



13 Recommendations

RECOMMENDATIONS

During the planning process a vast amount of information about the Addison Park District was gathered and utilized to develop recommendations for park and facility improvements as well as program modifications. A significant amount of time was spent in assessing the existing parks and facilities, understanding the changing demographics of the community, reviewing survey results, talking with the APD staff and Board, and hearing from stakeholders and user groups. All of this information, when synthesized and evaluated in more detail, creates many ideas for improvements to the District beyond the site, buildings and programs.

A series of recommendations have been developed that address a number of other aspects of the Addison Park District. Many of these recommendations are written to promote ongoing activities that are important to the agency. Others are ideas that will help improve the District on a variety of fronts. All are ideas that are not necessarily unique, but rather state a common sense approach that is needed in many park and recreation agencies. Many are very specific to APD.

The recommendations are presented in specific topic areas, with an introductory statement as to their need and purpose. These recommendations expand on the District's Mission Statement to express improvements in the following areas:

- Administration
- Board/Staff Education
- Financial Resources
- Collaboration
- Communications
- Customer Service
- Volunteers
- Stewardship
- Programs
- Program Access
- Health
- Maintenance and Planning
- Park & Facility Enhancement
- Acquisition

Many of the recommendations are expressed as action items, while others offer a philosophical direction. The recommendations vary from general to very specific, as many are presented to provide guidance while others seek to address needs that are very specific. Recommendations for improvements to specific parks and facilities are found in the Chapters 8 & 9, and are designed to also work toward realization of the goals of the Addison Park District.

ADMINISTRATION

Workplaces that instill a sense of value in their employees are successful in recruiting and sustaining a creative, energetic and loyal workforce. Developing administrative techniques that are consistent in delivery and equitable in interpretation provide agencies that operate efficiently and creatively in the best interests of the community.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Develop consistent approaches to all public procedures and services that allow all front-line staff to address customer relations in the exact same manner and provide the public with a known process.
- Continue to encourage APD staff to use their expertise and initiative in developing new and creative approaches to the fulfillment of their positions.
- Promote Board and staff diversity to ensure that the park and recreation philosophies of APD are consistent with the community.
- Periodically assess the structure of the Park District administration to ensure that the District operates in an efficient and effective manner that meets the changing needs of the community.
- Prioritize funding of parks and facility maintenance as the most important means of proactively providing a high quality product for the community.
- Staff and Commissioners should continue to participate in community projects and civic organizations in an ongoing manner to promote APD interests and develop working relationships throughout the community.
- Encourage participation of all staff in the development of departmental capital improvements recommendations.
- Include departmental staff in decisions affecting their departments.
- Encourage conservation practices in all facilities, including recycling, energy conservation, alternative transportation modes, paper reduction and other techniques that promote environmental sensitivity.

BOARD/STAFF EDUCATION

On-going Board and staff training is a key to providing high quality services that can maintain high levels of customer satisfaction and interest. Training is also important in keeping up with trends, from recreation trends to management style and information technology, training can come in many forms that will benefit a park and recreation agency. Keeping programming new and vibrant, dealing with customers in a positive manner and understanding the end user are all areas where training can help maintain quality.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Develop a staff training program that provides consistent annual educational courses in broad and job-specific areas that are tracked annually and expanded over time.
- Provide on-going customer-service training for all front-line staff, including seasonal staff and volunteers, that include improved personal communications techniques as well as detailed knowledge of the Park District, especially in the areas represented by each individual.
- Broaden staff knowledge of the District by providing cross-educational opportunities that include staff research and presentation of topics both within and outside their specific experience.
- Utilize in-house staff to research and present topics of interest, whether in program development, maintenance procedures, computer technologies or other areas that provide cross-educational opportunities to staff that will create a broadened knowledge of the District.
- Develop a Board training program to enhance awareness of national and regional issues and trends in parks and recreation, business planning, professional ethics, team building and other subjects important to agency management.
- Continue to utilize regional and national park and recreation conferences as a means for staff and Board development.
- Engage local and regional professionals to speak to employee groups on general topics and on procedures that are job-specific.
- Keep up with technological improvements in everything from computer technologies to maintenance applications in order to maintain efficient use of resources.

FINANCIAL RESOURCES

While tax revenues, grants and program fees continue to provide a substantial portion of park and recreation agency funding, development of alternative funding sources through corporate partnerships is a trend designed to provide a means of increasing the quality of programs and facilities for the benefit of the community. It is important to balance the use of funding in an equitable manner that provides the necessary resources for daily operations as well as capital improvements.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Perform annual assessments of the relationships between facility/program user fees, quality and measure of use to determine if fee alignments are appropriate.
- Continue to work toward the goal to ensure that programs and facilities are self-sustaining to the greatest extent possible.
- Seek to utilize alternative, non-tax funding sources, including sponsorships and grants, to fund all or part of new initiatives.
- Utilize the web-site and select publications to incur sponsorship revenues that can be used to support programs, special needs and enhanced publications.
- Continue to develop partnerships and promote sponsorship packages that include combinations of the web-site and other APD publications without requiring superfluous name placement in return.
- Design new and creative opportunities for sponsorship of parks, programs, events and facilities.
- Broaden the utilization of the Foundation, the Chamber of Commerce and other civic organizations to assist in developing corporate partnerships and sponsorships that will benefit the Park District.

COLLABORATION

Relationships between public agencies and between public and private agencies provide opportunities that may not exist within any one agency. Maintaining open communications, and understanding the common goals and interests of other agencies, allows APD to work in a collaborative manner to provide enhanced services and facilities to the community.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Commit to the Mission of the Park District and its established goals as the basis for all collaboration with other agencies.
- Continue to participate in quarterly interagency meetings with the Village, Library, Schools, Police, Fire, etc. Encourage additional participation by the Forest Preserve District, Township, County and other agencies to establish common interests.
- Coordinate program offerings with schools and other recreation providers, including adjacent park districts as appropriate, to broaden recreation, education, athletic and fitness opportunities.
- Collaborate with the Chamber of Commerce in the marketing of the Park District.
- Continue to nurture existing relationships and build new relationships with agencies and organizations that serve the community.
- Work closely with community organizations to educate their constituency about the role of APD, its accomplishments and its future goals.

COMMUNICATIONS

Effective communications are the most important marketing tools used by most park and recreation agencies. Presenting the District to the public in a broadened manner can provide more interest in the variety of facilities and programs available, create a better understanding of funding and operations, and make the District a more integral part of the lives of all resident. This will help remove misconceptions about District operations and promote even greater community support of the District.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Broaden the utilization of Facebook, Twitter and other social networking programs to inform residents of APD news and events, and encourage participation in programs.
- Revise the web-site to be more interactive and include volunteer opportunities and features that market the Park District and keep the public informed and involved.
- Utilize all existing APD publications and the APD web-site to 'present' the District to the public by including articles on operations/finance, profiles of Staff/Board members, volunteer initiatives and events/programs in other venues that can promote cross-interest.
- Feature a park or facility and a program each month in APD publications and on the APD website to increase the visibility of each facility over time. The featured property and program can include history, amenities, events, future and recent improvements, and other anecdotal information that presents the Park District in a fun and positive manner.
- Develop advertising of programs that focuses on filling programs that are less known in addition to the most popular programs to try to limit program cancellation.
- Develop a regional marketing effort for programs that are unique to APD.
- Utilize the APD web-site home page to proactively market new programs and new schedules/added classes to encourage registration for those programs and schedules that were requested by the public.
- Further develop the Park Ambassador program to provide increased presence in the parks.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Customer service is an important factor in park and recreation agencies because contact with the clientele (residents) happens at a variety of levels and for a variety of reasons. From assisting with program registration and complaints to ensuring access to programs and facilities, customer service requires communications skills, adequate technology and collaboration to operate effectively.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Enhance on-line registration visibility to make it more accessible to all who prefer that method of registration.
- Work with the athletic organizations to develop and maintain consistent policies for athletic field use, weather cancellations and concession scheduling that is clear and fair to the users, does not jeopardize quality and provides appropriate levels of service.
- Work with local senior communities and transportation providers to ensure that schedules for programs that are highly accessible to the non-driving senior population.
- Continually monitor the quality of customer service through user satisfaction surveys, including direct point-of-contact questionnaires that can be placed in drop-boxes at each facility and on-line questionnaires when services are provided.

VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers are very important to park and recreation agencies to assist with special events and maintenance, as advocates for parks in marketing and fundraising activities, and sometimes even as alternatives to salaried staff. Volunteer opportunities can be as varied as providing professional expertise to providing manual labor. The efforts of volunteers do require staff coordination, but the rewards for the community are many.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Increase the visibility and description of volunteer opportunities on the APD web-site to give the volunteer program a greater presence and appeal.
- Provide volunteers with training to match their areas of activity to ensure that customer service and volunteer activities meet the quality and philosophical goals of the Park District.
- Continue to utilize volunteers to assist with special events, selected recreation programs and general park maintenance activities, and to engage schools, organizations and church groups to assist in annual clean-up events.
- Promote teen and youth volunteer efforts by increasing recruiting and APD awareness campaigns in schools and youth organizations.
- Engage residents and local business professionals with specific expertise to speak to employee groups on topics or procedures that are job-specific, or assist instructors as guest speakers for specific programs related to their fields of expertise.

STEWARDSHIP

With stewardship of the land falling more and more to park and recreation agencies, it becomes increasingly important that park districts offer environmental education opportunities. Educational offerings can help protect the natural areas within a park district by provide a better understanding of natural systems, and can create a greater awareness of global ecological issues. It is also important that agencies undergo an internal transformation to be more environmentally friendly.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Develop additional interpretive signage in parks where natural areas or systems are at work.
- Add tree and shrub markers to provide horticultural identification in appropriate locations throughout the parks.
- Enhance public awareness of the natural areas available within the Park District and their environmental significance.
- Provide environmental educational programs that enhance District residents' relationship with the natural world and promote environmentally sensitive lifestyles.
- Utilize the expertise of area environmental consultants and agencies such as the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County and Chicago Wilderness to develop environmental programs, presentations and lectures.
- Plan for a future 'green' nature center to act as the focus for environmental programming that is designed utilizing green building technologies where applicable and feasible.
- Utilize energy-efficient light bulbs throughout District parks and facilities.
- Encourage the use of bio-degradable products and containers by staff, concessionaires and others utilizing APD parks and facilities.
- Utilize snow/ice melting products that minimize impacts on surrounding soils, water and plant materials.
- Establish pro-active pest management methods that include natural control methods and products, early detection of problems, preventive maintenance, and the selection of building materials and plant materials that are less susceptible to pest problems.

PROGRAMS

While many program offerings by park and recreation agencies maintain user interest over time, other interests change with shifts in demographics, age and fads that permeate society. Maintaining the base of long-term programs is essential. But it is equally important to look for ways to provide programs that appeal to an even greater cross-section of the public, and to recognize trends that affect participation and interest.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Evaluate the Community Survey results to determine specialized program/facility needs and requests that will lead to new and expanded programs that will appeal to a cross-section of current and future residents of diverse age, gender and ability.
- Conduct ongoing user surveys to evaluate existing programs and identify recreation trends at the local level, and continually monitor the viability of existing programs.
- Continue to work with Northeast DuPage Special Recreation Association in developing and increasing the quality of programs for individuals with special needs
- Add advanced/master levels in appropriate programs to develop life-long users of APD programs and facilities.
- Continue to expand the variety of programs, including educational, recreational and fitness, which allow participation by family groups.
- Create senior programs that engage the mind and exercise motor skills to help keep individuals active and interested in recreation.
- Expand senior activities and programs in computers, music, exercise activities, reading and games to promote expanded interest and use of facilities and amenities.
- Expand teen activities and programs in skating, basketball, music center, computers and performing arts.
- Explore the development more teen programs that, while pre-programmed by APD, are presented as more spontaneous offerings to gain an understanding of user habits.

PROGRAM ACCESS

Programs offered by park and recreation agencies are often scheduled at the same time year after year at times not available to many potential users. Program registration methodologies also cause many to miss out on programs that are of interest. Greater flexibility restrictions and schedules will allow many residents to participate who are currently unable to do so.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Create flexible program scheduling that will meet the lifestyle needs of more Park District residents, including evening and weekend programming that will attract working adults.
- Evaluate APD programs to determine which programs are most popular over long time frames and provide additional sessions of popular programs to meet community demand.
- Continue to work with area schools to provide comprehensive before and after school programs that include in-service/institute days, early release days and secondary holiday programming.
- Expand programs to meet a variety of performance ability levels to encourage on-going, life-long learning and park use.

HEALTH

Healthy active living is one of the most popular and responsible trends nationwide in park and recreation planning. At the same time, child obesity, heart disease and many other diseases continue to be major health concerns that affect our quality of life. Providing healthy environments for park and recreation patrons in which everyone can participate will continue to be of great importance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Institute a policy that provides for a smoke-free environment on APD properties.
- Provide more concessionary items that offer low-fat, low-sodium alternatives to typical concessionary foods.
- Create programs with Athletico and other area healthcare providers that focus on health and wellness topics for children and adults.
- Encourage greater use of alternative modes of travel by adding bicycle racks at each park and facility and by working with the Village of Addison to provide walkways and crosswalks that enhance pedestrian access to all parks and facilities.
- Make sure that all parks have adequate areas of shade, especially in areas designated for athletics spectator seating.

MAINTENANCE AND PLANNING

Maintenance of facilities and parks is an extremely high priority as park and recreation agencies search for ways to stretch the viable functional expectancy of products and reduce the time and effort needed for ongoing maintenance. Utilizing materials and products that have extended life under extreme wear and tear allows agencies to extend replacement schedules. Other products and materials can be utilized that require less on-going maintenance, thus reducing the effort needed to maintain them and allow time to be appropriated to other needed endeavors. Maintaining and enhancing existing parks and facilities is a key to the future effectiveness of the Park District.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Explore options for new maintenance facility north of Army trail Road, including collaborative use of maintenance facilities with Addison Trail High School, Village of Addison or private business opportunities.
- Provide additional trained horticultural and design/planning staff to promote efforts toward more efficient, natural and context sensitive parks and open space that can reduce maintenance requirements within the parks.
- Adopt and utilize Illinois Department of Natural Resources best management practices and other appropriate environmental management techniques, and control exotic and invasive species that inhibit ecological diversity.
- Develop a responsible internal work order system that is based on prioritized needs, simplicity, geographic proximity and flexibility to deal with emergency needs in a timely manner.
- Acquire GIS/GPS technology to complete an inventory of trees, unique plants, special habitats and other features that will assist in park enhancement and re-development.
- Develop more prairie style landscape areas on park sites and utilize no-mow grass mixes in non-sports field areas that will reduce the areas to be mowed and, over time, require significantly less maintenance and care.
- Modify shrub pruning techniques to promote natural growth habits that are healthier and provide greater seasonal interest.
- Undertake a tree maintenance and replacement program to improve the aesthetics and health of existing trees and to create greater shade areas in the parks.

PARK & FACILITY ENHANCEMENT

As new recreations trends reach the area, demographics change and parks show signs of wear, undertaking significant enhancement programs can ensure that the facilities continue to meet the needs of the community being served. Many enhancement initiatives are district-wide needs to provide a greater quality throughout the agency. Others are site specific, and include redevelopment of certain parks and changes of use at others.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Embark on a program of district-wide improvements that utilize standardized furnishings, quality materials, enhanced landscaping, improved safety, wayfinding, athletic field improvements and continued ADA compliance.
- Continue to replace site furnishings, playground equipment and other site amenities on a programmed schedule that will provide regular improvements on a cyclical basis while maintaining an understanding of the capital expenditures needed to meet the ongoing cycles.
- Utilize green building products and technologies in building and site development projects where applicable and feasible.
- Track recreation trends, demographic changes and changes in local interests to determine redevelopment needs of parks and facilities.
- Undertake the park and facility recommendations found in the Inventory and Assessment over the next five years to maintain the quality of APD parks and facilities.

ACQUISITION

In communities that are built to near capacity, acquisition of lands for open space or parks and recreation purposes is difficult. Properties that are available are often urban lots of only 10,000 square feet or less. Land areas large enough to accommodate athletic fields or major recreation amenities likely require that multiple adjacent properties be put together. In communities like this, the land acquisition strategy is limited to select parcels that meet specialized criteria.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Work toward a goal of meeting the NRPA guideline of 10 acres per 1000 residents.
- Cooperate with the Village of Addison and the school districts in acquiring and developing lands that offer potential for joint use.
- Target acquisition of properties that are adjacent to existing parks and facilities to allow expansion of recreation amenities or additional open space.
- Target acquisitions of additional lands along the Salt Creek Trail that can help protect wildlife and the riparian ecosystem.

