



2012
OUTDOOR PARK AND RECREATION
MASTER PLAN



2011 – 2012 Park Board

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SECTION 1

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Opportunities for providing outdoor recreation facilities and services are becoming increasingly limited, as local government budgets are strained and the fixed supply of open land is rapidly diminishing. In order for the Community Park District of La Grange Park to keep abreast of short and long term demands for parks and open space, a tool is needed to provide direction. The Park and Recreation Master Plan is designed to be this tool. The Plan serves as a framework to identify potential acquisitions, improvements, and strategies for implementation.

It is the intent of the Community Park District of La Grange Park Master Plan to be dynamic and flexible; one that is able to accommodate changes in the recreational needs of local residents. The Park Board will have the flexibility to make changes when unexpected opportunities arise, or as recreational demands may change.

Goals of the Plan:

- To develop guidelines for park and recreation development decision-making.
- To inventory and analyze the existing parks open space and its current use and role in the community.
- To establish priorities and recommendations for existing and future park land acquisition and development.
- To provide short, intermediate and long-range direction for planning and development.
- To develop a palette of recreational opportunities and ideas that will inspire the decision-makers when looking towards park redevelopment.
- To be an effective communication tool to all residents of the Park District.

HISTORY OF THE COMMUNITY PARK DISTRICT

The Village of La Grange Park was founded in 1892, and had a population of 3,406 by 1940. World War II triggered a population surge in the western suburbs of Chicago and within the next 10 years the census reported an 80% increase with 6,176 residents. A flurry of new local government services resulted, including the Community Park District, which was chartered in November of 1944. Aided by the availability of land, the Park District's highest priority for the next 20 years was land acquisition and park development. From 1945 to 1966 five of our existing six parks were acquired. Interestingly, the first land acquisition was made with local donations and money left over from the La Grange Park Civil Defense Fund. The first full-time employee of the Park District was Bill Conmy, who was charged in 1958 with maintaining the parks. There was another acquisition surge in the early 1960's that expanded earlier purchases. The sixth park location; Hanesworth Park was acquired in 1978 and was named in honor of the then Park Board President, Gil Hanesworth who lead the acquisition effort.

Recreation programs, like resident support for park land acquisition, were provided through a vibrant grass roots effort. The Citizen's Committee for Recreation was created in 1960 with generous donations from local business and service organizations. The Citizen's Committee provided a surprisingly wide range of programs until the mid-sixties when the Community Park District began to establish its own programs. Bill Yena volunteered as the Park District's recreation program director in 1965. A part-time executive director salary was established in 1971 and Mr. Yena became the second employee of the Community Park District. He served in this position until 1990 when John Hecker became the first full time Executive Director.

Several park improvements were made during the next 20 years. The first full-time Park District executive director was hired in 1990. During the following nine years the Park District completed \$800,000 in park improvements and relocated its offices to the Forest Road East School through an intergovernmental agreement with School District #102.

Plans to build a new recreation center began in the late 1980's but it was not until 2006 that the new 10,000 square foot building was opened in Hanesworth Park.

The history of the Community Park District is one of enthusiastic volunteerism and generous local support. It is a community hallmark that remains very strong today. In the fall of 2008 an attitude and interest survey was administered in connection with the District's strategic plan and it drew over a 20% response rate. The Park District invites all the previous year's volunteers to a summer picnic of appreciation and again this year there were over 100 attendees. With the Board's continued conservative use of its resources and the excellent support of its residents, the Community Park District will remain greater La Grange Park's first choice for recreation.

PARK DISTRICT FUN FACTS...

- *The original settlers were farmers who built their homes on the western side of town during mid-1800. Farmers offered refuge to people who had lost everything during the Great Chicago Fire of 1871, and later sold land to those who liked country living so well they decided to stay.*
- *The first property acquired by the Park District occurred in 1945. The first lots at Robinhood Park were purchased with left over money from the La Grange Park Civil Defense Fund and local donations.*
- *The Community Park District offers over 400 different recreation programs per year, which attract over 8,000 registrations.*
- *The cost of offering recreation programs and services is paid mostly with recreation program enrollment fees.*
- *The Community Park District offers quality recreation programs and services for persons that have a disability through SEASPAR, a co-operative of eleven parks and recreation agencies.*

COMMUNITY PARK DISTRICT

MISSION STATEMENT

The Community Park District Board has adopted the following mission statement.

The mission of the Community Park District of La Grange Park is to provide suitable parks and facilities, to support affordable, accessible, and meaningful recreational and instructional activities, and to encourage a healthy life style for all its residents and patrons.

To achieve this Mission, the following set of goals and objectives has been adopted by the Board:

- I. Improve Public Perceptions of the Value of Quality Leisure and the Community Park District's Ability to Provide it.
- II. Maximize Non-Tax Revenue
- III. Increase Use of Current Technologies
- IV. Increase Mental & Physical Health Awareness

VISION STATEMENT

The vision of the Community Park District of La Grange Park is to be known as the community's first choice in recreational activities.



EXISTING STRATEGIC PLAN

Prior to creation of this master plan, the Community Park District implemented a short range strategic plan. The objectives of this process were:

1. To identify a list of achievable projects that can realistically be completed during the next three years by a careful review of resident feedback, existing research and current Community Park District operations.
2. To strategically organize Park District resources so that the projects can be completed in an effective and efficient manner.
3. To provide residents with an easily understood document that communicates Park District priorities and objectives.

The Community Park District’s Strategic Plan is a working document. It is a useful tool while developing annual budgets and was a measure of progress. The key strategies will be reviewed periodically to assure that the road map the plan provides continues to lead the Community Park District to a meaningful and prudent destination.

I. Key Strategy: Improve Public Perceptions of the Value of Quality Leisure and CPD’s Ability to Provide It

- A. Expand Promotional Effort
 1. Maximize use of Existing Media:

i. Village E-Briefs – Every Other Week	On Going
ii. School Flyers/Posters – 4/yr	On Going
iii. LTTV – Special Events Coverage	On Going
iv. Newspapers – Every Other Week	On Going
 2. Initiate New Promotional Programs

i. Partner with Newcomers & Realtors	Q1/2011
ii. CPD News Letter – Brochure Insert	Completed
iii. Develop New Logo - Branding	Completed
iv. Upgrade Marquee Sign on La Grange Rd	Completed
v. Recreation Brochure Cover Highlights	Completed
vi. Wellness Promotional Activities	Q3/2011

- B. Increase Number and Quality of Low Cost/Free Events
 1. Increase Number & Quality of Special Events

i. Concert Under Stars – Promote Family	On Going
ii. Jazz/Blues Fall Festival	On Going
iii. Expand Run for Roses	Completed
 2. Promote “Added Value” Recreation Programs

i. Promote Picnic during Concerts	On Going
ii. Add Recreation Games to Web Site	Q1/2012
 3. Continue to Improve Buildings and Grounds

i. Maximize Usage of Beach-Oak Park	In Progress
ii. Add Memorial Park Picnic Grove Electric	Q3/2012
iii. Re-Organize “In-Line Hockey” Courts	Completed
iv. Expand Outdoor Ice Rinks	Completed
v. Seek Optimal Use of Memorial Pk Shelter Bldg.	Completed
vi. Seek Optimal Use of Hanesworth Concession Bldg.	Q3/2013
vii. Develop a Feasible Gym Addition Plan	On Going
viii. Seek a Dog Park Location	Q3/2014

- C. Increase Visibility
 1. Participate in La Grange Park Clubs/Organizations
 2. Increase Number of Visits to the Recreation Center

i. Initiate Tracking Procedures	On Going
ii. Speaker’s Bureau (Board and Staff)	Q1/2011
iii. Stage Shows & Other Performances	On Going
iv. Organization Use of Rec. Center	On Going

II. Key Strategy: Maximize Non-Tax Revenue

- A. Maximize Existing Revenue Opportunities
 1. Improve Net Program Sales

i. Package Group Program Sales	On Going
ii. Offer Program Add-on Options	On Going
iii. Improved Rental Service	On Going
iv. More Space for Popular Programs	On Going
v. Increase Concert Sponsorship	On Going



- 2. Apply for Grant & Foundation Money
 - i. OSLAD/LAWCON Completed
 - ii. Pathways Q3/2011
 - iii. Arts Council Q2/2011
- 3. Expand Effort to Know Consumer Perceptions & Needs
 - i. Exit Survey After Each Program On Going
 - ii. Participate in La Grange Pk Organizations On Going
- B. Initiate New Non-Tax Revenue Sources
 - 1. Initiate New Rec. Programs
 - i. Utilize Existing Program Statistical Data On Going
 - ii. Increase Fund Raising with Special Events On Going
 - iii. Zero Based Recreation Program Budget On Going
 - 2. Initiate New Non-Rec. Program Revenues
 - i. Promote CPD Friends of the Park Q2/2013
 - ii. Sell La Grange Road Sign Ads Q2/2011
 - iii. Sell Web Site Ads Q2/2011
 - iv. Sell Brochure Ads On Going
 - v. Consider P.T. Marketing Staff Completed
- C. Identify & Implement Cost Saving Measures
 - 1. Recreation Department Initiatives
 - i. Explore Program Brochure Options Q2/2012
 - ii. Encourage Volunteer Participation On Going
 - iii. Maintain Co-op Programs On Going
 - iv. Trade Service for Program Space On Going
 - 2. Parks Department Initiatives
 - i. Adopt - a – Park Q1/2011
 - ii. Utilize LADSE On Going
 - iii. Promote Neighborhood Watch 02/2011
 - iv. Maintain Park Department relationships w/other Units of Local Government Ongoing
 - 3. Administration Initiatives
 - i. Utilize Student Interns Q2/2011
 - ii. Maintain Office Cost Control Opportunity On Going

III. Key Strategy: Increase Use of Current Technology

- A. Maximize use of Internet
 - 1. Utilize Facebook On Going
 - 2. Targeted Park District E-Briefs On Going
 - 3. Spotlight Program on Web Page Completed
 - 4. Initiate “How we Doin’” on Web Q4/2011
 - 5. Research On-Line Programs Q3/1212
 - 6. Link CPD web site to other similar service providers On Going
- B. Identify Other Technologies that Improve Customer Service
 - 1. Stay Current on Leading Edge Technology On Going
 - 2. Utilize Part time IT Complete
 - 3. Teen Computer Programs & Contests Q1/2012
 - 4. Investigate LED Digital Scan Q4/2012
 - 5. Initiate On Line Registration Q1/2013

IV. Key Strategy: Improve Physical & Mental Health

- A. Place Priority on Health Awareness Programs
 - 1. Initiate “Biggest Loser” with packaged Fitness Programs & sponsors Q3/2011
 - 2. Add Health Vendors to Run for Roses Q1/2011
 - 3. Partner with Hospital or Health Clinic Q3/2011
 - 4. Healthy Classes On Going
 - 5. Make Fitness Court at In-Line Courts Q2/2011
- B. Partner with Local Fitness Agencies & Business
 - 1. Link La Grange Park Pedestrian/Bike Path Q2/2011
 - 2. Support Safe in town Bike Paths On Going
 - 3. Assist School Dist. 102 in Wellness Programs On Going
 - 4. Bethlehem Woods – Plymouth Place On Going

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The recommendations and conclusions located within the Master Plan were reached through a detailed planning process involving members of the Community Park District staff, Park Board members, a series of public meetings and a household survey. The process began with systematic inventory of existing parks and facilities, potential development areas, and comparisons with state and national recreational standards.

PLANNING PROCESS

The analysis and assessment tasks were as follows:

Data Gathering

The master planning process was initiated by collecting information concerning Community Park District resources, demographics, and public interests. This information is the basis for enhancement recommendations. The following outlines the data-gathering process:

- Conduct an inventory of existing outdoor recreation facilities, parks, and open space resources to document existing conditions. This was accomplished by conducting tours of the parks by LandTech, Staff, and the Park Board, researching the history of each park, and reviewing all existing relevant documents.
- Gather current and future demographic data on the Village. Current data was obtained from the 2010 U.S. census.
- Hold a series of public meetings to discuss potential park improvements, outdoor recreation needs, and satisfaction levels. Meetings with local special interest groups were also conducted.

Analysis

The objective of this phase was to analyze the data collected and to identify specific short, medium and long-term needs of all outdoor facilities. A needs assessment of the public was also conducted. The analysis included the following steps:

- Establish parks and open space calculations and compare to National and State standards for open space and facilities.
- Develop a list of specific parks system recommendations that meet the needs identified in resident meetings, analysis of standards, and Park Board input.
- Prepare recommendations and implementation guidelines.
- Prepare conceptual site plans illustrating creative development solutions for park redevelopment.

Implementation

The implementation phase of the plan is intended to provide a framework of tasks and methods to achieve the plan goals.

- List priorities for development and acquisition in accordance with financial and manpower resources.
- Prepare a four-year financial plan to support the direction of the Parks Master Plan. Structure budgets and park plans to meet the guidelines and matching grant requirements established by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A detailed evaluation of collected data was used to form a set of recommendations for existing parks and for new facilities. General recommendations made for the Community Park District are categorized below.

Land Acquisition

- Land Acquisition priorities must be set in accordance with planning area requirements and current community needs. As available land is extremely scarce and costly, the District should consider reducing its land requirements and focus on priorities for development as recommended by the public and in this plan.
- Continue monitoring land values and acquisition opportunities and be prepared to take advantage of “buyer’s market” trends.
- As undeveloped open space does not exist, identify residential or commercial lots that provide potential to expand current park space.

Facilities

- Estimate and include the cost of repair and replacement for existing fixed assets and include those costs into annual capital improvement budgets.
- Schedule similar repair and replacement projects in order to take advantage of volume cost advantages.
- Purchase new equipment in accordance with Park District purchasing policies that meet or exceed currently accepted standards and State and Federal mandates.

Park Enhancements – Existing Parks

Additional recommendations specific to each existing park are made in **Section 4**. These recommendations suggest what each park requires in order to improve overall quality. These improvements may include items such as landscaping improvements, increased and/or updated signage, updated playgrounds, picnic shelters, pathways and trails, and/or creative new features that will help to meet the needs of residents.

Overall Park System

The following is a summary of recommendations for the overall park system - further recommendations are found in **Section 5**.

- Redesign and modernize existing parks in a way that makes the most efficient use of limited space available and that enhances adjacent property values.
- Pay particular attention to incorporating ADA requirements into park modernizations. Utilize the Community Park District’s ADA Transition Plan completed in 2011.
- Increase the diversity and quality in existing play environments, using themed playgrounds and challenging equipment. Prevent cookie cutter designs. Build creative playgrounds that encourage physical, social, and mental development in children.
- Increase the opportunities for multi-purpose trails for:
 - Walking – loop pathways around larger parks or tie to sidewalks
 - cycling for pleasure
- Work cooperatively with the Cook County Forest Preserve District, Village of La Grange Park and adjacent municipalities to ensure trail connectivity and to monitor potential open space and recreational resources.
- Provide more opportunities for picnicking, passive recreation and access to natural areas.
- As population age groups fluctuate, monitor the number of athletic facilities such as:
 - Soccer
 - Football
 - Basketball
 - Softball
 - Baseball

- Consider amenities/facilities not currently offered, such as:
 - Pickle ball, bocce, horseshoes and beanbag courts
 - Climbing options
 - Improved neighborhood skate areas
 - Splash pads
- Continue to develop and expand partnerships with the local sports groups, and public school districts to better utilize local funds and open space for the benefit of the community.
- Work with neighborhood groups to identify needed local park improvements and amenities.

Maintenance and Management

- Continue to work with public school districts to renovate adjacent open space and review current use agreements for betterment of the taxpayer and resident. Suggest maintenance of fields, or perhaps entire sites in an exchange for usage.
- Study potential methods of reducing vandalism to parks and equipment, e.g. safety patrols and park ambassador programs.

- Continue use of contractor installations for playground equipment, thus preserving resources for landscape and physical maintenance and repair.
- Involve maintenance staff in decision making and plan review of new development or re-developments.
- Ensure public is involved in final design process for park developments.
- Invest in the maintenance department and garage facilities to provide advanced support of recreation facilities.

Financial Resources

Section 6 discusses priorities and potential development costs in a four-year development plan. Budget planning has utilized existing and forecasted Community Park District budgets, as well as available major funding assistance sources. This Master Plan will be an integral part of future grant applications and successes.