



Gurnee Park District

Strategic Plan
2017- 2022



PROMOTING FUN. PRESERVING NATURE.

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Mission

Promoting fun • Preserving nature

Vision

As a nationwide leader in our field, be the premier provider of community driven and innovative park and recreation experiences, while maintaining financial stability.

Acknowledgements

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Executive Summary

About Gurnee Park District

Gurnee Park District was established by local referendum on September 7, 1968 as a special purpose unit of government under the Illinois Park District Code. It is governed by a Board of five elected Commissioners who serve four year terms and set policy for the District. The Park District is led by the Executive Director who is appointed by the Park District Board. The Park District team includes 51 full time, 407 year round part time and approximately 163 short term employees.

The Park District encompasses 14.73 square miles in northeastern Lake County, approximately 45 miles northwest of the Chicago Loop. It serves the residents of the Village of Gurnee as well as a small portion of the City of Waukegan and unincorporated Warren Township. The population is estimated at 34,284, based on the 2010 U.S. Census.

The Park District maintains over 400 acres of parks, trails, ball fields, wetlands and open space. There are 28 park sites, Viking Park Community Center, Hunt Club Park Community Center, 75,000 square foot FitNation fitness center, 1500-bather capacity Hunt Club Park Aquatic Center, an indoor pool, six tennis courts, seven volleyball courts, three skate parks, one fishing area, 16 ballfields, 21 soccer fields, seven picnic areas, 25 playgrounds and 23 basketball courts.

The Park District provides a full range of recreational programs and services including fitness, dance, aquatics, preschool, before and after school care, day camps, youth and adult sports, adult leisure programming, arts and crafts, facility rentals and special events programming throughout the year.

In 2010, Gurnee Park District received the coveted National Park & Recreation Association Gold Medal Award. This is the highest form of recognition any park district can receive in the United States.

In 2016, Gurnee Park District was re-certified as an Illinois Distinguished Agency. This recognition confirms that the agency provides exceptional parks and recreation services to the community. The certification came after a lengthy review process conducted by a committee of the Illinois Association of Park Districts and the Illinois Park and Recreation Association.

The Park District has received the GFOA Certificate of Excellence in Financial Reporting every year since 1999 and the Distinguished Budget Award each year since 2010.

Gurnee Park District lifeguards are licensed by Ellis & Associates and have achieved the prestigious Platinum Safety Award. This is the highest international honor a lifeguard team can earn and means that their unannounced, independent lifeguard audit scores place them in the top 10% of all E&A clients worldwide.

Gurnee Park District is accredited by PDRMA (Park District Risk Management Agency) and has been a member since 1992.

Gurnee Park District Strategic Planning Process for 2017-2022

In the spring of 2016, the Gurnee Park District Board and staff initiated a five-year strategic planning process for the years 2017-2022.

Phase 1: Research and Issue Identification

The Park District conducted stakeholder (Board, staff and community) research to identify strategic issues, focusing on those items that were most important to the future success of the Park District over the next five years. The research included:

- A Park Board workshop conducted in May 2016.
- Several planning meetings with the Strategic Plan Executive Steering Committee (ESC). The ESC consisted of the Park District Leadership team.
- In June 2016, Park Board members met individually with local civic leaders (“Leader-to-Leader interviews”) to solicit their input.
- Two “World Café” - type community meetings were held in July 2016.

A fundamental component of this research was the development of a consolidated SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis developed by the Park Board and staff. Stakeholder feedback was used to develop the themes and many of the recommendations for each initiative.

Attachment A on page 29 includes details of the SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) Analysis developed by the Park Board and staff.

Attachment B on page 30 includes a summary of issues, opportunities and themes identified by various stakeholders.

Phase 2: Strategic Initiative Development

This research in Phase 1 enabled the District leadership to identify important issues that should be addressed over the next five years. Issues were then grouped by themes. A team leader was assigned to each strategic initiative along with staff team members to:

- Study and analyze each initiative.
- Clarify and define the initiative.
- Identify internal and external factors that may impact the District’s ability to move forward on the initiative.
- Develop recommendations with specific steps that must be taken to address the stated initiative.

The Park District leadership team developed seven forward-looking strategic initiatives for the 2017-2022 timeframe:

- 1. Excellence in Parks and Facilities**
- 2. Exceptional Programs and Services for the Community**
- 3. Leader in Promoting Health and Wellness for the Community**
- 4. Strong Intergovernmental Relations and Community Engagement**
- 5. Effective Communications, Marketing and Customer-Friendly Processes**
- 6. Highly Engaged Employees**
- 7. Financial Stability**

Balanced Scorecard Perspective

Gurnee Park District has adopted the Balanced Scorecard Perspective as a performance measurement system. The District developed its first Balanced Scorecard in 2009 in alignment with the last strategic plan. The framework of the Balanced Scorecard includes four perspectives: customer, financial, internal, and employee learning and growth.

The current strategic plan (2017-2022) has also been developed with the Balanced Scorecard in mind and the initiatives are aligned with the four perspectives as shown on page 5.

Phase 3: Review and Approval

A draft of the initiatives and associated recommendations was presented and reviewed at the December 2016 and February 2017 Park Board meetings. After the February board meeting, the draft Plan was made available on the District's website to elicit any additional feedback from community stakeholders.

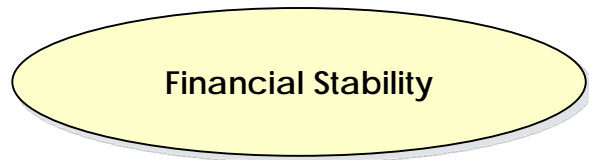
This plan is a result of community input, extensive staff work and valuable feedback from key community stakeholders. It establishes a roadmap for the park district to continue a record of excellence in all areas of its operations and provide the community with an increased sense of pride in their Park District. The Board and staff are confident that this plan will keep us focused on our mission and vision over these next five years.

**2017-2022
GURNEE
PARK
DISTRICT
STRATEGIC
INITIATIVES**

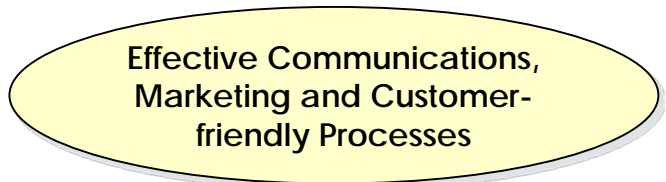
**Customer
Perspective**



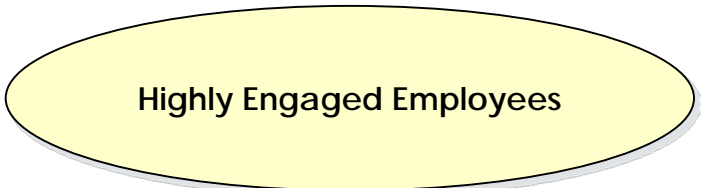
**Financial
Perspective**



**Internal
Perspective**



**Employee Learning and Growth
Perspective**



Strategic Initiatives

Strategic Initiative #1: Excellence in Parks and Facilities

Gurnee Park District will operate and maintain its parks and facilities at a standard of excellence defined by the expectations of the community.

Gurnee Park District maintains over 400 acres of land with a wide variety of amenities including: playgrounds, sports fields, trails, natural areas, two community centers, a fitness center with an indoor pool, and an outdoor aquatic center. It is the District's goal to have the safest, cleanest and most up-to-date parks and facilities.

The Park District has 25 playgrounds, nine of which will need to be replaced in the next five years. Playgrounds generally have a life cycle of about 20 years. The cost for the replacement varies due to size of the park, the type of surfacing and also whether the installation is done by staff or using contractors.

The District maintains several miles of pathways throughout various parks. Many of the pathways need to be upgraded or replaced in the next five years. The asphalt pathways at Ravinia and O'Plaine Parks need overlay in the next five years. The District also maintains three large parking lots at the two community centers and FitNation location. The parking lot at Hunt Club Park was originally built in different stages and re-building it in the next five years may be a significant financial commitment.

The District has two community centers, one outdoor aquatic center and one stand-alone fitness center with an indoor pool. Viking Park Community Center, the oldest facility, dates back to 1907. It has received many additions and improvements over the years, but will continue to require work as it ages. Hunt Club Park Community Center was built in 2006 and it will require various improvements every year, none of which is anticipated to be significant in the next five years. Hunt Club Park Aquatic Center is over 15 years old and requires a high level of maintenance each year. FitNation is the largest facility the District owns and operates, which was acquired in 2013. The District has been making many improvements to this facility since its acquisition and it needs further improvements in the future.

The sports areas that the District maintains are for in-house programs and daily non-scheduled activities such as soccer, softball, volleyball, basketball, flag football, t-ball, lacrosse and tennis. The fields are also used by various community sports organizations. Ongoing maintenance of these fields is important for the safe and enjoyable use by the customers. Future growth of the District's sports programs is reliant upon acquiring additional fields or converting existing grass fields to artificial turf fields. Tennis and basketball courts require less maintenance on an ongoing basis, yet cost significant amounts to replace in the long-term. The District allocates funds annually to maintain these courts by repairing them and color coating them every few years. There is a great deal of interest from the public in the up and coming new sport of pickleball, which needs to be addressed in the next five years. As many of the outdoor fields are only used during a few months of the year due to weather challenges, it would be desirable to have some fields lighted so that the fields can be used longer when weather is desirable. Currently the District only has one lighted softball field and none of the tennis courts are lighted.

The District has received requests from residents for additional facilities such as ice rinks, indoor pickleball courts, etc. all of which need to be evaluated during this strategic period.

INTERNAL FACTORS

- Limited financial resources available for capital maintenance and improvement
- Diverse skill level needed for staff to manage various parks and amenities
- Ongoing need for staff training
- Longevity of full-time employees add value to the District yet the time off often creates burden on the department in general

EXTERNAL FACTORS

- High level of expectation from the public in terms of quality of parks and facilities and responsiveness in addressing problems
- Unforeseen circumstances such as storms, snow, etc. that put additional burden on staff
- Tree pathogens that have put a burden on the parks team for removal and replacement of trees (e.g. Emerald Ash Borer)
- Potential property tax freeze proposed by the Governor
- Heavy use of parks by the public which is desirable yet requires more manpower to maintain
- There is limited space in town to expand parks and athletic fields
- ADA regulations and mandates
- Part-time employees limited work schedule due to the Affordable Care Act

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Review and upgrade the Park Maintenance Plan and the Standards of Maintenance.
 - a. Review and report suggested changes to the Park Maintenance Plan to the Executive Director and Board.
 - b. Review and report suggested changes to the Standards of Maintenance to the Executive Director and Board.
 - c. Evaluate organizational structure for Parks Team and make suggestions for change to increase efficiency and effectiveness.
 - d. Evaluate cost and efficiency of projects completed in house versus using contractors.
 - e. Evaluate the need for more part-time and seasonal employees.
2. Update the capital replacement schedule using a five year budgeting plan.
 - a. Plan the replacement of all capital equipment and infrastructure such as playgrounds, park amenities, vehicles and equipment, asphalt surfaces, roofs, HVAC units, buildings, sports infrastructure, etc. that need replacement in the next five years.
3. Address the need for maintenance and storage facilities.
 - a. Plan the replacement of Viking Park Maintenance Facility addressing storage needs for parks and recreation departments.
 - b. Plan an upgrade for the Hunt Club Park maintenance complex including options for storage, space for vehicles, etc.
 - c. Investigate the possibility of pre-fab buildings to meet maintenance facility needs.

- d. Investigate the possibility of vacant industrial buildings in town to meet the maintenance facility needs.
4. Identify additional recreation space to meet demands for new, expanding or otherwise popular activities.
 - a. Investigate indoor and outdoor athletic space for sports programs considering existing vacant spaces such as industrial spaces.
 - b. Determine if the indoor ice rink requested by individuals at community meetings is an option the District want to explore.
 - c. Plan potential future use for currently leased space at FitNation.
 - d. Consider the possibility of expanding Hunt Club Park Community Center with the infrastructure already in place if current facility is at use capacity.
 - e. Explore the possibility of adding an artificial turf field.
 - f. Look at enhancing drainage and irrigation of current natural turf fields.
 - g. Explore lighting additional sports fields to extend play time on existing fields.
5. Explore nature preservation and conservation opportunities.
 - a. Acquire additional land near flagship parks as opportunity arises.
 - b. Study current facilities and operations for environmental efficiencies.
6. Enhance the District's current operations and policy training programs.
 - a. Increase training opportunities for staff at all levels.
 - b. Improve safety training for staff.

Strategic Initiative #2: Exceptional Programs and Services

Gurnee Park District will strive to provide a diverse selection of recreational programs and services to meet the evolving needs of our community.

Gurnee Park District has offered exceptional programs and services to the Gurnee and surrounding communities for many years as evidenced by strong growth, high levels of participation and great results on program survey results. As the District continues to promote fun and preserve nature, it will be important to consider the following factors to keep the services strong.

While the overall population of Gurnee has not changed drastically in recent years, the make-up of that population has become more ethnically diverse. It is an objective of this strategic initiative to identify and offer programs and services that are appealing to the diverse community. In addition to the increasing ethnic diversity in the community, the changing age demographics also impact the District. Enrollment statistics from Warren Township High School District 121, Woodland School District 50 and Gurnee Grade School District 56 show a steady decline each year in student enrollment from ninth grade down to kindergarten. As this is currently a large percentage of the District's program users, it will be increasingly important to maximize the efficiencies in program offerings. Gurnee Park District has seen an increase in participation in the financial assistance program which has used the full funding amount of \$40,000 in each of the past three years. It will be the District's objective to find ways to engage residents who are in financial need and help them to have opportunities to participate in recreational activities.

As voiced in the Park District's community input meetings, customers are increasingly interested in finding more flexible scheduling options for themselves and their family members to participate in recreation activities. Gurnee Park District's objective is to explore scheduling services at non-traditional hours, payment options, transportation needs and modifying programs to take place in different ways to meet those needs.

In several program areas, the District's customers have many options to meet their recreational, instructional or entertainment needs. Fitness, swim lessons, preschool, studio dance, sports and before/after school care programs are some of the most notable areas where the District is seeing other providers offering the same services. As a government organization, it is important for the District to continue to offer these core programs at the highest standard expected by the community.

One of the challenges to offering more programs is finding staff specialized in those areas. Therefore the District often times relies on contractors to provide unique programs and facilities. The District also relies heavily on volunteers to keep costs down and to provide sufficient leaders for their activities. Continuing to encourage volunteerism and maintaining strong relationships with specialized program providers will continue to be a focus in the next five years.

Sports programs continue to be a very popular activity the District offers to the community. Though participation levels have dropped slightly over the past three years, sports programs are still a highly demanded activity by participants. There are also several other parent, school or township run sports programs in the area. The District received feedback from community input meetings and consistently from program surveys that the customers would like the District to run some of the programs already provided

by other entities. This needs to be further evaluated by the District as it is necessary not to duplicate services especially offered by other government entities.

Gurnee Park District offers a wide variety of programs and provides many benefits to the community. **GO GURNEE**, a community walking movement, is an example of a new and innovative way Gurnee Park District made efforts to begin educating the community recently. The Park District is an important driver of the local economy. Park Districts provide jobs, entertainment, essential services, parks and playgrounds as well as health and fitness opportunities. In addition, the business community can benefit through sponsorships and taking advantage of the programs and services available to their employees.

There is an increasing trend for children to specialize in sports at an earlier age. It will be important for the Park District to emphasize the benefits, increased quality of life and sports development provided to the users by offering and encouraging participation in a variety of activities. By making efforts to better educate participants, the District can help encourage them to make more informed decisions about achieving their sports goals and further supporting the District's activities.

INTERNAL FACTORS

- Most of the District's facilities are highly desirable for customers to use
- Staff are versatile and in tune with the industry trends, standards and have great connections and educational opportunities to maintain this knowledge
- Core recreational programs are successful and the primary driver of user-based revenue, resulting in lower need for tax dollars
- Excellent overall image in the Gurnee community
- Financially stable and good stewards of tax dollars
- Gurnee Park District is the premier provider of fitness, preschool and swimming opportunities within the Village of Gurnee
- Strong marketing resources provide the District with the ability to effectively reach residents
- Lack of available space during "prime times" for certain activities as well as lack of program space for year-round activities such as soccer, baseball and lacrosse
- Increasingly higher overhead costs to run programs and provide services
- Lack of expertise in certain areas (reliance on contractors)
- Availability of qualified staff/volunteer coaches
- Staff diversity can improve (to set a better example to those of various ethnic backgrounds who may need that influence to inspire participation)
- Competing within the District for the same ages at the same times within the same location
- Onboarding process and initial general training can improve
- Lack of resources currently to address full demand for financial assistance

EXTERNAL FACTORS

- Great relationships with schools and other government organizations and service groups in town allow Gurnee Park District to use indoor space to provide services
- High level of staff retention in full-time area
- As the community ages, more opportunities for teenagers, adults and older adults are developing, which in turn reduces the market for many programs that kindergarten through eighth grade would have otherwise participated in
- A strong interest for ice-related activities

- A consistent year-round interest in soccer and baseball
- Other local offerings have increased in recent years (camps, swim schools, fitness centers and other government organizations offering similar services). There are also existing public entities that have different revenue objectives (seniors/Warren Township, Middle School/Warren Township, adult programs/library)
- Parents/participants want to specialize in sports at earlier age
- Availability of gymnasium and other activity space at prime times
- Increasing number of low-income families in community (particularly District 50)

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Provide an in-depth review in each program area, and if necessary, identify steps to implement changes that will result in more efficient delivery of necessary activities and services.
 - a. Provide SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis of each program area and compare to revenue, staff time and expenses dedicated to managing each activity. If necessary, recommend changes to make delivery of services more efficient.
 - b. Analyze times contractual providers are using Park District facilities versus the District's in-house programs. Provide space usage recommendations based on analysis.
 - c. Identify new contractors that offer programs the District currently does not offer and explore partnering with them to provide services.
 - d. Identify additional staff, volunteers or contractors that can offer the expertise that Gurnee Park District cannot, in order to offer new programs that are in demand.
 - e. Analyze current building usage and identify new times to offer activities.

2. Obtain and study the demographic data for the District and make changes to program offerings accordingly.
 - a. Obtain demographic data for the District.
 - b. Determine a means to collect more information from teens, adults and seniors and based upon this feedback, explore and offer more programming and events for these groups.
 - c. Investigate other communities with similar diversity and explore their offerings to potentially provide for Gurnee's ethnically diverse population.
 - d. Increase cross-promotion of adult activities through the District's youth programming.
 - e. Identify programs and services that are a necessity for bordering communities and provide greater access to programs Gurnee Park District offers its residents.
 - f. Identify new locations to advertise services and increase awareness to this population while providing information in these locations.

3. Provide greater flexibility of activities for residents (weekends, evening, early mornings, drop-in activities, bring activities to the customer, childcare provided).
 - a. Investigate opportunities where additional transportation can be provided to programs and facilities.
 - b. Monitor activities of other organizations to ensure the District's program content, fees and flexibility compare with these agencies.
 - c. Explore and implement more flexible payment options if feasible.
 - d. Develop a program "progression plan" for each program that suggests what activities participants can go to next. Create a marketing campaign to support this in each specific area.
 - e. Continue to identify new trends and offer as they emerge.

4. Identify additional resources and strategies to provide more access to activities for families in need of financial assistance.
 - a. Analyze current transportation resources and explore ways to better educate or offer this transportation.
 - b. Identify additional partnerships, grants or sources of funding to better support the financial assistance (scholarship) program.
5. Offer additional sports programming and enhance existing sports programs.
 - a. Evaluate recreational versus competitive sports programs and weigh options to introduce more competitive-type programs.
 - b. Identify additional program space for sports activities during prime time (ice rink, artificial turf field, outdoor fields and indoor gymnasiums).
 - c. Increase the quality of the current sports programs offered to the community.
6. Provide more education to the community on how Park District programs and services can benefit quality of life for our residents.
 - a. Add parent orientation meetings for all youth sports programs to increase education about the program, safety and ways the program can benefit the customer.
 - b. Provide education as a benefit to fitness or other active programs.
 - c. Provide education as to the community benefits of participating in a recreational program offered within the community (Gurnee Park District is the “heart” of the community).
7. Develop measurement/statistical data reporting for recreation program participation and trends that allows the District to make data driven decisions.

Strategic Initiative #3: Leader in Promoting Health and Wellness in the Community

Gurnee Park District will serve as the leader in promoting health and wellness for the community.

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) has conducted research indicating that parks and recreation agencies not only have a tremendous influence on the culture of health and wellness in a community, but also play a major role in creating opportunities for residents to stay active through advocacy, access and programming. One of their three pillars is specifically health and wellness.

Accordingly to *Live Well Lake County*, the Lake County Health Department strategic health task force, as of 2015 nearly 25% of Gurnee residents (zip 60031) are obese and nearly 60% are reported to be either overweight or obese. The Center for Disease Control reports that those who are overweight or obese are at an increased risk for serious health diseases and conditions such as high blood pressure, diabetes, heart disease and mental illness to name a few. Neighboring communities to the east of Gurnee are nearly 30% and 70% respectively. This statistic is important because nearly 43% of the customers the District serves (in registration based programs) are from communities such as Waukegan, Zion and Beach Park.

In terms of physical education in schools, District 50 and 56 offer daily instruction ranging from 25-50 minutes of physical activity. District 121 requires health and physical education each semester for freshmen through seniors; however, juniors and seniors can receive an exemption when the student participates in a varsity sport. Physical education requirements for early childhood providers are not standardized through any state or federal mandates. Gurnee Park District's Growing Tree Preschool strives to provide 20 minutes of physical activity for half day programs and 40 minutes for full day programs.

Currently, the District offers several circulation trails within the parks and one direct connection point to Lake County Forest Preserve trails. In July of 2016, the Village of Gurnee conducted a pedestrian survey to solicit opinions on walking and biking within Gurnee to help guide a newly formed Blue Ribbon Commission in their analysis of pedestrian infrastructure in the community. Gurnee Park District has been asked to participate in this process. Connectivity not only allows users to access all of the District's parks with additional ease, but connectivity supports health and wellness initiatives for the community by electing to use healthier modes of transportation-by foot, bicycles, in-line skating, etc.

Over the past five years, the Village of Gurnee has been expanding senior-specific dwellings. Not only will this attract seniors to the area, but as the population ages, residents will retire in the area suggesting that the unique health and wellness needs of the population will need to be addressed through education, infrastructure and programming specific to this population.

The Village of Gurnee has a vibrant business sector. How the Park District defines the community is not only based on residency but on customer registration (both resident and non-resident) and recognizes the import/export nature of the work force for most jobs available in Gurnee. According to a July 2014 report *An Economic Development Strategy for the Village of Gurnee*, compiled by Gruen Gruen and Associates, upwards of 90% of jobs in the Village of Gurnee are held by non-residents who spend a majority of their time within the community despite living elsewhere. The District's health and wellness influence on both

businesses and their employees is apparent, not only through the Park District's fitness memberships, but the employment of non-residents to support this division is continuously growing.

A culture of health and wellness is one that a community lives 24-7. Therefore, those that are present within the Gurnee area to live and/or work daily both have an influence on the community and need to be motivated to create new values within the community.

INTERNAL FACTORS

- Wide variety of programs offered by the Park District that promote fitness and physical activity
- The new **GO GURNEE** movement
- Additional resources such as staff time and budget needed for health and wellness programs for the community
- The need for Gurnee Park District employees to show a great deal of buy-in with their leadership and participation in the programming (lead by example)
- In order to make cultural changes in health and wellness, the community requires education and engagement regularly. Unlike a lot of other activities or hobbies, changes to health and wellness are an ongoing effort because of the intricacies of influencing lifestyle change

EXTERNAL FACTORS

- There are quite a few agencies and private sector businesses that offer health and wellness programs and services. It will be imperative that the Park District seeks to collaborate in every way possible to avoid duplication of services
- Health and wellness is highly tied to human attitudes, interests and beliefs and making lifestyle changes at a community level is a challenging task
- To be the "leader" in this initiative, the Park District will need to establish additional credibility with the community

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Develop relationships with key health and wellness influencers within the community.
 - a. Increase awareness and participation in **GO GURNEE** and serve as a catalyst for **GO** movements throughout the County.
 - b. Join/attend non-profit/foundation meetings to develop relationships.
2. Offer health and wellness initiatives (separate from revenue producing programming) in collaboration with other agencies, businesses, sponsors, etc.
 - a. Explore the benefit of offering a Health and Wellness Day to the community, combining support and resources from various health providers, sponsors, agencies and businesses.
 - b. Offer events at neighborhood and community parks that bring residents together who live in close proximity.
 - c. Offer and/or sponsor local community walks in conjunction with FitNation and the **GO GURNEE** movement.
 - d. Evaluate current garden program and evaluate the need and feasibility for different types of community gardens- learning, micro, swaps and preservation. Explore potential for a summer feed program to support Gurnee area schools.
 - e. Collaborate with local schools on the **GO GURNEE** movement.

3. Work with Village of Gurnee to enhance biking and walking trail system throughout the community.
 - f. Serve on the Walkability Committee organized by Village of Gurnee to identify needs for connectivity.
 - g. Consider a Public Safety Announcement campaign addressing snow removal in partnership with the Village to support clear winter walkways and promote **GO GURNEE**.
 - h. Evaluate opportunities for additional signage/maps to create awareness of trails.

Strategic Initiative #4: Strong Intergovernmental Relations and Community Engagement

Gurnee Park District will strengthen its intergovernmental relations with all other taxing agencies in the Gurnee area and increase the level of engagement with the community.

For nearly 50 years, Gurnee Park District has been an integral part of the Gurnee community offering beautiful parks and a wide variety of recreational programs to its residents. The residents of Gurnee have an expectation that all taxing agencies will collaborate with each other to eliminate duplication of services and ensure their taxes are being utilized effectively.

Along with this collaboration comes an interdependence among agencies. For example, the Park District relies on using school buildings for various programming needs. There are many intergovernmental agreements currently in place with the Village of Gurnee and the local school districts.

In some instances, a formal agreement is not in place for many of the cooperative efforts between the Park District and other governmental agencies. The administrators at all taxing agencies currently share a positive, professional relationship which leads to easy access to one another's facilities. As changes in administration may occur in the next five years, all relationships currently in place need to be evaluated and documented through intergovernmental agreements.

The Park District also cooperates well with local service clubs, not-for-profit organizations and athletic organizations. The Park District plays a primary role in the annual community event, "Gurnee Days," working closely with the Gurnee Days Corporation. Many of the local athletic organizations are affiliates of the Park District. It is important to continue these relationships to ensure the positive placement the District has established in the community and continue to best serve the residents.

A second component of this initiative is the need to enhance community engagement. Currently a good segment of the community is engaged through usage of parks and recreational programs. As the community is aging and the adult population (over the age of 50) is growing within the community, an effort needs to be made to engage them with the Park District in various ways. The community is also more culturally diverse and the needs of this population needs to be taken into account in the next five years.

INTERNAL FACTORS

- All staff members understand the need to establish positive relations with other government agencies
- Staff time must be allocated to assist with various community events such as Gurnee Days, Exchange Club events, Holiday Train, etc.
- Budget constraints in terms of engaging the community
- Possible additional staffing is needed for community engagement
- Maintaining balance of revenue/non-revenue initiatives when developing offerings/programs and events

EXTERNAL FACTORS

- Possible change in administration at other government agencies in the next five years
- High expectations and immediate satisfaction from expected action

- Competition for potential users' time and discretionary income
- Education and information is funneled quickly and decisively in the current mobile society where users become initially engaged and disenchanted quickly. Keep users engaged, committed and loyal to Gurnee Park District.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Identify and engage community members currently not involved with the District through programs and volunteer opportunities.
 - a. Evaluate the demographics of the community to assess age and cultural diversity and develop programs/services to engage the growing population categories.
 - b. Provide “feel good” volunteer opportunities to the adult members of the community.
 - c. Explore the need for community gardens providing volunteer opportunities for community members and providing produce for food pantries.
 - d. Look at opportunities to connect residents with their neighborhood parks.
2. Strengthen relationships with local taxing agencies and not-for-profit organizations.
 - a. Develop partnerships with not-for-profit organizations in the area to enhance scholarship and sponsorship opportunities.
 - b. Enhance relationships with other taxing agencies and their leadership team members in order to establish relationships with their counterparts at these agencies.
 - c. Develop/update intergovernmental agreements with other taxing districts wherever applicable.
 - d. Explore offering summer lunch programs at parks in cooperation with the local school districts.
 - e. Review affiliate relationships with various organizations and make needed changes and revise agreements.
 - f. Look at opportunities for various taxing agencies to work together to enhance wellness in the community.
3. Strengthen relationships with the business community.
 - a. Identify large businesses in the District and address the needs of their employees that are non-residents.
4. Establish positive relationships with all legislators within the District and keep them informed of Park District initiatives and needs.

Strategic Initiative #5: Effective Communications, Marketing and Customer-friendly Processes

Gurnee Park District will serve its customers with the most effective communications, marketing and customer-friendly processes.

Direct mailed brochures/postcards, paper flyers and occasional press releases or paid print advertising were the primary marketing tools utilized until 2008. Communications were limited to mailed registration postcards, participant meetings and mailed handbooks/calendars and correspondences. Registrations were received in-person, by mail or through a simplistic registration software.

In 2008, Gurnee Park District, through its last strategic plan, identified the need to expand marketing efforts with a marketing/communications professional familiar with business marketing strategies. The Park District hired a Marketing and PR Manager at that time. Since then, the District's website has been overhauled three times, social media accounts have been established and are thriving, e-mail communications including newsletters were established, and new advertising channels have been added including cable, digital and paid e-mail blasts. Additionally, access to customer resources such as handbooks, calendars, forms, etc. have been integrated into the website. In the last two years, the marketing department has grown from two to four full-time staff.

In reviewing customer friendly processes, the Park District must pay attention to the consumer experience not only for other like service providers but major retailers like Amazon which cater to the simplicity of the user experience. Registration start and cutoff dates must be reviewed for their relevancy in a two-day delivery world.

Additionally, the frequency of and vehicle for communicating to customers at every stage of their experience will need to expand to meet the experience of single service providers (swim schools, preschools, sports leagues, dance studios, etc.).

INTERNAL FACTORS

- Financial resources
- Staff strengths and abilities
- The growing demand for each division/program area to be marketed specifically, strategically and within budget
- Partnership with recreation management and customer service to develop and deliver customer communications and program resources
- Willingness to adapt to new strategies and media outlets

EXTERNAL FACTORS

- Timing of other organizations with like services
- The ever changing and emerging marketing/customer service strategies and tools

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Develop a comprehensive Customer Service/Sales Plan.
 - a. Evaluate the roles and responsibilities of customer service/sales staff and make changes as necessary.
 - b. Create a training manual.
 - c. Identify online applications for training and communications (Office Vibe, Intranet, etc.).
 - d. Increase e-mail communication of programs/services and at each stage in the customer experience.
2. Further define roles and responsibilities of Marketing Team.
 - a. Create specific roles/job descriptions for marketing staff i.e. designer, communications specialist, etc.
3. Review and recommend changes to current customer processes/registration.
 - a. Review registration periods.
 - b. Review all policies.
 - c. Develop additional communication resources: RecConnect, e-mail services, rainout web integration.
 - d. Harness expanded search features, keywords and link-ability of programs in RecTrac.
4. Conduct a comprehensive evaluation of current brochure.
 - a. Measure effectiveness.
 - b. Report findings.
 - c. Develop plan for necessary changes.
5. Evaluate effectiveness of advertising mediums; explore emerging mediums and provide a recommendation for future strategies.
 - a. Expand social media channels for major divisions.
 - b. Focus on applications to targeted groups i.e. Instagram, Twitter, YouTube and LinkedIn.
 - c. Seek opportunities to cross promote with other agencies.
 - d. Identify automation resources and determine possibility and integration to e-mails, etc.
6. Increase awareness of Park District peripheral services-volunteers, gardens, etc.
7. Institute a community planning/networking day focused on key dates, events, etc.

Strategic Initiative #6: Highly Engaged Employees

Gurnee Park District strives to have staff who serve the community, take ownership, have fun and accept each other and customers as part of the family, all while upholding a high level of integrity.

In order to achieve exceptional customer service, it is vital to attract and retain high quality staff. Gurnee Park District promotes a culture in which each member of the team plays a vital role in promoting the mission and vision of the Park District. The District realizes that one of the reasons it is a Gold Medal Park District is due to the quality of its staff. The SOFFI Customer Service Standards set the guidelines for staff performance and attitude and its success has been shown by recent staff surveys that indicate job satisfaction is above 90%.

Gurnee is home to a balanced economy which includes an increasingly modernized industrial sector, large shopping mall and many retail businesses, a large regional theme park and busy services such as restaurants and hotels that serve all of these attractions and the residents. Gurnee Park District feels it is important that the District is seen as a “destination employer” for many individuals that are interested in employment. In order to attract and retain the best employees, the District needs to offer competitive pay and growth opportunities.

At Gurnee Park District, there is a trend where several of the supervisory staff worked for the District either as a student themselves or as an intern. Now, they are employed with the District in full-time, leadership roles. Gurnee Park District believes that attracting, training and retaining people from the community is a strength that whenever feasible need to be considered.

Gurnee Park District believes it is important to have a well-trained and appropriately staffed workforce to meet the recreational needs of the community. In order to do this, the District must strive to have a workforce that is representative of the community. The chart below indicates ethnicity as reported in the 2010 US Census figures for Gurnee as they compare to current Gurnee Park District employees (as of November 1, 2016):

	* Gurnee	** Employees	Difference
White, not Hispanic or Latino	66.7%	76.6%	9.9%
Hispanic or Latino	11.7%	10.7%	-1.0%
Two or more races	3.2%	3.9%	0.7%
African American	7.8%	4.4%	-3.4%
Asian	11.6%	4.4%	-7.2%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0.3%	0.0%	-0.3%

* Statistics and categories as identified on 2010 US Census Bureau Statistics.

** Statistics based on submitted background check forms to State of Illinois.

Recent staff surveys shows that the overall job satisfaction is over 90%. The District strives to provide a good work environment for employees as this has an impact on job performance and customer service. Monitoring employee satisfaction levels is something that will continue in future years.

INTERNAL FACTORS

- Reputation of the Park District in the community
- Gurnee Park District has a diverse group of employees in age, ethnicity, education, experience and gender
- Training opportunities for full-time staff are great
- In general, retention rates of full-time staff are very good
- Gurnee Park District has great relationships with schools, sports organizations and high school teams that allows them great access to prospective young employees
- Decentralized approach to hiring and orientation process lends to less consistent training and lower efficiency of supervisory staff
- Measure of ethnicity of current employees does not match US Census breakdown of ethnicities in Gurnee
- Training opportunities for part-time staff are typically only specific to their jobs
- Constant hiring and training associated with younger staff attrition. This attrition is not uncommon as many in this age group leave work for reasons other than employee performance
- Use of technology to aid in training and documentation of training is currently underutilized
- Gurnee Park District currently does not actively promote its jobs in churches or other culturally/ethnically appropriate places
- Engagement in extra-curricular activities and academics challenges the District's ability to hire and maintain staff who can work appropriate hours

EXTERNAL FACTORS

- Consistent support and agreement that an HR Professional is now needed and justified with the District's recent growth in number of employees. An HR professional would allow the Park District to offer a more consistent hiring process, orientation process and other general HR tasks that are being spread between several staff with other responsibilities or some processes that are not being achieved currently
- Prospective employees are on average very proficient with computers. Providing more web-based training opportunities for staff would help in consistency of delivering and tracking training. It would also lend to more consistency of training to staff
- Ethnicity of current staff can be improved to match the community
- Attitude of young staff seems to have changed recently resulting in higher employee turnover rates and the interest in working shorter shifts, most notably with high school and college-aged staff. There is a tremendous amount of competition for high school and college-aged staff in Gurnee with several other recreation, hospitality and retail jobs available
- Government regulation may soon require an increase to the minimum wage which will impact staff expenses and likely mean fee increases for participants. The Affordable Care Act limits the District's ability to offer consistent hours while maintaining part-time status
- The aging population and additional competition for workers contributes to fewer teenaged employees available to fill job openings

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Enhance Gurnee Park District's Human Resources Program.
 - a. Identify and hire a Human Resources professional to help with recruiting, hiring and retention processes.
 - b. Develop onboarding and initial orientation for employees.
 - c. Identify training requirements for each job and develop tracking procedures to monitor compliance.
2. Increase interest in working in the recreation industry as a short term job or long term career.
 - a. Provide workshops led by Department Heads (or appropriate staff) to highlight the many aspects/available jobs that park districts have to offer the community.
 - b. Explore ways to offer more teen and college-based job shadowing or internship opportunities.
 - c. Provide additional training and education on more Park District related details and general skill development.
 - d. Develop more attractive recruiting materials to exist physically and electronically.
3. Improve the ethnic/cultural diversity of Park District staff to better align with the community.
 - a. By focusing job recruitment efforts to all groups that represent the ethnic identity of the Gurnee community, the Park District can achieve this goal.
 - b. Work more closely with ethnically representative groups in the community (schools, churches, service organizations, Park District volunteers, etc.). The District can increase the interest in employment with them and in the recreation industry as a whole.
4. Evaluate front desk operations at the three main facilities (Hunt Club Park Community Center, Viking Park Community Center and FitNation) and make needed changes to improve efficiency in operations and enhance customer service.
 - a. Study the current front desk operations (phone and in person customer interactions) at Viking Park and Hunt Club Park Community Centers to determine whether or not changes should be made.
 - b. Explore the possibility of adding registration for recreation programs to front desk operations at FitNation.

Strategic Initiative #7: Financial Stability

Gurnee Park District will deliver on the mission and vision with comprehensive financial planning while demonstrating fiscal responsibility.

Gurnee Park District's 48 plus years of service to the community has seen growth in programs, facilities and recreation value for Gurnee Park District residents. Financial stability through planning and fiscal responsibility has been a key driver behind these many successful years. Gurnee Park District enters this strategic plan period in a financially stable position.

Financial stability means the following for Gurnee Park District:

1. The District can afford the maintenance and improvement of all currently owned infrastructure at a standard of excellence that is expected by the community.
2. Financial resources meet current operating expenditures as well as future needs and growth.
3. Balanced operating budget.
4. Financial resources available to support the District's ability to adapt to changes and shifts both known and unknown.
5. Financial resources to handle law changes and unfunded mandates.
6. Continued planning of major capital expenditures and use of debt financing.

The two main revenue sources for the Park District are property taxes and fees for services. These two sources currently account for 37% and 57% of total revenue, respectively. Having this revenue balance between property taxes and fees for services is very important to the financial strength of the Park District. In the Recreation Fund, fees for services account for 87% of the total revenue. Over the past several years, the Park District has worked hard on expanding revenue from fees and charges for services. A major move in this direction was the acquisition of FitNation, the Park District's 75,000 square foot fitness center. Prior to the opening of FitNation, total Park District revenue split between property taxes and fees for services was around 50/50, and Recreation Fund revenue was 80% from fees for services. Continued revenue growth from fees for services is extremely important for the financial stability of the Park District given the expected lack of growth in property tax revenue over the next several years.

Fiscal responsibility through expenditure accountability is very important to the overall fiscal stability of the Park District. Gurnee Park District regularly reviews financial results compared to the budget. Each month, financial results are reported and discussed with the Board of Park Commissioners. In addition, relevant program information, year-to-date revenues, expenditures and projected year-end results are provided by staff. Tracking of capital improvement project expenditures is provided on a regular basis as well. Gurnee Park District promotes an environment of always seeking out operational efficiencies that lead to expenditures savings without sacrificing delivery of excellent service to the community.

According to the latest bond rating from Moody's Investor Services, the Park District's current debt burden is "modest." The Park District's statutory debt limit is 2.875% of the Equalized Assessed Valuation of all taxable property located within the boundaries of the District. The current amount of outstanding debt applicable to the statutory limit is only 3.18% of the total debt limit.

The Park District currently has outstanding debt for the construction of Hunt Club Park Aquatic Center in 2001, the construction of Hunt Club Park Community Center in 2006 and the purchase and rehabilitation of FitNation in 2013. The Hunt Club Park Aquatic Center debt is on schedule to be fully paid off in 2021. The Hunt Club Park Community Center debt is on schedule to be fully paid off in 2024. The recent debt for FitNation is scheduled to be fully paid off in 2036 with all debt payments made from fitness operations revenue.

The Park District Board of Commissioners annually adopts an operating budget for the District. The Park District adheres to a balanced budget policy. Under normal conditions, operating expenditures are less than operating revenues. Surplus from operations funds a portion of ongoing capital improvement needs. A total budget deficit will only be the result of discretionary spending approved by the Board for capital improvements. One-time or special purpose revenues will be used to finance capital projects or for expenditure required by the revenue and not to subsidize recurring personnel costs or other operating costs.

The Park District's fund balance policy prescribes to maintain a prudent level of financial resources when possible to protect against revenue shortfalls or unpredicted expenditures. The fund balance policy for most funds is to have a minimum fund balance of 25% (three months) of the following year's operating expenditures. For the General Fund and Recreation Fund, balances above the three month target may be transferred to the Capital Replacement/Development Fund with Board approval.

INTERNAL FACTORS

- Current fund balance levels meet fund balance goal in all funds other than the Hunt Club Park Aquatic Center Fund
- Strong revenue split between fees for services and property tax revenue
- Well-developed financial policies in place to guide path of continued financial stability
- Great track record of expenditure accountability
- Current tax rate in operation funds (General and Recreation) are well below state caps
- High percentage of staff are part-time employees which provides more flexibility in adjusting staffing levels, as needed, based on weather and participation levels
- Fitness membership level still in growth period
- Good use of intergovernmental cooperation to promote expense savings
- Modest debt burden
- Aging facility, playground, equipment and asphalt infrastructure
- Additional costs associated with changing recreational program offerings
- Potential rising employee transition costs with aging employee population
- Fees for some recreation programming near levels to price ourselves out of market

EXTERNAL FACTORS

- Growth in interest income is related directly to Federal interest rate change
- Modest growth in Equalized Assessed Value in Gurnee after several consecutive years of decline
- Strengthening economic outlook nationally and locally
- Current positive reputation of the Park District
- Increase in project bid limit from \$20,000 to \$25,000
- The Park District's Risk Management Agency has been aggressively investigating lower cost employee health insurance options due to the unstable and rising costs of the health insurance markets
- State of Illinois unfunded mandates

- Possible tax levy freeze
- Negative public opinion of taxes
- Change in the Park District's community demographics (age)
- Growing competition from private sector service providers
- Poor weather in the summer has a negative effect on Hunt Club Park Aquatic Center's operations
- Property tax cap limits increases are based on CPI (Consumer Price Index) for all goods and services while the Park District's main expenditures are in the area of personnel and contractual services
- Possible minimum wage law change
- Prevailing wage driving up costs

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Maintain fund balance levels detailed in the Park District's Fund Balance Policy.
2. Evaluate the fund relationship between the Recreation and Hunt Club Park Aquatic Center Fund.
 - a. Consider consolidating the Hunt Club Park Aquatic Center Fund into the Recreation Fund for internal financial reporting purposes to match audited financial reporting.
 - b. Review the Hunt Club Park Aquatic Center fund balance target when the debt on the facility is paid off in January 2021.
3. Build on and extend the current long term capital replacement/improvement plan.
 - a. Create a multi-year long term capital replacement/improvement plan for all Park District capital assets, incorporating the replacement schedule contained in the Park District's Master Plan.
 - b. Establish procedures to use the long-term capital replacement/improvement plan to create the annual budget for the capital funds.
 - c. Review the capital replacement/improvement plan annually during the budget process.
4. Establish a long term comprehensive financial plan to support capital replacement/improvement plan and fund balance goals.
 - a. Enhance the long-term financial planning process and document.
 - b. Present long-term financial plan to the Park District Board during the annual budget process.
 - c. Reduce dependence on tax revenue income source by expansion of recreational revenue source through different services.
 - d. Create business plans in the various recreation programming areas (already exists in fitness operations).
5. Evaluate and make needed changes to the business model for recreation programs.
 - a. Evaluate and make changes to the Categories of Services.
 - b. Develop business and marketing plans for major revenue producing areas.
6. Consider establishing a Finance Committee to address future considerations of increasing revenue through other sources or reducing cost by outsourcing work.

Summary of Recommendations

Strategic Initiative	Recommendations to Achieve Initiative
<p>1. Excellence in Parks and Facilities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and upgrade the Park Maintenance Plan and the Standards of Maintenance. • Update the capital replacement schedule using a five year budgeting plan. • Address the need for maintenance and storage facilities. • Identify additional recreation space to meet demands for new, expanding or otherwise popular activities. • Explore nature preservation and conservation opportunities. • Enhance the District’s current operations and policy training programs.
<p>2. Exceptional Programs and Services for the Community</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide an in-depth review in each program area, and if necessary, identify steps to implement changes that will result in more efficient delivery of necessary activities and services. • Obtain and study the demographic data for the District and make changes to program offerings accordingly. • Provide greater flexibility of activities for residents (weekends, evening, early mornings, drop-in activities, bring activities to the customer, childcare provided). • Identify additional resources and strategies to provide more access to activities for families in need of financial assistance. • Offer additional sports programming and enhance existing sports programs. • Provide more education to the community on how park district programs and services can benefit their quality of life. • Develop measurement/statistical data reporting for recreation program participation and trends that allows the District to make data driven decisions.
<p>3. Leader in Promoting Health and Wellness for the Community</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop relationships with key health and wellness influencers within the community. • Offer health and wellness initiatives (separate from revenue producing programming) in collaboration with other agencies, business, sponsor, etc. • Work with Village of Gurnee to enhance biking and walking trail system throughout the community.

GURNEE PARK DISTRICT STRATEGIC PLAN 2017-2022

Strategic Initiative	Recommendations to Achieve Initiative
<p>4. Strong Intergovernmental Relations and Community Engagement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and engage community members currently not involved with the District through programs and volunteer opportunities. • Strengthen relationships with local taxing agencies and not-for-profit organizations. • Strengthen relationships with the business community. • Establish positive relationships with all legislators within the District and keep them informed of Park District initiatives and needs.
<p>5. Effective Communications, Marketing and Customer-friendly Processes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a comprehensive Customer Service/Sales Plan. • Further define roles and responsibilities of Marketing Team. • Review and recommend changes to current customer processes/registration. • Conduct a comprehensive evaluation of current brochure. • Evaluate effectiveness of advertising mediums, explore emerging mediums and provide a recommendation for future strategies. • Increase awareness of Park District peripheral services-volunteers, gardens, etc. • Institute a community planning/networking day focused on key dates, events, etc.
<p>6. Highly Engaged Employees</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance the Gurnee Park District’s Human Resources Program. • Increase interest in working in the recreation industry as a short term job or long term career. • Improve the ethnic/cultural diversity of Park District staff to better align with the community. • Evaluate front desk operations at the three main facilities (Hunt Club Park Community Center, Viking Park Community Center and FitNation) and make needed changes to improve efficiency in operations and enhancement in customer service.
<p>7. Financial Stability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain fund balance levels detailed in the Park District’s Fund Balance Policy. • Evaluate the fund relationship between the Recreation and Hunt Club Park Aquatic Center Funds. • Build on and extend the current long term capital replacement/improvement plan. • Establish a long term comprehensive financial plan to support capital replacement/improvement plan and fund balance goals. • Evaluate and make needed changes to the business model for Recreation programs. • Consider establishing a Finance Committee to address future considerations of increasing revenue through other sources or reducing cost by outsourcing work.

Attachments

Gurnee Park District Consolidated SWOT Analysis Summary - 2016-Final

(Based on Park Board and Executive Steering Committee Feedback)

	POSITIVES	NEGATIVES
Internal to your agency	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Strengths</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial stability • Staff - talented, well trained, knowledgeable, good balance of young and experienced staff • Customer service • Government and community relationships are strong • Teamwork atmosphere • Excellent facilities and beautiful parks • Trendsetting - innovation encouraged • High quality programs at a good value • Reputation in the community • A work culture that is family-friendly • Gold Medal Park District 	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Weaknesses</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of storage space throughout district • Internal communication breakdown/inconsistency between individuals as well as departments • Human Resources and hiring process • Programming (gym) space limited at times • Part time employee retention - staff hours are limited, no benefits offered • Consistency between facilities • Aging maintenance facilities • HCPAC – aging, needs re-branding • Limited adult programming • Parks staff productivity limited by Recreation work orders • Costs for non-residents
External to your agency	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Opportunities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue building strong relationships within Gurnee and surrounding areas to expand programs and services • Growth in adult programming • Partnerships/sponsorships with business/community engagement • New RecTrac version to manage business and enhance customer experience • Building new maintenance facilities • Changing market demographics and our ability to adapt • Online training or recertification programs • Successful, strong fitness operation • More opportunities for continuing ed/professional development • Lifestyle trends - growing health-conscious consumers • Utilization of social media/technology • Re-evaluate priorities and responsibilities • Utilize and repurpose space to expand programming 	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Threats</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local competition - public and private • Constant/rapid technology changes • Need for funding new maintenance facilities • Employee retention - leave for higher wages, not enough perks • Minimum wage increase • Increasing govt. regulation • Property tax freeze • Demographics changing - aging community • Children specializing in sport at younger ages • Economic downturn • Rising healthcare costs • HCPAC relevancy and self-sustainability (because of weather)

Summary of Feedback Sessions for Gurnee Park District Strategic Planning

(Includes Park Board, Executive Steering Committee, Community and Leader-to-Leader Interviews)

ATTACHMENT B

As part of the Strategic Planning process for 2017-2022, Gurnee Park District conducted a series of feedback sessions. These sessions identified strategic initiatives necessary to sustain the high level of success achieved by the Park District. The feedback sessions and formats included...

- A workshop with the Park District Board of Commissioners
- A workshop with the Strategic Plan Executive Steering Committee (ESC). The ESC consists of selected senior-level Park District staff and employees
- Two community meetings conducted using a “World Café” format
- Leader-to-leader interviews conducted by Park District Board members with selected Gurnee Community leaders

All feedback sessions were conducted between April – August 2016 and included a total of 70 participants (ESC-20, Board-5, Leader-to-Leader-12, Community meetings-33). Several strategic initiatives were identified as a result of the research. These initiatives are listed below and organized in a “Balanced Scorecard” format.

From a customer perspective:

- 1. Continue to strive for excellence in Parks and Facilities.**
- 2. Deliver exceptional programs and services to the community.**
- 3. Be a leader in promoting health and wellness in the community.**

From an internal perspective:

- 4. Foster effective communications, marketing and customer-friendly processes.**
- 5. Strengthen intergovernmental relations and community engagement.**

From an employee learning and growth perspective:

- 6. Develop and retain highly engaged employees.**

From a financial perspective:

- 7. Continue to strengthen financial stability.**

The following pages provide details, comments, suggestions and quotes from the feedback sessions for each of the identified strategic initiatives. The notes are annotated with the source of the comment or thought: (ESC)-Executive Steering committee workshop, (Board)-Board workshop, (Community)-Community meetings, (Name)-Leader to Leader interviewee.

#1 Excellence in Parks and Facilities*Customer perspective*

1. **Keep Parks/playgrounds cutting edge, beautiful and safe. (ESC).** Address the aging Infrastructure and equipment. Make sure it is updated and kept current. (ESC and Board)
 - People trust you! Sustain that trust! (Community)
 - Safety and awareness of park usage – i.e. preventing unwanted after-hours usage. (Community)
 - Ensure highest standards of Parks Maintenance: (Community)
 - Take park maintenance up another level! Standard is slipping!
 - Keeping within budget
 - Plan/budget accordingly
 - Partnering with other government entities (HS)
 - Updating with current equipment and best practices
 - Complete projects in timely manner (i.e. remodeling playgrounds)
 - Hire additional full time parks maintenance employee(s) to help keep up
 - Community gardens – explore interest, for all ages? (Community)
 - An additional space (O’Plaine Park?) for garden for food donation
2. **Enhance existing parks and facilities (Community)**
 - Misters/sprayers. Spray grounds (e.g. Grayslake, Mundelein) (Community)
 - Family locker room expanded at HCPAC. (Community)
 - Expand HCPCC for camps, etc. (Community)
 - More parking for some parks. (Community)
 - More pavilions or places to have get-togethers. (Community)
 - More bathroom facilities and water fountains. (Community)
 - Updates per Betty Russell Park; offering things such as shelters and more community-centric (adult things). (Community)
 - Park shade areas (e.g. Westgate) and places to sit at neighborhood parks. (Community)
 - Wi-Fi at parks. (Community)
 - More covered areas for people to cool down or get warmed up during winter (trees, shelter). (Community)
 - Address current demographics when updating parks. (Community)
 - Offer games such as the electronic game at Warren Township Park
3. **Explore possibilities for new parks and facilities (Community)**
 - Tennis courts (west side void/Ravinia Park). (Community)
 - Outdoor Pickle ball courts (borrow racquets). (Community)
 - Volleyball (Ravinia still?) for older kids. (Community)
 - Hunt Club Community Center fitness rooms – expand? (Community)

#1 Excellence in Parks and Facilities (continued)

- Lacrosse fields and programs for all ages. (Community)
- Outdoor basketball – full court? (Community)

- Develop a Park District indoor ice rink – two sheets for hockey, figure skating, camps, social events, sled hockey, general recreation. Families and Park District values align. (growth-leadership-trust) (Community)
 - Support the growth of ice sports in Gurnee and the surrounding communities (hockey-figure-special needs)
 - Keep families and athletics in town
 - Gurnee and bordering towns 1000 kids – less than 50% stay in town
 - program growth from four teams to 13 in four years
 - Gurnee residents going to Pleasant Prairie
 - Unfortunate practice times
 - Tournaments would be a winter draw - benefits hotels, restaurants
 - Outside communities will not compete in Gurnee due to current facility (loss of revenue/tournaments)
 - House program doubled three years
 - Travel tripled four years; two are all girls
 - High school Varsity and JV (all girls) schools
 - Not enough ice to support growth. People are leaving!
 - Support for multi seasonal use
 - Kids from three years to adults will benefit all day 18 hrs.
 - Support of other facilities
- Turf fields – multisport i.e. Waukegan (near airport). (Community)
- Lights for tennis courts and basketball courts at bigger parks. (Community)
- Solar powered facilities. (Community)
- Frisbee golf course. (Community)
- Self-guided fitness park (Glenview installed one at Gallery Park). (Community)
- Adult game play areas (bocce ball, pickleball, badminton, bags, shuffleboard, etc.)
- Parks mainly geared toward young children. In the effort to increase activity for older citizens and teens, perhaps develop more amenities to draw a more diverse demographic. (Community)
 - Basketball, tennis, sand volleyball
 - Soccer fields, baseball, etc.
- Increase field space to host tournaments – soccer, baseball, lacrosse. (Community)
- Teen center facility – east end of district. (Community)

#1 Excellence in Parks and Facilities (continued)

- Safe afterschool environment
- Structured programs. Tutoring opportunities
- Facility for specific sports/activities (i.e. pickleball). (Community)
- Soccer/lacrosse fields would benefit from having dedicated locations including enhanced fields i.e. underground irrigation, fertilization and mowing appropriately. (Community)

4. Improve space and storage usage. (ESC)

- Retail space at FitNation needs to be fully programmed by GPD
- Maintenance/storage facility at HCPCC (ESC)
- Build a central maintenance and storage facility. (ESC)

5. Acquire additional properties near flagship parks. (Board)

- Acquire additional open space. (Community)
- Keep it natural; don't overbuild. (Community)

Quotes from Community Leaders

For some older neighborhoods, look for places to provide parks and/or open space. Keep up the good work! (Simpson)

Acquire more land – especially large pieces. (Simpson) Again, more land because constituents want more. Very well run organization; loyal staff. Good, cohesive board. (Simpson)

#2 Exceptional Programs and Services for the Community*Customer perspective***1. Adapt programming to a changing population, shifting preferences and current trends. (ESC)**

- Expand sport offerings. (Community)
 - More for teens and adults with a variety of sports
 - For Soccer – Enhance partnerships or consider affiliating with AYSO.
 - For Soccer - Consider grouping league for which there are limited teams with other park districts so there are more than three teams in an age group
 - Structured tennis school
 - Lacrosse development (2) especially for girls
 - Lacrosse fundamentals for young kids
 - Wall ball
 - Adventure races – Spartan, Ninja warrior
 - Runs and races for children
- Enhance ice skating programs. (Community)
 - Learn to skate, hockey programs
 - Little coordination of RinkSide with GPD
 - Perhaps partner/buy facility or establish/build our own
 - Discontinue outdoor ice rinks-difficult to maintain and limited in use
- FitNation – should open earlier on weekends. (Community)
- Create a “Gaming” center/technology center. (Community)
- Improve the farmers market-consider a different day/time and location. (Community)
- Offer a full day camp option for < 5 years old. (Community)
- Toddler programs – tumbling (in-house). (Community)
- Teen programs; Non-sports-related activities for tweens/teens. (Community)
- More Rec-Mobile events and locations. (Community)
- Summer Camp program transportation from Viking to Hunt Club for before/after camp. (Community)
- In general, provide programs supporting our youth and adults to keep our communities safe, clean and positive. (Community)
- Offer more festivals – Winter carnival, Halloween, Lighting of trees. (Community)
- Offer more concerts! (with expanded food selection) Concert series on weekends. (Community)
- More special events. Social events for teens/families. (Community)
- Movie in the Park (the one held during Gurnee Days is adjacent to the carnival rides-not good location). (Community)

#2 Exceptional Programs and Services for the Community (continued)Quotes from Community Leaders

Balance is key from my perspective. The need to balance traditional recreation activities with technology's impact on "recreation" (drones, hover boards, Pokemon Go, etc.) Offering opportunities for opposite ends of the generational spectrum – baby boomers and millennials. (Muetz)

Mainly just keep doing what you are doing. Ice Rink. Wi-Fi access in parks (13/14 initiative to investigate, not sure where this is at). Double-edged sword - don't want kids sitting around on cell phones when they are supposed to be active. (Muetz)

2. Enhance Adult programming (ESC)

- Offer outdoor fitness opportunities at the parks. (ESC)
- Offer adult competitive leagues/tournaments; Softball, Volleyball, Tennis, Basketball, Hockey, Curling. (Community)
- Offer some of the following adult recreational programs. (Community)
 - Volleyball, basketball, softball, Pickleball in the evening
 - A Running Club
 - Water fitness in the evening
 - Offer affordable daily fees for fitness and aquatic centers
 - Basket weaving
 - Cooking
- More adult focused interests/groups/activities. (Community)
- Seasonal day trips for adults and/or families. (Community)
- Programs at convenient times for working parents with children. (Community)
- Availability of programs for working parents (young kids). (Community)
- Adults/senior citizen trips and gatherings. (Community)

3. Provide recreational services that address diversity and changing demographics (i.e., aging population) in the community (ESC and Board). Embrace the aging demographic and sociocultural needs by offering relevant programming, facilities and services. (ESC)

- More inclusive of all demographics, not only young children. (Community)
- Programming that meets the needs of all cultures. (Community)
- Bilingual/multicultural events. (Community)
- Expand offerings to include things like "dealing with loss" "work/life balance". (i.e. expand from physical focus to include emotional/mental growth). (Community)
- Diverse programs that include age, ethnicity, etc. (Community)

Quotes from community leaders

Demographic changes - > 40% of the students are considered "high poverty". How to support children and their families. (Swoboda)

#2 Exceptional Programs and Services for the Community (continued)

Address the demographic changes: costs of programs, location, etc. (haves vs. have-nots). The Park District is so strong, it's hard to come up with areas to improve. Assess adult programs- possibly do an interest survey. (Swoboda)
Aging demographics - changing neighborhoods, millennials. Keeping parks fresh and appealing to new families and generations. (Kovarik)

4. Design selected programs and events to connect different demographics within the community (Community)

- Multi-generational involvement. (Community)
- Bring various generations together – teens teach seniors (technology) and vice versa – seniors teach life skills like carpentry, electricity. (Community)
- Teen center concept (senior/teen fusion or “fusion center”). Senior volunteers offer structured programs for t(w)eens e.g. carpentry, cooking, sewing, babysitting classes, tutoring. (Community)
- Organize Community Service Days. (Community)
 - Park pride – spruce up parks
 - Clean up – painting, etc.
 - Shovel snow – helping needy or elderly
- Community events to help those in need (shoveling snow, home upkeep, etc.). (Community)
- Teen volunteers offer computer skills to seniors – how to use social networks and phones, etc. (Community)
- Fostering community service/wellness checks – volunteer coordination. (Community)
- Offer the Great American Campout more than once. (Community)
- Reach out to small businesses – hold small business days; Realtor, Attorney, Handyman/plumber. (Community)

5. Provide lower cost program options to benefit current demographics. Improve social equity. (ESC)

- Engage Non-users/marginalized/low-income residents. (Community)

Quotes from Community Leaders

(Institute a) Program where we feed the community and students over the summer. (Swoboda)
Regarding his district – potential development of a lunch program for low income families that possibly involve Park District, Village and other entities. (Hutton)

6. Expand programs and services to a regional audience at a reduced non-resident fee. (ESC)

- WSRA to offer wider variety of programs for all ages. (Community)
- Develop feeder sports programs: offering wider array of sports for popular sports. (Community)
- Offer wider variety of levels for different classes – make sure there are introduction and basic levels. (Community)

#3 Leader in promoting health and wellness for the Community*Customer perspective***1. Create connectivity of trails throughout Gurnee. (Board)**

- Accessible walking and running trails – local races for novice runners and kids. (Community)
- Connect trails in parks; park to park, trails to sidewalks, Bike lanes. (Community)
- Community assets within 15 minutes of all residents. (Community)
- Get people outside year-round. (Community)

Quotes from Community Leaders

Community – more walkable and bike-able. Hockey rink possibilities (Kovarik)

2. Grow “GO GURNEE”. (Board)

- Push the GO GURNEE initiative. (Community)
 - Not only providing support to top youth athletes
 - Provide support and empowerment to our mature residents
 - Use of older residents’ special skills to teach teens– welding, woodworking, carpentry
 - Go out and advise and provide classes for our adults
 - Expand the initiative to running, other activities.
- Focus more on work/life balance. (Community)
- Offer more 2K/5K run/walks – currently only around Gurnee Days timeframe. (Community)
 - Biking/Hiking – can even be for a benefit (local needs or crisis)
 - GO GURNEE walk & talk 6:30 am/6:30 pm

Quotes from Community Leaders

One of the most significant factors I think the Park District should continue to focus on is the growth of our area and their (the Park District's) terrific efforts to provide everyone the same quality of events and services as has been done in the past. (Yingling)

In the next 4-5 years, I'd like to see the Park District continue to provide the same great programs and events as has been offered in the past. I especially liked their recent efforts with "GO GURNEE" and hope that continues. (Yingling)

Continue GO GURNEE campaign. Advocacy campaign (Livergood)

3. Establish a Health & Wellness Day (Community)

- a. Blood pressure screening, Massage therapy, Community services awareness by attorneys, nutritionists, etc. (Community)

4. The Park District is keenly aware of the growing health conscious consumer and should continue to offer a wide variety of activities, programs and events to meet this need. (ESC)

- Be more green and preserve nature. Highlight how that’s done. (Community)
- Put pressure on schools to offer healthier beverages and food options. (Community)

#3 Leader in promoting health and wellness for the Community (continued) *Customer perspective*

- Alternative energy classes (solar panels, preservation). Environmental classes. (Community)
- Expand community gardens to include nutritional education, fresh food availability, cooking classes, social events surrounding these community gardens. (Community)

#4 Strong intergovernmental relations and community engagement *Internal perspective*

1. Continue to develop and enhance relationships with community organizations and other local government bodies. (ESC and Board)
2. Maintain strong communication between the Village, the Park District and Warren Township. (Community)
3. Provide leadership and involvement in community activities (give back). Pay it forward. (Board)
4. Work with township & library on events/programs/trips. (Community)
5. Partner with local businesses for sponsored classes (i.e. YWCA, senior centers). (Community)
6. Incorporate District 56 kids in afterschool programs, provide transportation. (Community)
7. Partner with local organizations to expand offerings- i.e. library. (Community)
8. Partner with high school for increased opportunities for teens (i.e. intramural basketball league (Note: from the audience, Mark Pos explained that the high school and Park District currently offer intramurals). (Community)
9. Stay connected with what other park districts have done/are doing to remain relevant and support our community. (Community)
10. When coordinating with other agencies consider... (Community)
 - Park District should take the lead!
 - Community trusts Gurnee Park District and feels it has the same values and beliefs as parents
 - Push community wellness for all ages
 - Champion community activities for all ages – including volunteering
 - Elderly outreach
 - Continue relationships with other agencies – Township, Bittersweet Golf Course, Library
 - Collaborative special events
 - Trade school initiative (between teens and mature adults sharing skills with each other)

#4 Strong intergovernmental relations and community engagement (community) (continued)

- Village and Park District share events
- 11. Work with school districts – better connectedness to school sports including soccer, swimming and lacrosse. (Community)
- 12. Liaison with other program entities (High School, Woodland, all Gurnee schools, Warren Twp., etc.) plus Latino support, Lake County Forest Preserve and Village of Gurnee, Six Flags. (Community)
- 13. Work with Historical sites (i.e. Mother Rudd House). (Community)

Quotes from Community Leaders:

I am impressed that Gurnee representatives actively reach out to lawmakers and other leaders. I think continued communication, such as in-person meetings, email and social media are beneficial and I look forward to our continued interactions. (Yingling)

Keep legislators informed of pressing issues, maintain open communication. (Jesiel)

Continue positive communication/relationships with professional associations-IAPD/IPRA. The Park District appears to have a positive image within these organizations. (Jesiel)

Communication between both entities I think is better than it's ever been. I think effort needs to go into communicating to the public and continuing to partner on projects. I think the Village and Park District have made some great strides over the past 3-4 years...combined newsletter, Families on the Fairway, Frosty Fest, Welton Plaza, potential property swap...the cooperation between the two organizations has really improved. All the taxing bodies need to get together on a more formal basis (Open Meetings Act) and identify opportunities for collaboration, economies of scale savings, etc. Larger, community-wide strategic plan, service/equipment sharing or joint contracting. Bikability/walkability – areas where financially unfeasible for one entity to tackle a gap (Washington @ Hunt Club) – is there an opportunity for sharing such an expense – benefits the overall community. (Muetz)

(Warren Township and Gurnee Park District are) Very collaborative already! Appreciate the cooperation and willingness to help – unconditionally. (Simpson)

Great working relationship – continue working together! (Kovarik)

Maintaining present status. Very fortunate to have Susie as Executive Director and her ability to collaborate joint efforts for community improvement. (Hutton)

Continued positive relationship, extremely happy with past situations – Kilbourne school - land-development. Current working relationship with River Trail School – playground, parking, etc. (Hutton)

We are in a fluid society. In the past, we centered all our activity within the community: church, school, shopping, and recreation. Now, we are fluid and dispersed. In five years, GPD must provide programs and facilities that support the mobile society at all times.

Other government agency planning is an influencer. Municipal plans influence what GPD may need to do: senior housing, single family affordable, etc. can determine the trend in our area and shape the demographics. Consider collaborative planning between agencies. Cooperative planning will mitigate the impact of inevitable changes in individual leadership. ([Link](#))

Keep up the great work! My office and I look forward to our continued partnerships. (Yingling)

Keep working cooperatively. Listen to the people and you can act and defend your actions. ([Link](#))

#5 Effective communications, marketing and customer friendly processes *Internal perspective*Technology-oriented

1. Stay current with technology trends – VSI, MainTrac. The Park District needs to stay current with the evolving technology and trends. (ESC)
2. Offer premier customer experience through technology. For example, online registration and social media usage. (ESC)
3. Continue to ensure that our internal and external customer service – technology/communication process/procedure standards are superior to experience with like providers. (ESC)
4. Streamline email system for notifications and program offerings, e.g. Monthly newsletter. (Community)
5. Designate an emerging technology innovator, for example, Pokemon-Go. Whatever comes next in terms of technology-driven recreational trends. (Community)
6. Offer a mobile app highlighting activities, exercise and education. (Community)

Quotes from Community Leaders

We are in a fluid society. In the past, we centered all our activity within the community: church, school, shopping, and recreation. Now, we are fluid and dispersed. In 5 years, GPD must provide programs and facilities that support the mobile society at all times. (Link)

Policy and process oriented

1. We have established consistency in the customer service provided at all facilities. Maintain that excellence. (ESC)
2. To ensure GPD is providing relevant services and community programs, need to ensure plans are executed well. Will need to consider age-appropriate plans (including elderly, young children). (Community)
3. Human Resources policies and procedures must keep up with GPD growth. (ESC)
4. Review and focus the Hunt Club Park Aquatic Center positioning (internal and external). (ESC)
5. Project management – timing/priority/quality/relevancy/impact. (ESC)
6. Optimal utilization of space – programs/fields/operations/storage. (ESC)
7. Optimize facility usage and property (use to the fullest potential). (Board)
8. Maximize effectiveness of staff and district resources – contractors/partnerships/affiliates. (ESC)
9. Must be sensitive to scalability of growth – ratios/expectations. (ESC)
10. The Park District has ensured patrons that safety is paramount by: crisis plans, emergency procedures, trained staff, and intergovernmental cooperation and communication. Don't lose that community trust and focus on safety. (ESC)

Quotes from Community Leaders

I think keeping the Plan in front of the public is key. We've developed plans in the past and then not reported on the progress; this was a mistake. Regular reporting lets those that participated see that their involvement is producing results. It also lets people physically see the progress the Park District is making. (Muetz)

Continue to achieve excellence in leadership, community service and programming. (Swoboda)

#5 Effective communications, marketing and customer friendly processes (continued)

Maintain stability – don't take on too much. The Park District is doing great. Focus on what is already going on. The GPD has grown a lot in the last few years. Please try to keep the small town/community feel. (Zeck)

Communication and Marketing oriented

1. Promotion/development of teen and adult programs. (Community)
2. Promote programs more through social media. (Community)
3. Better and increased marketing - e.g. Twitter. (Community)
4. Better marketing of volunteer opportunities. (Community)
5. Electronic scrolling sign. (Community)
6. Develop, enhance website. (Community)
7. Community events boards – e.g. library has one. (Community)
8. Continue to promote inclusion by all government agencies. (Community)
9. Promote community pride – all aspects. (Community)
10. Broaden communication methods/locations to ensure maximum exposure to activities offered. (Community)
11. Maintain strong communications with township/elderly. (Community)
12. Calendar that includes all events – magnet? (Community)
13. Marketing: different ways to promote existing programs. For example - cross market to other agencies' programs. (Community)
14. Communicate what some facilities have/offer e.g. geocache. (Community)
15. Foster open communication between Park District employees and community members. (Community)

Quotes from Community Leaders:

(I suggest) Programming meetings with library. Meetings between marketing depts. (Livergood)

#6 Highly engaged employees*Employee Learning and Growth perspective*

1. People Trust You! (*Sustain that trust*) (Community)
2. Establish a streamlined HR department. (ESC)
3. Attract, hire and promote diversification within the workforce. (Board)
4. Attract, train and retain quality employees. (Board)
5. Recruit and retain quality staff. (ESC)
6. The Park District needs to be progressive and aggressive in recruitment, retention and continual training. (ESC)
7. Keep promoting teen employment. (Community)
8. Future hiring must take into account diversity of community. (Community)

9. Promote internship/job shadow for teens. (Community)
10. Promote volunteer opportunities for all age groups (community garden). (Community)
11. Career counseling for teens – have someone come to summer training - partner with College of Lake County. (Community)

Quotes from Community Leaders:

Discuss employee benefits and how they are communicated to WSRA full time and part time staff. Continued support with inclusion education opportunities, especially within preschool, camp and swimming - seriously consider educational opportunities when recommended by WSRA staff. (Zeck)

#7 Financial stability

Financial perspective

1. Reduce our dependency on tax revenue income source. (Board)
2. Expand recreational revenue source through different services. (Board)

Quotes from Community Leaders:

We serve the common taxpayer. GPD represents the government well by demonstrating fiscal responsibility; builds a positive perception of government in the public eye. I am a proponent of consolidation of local government units, but only replace and consolidate where it makes sense. No need to consolidate if agencies are operating well and within means, case by case. (Link)

The financial impact of the proposed minimum wage increase will be a challenge. The Park District needs to be mindful of the impact that taxes have on residents. (Jesiel)

People want more and want to pay less. Concern locally is high property taxes, statewide is high tax of all types. GPD challenge is how to provide current and additional services efficiently. (Link)