



PARK AND RECREATION COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

SUMMARY



Approved by Board of Commissioners in 2011

Revised November, 2015

Updated, 2016

BACKGROUND

In 2011, the Lake Bluff Park District Board of Commissioners adopted a Comprehensive Plan Policy that is defined as 18 sub-plans. In November 2015, the Board approved a revised policy that adopts and maintains a current Park and Recreation Comprehensive Plan (PRCP) at all times comprised of 17 sub-plans. The PRCP is developed based on resident, guest, staff and commissioner assessment of the District's current and future park, facility and recreation needs. The PRCP includes 17 sub-plans with action steps that are included as objectives in the Strategic Plan. Sub-plans are meant to be revised for various reasons; therefore, the Park District is committed to revisiting the plans annually and/or every three years due to the following impacts: specific action steps, economic conditions, grants, and/or community needs. Each sub-plan impacts an aspect of another plan so it is important that a logical and strategic discussion and sequence be determined for setting a future direction. The 17 sub-plans are the following:

- Needs Assessment Plan – Completed 2009
- Strategic Plan – Completed 2011 and 2015
- ADA Transition Plan – Completed 2011
- 10 Year Capital Plan – Completed 2013
- Grant Funding Plan – Completed 2014
- Referendum Plan – Completed 2010 and 2014
- Park and Facility Analysis – Completed 2015
 - ❖ Sunrise Park and Beach - Completed
 - ❖ Artesian Park – In Progress
- Land Acquisition Plan – Completed 2015
- Bikeways Plan – Completed 2015
- Programs and Services Plan – Completed 2016
- Marketing and Communications Plan – In Progress
- Facility Operations Plan – In Progress
- Financial Sustainability Plan – In Progress
- Human Resources Plan – In Progress
- Environmental Sustainability Plan – Not Completed
- Maintenance Plan – Not completed
- Site and Architectural Plans – Not completed

Each sub-plan requires significant data and analysis and if requested, residents can review the information via a website, BHFX, or requesting a copy. The PRCP sub-plans are updated a minimum of once every seven years and published for public review. The Park District prides itself on community input.



Lake Bluff Park District History

Park Districts in Illinois

Park commissioners, the forerunners of the modern Park District, were first organized in Chicago in 1869. The state legislature continued to organize other park commissions throughout Illinois until 1951 when the codification of Illinois laws was passed. These laws empower Park Districts in Illinois to levy taxes for general park maintenance and recreational programming, as well as other general powers. Park Districts are common throughout Illinois and a few other parts of the country. In some states, park and recreation facilities are provided through city, village, county or township government.

Formation of the Lake Bluff Park District

Solomon Thatcher, Chicago business man and Methodist layman described Lake Bluff; "A paradise complete with its ravine and running brook; its bluff and beach; its wooded parks." In these words, he described that part of Rockland which, in 1876, was to become the site of the Lake Bluff Camp Meetings. Paths were developed and benches installed along the bluff and in the ravine so that summer visitors could fully appreciate the beauty of this natural setting. The drilling of an artesian well in 1883 provided the water to create Artesian Lake, ten acres of water surrounding an island where Artesian Park is now located. Boating in the summer and ice skating in the winter were enjoyed on this man-made pond.

With the decline of the Lake Bluff Camp Meeting Association and the emergence of the Village of Lake Bluff, the land including the Lake Front Park (now Sunrise Park), Ravine Park and Artesian Park became the property of the newly formed village (1895). These parks were administered by the Village Board until 1928, three years after the Park District was created in 1925.

In 1904, the creation of the railroad underpass resulted in the draining of Artesian Lake and for the next thirty years the area became the village dump. Part of the area continued to be flooded for skating.

In 1911, Lake Bluff held its first Fourth of July parade, proceeding from the Village Hall to Lake Front Park for a patriotic program, games and evening fireworks at the beach. The parade committee later formed itself into the Lake Bluff Welfare Association, interested in various projects to improve the village, including the improvement of Ravine Park. As a result, the Village established the ravine as a botanical garden. A Park Commission was appointed and the first park bulletin was published: an inventory of 64 varieties of trees was found in the ravine! A nature path through the ravine was planned and a start was made on the rehabilitation of Artesian Park with the creation of three tennis courts, a baseball diamond, and a skating pond. Thus, the very first Fourth of July parade in Lake Bluff was closely tied in with the development and administration of Lake Bluff's park system. From 1911 until 1929, the Fourth of July fireworks display was put on from the pier at the beach.

On May 9, 1925, A.W. Witt of 130 Center Avenue and 149 other residents presented to the Circuit Court of Lake County, a petition known as case #4021 to organize the Lake Bluff Park District. Illinois statutes under an Act of the General Assembly of Illinois entitles the "Act to provide for the organization of Park Districts and the transfer of submerged lands to those bordering on navigable waters, approved June 24, 1895, enforced July 1, 1895." At the special election held on June 2, 1925, 170 residents voted in favor of the organization of the Park District with 20 opposing the question.

The Lake Bluff Park District was therefore established in 1925 as a municipal corporation, empowered with a five member elected Board and given statutory authority to levy its own property taxes and generate user fees. The new Park District area consisted of approximately six square miles extending westward from the shore of Lake Michigan, comprising the Village, unincorporated Knollwood and small portions of North Chicago.

With the creation of the Lake Bluff Park District came expansion, the district was enlarged, new park areas were acquired and the Park District began to conduct recreational programs. In the early 1930's, dumping finally ceased at Artesian Park, the five clay tennis courts that are still in use were converted to asphalt courts and the entire area was improved for recreational use. In 1933 the beach was established as a public bathing beach.

In 1933 Tom Evert began his career of 40 years working for the Park District. In 1936 he was appointed as Superintendent, a position he held until his retirement in 1973. In those years he was responsible for the physical maintenance of the "whole show," the grass to be mowed, the beach to be cleaned, the baseball fields to be manicured, the tennis courts to be rolled and lined, etc. There was no General Manager, so each commissioner expected Tom to carry out his or her wishes.

Park District Administration

With the establishment of the Park District in 1925 and prior to the hiring of Frank Strainis as manager in January 1968, the elected Park Commissioners had previously "micromanaged" the affairs of the park system. Betty Ferris, who served on the Board from 1957 to 1961, describes her duties:

- To hire the life guards for the beach, set up their schedules and duties, supervise their behavior with the public (and take any heat resulting). Tom Evert and his "crew" (two workmen) cleaned up the beach and restrooms.
- Betty also hired two recreation directors, a boy and a girl of college age, usually residents of Lake Bluff. The recreation program was free to all residents. Headquarters were the new field house at Artesian Park. She assisted them in setting up their programs for the various ages, games and crafts. At the end of the program several field trips were made.
- Frank was the first park and recreation professional director to guide the District from Commissioner to a staff managed agency. With his employment began the development of a recognized park district logo, park policies employee standards and procedures. He supervised the final construction and opening play of the golf course.

Coming from Wisconsin, Glenn Holzmer served from 1971 to 1974 and he also had previously directed a public park and recreation agency. He developed the final plans for the outdoor swimming pool and opened the facility for public use.

In 1972, resident Edward McCormick Blair Senior, owner of Crabtree Farms, committed \$20,000 per year for five years; a donation that was to be used for the employment of an experienced Park District Manager. Glenn was the first manager to be paid from this donation.

Mr. Blair, with his \$300,000 donation towards the planning of a community swimming pool, recommended the employment of an experienced park professional that would be knowledgeable in park and pool management to oversee the operation of the District.

In February 1975, coming from the Winnetka Park District, Walter Schamber managed the District until his retirement in May 2008. During his long tenure, tremendous growth and expansion were accomplished in both recreation programs and new facilities.

The Park Board, through its Personnel Committee, began an extensive search for an experienced director to manage the operation of the District and employed from Wheeling Park District, Ron Salski. Ron began in April 2008 and continues to direct the Park District.

Executive Summary

Needs Assessment Plan - Completed 2009

The Lake Bluff Park District Needs Assessment Plan consisted of Focus Groups and a Community Wide Attitude and Interest Survey. The goal was to obtain a total of at least 500 completed surveys from Lake Bluff Park District households. This goal was far exceeded, with a total of 640 surveys completed. The survey findings included percentage of residents visiting the parks, participating in programs, facilities used, other organizations used for indoor and outdoor activities, need for Parks and Recreation Facilities, Most Important Parks and Recreation Facilities, Need for Recreation Programs, Most Important Recreation Programs, Recreation Programs Participated in Most Often, Ways Respondents Learn about Programs and Activities, Park and Recreation Services that Should Receive the Most Attention, Level of Satisfaction with the Overall Value Received from the Park District, Actions Respondents are Most Willing to Fund with Park District Tax Dollars.

The Community Wide Survey identified demographics, The Park District anticipates completing a plan every five to eight years. An Executive Summary is located on the Park District website and BHFX website. The Park District is anticipating to complete the next Needs Assessment Plan in 2017.

Consultant: Leisure Visions

Action Steps: Completed

Estimated Five Year Financial Impact: (\$35,000 – Consultant and Distribution of Surveys)



Strategic Plan - Completed 2011 and 2015

The Lake Bluff Park District Strategic Plan guides our agency by setting a four-year direction through themes, goals, objectives and tactics. The Park District embarked on its first ever Strategic Plan in 2011 and shared with the community. Staff presented the progress quarterly and during the budget meetings.

In 2015, the Board and staff revised specific language to include core areas, goals and objectives. Staff presented the progress quarterly but a Board/Staff Workshop has been scheduled in September, 2016 to review goals, objectives and priorities.

Consultant: Heller and Heller Consulting, LLC for both Strategic Plans.

Action Steps: On-Going

Estimated Five-Year Financial Impact: (\$15,000 – Consultant and Focus Groups)

ADA Transition Plan - Completed 2011

The American with Disabilities Act requires a governmental agency to complete a Transition Plan. The Lake Bluff Park District ADA Transition Plan consists of an evaluation of facilities, action steps for specific sites, inclusivity report and yearly review. The Park District makes improvements listed in the Transition Plan and/or adheres to strict guidelines on new construction projects. The Transition Plan is located on the Park District and BHFX website.

Consultant: Recreation Accessibility Consultants

Action Steps: On-Going

Estimated Five-Year Financial Impact: (\$300,000 – Improvements)

10 Year Capital Plan - Completed 2013

The Park District utilized a diverse group of Lake Bluff residents, 20 Year Capital Task Force, to analyze and establish a 20 Year Capital Plan. The Park District retained ACG, Inc., Consultant, to include all assets over \$10,000 with a replacement date. Once the Park District received the document, the Task Force outlined and recommended a 10 Year Plan which the Board approved. The final report is located on the Park District website.

Initially, the report stated the Park District is anticipating a \$11.3 million expense over 20 years. The Task Force narrowed down the plan to reflect an anticipated \$5.2 million in capital repairs/improvements within 10 years. With this information, the Park District outlined a referendum plan of \$3.1 million resulting in the Park District needing \$2.1 million within 10 years. The Park District has contracted with Excalibur Technology Corporation to complete a Technology Plan which anticipates to add more Capital Plan expense.

Currently, the Park District has the following in Capital Funding:



Consultant: Architectural Consulting Group, Ltd (ACG)

Estimated Five-Year Financial Impact: (\$500,000 to \$1.5 million - Improvements)

Referendum Plan - Completed in 2010 and 2014

The Lake Bluff Park District Referendum Plan included extensive meetings with the community, board and staff and discussed whether the Park District required additional funds for its 20 Year Capital Plan. The meetings presented the tax impact on the community. The Referendum Plan considered significant community involvement and transparency was essential. The Board approved a referendum ballot question in 2010 and the question failed by 60% of the voters. In 2014, the Board approved a referendum ballot and the question passed by 72%. The Park District does not have short-term plans to approve a referendum ballot question.

Action Steps: On-Going

Estimated Five-Year Financial Impact: \$3.1 million

Grant Funding Plan – Completed 2014

The Board of Commissioners agreed to actively pursue grant funding in October, 2013 for the beach, pool and playgrounds. Staff submitted multiple grants for the beach, Blair Park Playgrounds and Blair Park Pool. The Park District was successful and awarded with a \$400,000 OSLAD Matching Grant for the Lake Bluff Pool but the State of Illinois put the grant on hold. Recently, IDNR released the funds and the Park District is working with Laura Stuart. The Park District will continue pursuing energy, coastal, tree and invasive species grants.

Grant Writer: Laura Stuart

Estimated Financial Impact: \$400,000

Park and Facility Analysis – Completed 2015

The Park District utilized a diverse group of Lake Bluff residents, Property and Public Land Use Advisory Committee, to analyze all parks and facilities. The Committee spent two years working with the Village, School District #65 and Lake Bluff Open Lands Association. The Advisory Committee developed an exhaustive report and requested limited assistance from Hitchcock Design Group. The final report is located on the Park District website and BHFEX Website. The report includes the following:

- Parks and Property Matrix
- Park District Holding
- Facility Need Assessment
- Level of Service Analysis
- Policies
- Opportunities for Annexation

Action Steps: There are a minimum of 20 recommended action steps within the report.

Estimated Financial Impact: (\$10,000 – Attorney’s fees and staff time)

The Park District started a Master Plan for most utilized parks, Sunrise Park and Beach and Artesian Park. Sunrise Park and Beach has a Master Plan approved by the Board. Currently, Artesian Park has a draft Master Plan which still being reviewed by the Community and Board of Commissioners.

Consultants: Upland Design, Ltd. (Waterfront Master Plan)
Cliff Miller (Bluff Vegetative Plan)
Shabica and Associates (Coastal Consultant)
Hitchcock Design Group

Estimated Ten-Year Financial Impact (Sunrise Park and Beach): (\$2,650,000)

Estimated Ten-Year Financial Impact (Artesian Park): (\$182,358)

Land Acquisition Plan – Completed 2015

The Park District utilized a diverse group of Lake Bluff residents, Property and Public Land Use Advisory Committee, to draft land acquisition policies and potential locations. The Committee spent two years working with the Village, School District #65 and Lake Bluff Open Lands Association. The document is located on a google drive and BHFx Website.

Action Steps: The policy was approved by the Board of Commissioners in January 20, 2016.

Bikeways Plan – Completed 2015

The Park District utilized a diverse group of Lake Bluff residents, Property and Public Land Use Advisory Committee, to analyze all bikeways and make recommendations to add bikeways. The Committee spent two years working with the Village, School District #65 and Lake Bluff Open Lands Association. The document is located on the Park District and BHFx Website. The Village has an adopted Bikeways Plan as well.

The Village of Lake Bluff received a grant to construct a bike path along our most widely used park, Artesian Park, that will connect to the Lake Bluff downtown, North Shore Bike Trail and west Lake Bluff. The Park District has included in its Master Plan a connector trail to access the playground and tennis courts from the recently constructed path by the Village. The Park District is repairing paths as part of playground construction projects.

Consultant: Hitchcock Design Group

Estimated Five-Year Financial Impact: (\$100,000)

Programs and Services Plan – Completed 2016

The Department of Community Recreation, Safety and Outreach Services developed a Program and Services Plan which was presented to the Board on January 4, 2016. The key chapters include the following:

- 2.0 Survey Results Relating to Recreation Programs
- 3.0 Core Program Identification
- 4.0 Program Priority Spreadsheet
- 5.0 Lifecycle Analysis
- 6.0 Age Segment Analysis
- 7.0 Current Program Assessment
- 8.0 Financial Information
- 9.0 Recreation Program Best Practices
- 10.0 Action Steps

In addition, the Park District and City of Lake Forest created a Joint Task Force reviewing programs and services. Based on the extensive efforts of the Task Force, the City of Lake Forest and Park District developed an agreement to offer resident rates. The final report is located on the Park District and BHFX Website.

Action Steps: There are 14 actions steps.

Estimated Financial Impact: N/A

Marketing and Communications Plan – In Progress

The Park District completed a Communications Plan which outlined recommended communication channels. The Marketing and Communications Plan will provide a more comprehensive Marketing strategy and the key chapters are outlined below:

- Definitions
- Digital Marketing
- Social Media
- Website
- Signage
- E-Newsletters
- Branding
- Logo

Consultant: Public Communications, Inc.

Estimated Five-Year Financial Impact: (\$50,000)

Facility Operations Plan – In Progress

The Facility Operations Plan involves an evaluation of all rooms, gyms, shelters and fields available in the Park District. The key chapters are outlined below:

- Pricing
- Maintenance
- Policies
- Statistics
- Capacity Percentage

Consultant: None (staff)

Estimated Five-Year Financial Impact: \$50,000 – Additional Revenue

Financial Sustainability Plan – In Progress

The Financial Sustainability is a five-year plan that provides strategies to achieve financial goals and objectives. The Plan reviews all financial aspects of the Park District, policies and provides a five-year approach which allows future staff and Boards to continue providing a quality park and recreation system. The key chapters include the following:

- Definitions
- Net Operating Surplus/Loss
- Revenue Policies
- Debt
- Fund Balance Policy
- Tax Levy

The Park District has started the plan and the Board has scheduled a Board/Staff Workshop in September to discuss some chapters.

Estimated Five-Year Financial Impact: (\$50,000 – Potential Net Loss)

Human Resources Plan – In Progress

The Human Resources Plan will encompass important topics that the Board agrees to address and approve over a period of time. The Human Resources Plan focuses on a key strategic core area, Learning and Growth, as satisfied employees are a key aspect to the success of the Park District. Annually, the Park District researches and benchmarks other Park Districts regarding insurance, compensation, benefits and more. The key chapters are outlined below:

- Health Insurance
- Salary Ranges
- Compensation
- Benefits
- Future Full-Time Positions
- Unemployment
- Performance Appraisals
- Employee Feedback

Some chapters have been completed; however, some chapters require significant discussion with the Board of Commissioners.

Consultant: RFP anticipated in 2017

Estimated Five-Year Financial Impact: (\$90,000 – Health Care Costs, ACA, Compensation, Additional Full-Time Staff)

Environmental Sustainability Plan – Not Completed

The Village of Lake Bluff established a Sustainability Committee and the Park District will provide input. The key chapters are outlined below:

- Social, economic, and environmental by assessing various community conditions. This includes identifying your community's local characteristics such as geography, natural resources, population levels, political, civic, environmental and other institutions, as well as environmental conditions such as water quality, air quality, hazardous waste sites and other potential sources of pollution.
- Visualize the future such as land development, population change, natural resource consumption, and commercial and industrial activities continue.

Maintenance Plan – Not completed

The Maintenance Plan is a plan that outlines philosophies, policies and approaches to golf, park and facility maintenance. The initial chapter, Standards, requires adopted philosophies and an approach in order to determine the level of care and resources. The Park District uses a classification, Gold, Silver, or Bronze. In 2016, the Park District will be identifying its Standard.

The key chapters are outlined below:

- Standards
- Tree Inventory and Plan
- Memorial Program
- Work Order System
- Safety
- Acreage and Amenities
- Pesticide Application
- Number of Employees

Estimated Five-Year Financial Impact: (\$175,000)

Site and Architectural Plans – Not completed

The Park District has developed a Master Plan for the two most utilized parks, Sunrise Park and Beach and Artesian Park. Sunrise Park and Beach has a Master Plan approved by the Board. Currently, Artesian Park has a draft Master Plan still being reviewed by the Board of Commissioners and community. The Park District is not anticipated to update any buildings or sites within the next five years. In fact, the Park District is evaluating whether to demolish the Golf Clubhouse.



Estimated Five-Year Financial Impact - Summary

A Comprehensive Plan is developed for planning purposes and financial impacts are only one factor whether to execute elements or entire plan. A five-year revenue/expense impact is listed below:

Needs Assessment Plan	(\$35,000)
Strategic Plan	(\$15,000)
ADA Transition Plan	(\$300,000)
Park and Facility Analysis	(\$10,000)
*(Plan is outlined for 10 years)	
10 Year Capital Plan	(\$1,000,000)
Referendum Plan	\$3,100,000
Grant Funding Plan	\$400,000
Land Acquisition Plan	\$0
Bikeways Plan	(\$100,000)
*(Plan is outlined for 10 years)	
Programs and Services Plan	\$0
Marketing and Communications Plan	(\$50,000)
Facility Operations Plan	\$50,000
Financial Sustainability Plan	(\$50,000)
Human Resources Plan	(\$90,000)
Environmental Sustainability Plan	N/A
Maintenance Plan	(\$175,000)
Site and Architectural Plans	N/A