline next steps for the programming and financial planning required for project initiation, all the way through project construction.

*This is assuming the Park District obtains fee simple ownership of HPCC or the City allows changes to the HPCC

PROJECT START, PLANNING, AND PROGRAMMING

- Preliminary Project Review with Regulating Agencies
- Detailed Site legal, boundary, building, topographic or environmental surveys
- Specific Project Programming Analysis
- Site and Building Space Programming
- Project Budgeting Analysis
- On-going operation and maintenance cost estimating
- Program and Facility Business Plan Modeling/ Funding

DESIGN DEVELOPMENT, BUDGET, AND ENTITLEMENTS

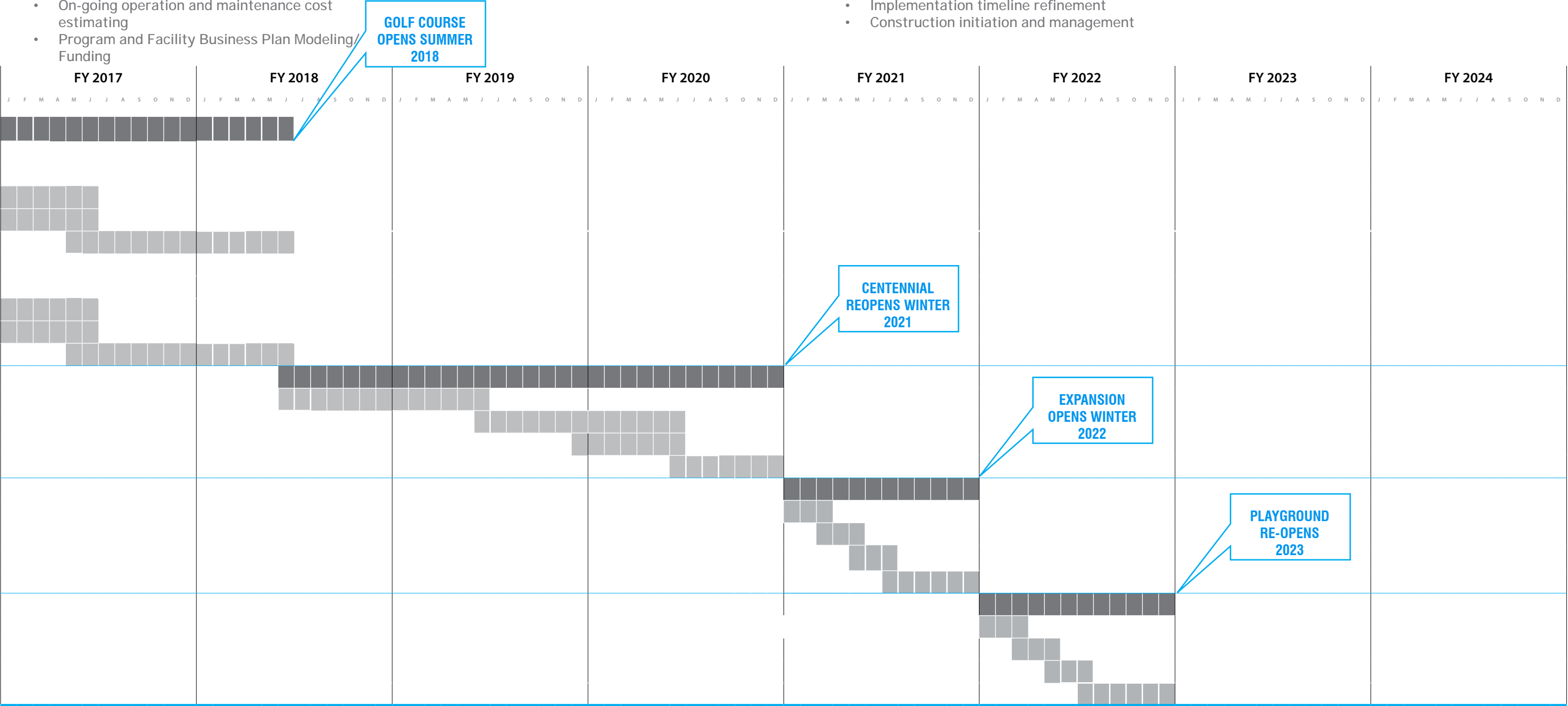
- Schematic and Detailed Site Planning
- Schematic and Detailed Building Design
- Schematic and Detailed Site Engineering , Infrastructure or Traffic Study
- Construction Cost Estimating
- Agency(ies) Permitting Initiation
- Entitlement process (planning/zoning/legal)

CONSTRUCTION DOCUMENTS, BIDDING AND NEGOTIATION

- Detailed construction documents
- Cost estimating and bidding
- Financing plan initiation
- Operations and maintenance program and budgets
- Final permit procurements
- Contractor selection and procurement
- Implementation timeline refinement
- Construction initiation and management

CONSTRUCTION

- Construction initiation and management



Funding Strategies

A variety of funding options including grants, program fee increases, partnerships, and non-referendum bonding may be available to the Park District to help support project implementation. Identified below is a summary of staff and team discussion on what we believe may be one of the most feasible and efficient financing strategies. This strategy will effectively move GreenPrint 2024 implementation forward, so that the community may receive the benefits of these new programs and facilities. It should be noted however, that detailed programming and business modeling for each new target initiative must still be conducted prior to implementation. These tools are necessary to help the Park District to evaluate the true costs of building, operating and managing the business of community recreation, so that it may provide Highland Park residents with the best return on their investment.

CAPITAL BUDGET STRATEGIES

Park District staff has determined that by the end of fiscal 2015 (December 31) it will have approximately \$10 million in available resources to fund capital needs. It should be remembered that ordinary capital such as asphalt repair, vehicle purchases, or ongoing park and building maintenance must be paid out of the same \$10 million. Staff further believes that based on past history,

A variety of funding options including grants, program fee increases, partnerships, and non-referendum bonding may be available to the Park District to help support project implementation.

an additional \$950,000 - \$1 million will be added yearly to the resources based on the results of Park District operations.

However, given the cost of the items identified in the first phase of the plan, and absent very large grants or donations, the Park District will need to utilize debt to fund the remainder of the plan. Further, as a special district, it has the opportunity to levy annually for its Debt Service Extension Base which equals approximately 5.8% of its Equalized Assessed Valuation from 1991 and adjusted for increases in the CPI since 2006. That amount currently equals \$1.4 million per year. It is staff's recommendation that rather than levying on an annual basis for new capital, the Park District pay off a larger debt issue with the annual levy. Additionally, since the District has not utilized this portion of the levy for several years, the presentation to the public with respect to GreenPrint 2024 as well as the first year of the levy must be relayed appropriately.

Finally, in order to not borrow (and pay interest on) debt whose proceeds will not be spent immediately, staff is recommending a phased-in approach. A sample schedule (included in the appendix of this document) was prepared in October 2015 with the assistance of the District's Financial Advisor-PMA Financial Network. It is important to remember that the debt issuance and accompanying proceeds may be timed so that the issuance occurs before the year in which the levy is executed.

In this example, the Park District would borrow \$3 million during the first year of implementation and \$9 million during the second year. Then in 2019, the Park District could either issue an additional \$4 million for completion of Track One projects or wait and adjust as necessary. The Park District will levy for half the additional amount in the first year of the repayment schedule, increasing to the full \$1.4 million in the second year, and moving forward.

In summary, if the Park District borrowed \$16 million dollars and combined it with existing available resources, approximately \$26 million would be available for Track One projects and routine capital purchases. Approximately halfway through the process, Park District leadership should assess its needs and resources and be well positioned to borrow funds as needed.

NON-TAX REVENUE STRATEGIES

Additional opportunities for project funding may be available through the following sources.

Open Space Land Acquisition and Development Grants (OSLAD)

The OSLAD program can provide up to 50% funding assistance to eligible units of local government for the acquisition and / or development of land for public outdoor recreation. OSLAD is a state-financed program administered by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR). Funding is provided on a reimbursement basis after satisfactory project completion. The grant is awarded annually through a competitive application process.

Land and Water Conservation Fund Program (LWCF)

LWCF programs can provide up to 50% funding assistance to eligible units of local government for the acquisition and / or development of land for public outdoor recreation. LWCF is a federally-funded program administered by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR). Funding is provided on a reimbursement basis after satisfactory project completion. The grant is awarded annually through a competitive application process. LWCF funds may only be used for land acquisition.

Illinois Bicycle Path Grant

Program The Illinois Bicycle Path Grant Program, administered by

the IDNR, was created in 1990.

Grants are available to any local government agency having statutory authority to acquire and develop land for public bicycle path purposes. Financial assistance of 50% of project costs can be applied up to a maximum annual grant of \$200,000. Eligible project costs include linear corridor land acquisition costs, including associated appraisal fees and bicycle path development or renovation including site clearing and grading, drainage, surfacing, bridging, fencing, signage, and directly related support facilities such as potable water and restroom facilities.

ICMP Sustainable Coastal Planning Grant

Administered through IDNR's Illinois Coastal Management Program, funds are available to eligible local governments for planning projects occurring entirely within the Illinois Coastal Zone. A 50% match is required for most applicants.

ICMP Education and Outreach

Grant Administered through IDNR's Illinois Coastal Management Program, funds are available to eligible local governments for education and outreach programs related to the Illinois Coastal Zone. The Park District has successfully secured a grant through this program in 2013, and will be using monies to fund a lakefront education program, engaging NSSD 112 for place-based learning at the new Rosewood Beach Interpretive Center.

Special Wildlife Funds Grant

Program These grants, administered by the IDNR, seek to protect, acquire, enhance or manage wildlife habitat and to support limited research and educational programs to further advance this mission.

Illinois Green Infrastructure

Grant (IGIG) IGIG grants are administered through the Illinois EPA. Grants are available to local units of government and other organizations to implement green infrastructure best management practices to control stormwater runoff for water quality protection in Illinois. Projects must be located within a Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) or Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) area. Funds are limited to the implementation of projects to install best management practices. Funding limits are based on project type – combined sewer overflow rehabilitation, stormwater retention and infiltration, or green infrastructure small projects.

Streambank Cleanup and Lakeshore Enhancement Program

(SCALE) Administered by Illinois EPA, the SCALE program was established to assist organizations to conduct stream-bank and lakeshore litter collection events to improve water quality in Illinois. Organizations that have an established, recurring streambank or lakeshore cleanup events (including park districts) are eligible for the SCALE program.

SCALE is 100% cost share, and grants range from \$500 - \$3,500.

Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program (ITEP)

ITEP is a grant fund administered by Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT). The grant may provide funding for qualified on-road and off-road facilities for pedestrians, bicycles, and other non-motorized forms of transportation, as well as related beautification projects, community improvement activities, environmental mitigation activities, construction of turnouts, overlooks, and viewing areas, and lighting. To be eligible, trails must qualify as alternative transportation routes. Recreational trails (e.g. unconnected loop trails in a park) are not eligible for funding under ITEP.

Urban and Community Forestry Assistance Grant

The Urban and Community Forestry Assistance Grant, administered by the IDNR, provides financial assistance to local units of government for the development of local urban and community forestry programs. These activities must help to establish, manage, conserve and preserve the urban and community forests from inner city to associated public lands. The grant requires that the applicant must have an approved tree care ordinance or equivalent or use the grant to fund the creation of such and ordinance.

Community Foundation of Central Illinois

The Community Foundation of Central Illinois awards grants to nonprofits and governmental agencies in Central Illinois for the arts, education, community development, health and human services, and youth development. Recreational activities and facilities are also included in the focus area. Recent grant recipients include Camp Big Sky for their Accessing the Outdoors program and the Heartland Commerce and Economic Development Foundation for the Illinois River Road National Scenic Byway. Funds are provided from designated, unrestricted, donor-advised and unrestricted funds. Grant amounts and deadlines vary annually.

The Baseball Tomorrow Fund (BTF)

is a joint initiative between Major League Baseball (MLB) and the Major League Baseball Players Association (MLBPA). The fund awards grants to organizations in the operation of youth baseball and softball programs and facilities to promote and enhance the growth of youth participation in baseball and softball.

Midwest Youth Tennis & Education

Foundation has awarded grants to individuals and community-based youth tennis programs since 1994.

The Chicago Tennis Patrons

encourage participation at all levels of tennis by awarding grants and scholarship to those who may not otherwise have the opportunity to play tennis.

The U.S. Soccer Foundation awards grants on an annual basis to support both soccer programs and field-building initiatives in underserved areas nationwide, including:

- Safe Places to Play grants are available in four categories: Synthetic Turf, Lighting, Irrigation, and Sport Court. Multi-sport field projects are eligible for funding, but such fields must be used a majority of the time for soccer. Multi-field projects are also eligible. Projects that must go through a bidding process are eligible. All Safe Places to Play grants (except for Irrigation) can be awarded for either indoor or outdoor field projects.
- Program grants are awarded for grantees to purchase soccer equipment and/or to cover operating expenses.
- The National Soccer Coaches Association of America (NSCAA) Foundation awards grants to 501(c)(3) organizations by providing financial assistance for NSCAA Coaching Academy diploma courses

North Suburban Special Recreation Association (NSSRA)

Funds Funding that is levied by the Park District to support ADA issues with development is available as well. The Park District only needs to determine the amount and gain approval from NSSRA to use.

Synergies and Partnership Opportunities

At present, there is a focus on developing earned income streams through individual event-based sponsor / partner support. In order to truly sell the potential benefits of partnering with the system, there is a need to develop a focused sponsorship campaign and a proposal for tiered sponsorship levels.

The Park District currently lists sponsorship opportunities including scholarship programs such as S.M.I.L.E. Donations Page and also an on-line Donation Brochure. However, this information is hidden under General Information rather than highlighting it front and center on the website which would increase the 'eyeballs' for those sections. Additionally, to garner Sponsorship Dollars it would be helpful to provide details listing the event calendar, participation metrics and user demographics which would help potential sponsors an opportunity to identify how well the park system participants align with the sponsor's target market and choose the right fit for them.

These metrics will also help the Park District evaluate its return on investment for sponsorships / partnerships for various events. Some other recommendations would be to publish these metrics on the website and promote them aggressively.

Other recommendations for sponsorship include:

PARK FOUNDATION

A Park Foundation should be established as a third party intermediary that can fund raise or accept private donations to support efforts to preserve open spaces and improve park and recreation activities within Highland Park. A foundation is a non-governmental, not-for-profit corporation established to receive charitable gifts and donations that will enhance the development of Park District facilities, land and operations. All donations made to a park foundation are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by the law. Successful and robust park foundations in other communities have been instrumental in assisting with funding of projects.

SPONSOR RECOGNITION

Recognizing all existing or past sponsors for their support would strengthen working relationships with sponsors.

Tiered Sponsorship Levels

It is essential to create tiered levels of sponsorship in order to allow all potential sponsors the ability to choose the level of support they wish to exhibit.

Package Offerings

It has been seen that the greater the opportunities to package the offerings, the more the likelihood of selling sponsorship. Packaging sponsorship opportunities for events, as well as signature parks and facilities like Hidden Creek AquaPark or the Recreation Center, could be a viable option to provide

additional sponsor value as well. Providing sample packaging options that tie-in some signature special events with some of the smaller events would ensure that the staff up-sells events that may not be sold otherwise, while the partners receive more bang for their buck.

CROWD FUNDING

Crowd funding can be used in conjunction with the Foundation's projects in looking for specific opportunities. Crowd-funding websites such as Kickstarter.com, Razoo.com, Indiegogo, etc. have extremely successful examples of public agencies that have successfully partnered and raised revenue to build or enhance parks and facilities, offer programs and even design marketing materials.

A Park Foundation should be established as a third party intermediary that can fund raise or accept private donations to support efforts to preserve open spaces and improve park and recreation activities within Highland Park.

Implementation Roles and Responsibilities

Most of the proposed non-construction related initiatives should be handled by Park District staff. In some instances, limited support may be required from consultants, helping to provide detailed design, engineering, surveying, budgeting, and financial or legal counsel.

For the priority projects which include significant capital construction, outside assistance will be required to successfully manage, plan, design, engineer, cost, and entitle these projects.

This feasibility study work should be managed, and in some cases partially undertaken by Park District staff. During this stage of work, Park District staff and select consultants will develop detailed project programs and business plans. The feasibility study is an important, critical path item. Tasks completed in this stage will allow the Park Board and staff to readjust the priority project timeline as necessary.

While staff will continue to be actively involved with project management, throughout the four stages of all priority projects, the complexity of many of the capital construction-related priority projects will require outside consultant expertise to be fully engaged from design development through construction.

Priority projects range in complexity. Outside consulting support may be as simple as project engineering, design, and pricing to a more complex program that may require full time project manager, engineer, architect, construction manager/owners representative and zoning counsel such as the Highland Park Country Club site.

Timing and sequencing of each of these projects will inevitably determine the level of staff management and commitment of each of these projects. Should the Park District choose to follow the aggressive sequencing of the priority projects suggested, it may be wise to consider hiring an additional full or part-time dedicated project manager. Any project manager considered must demonstrate the ability and experience to have successfully moved projects of this nature forward from programming through construction.

The master plan is a living document, and as civic, economic, demographic conditions change, the plan should be flexible to allow the Board the ability to adjust the course of its plan to accommodate the best for the community.

