



# 2014 COLUMBUS RECREATION AND PARKS MASTER PLAN

COLUMBUS RECREATION AND PARKS DEPARTMENT

NOVEMBER | 2014



THE CITY OF  
**COLUMBUS**  
MICHAEL B. COLEMAN, MAYOR

RECREATION AND PARKS  
DEPARTMENT

# 2014 COLUMBUS RECREATION AND PARKS MASTER PLAN

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2014 Columbus Recreation and Parks Master Plan will set the course for the next 10+ years of improvements and advancements for the department. This plan updates priorities, identifies needed improvements, and assesses current planning and operations to ensure that the department fulfills its mission “to enrich the lives of our citizens.”

To accomplish this Master Plan, the planning team and the Columbus Recreation and Parks Department (CRPD) studied current needs and determined the ability of current facilities to meet those needs, anticipated growth areas and demand for future services, analyzed socioeconomic trends and changes in preferences, and recommended strategies and tactics to implement needed improvements.

The Master Plan was driven by an extensive public process that included outreach to neighborhoods, a statistically-valid survey and stakeholder and staff interviews. The planning team held a Public Workshop in each of the five identified Study Areas in November and December of 2013. This process engaged more than 120 residents one-on-one and resulted in 1,100 additional public comments online. In May 2014, the planning team returned to present key findings, recommendations and strategies to the public. More than 60 people attended and provided input in-person, and another 230 participated online, providing 1,200 additional comments. Concurrent with the public process, a Community Interest and Opinion Survey was conducted to determine how well the current park system meets existing needs of Columbus residents. The survey reached 1,811 households across the City of Columbus. Stakeholder interviews were conducted with agencies and individuals that are closely partnered with the CRPD. The planning team also conducted interviews with CRPD staff and other City Departments. This input was a key building block of the Master Plan, helping to inform plan recommendations and strategies.

The Master Plan was also informed by site visits to more than 60 parks and facilities and 20 community centers to assess conditions, quality and needed improvements. To identify local and national demographic and park trends, the planning team used U.S. Census data, population and land use forecasts from the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission, and benchmarking analysis from the Trust for Public Land, the Sports & Fitness Industry Association and other sources. Level of Service analysis compared how well the City of Columbus is meeting national and regional standards in terms of service and delivery.

Taken together, this input, professional observation, and analysis provides the foundation for strategies and tactics to improve how CRPD serves Columbus residents. There are numerous successes to build on. Since the previous Master Plan in 2003, CRPD has added more than 1,000 acres of parkland, opened 22 new parks, added 18 new trail miles, and invested in community centers, spraygrounds, pools, and

sport fields. While CRPD falls short in terms of Level of Service standards in many areas, the plan couples this information with survey results and public input to prioritize improvements and investment. Facilities most in demand include walking and biking trails, small neighborhood parks, and large community parks. Programs in demand include adult fitness and wellness, community events, nature programs and outdoor education.

Community Centers and Programming improvements are also required. While many centers have been renovated and/or expanded in recent years and the department has successfully been able to update approximately one center per year, more needs to be done to improve service delivery. Maintenance and security and the consistency and quality of center offerings need to be improved system-wide. The department also needs to consider revenue-generating capabilities to leverage cost recovery for larger centers and certain programs to bring budget allocations more in line with national standards for efficiency. This will require a regional approach to program delivery, better communication and outreach, and stronger partnerships.

Improving maintenance standards of parks, facilities and community centers was another key need identified throughout this planning process. Proper maintenance supports higher property values in the community, reduces crime and vandalism, and promotes a higher level of civic pride.

The Department also plays an important role in the environmental health of the City of Columbus. The department is charged with managing and planting street trees within the city. Since 2003 it has planted more than 18,000 street trees city-wide. City parkland also represents 12.2% of the City's tree canopy, and the department is on the front lines of combatting the loss of tree to the Emerald Ash Borer. Additional, significant investment will be necessary to meet the City's tree canopy goal and to replace lost and damaged trees. The department should continue to prioritize preservation of property that buffer stream corridors, provide wildlife habitat, and protect the city's tree canopy.

This Master Plan provides an action plan for the continued growth, innovation and effectiveness for the Columbus Recreation and Parks Department. Accomplishing all of these improvements and investment will require CRPD to explore other funding models and to collaborate and cooperate with other City departments and public and private sector partners. To effectively plan for the future, there are numerous organizational and budgetary changes that are necessary going forward to allow for greater operational efficiency and functionality. While this will require additional work following this Master Plan, the department will be in a better position to serve existing and future residents of the City of Columbus.

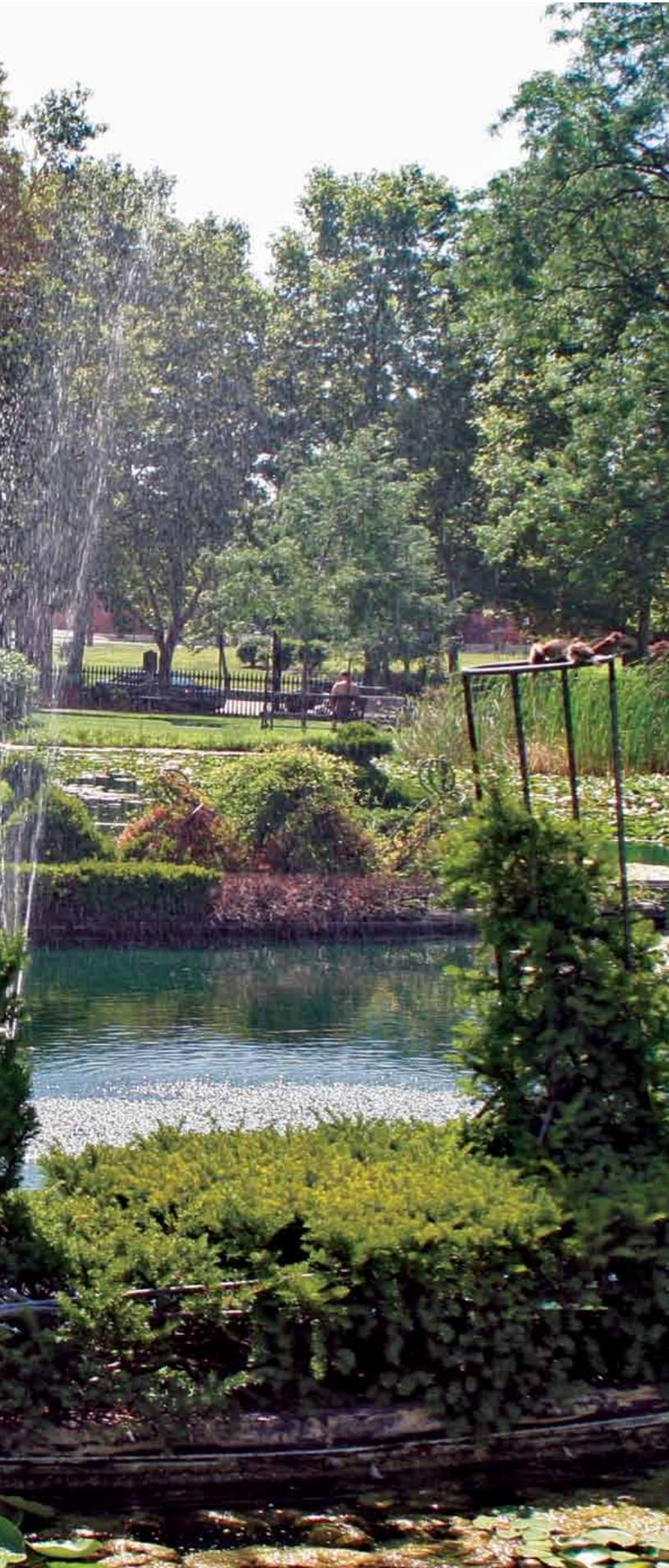


## SECTION 1



### TOPIARY GARDEN AT DEAF SCHOOL PARK

Topiary Garden located in Downtown Columbus was dedicated in 1992, but has a past spanning back to the 19th century when it was part of the Ohio School for the Deaf campus.



The 2014 Columbus Recreation and Parks Master Plan begins by reviewing the purpose and process of the planning effort. Departmental organizational structure, roles and responsibilities are also introduced, as well as accomplishments made by the department in the ten years since the last Master Plan. The importance of parks to the Columbus community is also outlined, setting the stage for the improvements recommended by the Master Plan. Finally, this section explains how to use this plan, summarizing each of the major sections and orienting readers to the content and topics within.

# INTRODUCTION

## PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

The Columbus Recreation and Parks Department (CRPD) is revisiting and revising its 2003 Master Plan to update priorities, identify needed improvements, and assess current planning and operations. This Master Plan builds off the Department’s mission statement “to enrich the lives of our citizens” and will set the course for the future of the Department. The goals of the 2014 Master Plan are to:

- Review the 2003 Master Plan and assess how well the expectations of that effort have been met
- Study current needs and determine the ability of current facilities to meet these needs
- Anticipate growth areas and demand for future services
- Understand and document trends since 2003 and the changes in population and attitudes
- Identify opportunities to integrate with facilities in adjacent park districts and other City of Columbus departments

## PROCESS

To accomplish the Master Plan, CRPD engaged three firms. MKSK lead the master planning process and public process. PROS Consulting conducted service delivery, operations and programming analysis to assess current conditions, outline national and local trends and provide a direction for future improvements. ETC Institute performed the Community Survey to document how well the Department is meeting the needs of the Columbus citizenry.

The planning team took a multifaceted approach to public engagement, data gathering and analysis. The process was guided by a CRPD-led Steering Committee and an Advisory Committee made up of representatives from Neighborhood Civic Associations and Area Commissions. The planning team met with these two committees throughout the process to share information, gain input and develop recommendations. At critical junctures of the process, the planning team also met with the Recreation and Parks Commission for review, input and approval.

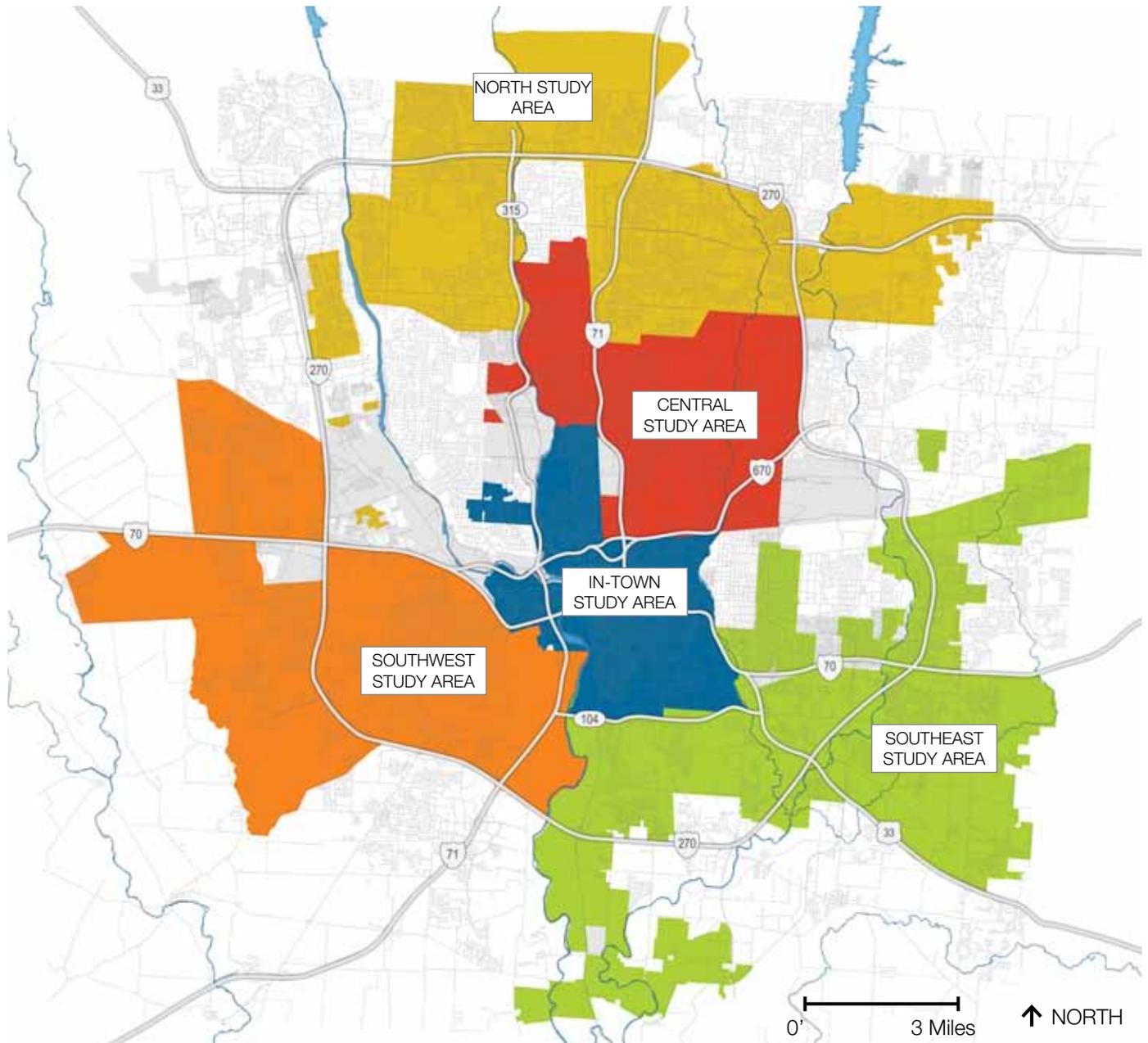
### Establishing Study Areas

While the Master Plan is intended guide the future of the entire park system, given the size of the city and the breadth of parks, facilities, and programs the park system was divided into five geographic Study Areas. The Study Areas are: In-Town, Central, North, Southeast and Southwest. The Study Areas and the Civic Associations and Area Commissions contained within each are shown in Table 1.1. These Study Areas allowed the planning team to begin to focus in on specific issues and needs within each area and helped to organize the public input process in a more streamlined fashion.

Table 1.1 Area Commissions and Civic Associations by Study Area

IN-TOWN	
5th by Northwest AC	Harrison West Society
Brewery District AC	Italian Village AC
Columbus Southside AC	Livingston AC
Downtown Residents' Association of Columbus	Near East AC
Franklinton AC	North East Area AC
German Village AC	University AC
	Victorian Village AC
CENTRAL	
Clintonville AC	North Central AC
Colonial Hills CA	North Linden AC
East Columbus CA	Northeast AC
Kenwood Area Resident CA	Riverside Heights CA
Milo-Grogan AC	Shady Hill Estates CA
	South Linden AC
NORTH	
Ballymeade CA	Northwest CA
Far North Columbus Communities Coalition	River Landing CA
Far Northwest Coalition	Saddlebrook CA
Monohan Homeowners CA	Scioto Trace CA
Northland Community Council	Scioto Woods CA
	Shannon Hts/Kilbannon/Kildaire CA
	The Glen CA
SOUTHEAST	
Berwick CA	Peacekeepers CA
Berwyn East CA	Pinecrest East Neighborhood CA
Berwyn West CA	Rathburn Woods CA
Eastmoor CA	Renewed Hope CA
Far East AC	Shady Lane Park CA
Far South Columbus AC	Southeast Community Coalition
James Road Neighborhood CA	Thunderbird Acres CA
Leawood and Walnut Ridge CA	Willis Park CA
North Eastmoor CA	
SOUTHWEST	
Chesapeake Farms Homes CA	Greater Hilltop AC
Far West Coalition CA	Southwest AC
Greater Feder Road CA	West Point CA
	Westland AC

Figure 1.1 Master Plan Study Areas



Legend

- City of Columbus Boundary
- Hydrology
- Major Roads

- In-Town Study Area
- Central Study Area
- North Study Area
- Southeast Study Area
- Southwest Study Area

# INTRODUCTION

## PUBLIC WORKSHOPS: FALL 2013

5	120+	1,100
Public Workshops	Meeting Participants	Total respondents to our 1st Online Survey



Participants at the first Public Workshop in the North Study Area.

## PUBLIC MEETING: MAY 21, 2014

60	230	1,200
Meeting Participants	Total respondents to our 2nd Online Survey	Total Online Comments



Participants at the May public meeting gave input on Master Plan recommendations

### Public Engagement

The public process was essential to the success of this Master Plan effort. With the Study Areas determined, the planning team held a Public Workshop in each Study Area in November and December of 2013. The purpose of these early workshops was to introduce the planning process and gain input from residents. More than 120 residents attended the workshops. Input was also sought online via CRPD's website and an online survey input form completed by 1,100 residents. This initial interaction with the public helped to define a direction for the Master Plan. The planning team held a city-wide Public Meeting May 21, 2014, to present key findings, recommendations and strategies. More than 60 people attended and provided input in-person, and another 230 participated online, providing 1,200 additional comments.

In addition to the public input process, a Community Interest and Opinion Survey was conducted to determine how well the current park system meets existing needs. The survey was mailed to 7,000 Columbus residents and was completed by 1,811 households representing a balanced cross-section of the city. The results have a 95% level of confidence and a precision rate of at least +/-2.3%. This

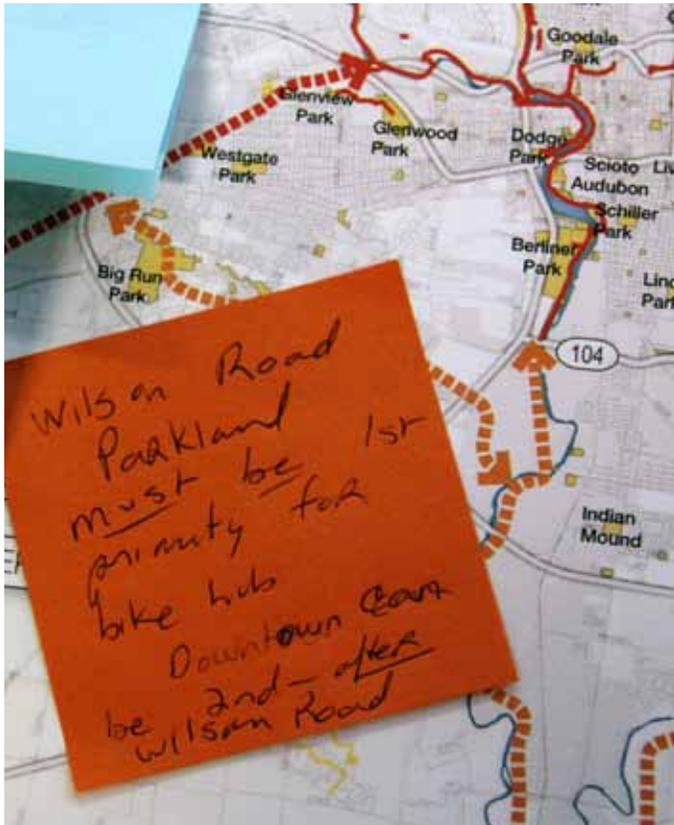
statistically valid survey is a key building block of the Master Plan and helped to inform plan recommendations and strategies.

### Interviews and Data Gathering

The planning team bolstered the public process and survey effort with numerous other sources of information. Site visits were conducted for more than 60 parks and facilities and 20 community centers to assess conditions, quality and needed improvements. Stakeholder interviews were conducted with agencies and individuals that are closely partnered with CRPD. The planning team also conducted interviews with CRPD staff and other City departments. To identify local and national demographic and park trends, the planning team used U.S. Census data, population and land use forecasts from the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission, and benchmarking analysis from the Trust for Public Land and other sources.

### Integrating Plans and Initiatives

The planning process was also informed by current and recent planning processes and ongoing city initiatives. Neighborhood plans helped to identify areas of the city that



The public process generated more than 2,300 comments both in-person and online.

need additional parkland and strategies that could help to achieve improvements. The Mayor's Green Team efforts helped guide recommendations for increasing the City's urban tree canopy and identified how CRPD could take a leadership role. Recommendations for improving bicycle access to the Department's trail system and to trail systems by adjoining municipalities was directly informed by planning efforts by the City of Columbus Bike Plan and MORPC's regional trail system plans.

## A Holistic Approach

It is important to note that this Master Plan is influenced by multiple sources of information. Any one data point, any one survey question, any one planning team observation, or any one stakeholder opinion can't be taken in isolation. All of these pieces of information work together to inform the direction of CRPD. The planning team examined all information holistically to develop a complete and balanced understanding of the park system that exists today and define the direction over the next 10 years.

## DEPARTMENT ORGANIZATION

The Columbus Recreation and Parks Department's mission is to "enrich the lives of our citizens." The Department accomplishes this by providing active and passive recreational activities, programs and facilities for Columbus citizens of all ages in accessible, affordable and safe environments. The Department also maintains parks, multi-use trails, city trees, golf courses, nature preserves and recreational facilities, and it promotes the preservation and wise use of the city's natural resources. The Department also encourages cultural and physical diversity through its planned activities, the programs offered, and by means of the staff it hires.

The Department fulfills its mission with a staff of 279 full-time and 1,130 part-time employees. The latter number includes seasonal employees. Its budget for 2014 is \$38.4 million. The Department is divided into the following three divisions that work together to deliver recreation and parks facilities and services to the residents of Columbus.

### 1. Administration

The Administration Division supports CRPD's mission of providing high-quality recreation and park programs and services to the community. Key sections included in this division are Fiscal, Safety, Human Resources, and Development. Other administrative areas include Information Systems, Warehouse Operation, Visitor Services, and Media Relations.

#### Fiscal

The Fiscal Section provides leadership, management, and support for the Department's budget, working with the Department's budget and revenue teams. This section provides management and support for the warehouse operation, purchasing, and the accounting functions that include accounts payable and receivable, and revenues.

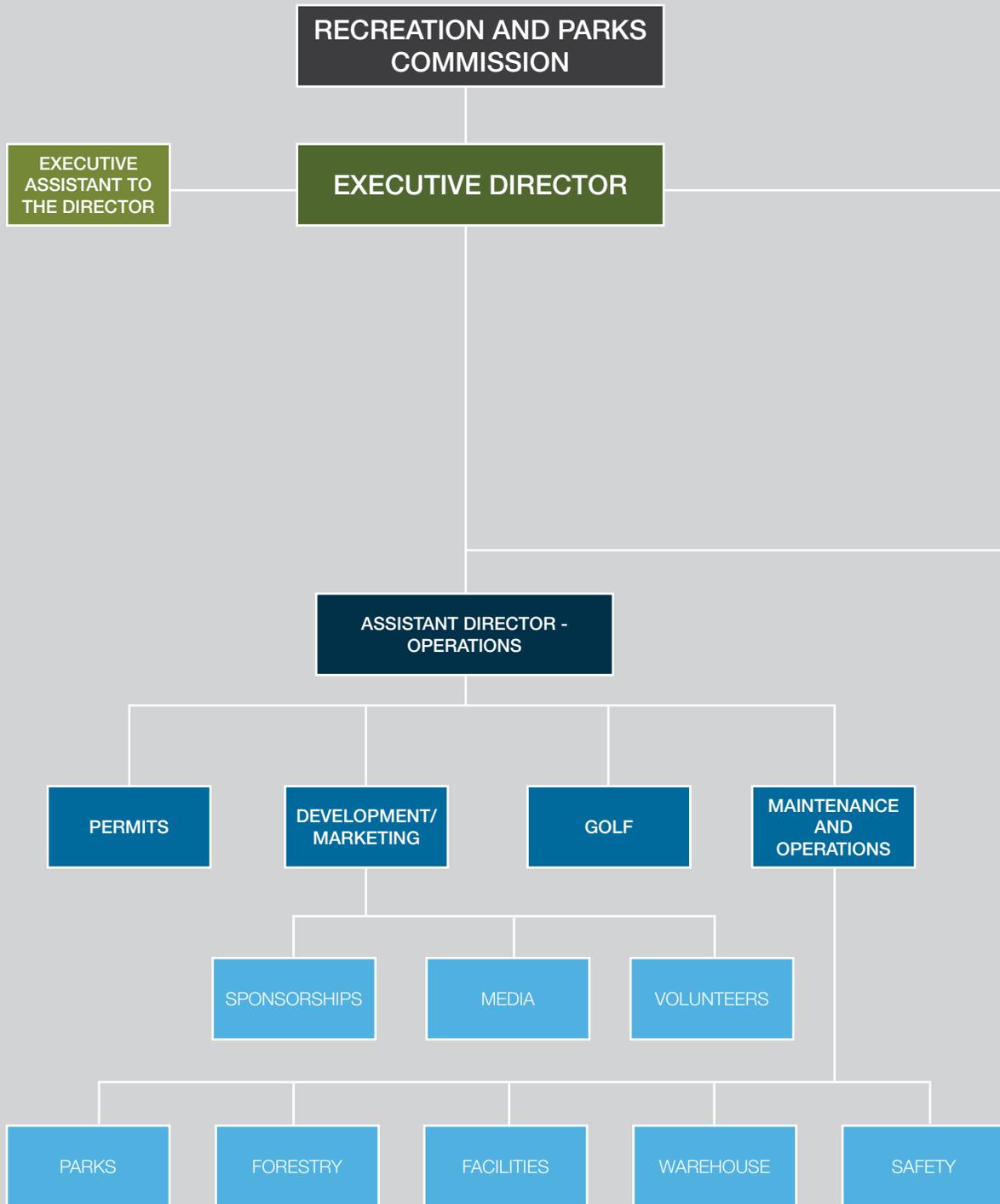
#### Human Resources

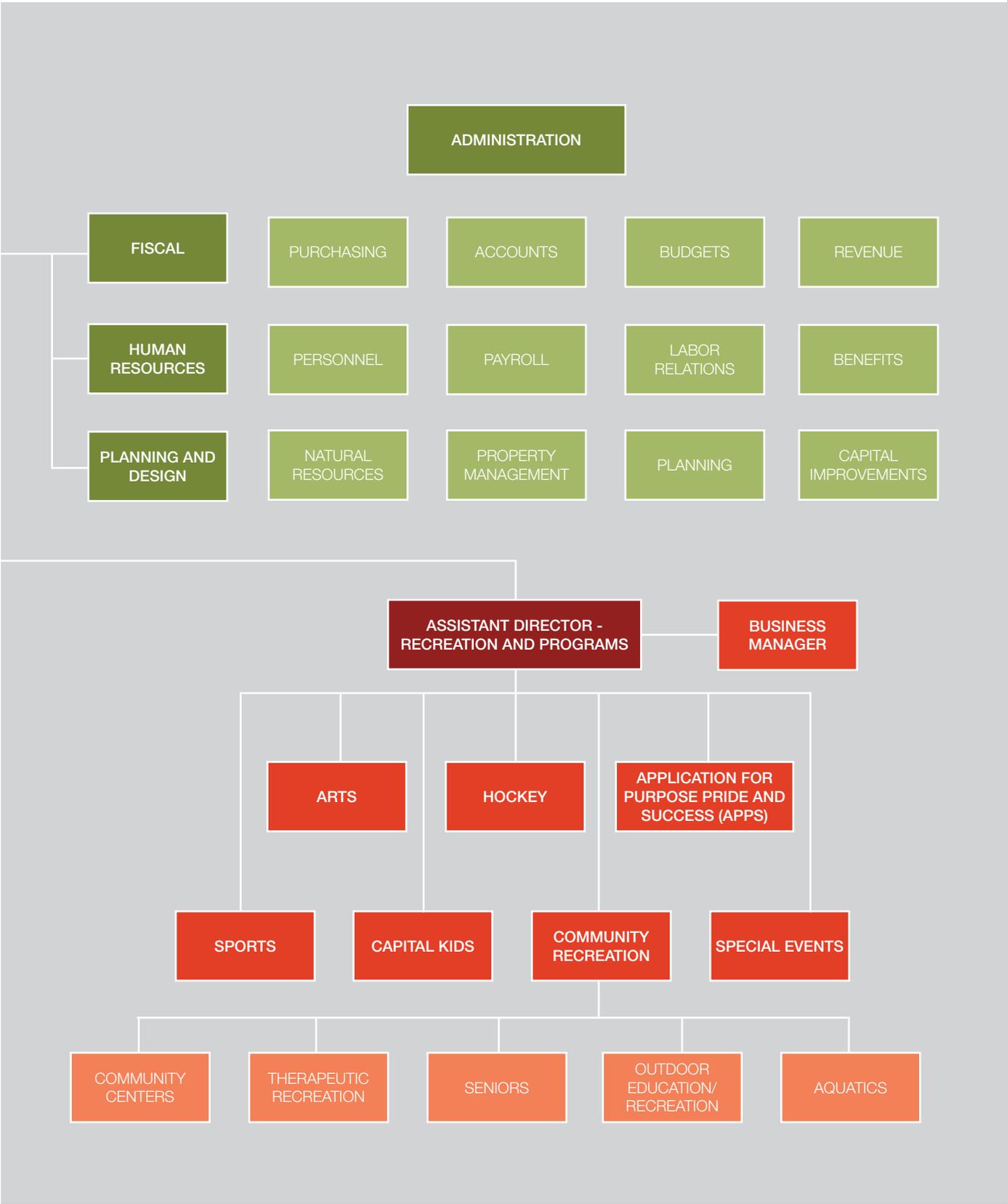
This Section operates as the caretakers of CRPD's most valuable resource: its employees.

#### Planning and Design

This section oversees the Capital Improvement Budget and Funds for planning and design of facilities, parks, preserves and properties. Responsibilities include building renovations and development, park/playground improvements and development, and greenway trail development. The section is also responsible for land acquisition and the Parkland

Table 1.2 CRPD Organizational Chart





# INTRODUCTION

Dedication Ordinance, and manages information with databases and a Geographic Information System (GIS). The section monitors properties for encroachments, endangered species and use and holds all private leases. Planning and Design staff also works directly with the community in the design of parks.

## 2. Operations

Key sections within the Operations Division include Development and Marketing, Permits, Golf, Maintenance, Forestry, and Safety.

### Development and Marketing

This section works with all divisions and sections of the Department to increase financial and personnel resources and to promote a positive image in the community. The major components of this section are Marketing, Grants, Sponsorships, Volunteers, and Private Leisure Assistance for Youth (P.L.A.Y.), a program that provides grants for children from financially challenged families to participate in CRPD fee-based programs.

### Permits

The Permit Section manages and operates five athletic complexes (basketball and volleyball rentals), eight enclosed shelter houses for rent by private groups, and four municipal marinas (Griggs Reservoir, O'Shaughnessy Reservoir, and two at the Hoover Reservoir). The section processes permits for street closures, special activities in all CRPD parks and on Columbus waterways, public and private boating activities, and sites for private weddings. The Permit Section accepts payments for permits and for other user-fee-based programs and services (e.g., rentals, gyms, and league fees).

### Golf

Golf is the only CRPD division that is structured to be self-sustaining. Revenues generated through greens fees, cart rentals, tournaments, rentals, and concession sales support Golf Division operations. A portion of the revenue generated (10 percent) is dedicated to debt retirement. Enterprise funds also support the division's operational expenses.

### Park Maintenance

Staff provide professional grounds and facilities maintenance services across the city's 220 square miles. Hundreds of sites are serviced, including parks, playgrounds, lakes, swimming pools, community centers, athletic complexes, facilities, ball diamonds, bikeways, tennis and basketball



The Golden Hobby Shop is operated by the Arts Division and acts as a consignment store for senior citizens' hand-made crafts.

courts, public gardens, signage, and wildlife management areas.

### Facilities Maintenance

This division maintains over 100 buildings, parks facilities and other physical assets in a safe, effective and economical manner to provide quality places and opportunities for the public to recreate.

### Forestry and Horticulture

The Forestry Section manages, maintains, and protects trees growing on public streets and in parks and other public spaces. The primary goal of the Forestry Section is to manage the urban forest efficiently so the public health, safety, and welfare are preserved. The section is responsible for trees growing on more than 2,000 miles of streets, 400 miles of alleys, and CRPD's 382 parks.

The horticultural crew operates two greenhouses, maintains the Topiary Garden at Deaf School Park and the Park of Roses at Whetstone Park (the largest municipal rose garden in the country), and plants floral displays throughout downtown parks as well as Goodale and Schiller Parks.

## **Safety**

The Safety Section provides training to employees, oversees the purchase of safety equipment, and monitors CRPD Safety Manual.

## **3. Recreation and Programs**

Key sections within the Recreation and Programs Division include Community Recreation, Sports Office, Special Events, Arts, and Aquatics.

### **Community Recreation**

Community Recreation operates 29 Community Centers throughout the city. Staff members administer the city's Summer Nutrition Program, which serves free lunches at more than 260 locations. During the summer, Community Recreation operates more than 295 camp weeks, which serve thousands of youth in Central Ohio. Recreation clubs and playgrounds serve thousands more. Community Recreation hosts a wide variety of special events, field trips, and partner programs (with the Columbus Crew and Columbus Blue Jackets). Community Recreation serves the needs of youth and families in the community, working closely with Community Recreation Councils in each area. The Community Recreation Section has a strong volunteer base, which keeps this section heavily involved in community activities and in touch with the changing needs of citizens.

### **Therapeutic Recreation**

The Therapeutic Recreation Program sponsors and conducts recreational activities modified to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities.

Therapeutic Recreation offers a broad spectrum of leisure experiences to enhance an individual's physical, social, and lifetime recreational interests. These programs include aquatic fitness classes; bowling; golf; weight training; wheelchair sports; Addressing Community-Oriented Recreational Needs (ACORN), an after-school program; and The Summer of Fun and Adventure Day Camp. Therapeutic Recreation welcomes and encourages everyone, including the non-disabled, to participate.

### **Outdoor Education/Recreation**

The Outdoor Education Section provides outdoor recreational opportunities for all ages, some of which are among the most popular and well-attended programs offered by the Department. This section manages Indian Village Camp, a riverfront park with hiking, fishing, and an

environmental educational center. Experiential educational classes include nature studies, camping, canoeing, archery, Native American studies, rock climbing, kayaking, and many other outdoor recreational activities. This section also teaches environmental classes for schools and groups at Community Centers.

### **Aquatics**

The Aquatics Section operates 7 outdoor swimming pools and 3 spraygrounds during the summer, and the indoor Columbus Aquatic Center year-round. Summer instructional classes in sailing and canoeing are also offered. Other classes and programs provided for Columbus-area residents include learn-to-swim, boating and water safety, instructor-level first-aid and CPR, life-guarding, water aerobics, adult masters, special needs, conditioning, senior adults, and year-round competition for youth.

### **Special Events**

The Special Events Section provides professional event coordination assistance and resource materials to hundreds of public, private, and non-profit organizations that annually host festivals and special events in parks and on public property. This section also issues event permits, coproduces events for the city, and administers a sponsorship program for community events.

### **Sports**

The Sports Office plans, organizes, and coordinates sports activities, leagues, tournaments, and special events for youth and adults that provide opportunities for their physical, mental, and social needs during their leisure time. The Sports office also operates its own permitting, both online and at Community Centers, as well performs its own maintenance on its own sports fields.

### **Arts**

The Arts Section produces and presents quality performing and literary arts programs that promote the enjoyment and appreciation of the arts and help develop creative potential through exploration, education, and skill building. The section offers a wide range of program formats and curricula to diverse as well as targeted audiences, some of which take place at the Cultural Arts Center, thus serving a variety of interests and skill levels at a central location.

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS SINCE 2003

The Columbus Recreation and Parks Department has made numerous accomplishments since the last Master Plan in 2003. The system has grown by 1,016 acres of new parkland for preservation or future development, at an average of 101.6 acres per year. Five new dog parks (Big Walnut, Godown, Spindler, Three Creeks, and Wheeler) have been added as well as the opening of 22 new developed parks, such as the Scioto Mile, Hard Road Park, Sharon Meadows Park, and Alkire Woods Park (For a full list, see right)

Significant improvements have been made at community centers, pools and spraygrounds. Lazelle Woods Community Center opened in 2005, the first new center to open in the city since 1990. CRPD continues to make an effort to renovate approximately one center per year. Since 2003, Dodge Community Center, Whetstone Community Center, Beatty Community Center, Brentnell Community Center and Milo Grogan Community Center have been renovated. The current renovation cycle is ongoing with the renovation of the Westgate Community Center (built in 1963) nearly complete and Glenwood Community Center (built in 1916) about to start. The department has also continued its commitment to aquatics, renovating the pool at Dodge Park in 2012, and creating three new spraygrounds at Barnett, Blackburn and Indian Mound Community Centers. The current renovation cycle of pools includes Maryland Pool (opened summer 2014), Lincoln Pool (renovation begins 2014), and Deshler Park Pool (design begins 2014).

Multi-Use Trail development continues with the development of the Camp Chase Trail on the west side. Since 2003, 18 trail miles of the Alum Creek Trail were developed on the east side, with the completion of missing connections expected by 2015.

To better direct the department's efforts to protect conservation and natural areas, the Nature Preserve Advisory Council was created. The council oversees CDRP's 95 Conservation Areas. The sustainability contributions to the city were also significant with 18,742 new trees planted city-wide along city streets and in parks and open spaces.

Programmatic improvements were also made for sports activities and community centers. Online registration was instituted for recreation programs, summer camp registration and adult sports leagues. Fitness Coordinators were added to more than 15 centers to manage fitness equipment, train staff, track use, and maintain and replace equipment. Investments also continued at revenue producing sports facilities like Berliner Park where 11 new turf infields, a concession stand, new lights and irrigation were added. This has helped to support the popularity of this facility that has generated more than \$12 million in economic impact through annual tournaments.

Volunteerism is also strong in city parks and facilities. Over

the past 10 years, volunteers have contributed 1,541,316 hours at a value of \$26.5 million. Investing in parks and facilities invites the community to invest time and energy in parks and facilities creating a virtuous cycle that benefits the entire city.

### Accomplishments Since 2003 at a Glance...

#### Facilities

1,016 Acres of New Parkland

22 New Developed Parks

18 Trail Miles  
For the Alum Creek Trail

5 New Dog Parks

3 New Spraygrounds

1 Renovated Pool  
Dodge Pool

1 New Community Center  
Lazelle Woods Community Center

#### Sustainability

18,742 New Trees Planted  
Along city streets, parks, and open spaces

#### Programmatic Improvements

15 New Fitness Coordinators

11 New Turf Fields  
At Berliner Park

#### Economic Impact

\$12 Million Economic Impact  
Generated through tournaments held at Berliner Park

#### Volunteers

1.5 Million Volunteer Hours  
Contributed from 2003 - 2013

\$26.5 Million Economic Value  
Contributed by Volunteers

### New Developed Parks Since 2003

#### Neighborhood Parks:

Albany Crossing Park  
 Alkire Woods Park  
 Cedar Run Park  
 Lehman Estates Park  
 Harrison Park  
 Haydens Crossing Park  
 Jefferson Woods Park  
 New Beginnings Park  
 Prestwick Commons  
 Reynolds Crossing Park  
 Side by Side Park  
 Sharon Meadows Park  
 Williams Creek Park  
 Winchester Farms  
 Walden Park

#### Community Parks:

Hard Road Park  
 Godown Road Park

#### Regional Parks:

North Bank Park  
 Scioto-Audubon Park

#### Special Use:

Bicentennial Park  
 Highbluffs Park  
 Scioto Mile Promenade

### Acquisitions/Extensions since 2003

Hayden Falls Extension  
 Davis Property  
 Hanford Village Extension\*  
 Shannon Road Parkland\*

Roosevelt Park Extension  
 Walnut Hill\*\* Parkland  
 Hilliard Run Parkland

\* *In Progress*

\*\* *Former Golf Course*

### Opened Lazelle Woods Community Center in 2005



Volunteers contributed  
 1,541,316 hours



Instituted online registration for recreation programs, summer camps and adult sports leagues

# INTRODUCTION

## IMPORTANCE OF PARKS

Before discussing the data, public input and recommendations of this Master Plan, it is important to consider the vital role that recreation and parks facilities play in the social, physical, environmental and economic health of our community. Continued investment in parks and facilities provides a multitude of benefits for cities including, improving public health, creating public gathering spaces, connecting residents, workers, and visitors to nature, and spurring economic development and revitalization. In recent years, a growing body of academic research and economic studies have explored the linkages between public health and the built environment, quantifying the environmental and economic benefits of greenspace and outlining the social benefits of having easy access to recreation and park spaces.

### Community Benefits

Recreation and park facilities promote neighborliness and social inclusion by providing a venue for special events and daily interaction. These spaces and places are anchors in the community's they serve, creating a destination for visitors and residents alike. The benefits of these facilities on the physical and mental development of children is substantial, teaching children critical social skills and increasing the brain's capacity for learning (*Howard Hughes Medical Center, 1999*).

Research also supports the widely held belief that community involvement in neighborhood parks correlates to lower levels of crime. Access to parks and recreational facilities has been linked to reduction in crime and juvenile delinquency (*Witt and Crompton, Journal of Park and Recreation Administration, 1997*). After expanding recreational facilities in Fort Myers, Florida and starting an outreach program, police reported a 28% drop in juvenile arrests (*Hartmann and Depro, Journal of Sport & Social Issues, 2006*).

The physical health of the community also improves with increased access to recreation and park facilities. A CDC study demonstrated that access to parks and open space lead to a 25.6% increase in the percentage of people exercising three or more times per week. Due to the growing obesity epidemic, the CDC has called for the construction of more parks and playgrounds to improve the nation's health and well-being.

The environmental benefits of parkland are also substantial. Trees buffer air pollutants and generate oxygen. Natural buffers along streams and rivers clean water by filtering particle pollutants from agricultural runoff and managing stormwater. American Forests estimates that trees in the nation's metropolitan areas provide \$400 billion in stormwater retention.



The Scioto-Olentangy bike trail provides access to numerous parks and connects neighborhoods to downtown.

All of these positive factors of parks and recreation facilities combine to make a strong economic impact for the communities that they serve. An ongoing study and survey by the Knight Foundation has found that parks, tree-lined streets, playgrounds and trails contribute to what they call "community attachment." Cities with higher ranking of community attachment are not only more likely to retain and attract residents, but they are also more successful, demonstrating higher economic rates of Gross Domestic Product growth over time. (*Knight Soul of the Community: Why People Love Where They Live and Why it Matters, 2010*).

Parks are **anchors** in the communities they serve, creating a **destination** for visitors and residents alike.

**\$400 Billion** Value of **stormwater retention** provided by trees in the nation's metropolitan areas



**25.6%** Increase in the **percentage of people exercising three or more times per week** resulting from access to parks and open space



Access to parks benefit the **physical and mental development of children**, increasing the brain's capacity for learning

# INTRODUCTION

## HOW TO USE THIS PLAN

The 2014 Columbus Recreation and Parks Master Plan is divided into the following sections.

### Existing Conditions and Trends Analysis

This section catalogs current parks and facilities within Columbus Recreation and Parks. It also examines how City of Columbus parks fit into the regional park system and how it relates to the park systems in adjacent municipalities. Looking to the future, the second part of this section focuses on the trends that will impact the department in the next 10-plus years. This includes changing demographics, socioeconomics, and land use and population forecasts. Local and national trends in sports and recreation programs are also analyzed. Finally, how Columbus ranks compared to other cities nationally is examined.

### Public Engagement

The Public Engagement section describes how the planning team worked with residents, stakeholders and department staff to develop strategies for improvement. The resulting public input is summarized along with stakeholder and staff interviews. This process informed the vision for the future of CRPD.

### Community Survey and Level of Service

Two critical portions of the Master Plan process are discussed in this section. The first, the Community Interest and Opinion Survey outlines the statistically-valid survey methodology and highlights major findings. This is followed by a Level of Service Analysis that compares existing parks and facilities to regional standards for service today and five years into the future. Where appropriate, survey results and Level of Service information are combined, beginning to suggest priorities for improvements in certain Study Areas.

### Needs Assessment and Strategies

This section couples general site visits of parks and site assessments of community centers with specific recommendations for strategic improvements. These strategies and tactics combine data, trend analysis, public and stakeholder input to create a framework for success.

### Implementation and Action Plan

The Implementation Section outlines an Action Plan Matrix for prioritizing and planning for improvements. This matrix identifies strategies, tactics, leadership and partnership roles. Order of magnitude operational and capital costs are also quantified. This section concludes with recommended organizational changes to both streamline the department and aid in the implementation efforts.



