



SPORTS FIELD MASTER PLAN

Spring 2019



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Introduction

The goal of the Sports Field Master Plan (SFMP) is to prioritize improvements of existing fields to meet current and projected program needs. This plan is rooted in the Park District’s vision to provide extraordinary experiences in parks and recreation, consistently exceeding the public’s expectation while using nimble decision-making and creative solutions. The planning team focused on three scenarios and developed recommendations for each. The three scenarios position the District to act effectively as opportunities become available and as demand changes.

Green Print

The need for a SFMP was a recommendation of the Park Districts master plan, Green Print 2024 approved in 2015. The plan identified the need to calibrate the fields to the program demand. The community and staff called for a cluster of sports fields to improve efficiency, offer ease of scheduling, benefit program management, and introduce opportunities for tournaments.

Strategic Plan

The Park District renewed its Strategic Plan in 2016 confirming its commitment to growing with the community’s ever-changing demands for programs and facilities. The SFMP is a byproduct of the 2016-2020 Strategic Plan which highlights maximizing customer experience while honoring the District’s goal of sustained financial health by looking for ways to meet the needs of the community and identifying efficiencies to reduce expenses.



Plan Contents

The plan has four sections:

1. Overview of the planning process,
2. Summary of existing conditions and needs assessment,
3. Vision and recommendations,
4. Plan for implementation and evaluation.

The appendix of the plan includes a data sheet on each Park District sports field and its condition at the time of data gathering.

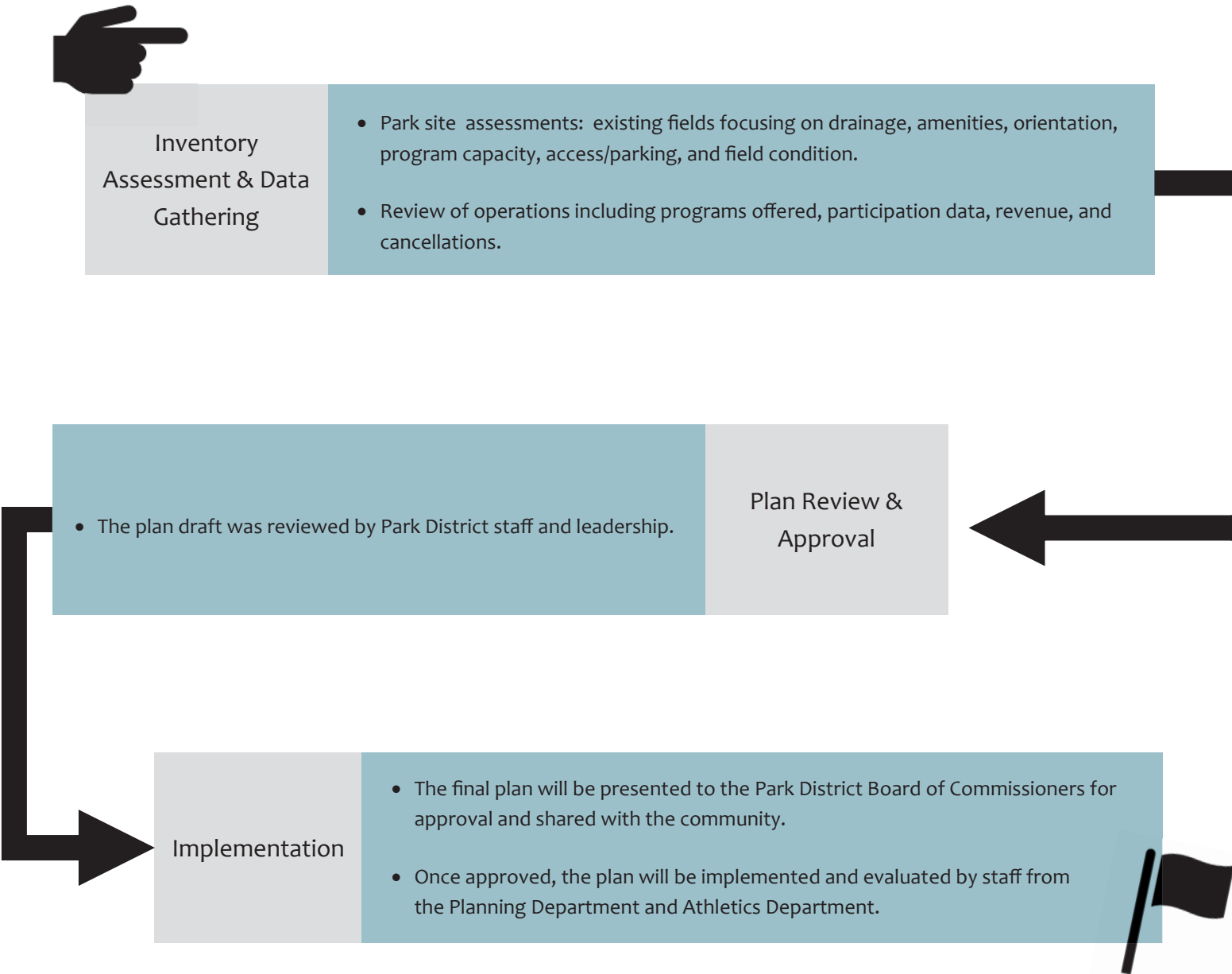
Section 1: Planning Process

Internal Planning Committee

The Internal Planning Committee (IPC) was comprised of staff from the Park District’s Athletics Department and Parks and Planning Department. The diverse group brings together knowledge of land management, field maintenance, stormwater management, and athletics programming. The final plan benefited from the groups wide-ranging skills and knowledge base.

Process

The IPC took a five-step planning approach:





Community Engagement

- Four focus groups held separately with each user group: coaches, participants, partner organizations, and staff.
- Focus group participants were asked questions that assessed field preference, field issues/ concerns, and programing issues/concerns. (The questions are saved in the appendix)

- The plan takes a scenario approach to work towards addressing the needs identified through the need's assessment phase. Through a series of meetings, the IPC explored the three scenarios.

- The IPC began to assess cost and feasibility of each recommendation.

Plan Development



Section 2: Present Conditions and Needs Assessment

Demographics

Highland Park Population is roughly 29,780 (2016 American Community Survey). Youth under the age of 17 make up 17% of the population. In Highland Park the 62 and over population is growing, median age increased from 44.7 in 2010 to 46.3 in 2017. The youth age group (17 and below) has remained steady since 2010 however, the youth age group is exhibiting a slight downward trendline. The youth decline is consistent with School District enrollment data, see figure 2.

Athletics in Highland Park

The goal of the SFMP is to calibrate fields to program demand. Participation data from 2013-2018 was analyzed to identify trends in program demand. For purposes of this report, the focus is on field sports that play on diamond fields and rectangles fields. Diamond field sports include: baseball and softball. Rectangle field sports include: football, lacrosse, and soccer. Soccer programming is offered through affiliate and private organizations. Participation data was provided by the District’s affiliate organization. Field usage data will be used to inform demand for soccer.

Programs Offered

The Park District of Highland Park offers a variety of athletic programs including leagues, clinics, lessons, and tournaments the majority of programing is directed at youth with some adult league programming. The sports offered include both diamond sports, rectangle sports, and court sports. The District’s baseball, softball, and lacrosse programs rely on the use of the park outdoor fields. Also using the District’s outdoor fields are schools, private league rentals, and AYSO, an affiliate community volunteer organization offering soccer programming in Highland Park. The District provides field space for AYSO games and practices and AYSO manages field preparations, routine maintenance, and manages operations.

Year	Enrollment (District 112 Elementary School)
2008	2817
2009	2832
2010	2888
2011	2819
2012	2801
2013	2671
2014	2685
2015	2600
2016	2502
2017	2412
2018	2354

Figure 2: Total Elementary School Enrollment (2008-2018) North Shore School District 112 . Data Reported at the September 25th 2018 Board of Education Meeting

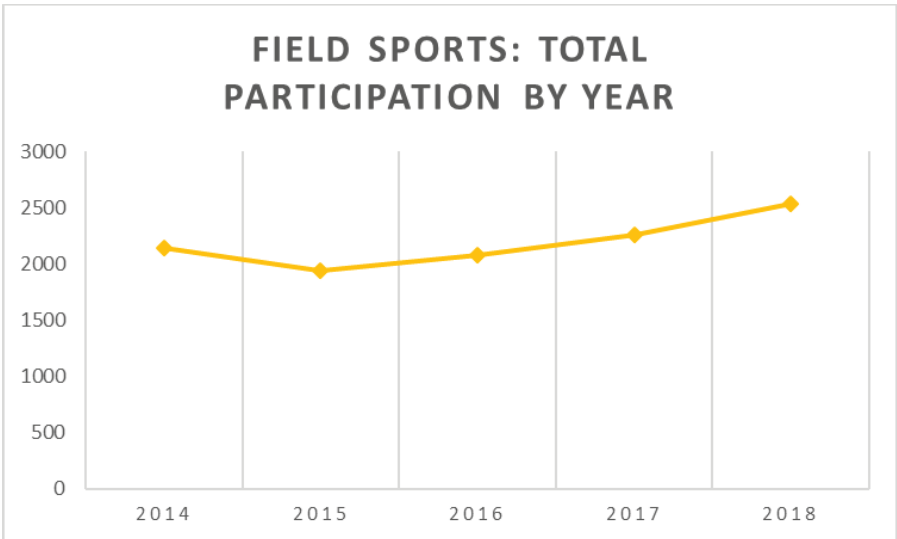


Figure 2: Participants by field type by year. Includes PDHP programs and includes 1100 average for affiliate organization AYSO. Does not include participation in private organizations.

Programs/Demand

Generally, the Park Districts athletics participation numbers have stayed steady over the last five years with diamond field participation on the rise since 2014. Participation in PDHP sports using rectangle fields, this includes lacrosse and football, is steadily declining. Soccer in Highland Park is offered by private and affiliate organizations and is not reflected in Park District participation data. AYSO reports that participation in soccer programming averages around 1100 participants annually (*please note this number may include duplicate registrations, and reflects an average), this number is nearly double the total participants registered for PDHP diamond sports, making soccer the leader in youth athletic participation.

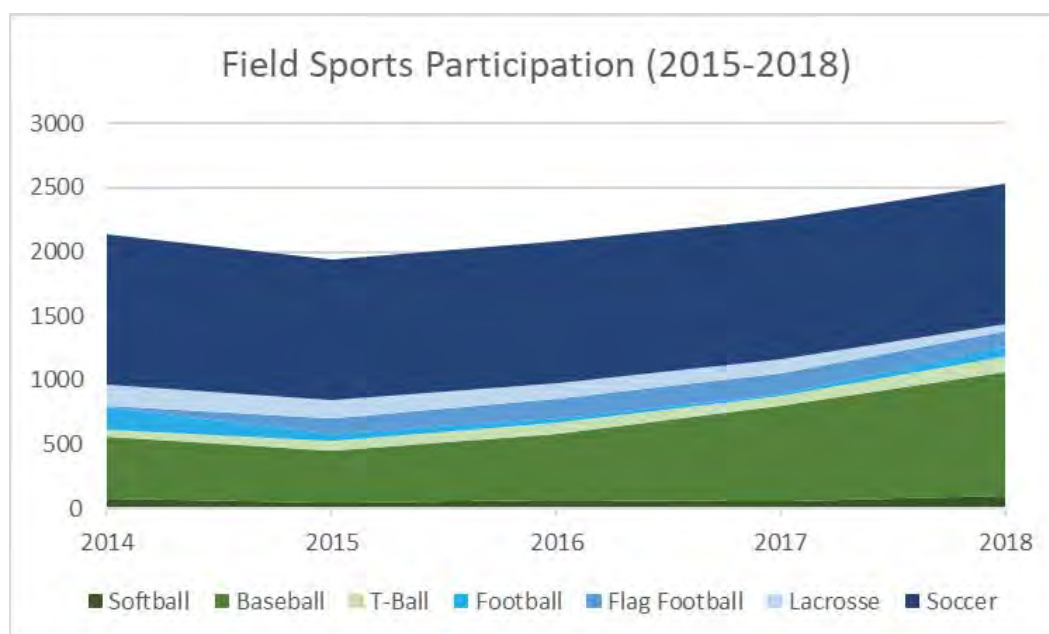


Figure 3: Sports participation. Soccer data includes affiliate organization participation estimate.

Soccer trends in the area

Soccer programs in Highland Park are offered by private clubs and a Park District affiliate AYSO a volunteer run organization. Private clubs in the area include: Chicago Magic, Chicago Fire, Elite, Chicago Wind, LFSA, North Shore FC, and Spartan FC. Over the last five years a majority of these clubs and others have rented Park District fields. The largest club in the area, The Chicago Magic, reports an increasing trend in participation and anticipates continued growth because of a departure of an area competitor.

Renter	Field Rentals 2013-2018 (Hours)
Private Rental	300
All Sport Series	63
Chicago Fire	2385
Chicago Magic	3468
Chicago Wind	101
FC Setana	146
HP Elite	1739

Renter	Field Rentals 2013-2018 (Hours)
IGLA	27
JCYS	480
Little Legends	131
NSLA	1659
NXT Sports	18
Valladolid	29

Industry trends

As part of the District's planning effort the planning team reviewed statewide industry trends.

SCORP data

The Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) was approved in 2015 and covers the five-year plan period through 2019. The plan serves as a statewide needs' assessment of outdoor recreation resources and broadly identifies priorities to best meet those needs. The SCORP is prepared by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources in coordination with the Office of Architecture, Engineering, and Grants Division. Data collected for the 2015-2019 SCORP was collected in 2013-2014.

The SCORP provides participation data. For the purposes of the Sports Field Master Plan, only relevant field sport data will be highlighted this includes Softball/Baseball (considered one in SCORP), Soccer, and Lacrosse.

Highlights

- 17% of Urban Respondents report Participating in Baseball/Softball (highest % for group sport). The #1 activity with the most participation is pleasure walking. However, it is down from 32.9% in the previous SCORP report (2009-2014)
- 10.5% Urban Respondents report participation in soccer, down from 18.1% soccer in the previous SCORP report.
- 1.5% Urban Respondents report participation in Lacrosse (not reported in the previous SCORP Report).

See Figure 4.

Community parks are the preferred sites for baseball/softball/lacrosse. SCORP reports that Illinoisans go to City parks or County preserves for Baseball/softball // soccer // Lacrosse 59.8%/52.6%/55.6% (respectively) compared to 31.4%/40.5%/33.3% (respectively) travel to locations near home and less than 5% for all three sports at either state park, federal lake or forest, and private area.

Sport	2015-2019 SCORP Report	2009-2014 SCORP Report
Baseball/Softball	17%	32.9%
Soccer	10.5%	18.1%
Lacrosse	1.5%	Not available
Tennis	10.5%	21.6%
Pickleball	1.7%	Not reported
Horseshoe	11.7%	Not reported
Basketball	11.4%	22.1%

Figure 4: SCORP 2015-2019 vs SCORP 2009-2014. Note that there were 7 more activities listed in the most recent SCORP report potentially contributing to the change in distribution.

The Sports and Fitness Association 2019 Topline Participation Report

The Sports and Fitness Association Topline report is produced in partnership with the Physical Activity Council and one of its goals is to highlight participation trends in sports, fitness and recreation. Data was collected from 20,069 completed surveys nationwide. Highlights related to the Sports Field Athletic Plan:

- “Most traditional team sports participation declined while niche team sports increased, and youth began to specialize at an earlier age than seen in past.”
- Participation in team sports has remained steady since 2013, each year participation is around 22%. For comparison, participation in fitness sports in 2018 is 66% Outdoor sports in 2018 is 59%, and Individual

sports in 2018 is 45%.

- Gen Z (2000+) 54.9% participate in team sports
- Soccer ranked number 1 among youth ages 6-12.

Nationwide and statewide trends indicate that participation in other niche sports is growing such as pickleball and lacrosse. Mature team sports such as baseball and soccer remain steady with little growth. This supports the need to maintain fields for steady demand that can also calibrate to changing demand.



Figure 5: Graph from SFIA Report

Field use

Field usage data tracks the total hours a field is used in a year and provides another view at which fields are most programed or frequently rented.

Comparison: Diamond v Rectangle

In 2017 diamond fields had a great number of hours used than diamond fields. This shift is notable because from 2013-2016 rectangle fields reported more hours of field use than diamond fields.

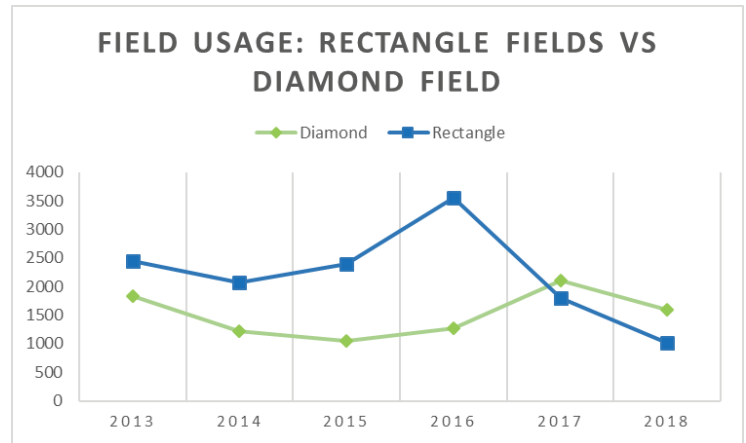


Figure 6: Field Usage Rectangle fields vs. Diamond Fields 2013-2018



Field Specific

Rectangle Fields

Rectangle sports heavily rely on Danny Cuniff Park South field. Hours of use at each field have steadily been declining since 2013 with the exception of DC South. The use at Lincoln in 2017 is an outlier.

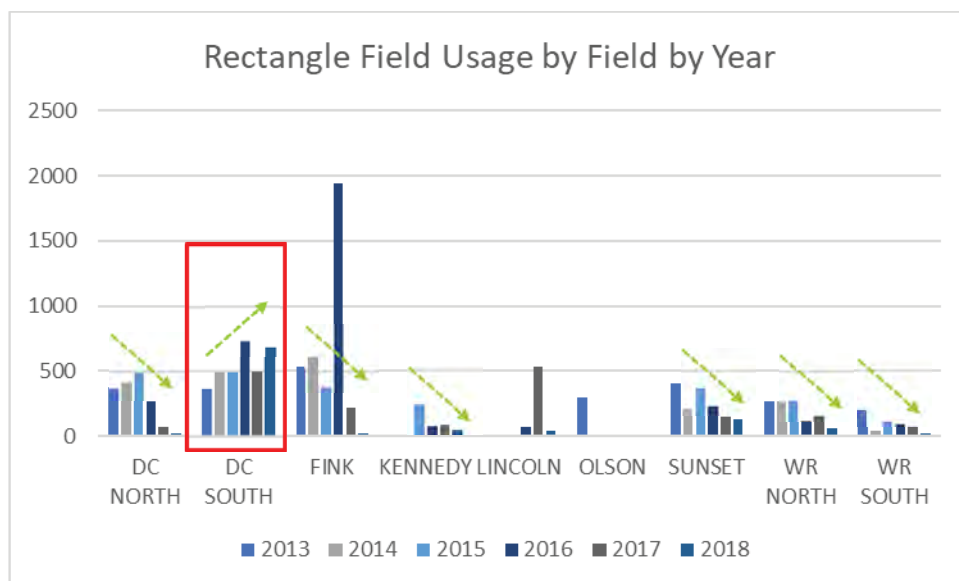
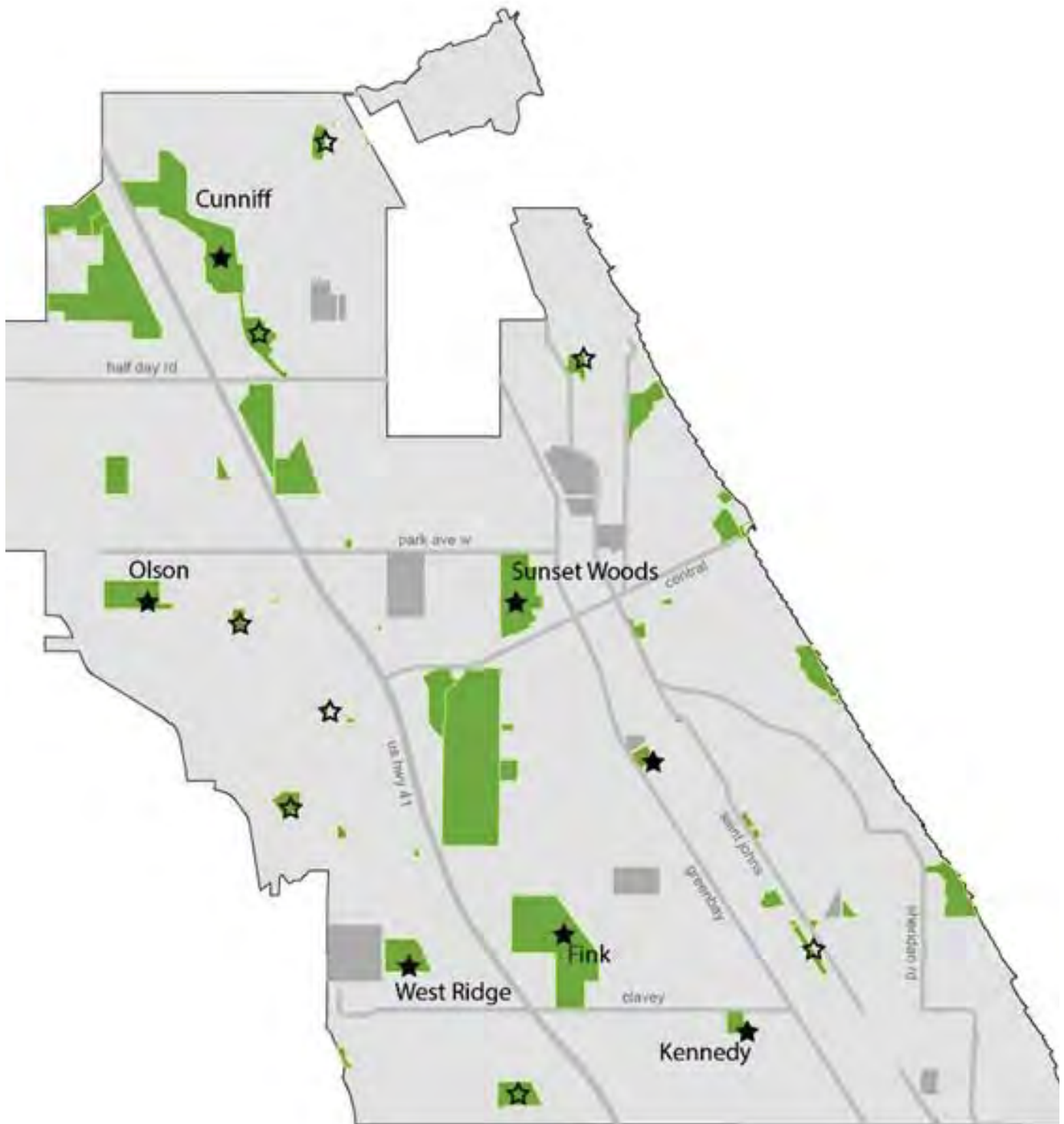


Figure 7: Rectangle field usage by field by year

Park District Rectangle Fields



Diamond Fields

Diamond fields are more varied, however the fields with lights stand out from the rest, those include Danny Cunniff Diamond 1, Sunset Woods Diamond 1and 2, and West Ridge Diamond 1.

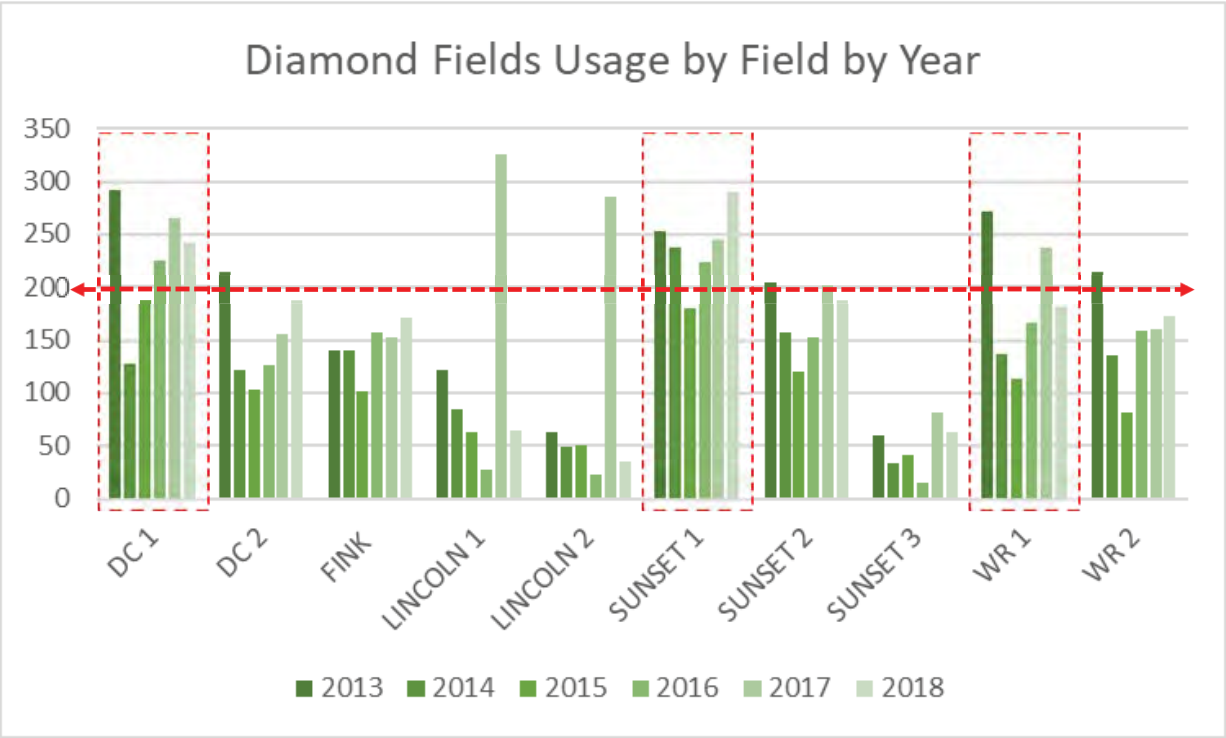
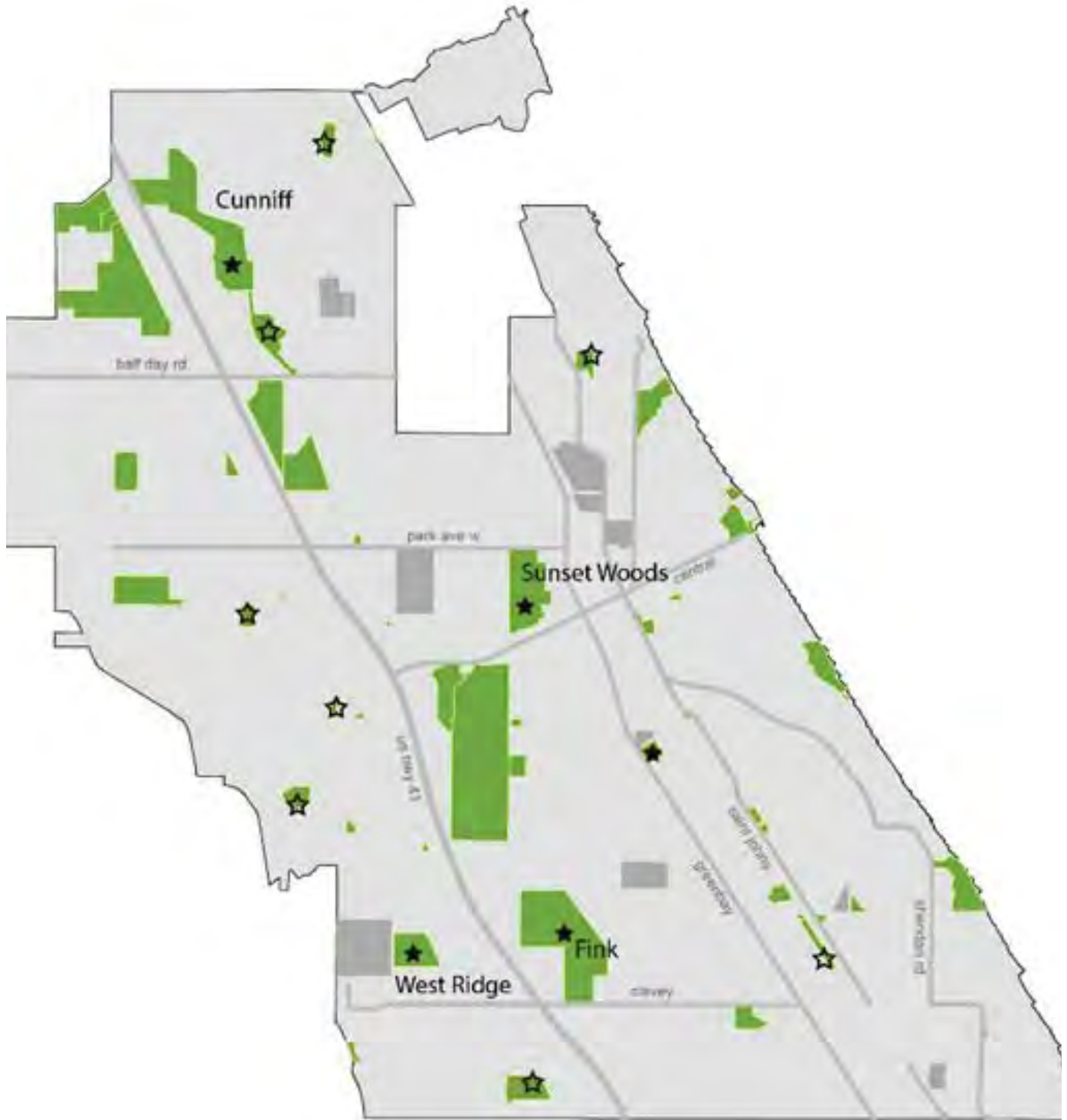


Figure 8: Diamond fields usage by field by year



Park District Diamond Fields



Rental Revenue

Rental revenue is another way to assess demand for fields.

Rectangle fields are the dominant revenue generator compared to diamond fields because diamond fields are primarily used for PDHP paid programs. Different groups use Park District fields for their programs, these groups include: private clubs, the District’s affiliate community run soccer program AYSO (American Youth Soccer Organization), and schools. Revenue generated from field rentals has been declining since 2013 and usage by private organization is declining and is reflected in the parallel decline in revenue.

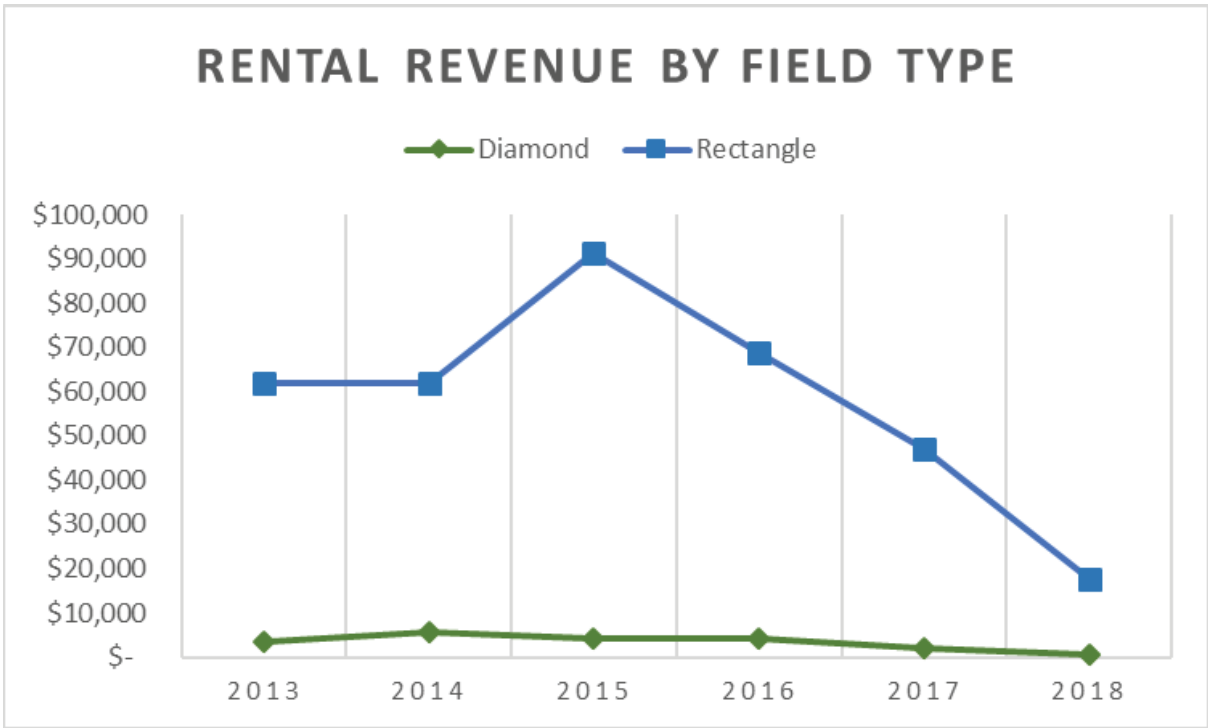


Figure 9: Rental Revenue

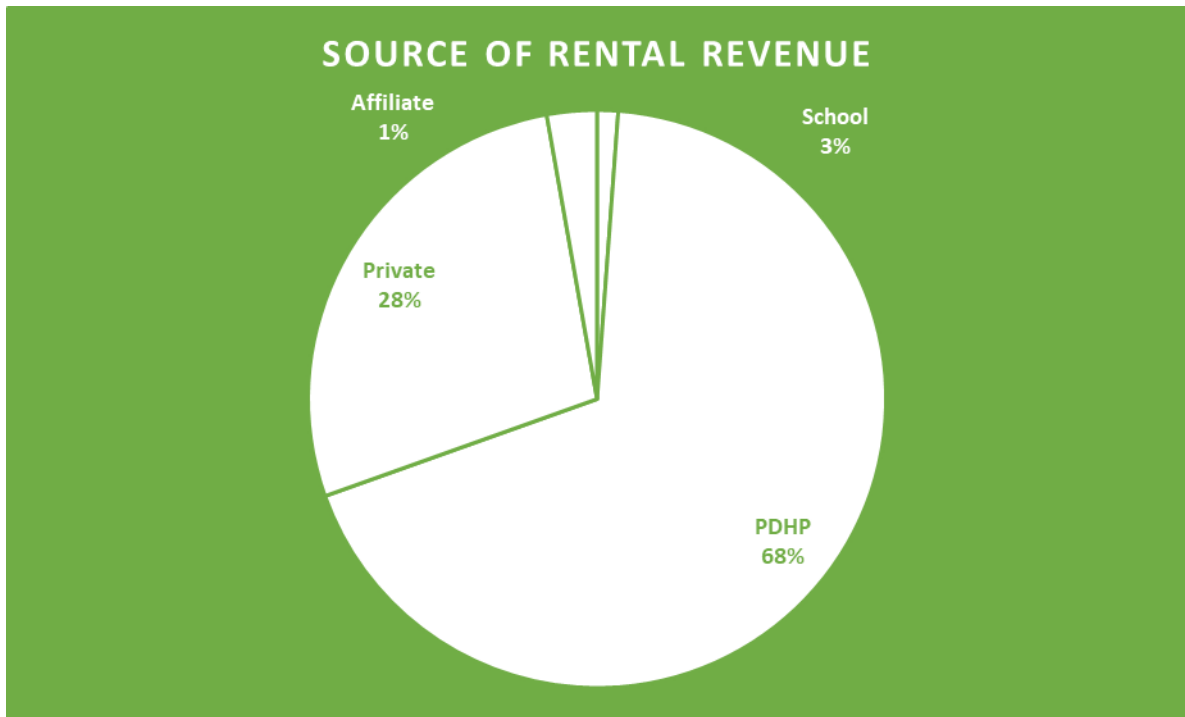


Figure 10: Percent of user type (2013-2018)

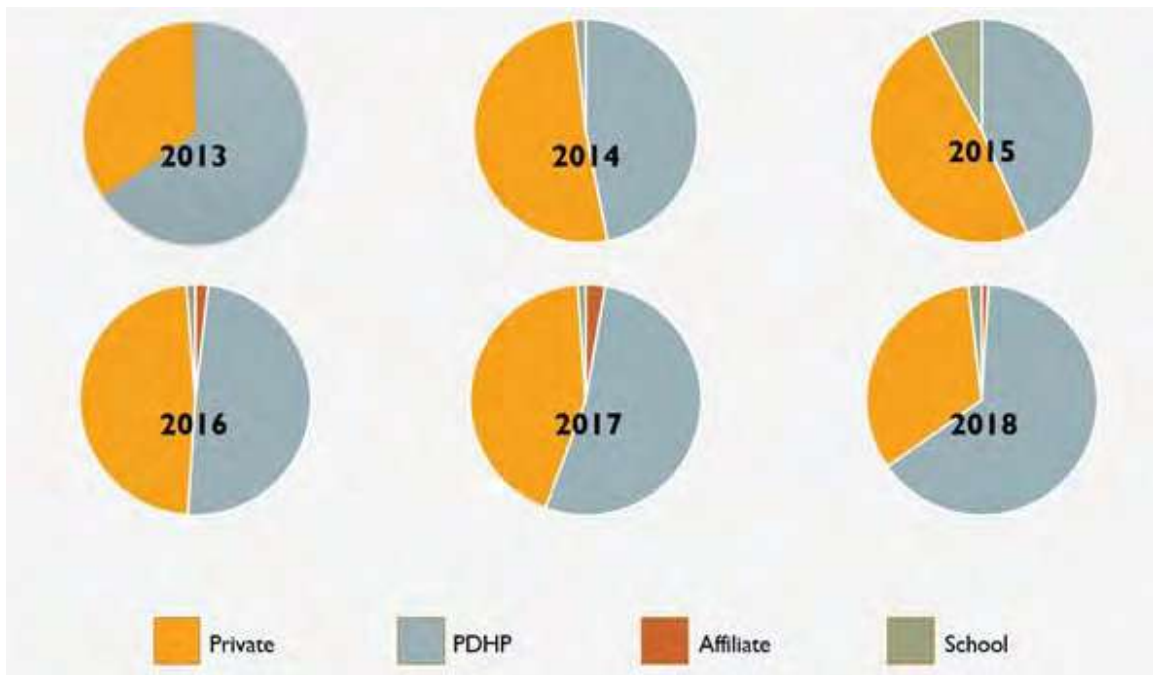


Figure 11: Source of Rental Revenue Trend (2013-2018)

Data Highlights

- There is steady demand for traditional sports like soccer and baseball
- Field usage for diamond fields is increasing and usage for rectangle fields is decreasing.
- Rental revenue for rectangle fields is decreasing.



Community Feedback

Park District staff hosted four focus groups with field sport participants, affiliate and private organizations, baseball advisory committee, coaches, and internal athletics staff. Each group was asked to describe their ideal field, list field elements that are important to their interest group, talk about Park District fields conditions and name which field they prefer or avoid and why. To quantify the information gathered, comments were assigned keywords, keywords were then aggregated to identify trends and priorities.

The information collected at the focus groups validates the data gathered in the first phase of this planning effort. The top five topics mentioned were related to drainage, spectator amenities, maintenance, lights, and parking. Staff running programs internally or for affiliate organization had more mentions of drainage than participants and coaches. Coaches were concerned with field surface and ensuring a consistent and level playing area. Participants and internal staff had more mentions of spectator amenities. Baseball advisory committee members mentioned maintenance more than the other interest groups.

Respondents prefer the District fields that offer lights and other amenities and have good field conditions. 54% of the applicable responses to the question “Which is your preferred PDHP field and why” mentioned rectangle fields at Danny Cunniff South and the diamond fields at Cunniff and Sunset Woods as preferred locations.

Priority Areas Gleaned from the Focus Groups

1. Drainage: Improved drainage at the fields is paramount for high performance reliable fields for programs and rentals.
2. Amenities (lights, parking, player amenities): Fields must offer amenities for participants and organizations using the fields providing ease of access and generally making the experience more comfortable and enjoyable for both the players and the spectators.
3. Maintenance: Fields must be maintained regularly and sustainably, applying best practices to ensure quality play for each game and years to come.
4. Multiple fields/complex or sports hub: Participants, affiliate organizations, coaches, and schedulers all mentioned the need for a sports field location with multiple fields to accommodate multiple teams and age groups. This allows ease for families and organizations running multiple programs.
5. Field playability – size and surface: Fields must be level to ensure a safe and quality play area, varying sizes to accommodate the differing age groups.

Athletic Field Overview

The fields available for athletic programming must meet the program and participant needs. Below is an inventory of fields located in Highland Park and an assessment of Park District fields.

City of Highland Park Field Locations

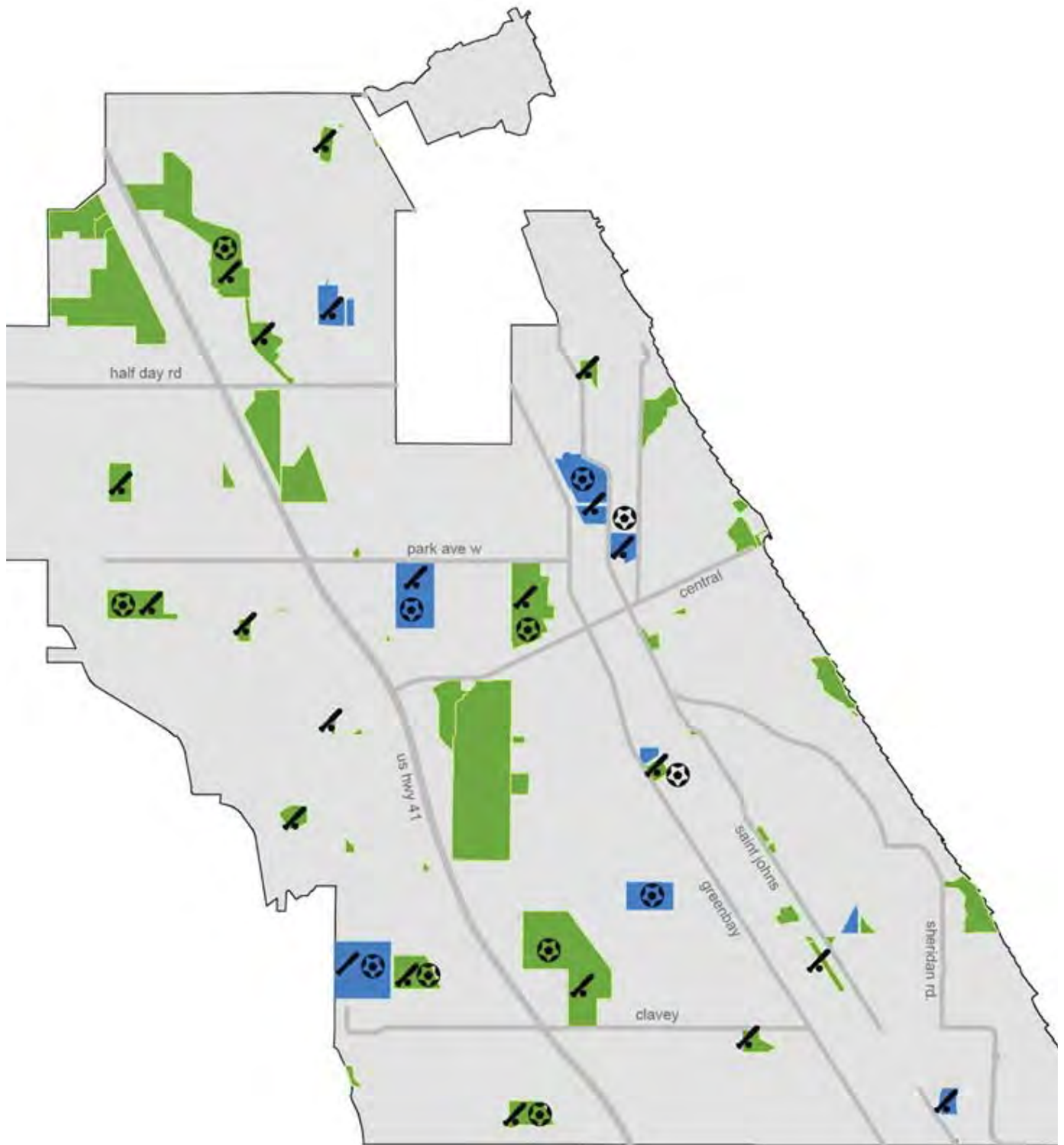
The Park District of Highland Park owns and manages 16 parks with athletic facilities, six of those fields host PHDP athletic programs, and three fields host affiliate programming. There are other fields throughout the City owned by other entities: six of the elementary schools have athletic fields and the high school has two properties with athletic facilities. In total, the City features twenty locations with diamond fields and fourteen locations with rectangle fields. (see map to the right).

Athletic Fields in Highland Park

Park	Field Name	Pre-K/ Toddler	Elementary School	Middle School	High School	Adults	Neighborhood Play
Brown	Open space and Backstop						✓
Cloverdale	Open space and Backstop						✓
Danny Cunniff	Diamond 1	✓	✓	✓			
	Diamond 2	✓	✓	✓			
	South Large	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	South Small	✓	✓				
	North Large/Medium	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	North Small	✓	✓				
Fink	Large	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Medium	✓	✓				
	Small	✓	✓				
	Diamond 1	✓	✓	✓			
Kennedy	Large	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Lincoln	Diamond 1	✓	✓				
	Diamond 2	✓	✓				
	Small/Medium	✓	✓				
Mooney	Open space and Backstop						✓
Old Elm	Diamond 1	✓					✓
	Diamond 2	✓					✓
	Open Space						✓
Olson	Rectangle Fields (~7)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Port Clinton	Open space and Backstop						✓
Sherwood	Open space and Backstop						✓
Sleepy Hollow	Open space and Backstop						✓
Sunset Woods	Large	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Diamond 1	✓	✓	✓			
	Diamond 2	✓	✓	✓			
	Diamond 3	✓	✓				
West Ridge	North Medium	✓	✓				
	South Medium/Large	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Small	✓	✓				
	Diamond 1	✓	✓	✓			
	Diamond 2	✓	✓	✓			
Woodridge	Small						✓
	Open space and Backstop						✓
Total		26	24	14	7	7	11

Figure 12: Inventory of Park District Fields

Athletic Fields in Highland Park



Assessment

Each Park District park was assessed by Parks and Athletics staff using a standardized assessment form. The categories used in the review include: field orientation, size, usability, turf condition, site grading, drainage, irrigation, park amenities such as lights, sidewalks, and accessibility; and environmental limitations of the site (Staff only completed the assessment for park district property). Staff ranked each category using a grading scale from 1 to 4, 4 representing an unsatisfactory condition and 1 representing excellent or exceed standards. The staff completing the assessment are experts in field management, maintenance, athletic programming, and Park District of Highland Park locations and used their joint expertise to determine the appropriate rating. The final assessment forms are included in the appendix of the report and summarized here.

Turf condition, Site grading, drainage and irrigation

Field conditions are a high priority for all user groups. How the site handles water determines the condition of the field. This is the primary concern across the various users who participated in focus groups. Staff assessed drainage and grading based on knowledge of how the fields respond after heavy rain storms and how level the playing surface is for play. Not one field in the Park District inventory was given a rating of 1 (exceeds standards) for drainage, grading, or turf conditions, the chart below highlights the fields with both top ranks for grading and drainage. Three of the five fields listed are located at Sherwood and Cloverdale parks. These parks are not programmed but do host a back stop and/or a large open field for casual play.

Field	Turf Conditions (Rank)	Grading (Rank)	Drainage (Rank)
Cloverdale Backstop	3	2	2
Cloverdale Open Space	3	2	2
Danny Cuniff Diamond field 1	2	2	2
Danny Cuniff Diamond field 2	2	2	2
Sherwood Open Space	2	2	2

Figure 13: Fields that ranked satisfactory of above for drainage and grading and turf condition rank.

The fields primarily programmed at the Park District are listed below. All of these fields rank low for drainage. The resulting poor turf condition at the District's community parks Danny Cuniff, Sunset Woods, and Fink Park is likely due to overuse.

Field	Turf Conditions (Rank)	Grading (Rank)	Drainage (Rank)
Danny Cuniff Rectangle Fields	3	2	3
Fink Rectangle Fields	3	2	3
Fink Diamond Fields	2	2	3
Sunset Woods Rectangle and Diamond Fields	3	2	3
West Ridge Rectangle and Diamond Fields	2	2	3

Figure 14: Field conditions for programmed fields.

Park Amenities

The amenities at the park contribute to the overall experience of field sports. The amenities highlighted by user groups include parking, lighting, and player amenities. Player amenities include elements such as: dugouts, lights, scoreboards and practice areas. Other amenities that contribute to the athletic program experience include walking/bike paths, restrooms, seating, and water. The two parks that have all of the recreational amenities, listed include: Danny Cuniff Diamond field #1 and Larry Fink Diamond field. Other parks that also offer a variety of park amenities include Sunset Woods and West Ridge.

Park	Player amenities (Batting cages, PA, bullpen)	Lights	Score Board	Spectator Seating	Player Seating	Restrooms	Sidewalks	Parking
BROWN	Not Present	Not Present	Not Present	Not Present	Not Present	Not Present	2	4
CLOVERDALE	Not Present	Not Present	Not Present	Not Present	Not Present	Not Present	2	4
DANNY CUNIFF	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
KENNEDY	Not Present	Not Present	Not Present	Not Present	Not Present	Not Present	3	2
LARRY FINK	1	1	2	2	2	3	2	2
LINCOLN	2	Not Present	Not Present	2	2	1	1	3
MOONEY	2	Not Present	Not Present	Not Present	Not Present	1	1	4
OLD ELM	Not Present	Not Present	Not Present	2	3	2	2	3
OLSON	Not Present	Not Present	Not Present	Not Present	Not Present	Not Present	2	2
PORT CLINTON	4	Not Present	Not Present	Not Present	Not Present	Not Present	2	3
SHERWOOD	Not Present	Not Present	Not Present	Not Present	Not Present	Not Present	4	3
SLEEPY HOLLOW	Not Present	Not Present	Not Present	Not Present	Not Present	Not Present	2	2
SUNSET WOODS	Not Present	3	Not Present	3	2	1	1	2
WEST RIDGE	2	3	Not Present	2	3	3	1	2
WOODRIDGE	Not Present	Not Present	Not Present	Not Present	Not Present	Not Present	3	2

Figure 14: Amenities Chart: Danny Cuniff, Larry Fink, Sunset Woods, and West Ridge have the most amount of player and spectator amenities, particularly lights. 0 indicates that the amenity is not present at the park.

Environmental Limitations

Park location and soil conditions contribute to drainage. To assess these factors staff used outside resources including soil maps, FEMA flood zone designations, presence of wetlands, and conservations lands. Fink park and Danny Cuniff park are two of the District's largest community parks with over 130 acres of park land combined and hosting a variety of recreational amenities including athletics. Both parks have significant portions of the property located within flood plain –94% of Fink and 76% of Cuniff park land is within the City of Highland Park floodplain.

Storm water

The increase in heavy storm activity and the resulting flooding has impacted athletic programming in Highland Park. Integrating a stormwater management approach to field improvements and sport field planning will benefit the quality of the playing surface and programs.

Highland Park has three bodies of water within its borders: Lake Michigan along its eastern border, the Middle Fork of the North Branch of the Chicago River on the western border, and the Skokie River bisects Highland Park from north to south. The Skokie River is located adjacent to two of the Park District's community parks that host many of the District's athletic programs: Danny Cuniff Park and Larry Fink Park. These two parks are directly affected by flooding after heavy rains.

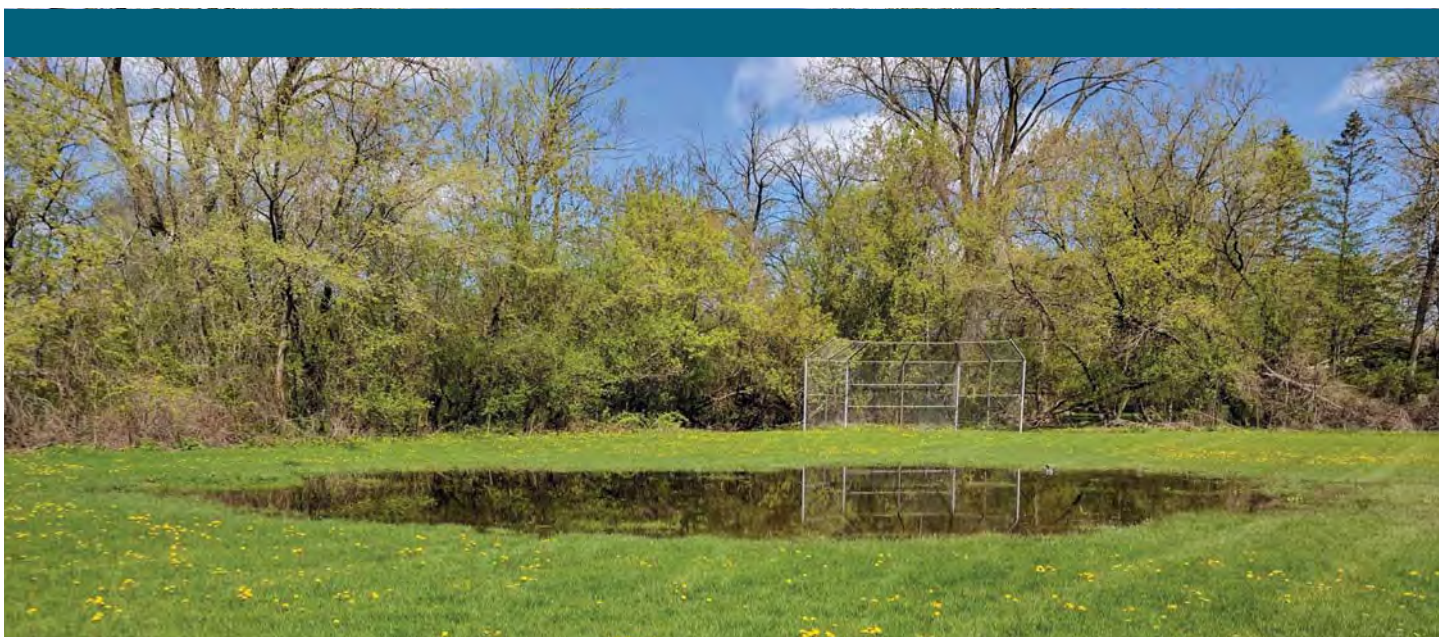
Increase of storms

Northeastern Illinois experiences 36.83 inches of precipitation on average annually. Over the past decades, Illinois has experienced more frequent heavy rain events. The "Frequency Distributions of Heavy Precipitation in Illinois: Updated Bulletin 70" reports that for Northeast Illinois the 1% annual chance design storm (100-yr) increased from 7.58 inches in 24 hours to 8.57 inches in 24 hours. Lake County and Highland Park have experienced major flood events in recent years, as reported in The Lake County All Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan (ANHMP). The 2017 ANHMP Plan, adopted by the County and participating municipalities including the City of Highland Park, highlights the importance of parks and open space for flood mitigation efforts.

Effect of storms on fields

48% of Park District parks are located within the City of Highland Park floodplain and many of the problem areas impact athletic fields. After heavy rains, Park staff assess the fields to determine if the play surface is too wet. If a field is too wet, programming will be cancelled to avoid further damage to the turf. Frequent cancellations can result in significant loss to the Park District; for example, during the Spring 2017 soccer season the Park District lost 164 hours of play and \$8,500 was refunded to participants.

When flooding threatens programming, there are some circumstances where the decision is made to prepare the field for play through whatever means possible. Many factors are considered when making the decision to play on a wet field including whether it is a travel league or a rental. To reduce impact on diamond sports, the Park District purchases an annual supply of turf to prepare the field for play in wet conditions. There isn't a similar product for rectangle fields. Park District staff monitor the turf. Staff report that tolerance is increasing, meaning to avoid cancellations, the threshold required to cancel play is higher to avoid cancellations. Play on wet fields perpetuates the problem. In 2016 the Park spent \$4,823 on turf. This cost does not include the extra staff time needed to prepare the field.



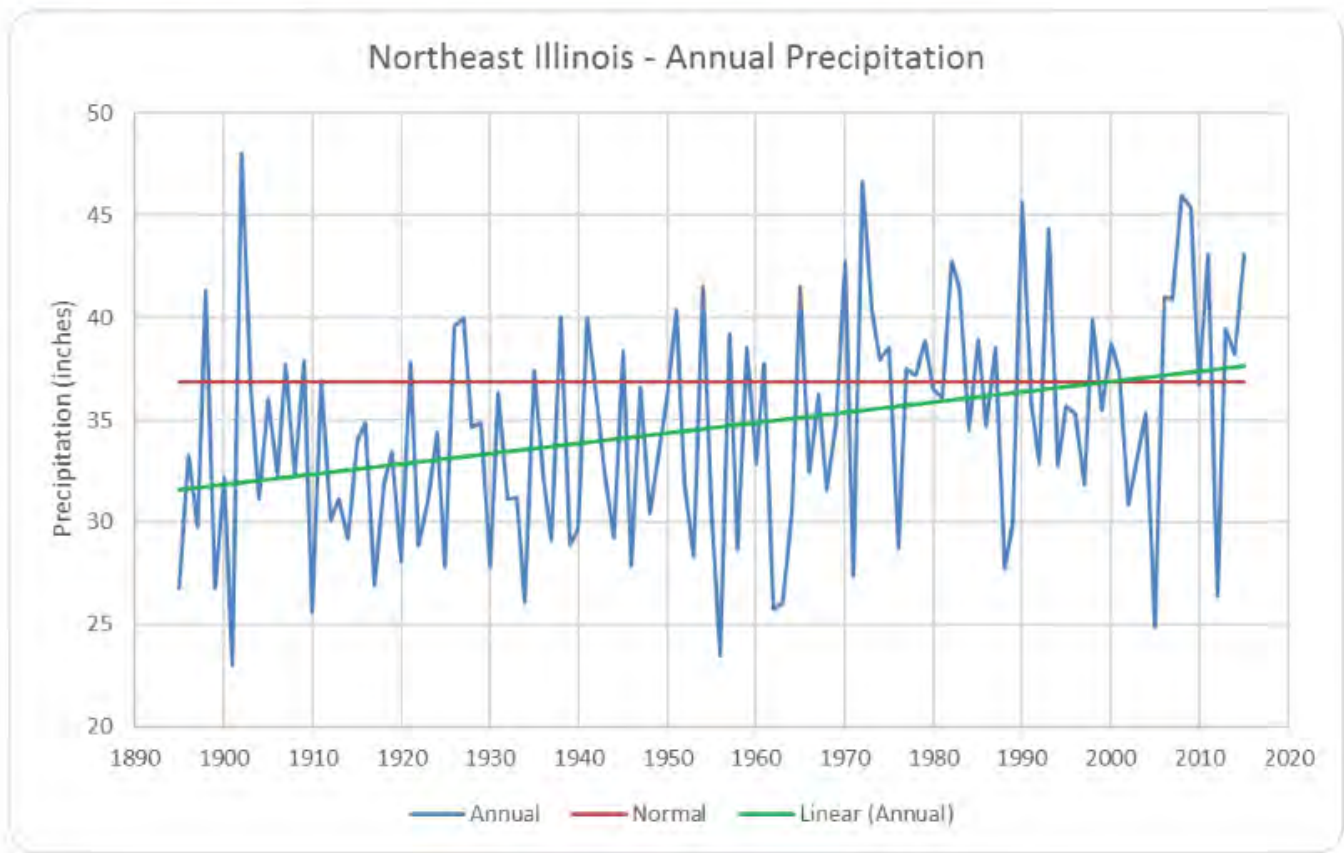


Figure : Northeast Illinois annual precipitation in blue, 1981-2010 normal in red, and linear trend in green. The normal annual precipitation for northeast Illinois is 36.83. Source: Illinois State Water Survey, University of Illinois Board of Trustees 2016

Data Highlights

- Fields with satisfactory drainage and grading rank unsatisfactory for overall turf conditions, indicating a correlation with overuse.
- Fields located in parks with amenities, especially lights, are frequently programmed for athletics.
- Northeastern Illinois is experiencing more heavy rain events.

Section 3: Vision and Recommendations

Overarching Goal

To create a sports field strategic plan that offers field improvement recommendations to calibrate fields to the natural ebb and flow of sport demand and meet the needs of the community.

Key Findings:

- Field use is concentrated to a few fields. The Park District primarily programs four park sites for athletic programs: Danny Cuniff, West Ridge Park, Sunset Woods Park, and Larry Fink Park because of the amenities offered at these fields such as lights, and parking. Such concentration is negatively impacting turf conditions and the overuse is contributing to increasingly poor drainage.
- Usage and Revenue from rectangle field rentals is on a decline. PDHP rectangle fields available for rentals with lights are limited. The field conditions are unsatisfactory or in locations with poor drainage – or both. The decline in rental revenue may be attributed to the declining field conditions and unsatisfactory amenities.
- Baseball participation is increasing as are spring storms which can impact play and result in cancellations.
- Lights and park amenities positively contribute to the experience. These amenities are in the larger parks. Addition of these amenities at small neighborhood parks is challenging.
- Rectangle fields are adaptable for a variety of sports including growing niche sports such as lacrosse and flag football.
- Niche sports are on the rise

OBJECTIVES:

1. Improve drainage and turf conditions at PDHP community parks to reduce cancellations and offer a reliable playing space for PDHP programs, affiliates and private sports.
2. Provide amenities for user groups at parks with regular athletic programs
3. Prioritize multi-use fields that can accommodate a variety of sports.



Overview of approach

The Park District chose to review various scenarios to address the needs of the athletics program and the community. The planning for each scenario positions the District to make nimble decisions as opportunities arise. A cost benefit analysis was conducted for each scenario to inform recommended action. The scenarios are not mutually exclusive. Scenario 2 and Scenario 3 both rely on outside funding and/or land and therefore are to be implemented only if available and determined to be beneficial to the Park District following the criteria in this plan.

Scenarios

1. Focus on current infrastructure
2. Artificial Turf Field
3. Land Acquisition

Related Community Happenings

As the Park District is conducting the planning for the SFMP there are developments with other City agencies and land owners that are relevant to the Park Districts sports fields. The School District 112 is renovating two middle school properties and has plans to renovate several elementary schools within the next ten years. In addition, School District 112 closed two schools in Highland Park, one of which is adjacent to Lincoln Park which offers two baseball fields and one rectangle field and is programmed by the Park District.

Also relevant to the District's planning efforts, the City of Highland Park is working with other neighboring municipalities to identify regional stormwater solutions. The group is in preliminary discussions with the US Army Corps. Two of the Park district community parks which host athletic programming are located along the Skokie River and could be considered as locations for stormwater efforts.

Neighboring Community Best Practices

Neighboring park districts are a valuable resource for best practices and innovative project ideas. The planning team looked to neighboring municipalities for examples of similar projects.

Glenview Park District: Community Park West

A 95-acre park that features 9 lighted baseball fields, soccer fields, walking paths, among other recreational activities. The park also offers parking and restrooms. The park is an example of a true hub offering a variety of sports and amenities to engage everyone in the family. The Glenview Park District primarily uses the fields for games. Priority use of the fields is given to District programs and leagues and affiliates. The Park was developed in 2003 and staff in 2019 continue to laud the park as being able to accommodate a wide array of events making it an ideal location for weekend athletic programming that engages the whole family.

Huntly Park District: Tomaso Sports

A 38-acres site with 7 rectangle natural turf fields and 6 natural turf diamond fields with lights and scoreboards. The fields offered at this park serve a wide spectrum of ages, two of the diamond fields have 250' fence line with up to 80' bases and the other two have 200' fence line with up to 70' bases. There are two additional diamond fields that do not have bases and can accommodate 70' bases. The diamond fields are lit. The

park also offers recreation paths, playground and restrooms.

Located partially in a flood plain, the Tomaso Sports Park has drainage challenges on some of the rectangle fields that are not crowned. To improve maintenance and sustain the quality of the fields, the Park District programs the sports park for weekend games and allows the fields time to rest Monday thru Friday.

Staff at Huntly Park mentioned that parking can be a challenge at Tomaso Park. Due to the limited parking, the District does not host both rectangle and diamond sports at the same time.

Wheeling Park District: Heritage Park

Wheeling Park District's largest park, Heritage Park is 104 acres and hosts the community recreation center, family aquatic center, performance pavilion, and a sports complex. The sports complex has four diamond fields artificial turf fields that accommodate both baseball and softball. The outfield of one of the diamond fields serves as a multiuse field and is striped for football and soccer. The Park also has 8 natural turf soccer fields, a walking path, shelters, and a concession area. The fields at Heritage park are rented to high school teams and adult leagues and are available for day and night games. Staff report that the addition of artificial turf benefited programming because it reduced the cancellations.

Heritage Park is located adjacent to the Wheeling Drainage Ditch a tributary of the Des Plaines River. The property is located within a floodplain and offered an opportunity for regional stormwater capacity. The project was funded in partnership with the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District. The MWRD constructed storage basins on the property to provide flood relief for communities along the Des Plaines River. Heritage Park is a great example of project partnership based in mutual benefit.

<https://www.dailyherald.com/article/20140327/news/140328659/heritageparkproject.info>

Waukegan Greg Petry Sports Park

Waukegan Greg Petry Sports Park is a premier field complex that hosts 14 soccer fields (one of which is synthetic turf), 4 softball fields, 2 concession stands, in addition to other park amenities such as walking trails, playground, and a splash pad. The park design implemented green infrastructure best practices to manage stormwater on site. 16.5 acres of the park are comprised of native planting, bioswales, and rain gardens. The Greg Petry Sports Park is an example of coupling naturalized stormwater management with athletic programs to better manage stormwater.

Winnetka Skokie Play Fields

Skokie Playfields is Winnetka Park District's largest park and hosts the A.C. Nielsen Tennis Center, Administrative Office, Winnetka Ice Arena, Platform Tennis, Golf Club, in addition to four outdoor diamond fields and 2 artificial turf rectangle fields. The two rectangle fields also have backstops to accommodate diamond sports. The demand for rectangle fields guided the decision for the artificial turf layout. To keep the fields multi-use, the fields include sport line indicators to assist with striping. Stripes are scrubbed off when new lines are needed.



Scenario 1: Focus on current infrastructure

Make the most of existing infrastructure to address the athletic program needs in Highland

Objective 1.1: Improve drainage and turf conditions

Strategies

- ◆ **1.1.1: Evaluate sub-soil reports to determine soil amendments to improve drainage.**
- ◆ **1.1.2: Increase aeration at frequently programmed fields in effort to improve drainage.**
 - ⇒ Monitor improvement.
- ◆ **1.1.3: Implement a resting schedule.**
 - ⇒ Upon approval of the plan, seek to build partnerships with school districts for shared use of fields to facilitate field resting rotation and flexibility in scheduling.
- ◆ **1.1.4: Explore relocating the outdoor ice rink and select events held at Sunset Woods athletic fields to preserve the turf conditions for athletic programs.**
- ◆ **1.1.5: Implement drainage improvements to fields at Danny Cuniff Park, West Ridge Park, Larry Fink Park, and Sunset Woods Park**
 - ⇒ Drainage improvement techniques may include traditional methods such as field underdrains, installation of trunk line and/or perforated pipe, and/or detention areas. Green infrastructure applications may include bioswales or raingardens.
- ◆ **1.1.6: Present environmentally friendly solutions to weed maintenance to the Park District Board of Commissioners that serve as alternative to manual removal.**
 - ⇒ Potential alternatives include non-synthetic herbicides and other natural household products.

⇒ Such an alternative will allow the maintenance staff to meet the field maintenance standards requested by community members with the department's current capacity and without sacrificing other parks.

Objective 1.2: Provide player and spectator amenities

Strategies:

- ◆ **1.2.1: Establish West Ridge, Danny Cuniff, Sunset Woods, and Larry Fink as the athletic fields hubs and prioritize athletic amenities at these sites.**
- ◆ **1.2.2: Budget for portable restrooms at locations with limited or no restroom access: West Ridge Park, Larry Fink Park, and Danny Cuniff North.**
- ◆ **1.2.3: Budget for addition of athletic field lighting at Danny Cuniff Diamond 2.** Lighting specific improvements outlined on page 34.
- ◆ **1.2.4: Develop a maintenance schedule for all outdoor athletic lighting.**

Objective 1.3: Prioritize multi-use fields that can accommodate a variety of sports

Strategies

- ◆ **1.3.1: Improve fields to be able to accommodate multiple age groups.**
 - ⇒ Larry Fink is a premier field however the sizing of the field is specific to a certain age group. Skin the infield at Larry Fink Park to accommodate multiple age groups and designate Larry Fink as one of the Districts premier fields.

Park following the planning principles identified in this plan.

	Est. Cost
Sub-Soil Report	\$2K
Larry Fink Skin infield	40-100K
Drainage improvements for large rectangle field (2)	\$120K
Drainage improvements for diamond field (2)	\$100K
Lighting @ DC and Fink	\$750K
Player and Spectator amenities dugout fencing (2), dug out concrete (2), shade structure (2)	\$100K
Total Estimated Capital Cost	\$1.1M

Action Steps:

- Increase aeration frequency at primary fields (Danny Cunniff, West Ridge, Sunset Woods, Fink)
- Conduct subsoil investigation and evaluate report. Define maintenance based on report to improve drainage.
- Explore weed solutions and present to the board
- Continue conversations with the School District to identify partnership opportunities to utilize school district fields for community athletic programs
- Build in low-cost drainage improvements in to the District's capital plan
- Build in amenity and lighting improvements in to the District's capital plan

Savings	Costs
Less administrative and maintenance time spent after rain storms for rescheduling and maintenance	
Fewer cancellations and refunds due to weather.	
Less capital costs	May continue to lose rental revenue from private clubs to synthetic fields.
Use existing infrastructure	May continue to lose funds to cancellations due to weather.

Scenario 2: Secure funding for artificial turf field

Invest in an artificial turf multi-use field to provide consistent athletic programs and high-p

Objective 2.1: Improve drainage and turf conditions

Strategies

- ◆ **2.1.1: Build a multi-use artificial turf field at Danny Cuniff Park South fields. The use of the proposed field would prioritize Park District programs and community programs.**
 - ⇒ Explore mutual stormwater benefit partnerships
 - ⇒ Useful life estimated at ~10 years +
- ◆ **2.1.2: Maximize play at the proposed artificial turf field and eliminate programming at other parks**
 - ⇒ Relieve maintenance time and dollars, estimated to save the park district at minimum \$40K annually in materials and staff time. See proposed removals below.
 - Spring and Summer:
 - Eliminate West Ridge for baseball, only use for soccer as needed
 - Eliminate Lincoln
 - Eliminate play at Sunset Woods on Saturdays

Objective 2.2: Provide player and spectator amenities

Strategies

- ◆ **2.2.1: Expand athletic lighting to diamond fields at Danny Cuniff Park.**
- ◆ **2.2.2: Renovate the adjacent shelter building for concession opportunities.**
- ◆ **2.2.3: Focus player and spectator amenity improvements to the four sports focused park hubs – West Ridge Park, Danny Cuniff Park, Sunset Woods Park, and Larry Fink Park.**
 - ⇒ Prioritize amenities at the artificial turf field.



Objective 2.3: Prioritize multi-use fields that can accommodate a variety of sports

Strategies

- ◆ **2.3.1: Design a field to accommodate various sports and age groups.**
 - ⇒ The proposed shape and size would accommodate a diamond field that could play up to a 300' fence line for adult softball in addition to a large soccer field and a medium soccer field. The proposed turf field would complement the existing 250' fence line diamond fields and the natural turf large and medium fields at the north end of the park.

Performance quality fields for play at Danny Cunniff Park.

	Est. Cost
Design and permitting	\$300 K
Construction of artificial turf field	\$3M
Costs for amenity improvements	\$600K
Purchase of maintenance equipment for the field	\$3.5K-\$5K
Future drainage improvements at other parks	\$100K
Total Estimated Capital Cost	\$4M

Savings	Costs
The Park District will be able to get more use out of the same amount of land.	
Artificial turf fields drain quickly resulting in more consistent scheduling and fewer cancellations	
Because of the consistent paying surface, artificial turf fields are attractive for rentals.	
Artificial turf fields are less impacted by cold weather conditions and therefore can host a longer season resulting in increased rental revenue opportunities.	
Artificial turf fields require less man power to maintain allowing for staff to focus on other parks and facilities.	Artificial turf fields have a high initial cost to install estimated costs approximately \$3M
Because the artificial turf field can be constantly programmed without impact to the playing surface, this relieves use of natural turf fields and reduces weekly field maintenance staff time and materials.	While artificial turf fields require less regular maintenance, they do still require maintenance and the specialized equipment is needed. The Park District would need to acquire the specialized equipment for routine maintenance.

Action Steps:

- Identify funding for artificial turf field and lighting
- Share this plan with partners to potentially identify mutual benefit and create a joint effort.

Scenario 3: Secure funding and land for sports complex

If/when available take advantage of a size appropriate acquisition opportunity to develop a

Objective 3.1: Improve drainage and turf conditions

Strategies

- ◆ 3.1.1: For the Park District to consider a property for acquisition and development the property available for sports fields would need to be at minimum 20 acres.
- ◆ 3.1.2: If a new site were to be developed, operational planning should include consideration of impact on other District fields.

Objective 3.2: Provide player and spectator amenities

Strategies

- ◆ 3.2.1: Assess site for appropriate space for player and spectator amenities including athletic field lighting

Objective 3.3: Prioritize multi-use fields that can accommodate a variety of sports

Strategies

- ◆ 3.3.1: If a new site were to be developed, prioritize rectangle fields



an athletic hub with quality fields and amenities to serve the Highland Park Community

	Est. Cost
Property acquisition and associated costs	\$Unknown
Design and permitting for site utilities, amenities, and fields	\$1.5M+
Construction Costs for site utilities, amenities, and fields	\$15M+
Required maintenance equipment for new facility if needed	\$3.5K -\$5K

Savings	Cost
	Cost to acquire and build a new park is high
Build a facility that meetings the District's needs	Large parcels that could accommodate the recreation needs of a sports complex are not frequently available in a developed community like HP

Action Steps:

- Identify potential funding sources for property acquisition so that the District is prepared if an opportunity were to present
- Share the Sports Field Master Plan with local partners to potentially identify opportunities to benefit the community

Athletic Field Lighting

The Park District of Highland Park has athletic field lighting at four fields:

- 1) Danny Cuniff Diamond Field 1
- 2) Danny Cuniff South rectangle
- 3) Larry Fink Diamond
- 4) West Ridge Diamond

Objective L.2: Maintain existing lights sustainably

L2.1: Budget for lighting improvements at Sunset Woods

L2.2: Budget for lighting improvements at Larry Fink

L2.3: Budget for lighting improvements at West Ridge Park.

L2.4: Update all lights to LEDs and to comply with Dark Sky Ordinance

Lighting Specific Objectives

Objective L.1: Add lights at strategic locations to increase play

L.1.1: Add athletic field lights to Danny Cuniff Park Diamond 2. Danny Cuniff Diamonds 1 and 2 are among the District's best fields. Adding lights activates the fields as premier diamond hub that can accommodate increase program capacity.

*More lights at strategic fields
would increase play time and
rental opportunities.*





Section 4: Implementation

The Sports Field Master Plan equips the District with support to guide operations, prioritize capital improvements, and begin identifying funding opportunities.

Funding Strategies

Funding options can vary from grants, program fee increases, partnerships, or land donations.

District Capital Replacement Fund

The District maintains a five-year capital replacement plan to maintain park district facilities and properties. This fund serves all District parks and facilities. Scenario 1 outlines priorities and needs to improve existing facilities. During capital planning the improvements recommended by the approved SFMP plan will be considered.

Grant Funds:

Open Space Land Acquisition and Development (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 (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 Green Infrastructure Grant

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.

The Baseball Tomorrow Fund

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.

Energy Efficiency Incentives ComEd

Each ComEd customer pays into a fund to benefit energy efficiency initiatives in the region. The Park District can apply for incentives for new construction and retrofit projects. New outdoor athletic field lighting projects may be eligible for funds.

Partnership Opportunities

School District

A partnership with the School District would offer an opportunity for additional fields to program allowing time for fields to rest.

City of Highland Park

The Park District is a major land owner in the City of Highland Park, which could serve as mutual benefit for regional stormwater management. There are several regional examples of a such partnership including Wilmette, IL and Wheeling, IL.

Soccer Groups

Private soccer groups make up 60% of the rectangle field users. Any improvements to Park District of Highland Park rectangle fields will benefit their operations and program offerings. A partnership with private soccer groups using PDHP fields can be mutually beneficial to offer the premier fields in the area.

Private Companies

Local companies with a vested interest in the community may be interested in contributing to field improvements in exchange for marketing opportunities such as field name rights or a logo on the field.

North Shore Water Reclamation District

There is precedence of Water Reclamation Districts such as the North Shore Water Reclamation District partnering with a Park District on a project to develop park facilities while incorporating a stormwater storage solution. Wheeling's Heritage Park is a an example of Cook County's Metropolitan Water Reclamation District partnering with the Wheeling Park District to fund the project.

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
1.1.1: evaluate sub-soil report					
1.1.2: Increase aeration					
1.1.3: Implement a resting schedule					
1.1.5 Explore relocating PDHP activities to benefit Sunset fields					
1.1.6 Implement drainage improvements					
1.1.7 Alternative weed management solutions					
1.2.1 Prioritize athletic amenities at four major athletic parks					
1.2.2: Portable restrooms					
1.2.3 Lighting Specific Improvements					
1.3.1: Improve fields to accommodate multiple age groups					

Timeline

The nature of the scenario planning allows for flexibility as opportunities arise and demand changes. Scenario 1 is achievable and is recommended to begin implementation upon approval of the plan. The recommendations from scenario 1 do not preclude scenario 2 or 3. The District can concurrently utilize the SFMP to pursue and evaluate funding and partnerships opportunities.

Evaluation

- The following progress evaluation will be put in place upon approval of the plan:
 - Annually track the recommended projects completed.
 - Annually survey participants, coaches, program staff, and affiliate organizations to evaluate perceptions and improvements. Survey should be issued in November of each year.
 - Track program participation data to evaluate trends and adjust plans as needed.
 - The internal planning committee will reconvene biannually to discuss progress with partnerships, funding opportunities, trends, and other external factors.

Commitment

The Park District is committed to serving the community with quality athletic programming and fields. The Sports Field Master Plan will be used as a living document that provides the District the support to implement improvements and pursue larger scale improvements through partnerships and/or outside funding.

