ACTION PLAN



UPDATE 2020

RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS























A little background ...

We are a park district rich in history that was built through the generosity of its citizens, strategic partnerships, and dedicated team members. Even in times of significant economic downturns, we've been able to consistently provide outstanding park and recreational offerings to our community; however, with declining revenue both through fees and a declining tax base, along with population and demographic shifts, it has become difficult to provide the same level of service without an increase in revenue or a decrease in our footprint.

In 2018, the District directly engaged with an estimated 37,000 youth and adults over a six-month process. Based on feedback from the community, the Rockford Park District developed a five-year strategic plan and revised priorities to address how to best accomplish our mission and fulfill our vision given the current economic,

demographic, and environmental challenges facing the Rockford region. Our action plan provides a series of recommendations that will help guide investment in District assets, along with decisions regarding obsolete, underutilized, or non-trending parks, facilities, and amenities. Feedback regarding recreational needs is being used to determine areas to reinvest in, eliminate, or strategically add. Citizens deemed top priorities, such as neighborhood parks, playgrounds, youth programs, Washington Park Community Center, and trails, along with arts and cultural programming. To further invest in these priority areas for our community, the District must free up operational and capital dollars.

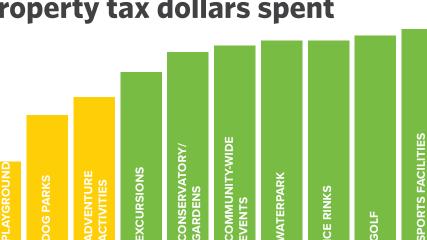
As it was then and is now, this is YOUR Rockford Park District. Thank you for your continued support, involvement, and for making this the greatest park system in the country.

What you told us ...

Focus on programs for







RECREATION
SWIMMING
ARTS & CULTURAL PROGRAMMING

DUTDOOR EDUCATION

OPEN SPACE/ TRAILS/ REC PATHS

YOUTH PROGRAMS & WASHINGTON PARK

NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS & PLAYGROUNDS



Fee Revenue Supported

Tax Revenue Supported

What we've done so far ...

Priority 1 Progress

Neighborhood Parks

- Playgrounds at Terry Lee Wells Park at Haskell School, Liberty Park, and Washington Park Community Center refurbished
- Rockford Park District and Rockford Public Schools (RPS205) worked together to fund improvements to Lewis Lemon playground
- Playground renovations were completed at the new White Swan Park and Walker Park, thanks to \$25,000 in state funding, along with private donations

Infrastructure

- ➤ Jefferson Street Pedestrian Bridge construction completed and reopened, thanks to the Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program (ITEP) grant received from the Illinois Department of Transportation
- ▶ Mechanical system replacements at Carlson Ice Arena
- Retaining wall replaced at Marinelli Park/Black Hawk Park

Investment in Priority Areas

- Improvements made at Clarence Hicks Memorial Sports Park
- Atwood Silent Sports Trails Phase 1 completed, thanks entirely to donations and grants
- Skybox Restaurant at Indoor Sports Center completed, thanks to Reclaiming First capital funds, four multi-sport simulators included
- Sinnissippi Rose Garden Sumac Slope improvements made possible by donors and the Nicholas Family Foundation Endowment
- Midway Village Multi-Use Path completed
- The Landing Skatepark at Davis Park was completed, thanks to a donation from the Smith Charitable Fund
- Practice green added for year-round golf opportunities inside the Indoor Sports Center

Sale or Lease of District Assets

- Magic Waters Waterpark leased to Six Flags Great America
- ► Former RPD Administration Building sold
- > 7th Street Train Station leased
- Guilford Tennis Center is now maintained and operated by Rockford Public Schools (RPS205)
- Portion of Vandercook Park sold to Muslim Association of Greater Rockford





2019-2023 PRIORITY RESULTS

PRIORITY RESULT IN Park space and recreational facilities meet the recreational needs of this and succeeding generations.

FOCUS ON LAND + ASSETS

- Neighborhood Parks
- Infrastructure
- Investment in Priority Areas
- · Sale or Lease of District Assets
- PRIORITY RESULT III: Residents value and are involved in diverse, well supported, and fun activities that promote a healthy lifestyle, and contribute to a vibrant and relevant park system.



- Community Partnerships
- Our Next Generation
- Culturally Inclusive Programs
- Residents Value a Vibrant Park System
- exceptional parks and recreational facilities, services, and programs that reflect a high return on citizens' tax investment.

FOCUS ON FINANCES

- Priority is Given to Areas of Greatest Public Benefit
- Reasonable Tax Subsidies are Achieved
- Seek Non-Property Tax Revenue

Priority 2 Progress

Community Partnerships

- Park District acquired green space from former school sites at White Swan and Walker in exchange for Park District property, so RPS205 could construct Cherry Valley Elementary School
- Rockford ProAm was held at Aldeen Golf Club for the first time
- New partnership formed with Hard Rock Casino Rockford will provide non-property tax support for key areas, pending licensing approval by the Illinois Gaming Board
- Partnerships were expanded with Rockford University, Fleet Feet Sports Rockford, and Illinois Youth Soccer Association
- Grab and Go meal distribution at Washington Park Community Center and Wantz Park in partnership with the Community Action Agency of Winnebago and Boone Counties, along with other agencies
- Partnered with the Rockford Public Library to host "Storybook Walk" at three parks

Our Next Generation

- ▶ Employed more than 300 youth under age 21 in 2019
- Hired 100 youth in 2020, thanks to the Summer Youth Employment grant through the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS)
- ► The Youth Sports department provided outreach programs to 40+ locations, impacting 6,500 youth
- Expanded youth programming opportunities for atrisk youth, thanks to \$698,608 in funding from the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority (ICJIA) for violence prevention programming
- Leadership programs offered such as Junior Leader, HALTERS, and UKUU
- NCG lit up with specific colors on select nights for 22 schools throughout the region as part of Glowing for Grads

Culturally Inclusive Programs

- Offered a summer program to introduce youth and teens in the Muslim and Congolese communities as well as the 100 Strong organization to RPD facilities.
- Pride Proclamation and lighting at Nicholas Conservatory & Gardens (NCG)
- Black Lives Matter Proclamation and Blackout at NCG
- ▶ To ensure a culture of diversity, inclusion, equity and belonging exists in all areas of the Park District, our Equity Committee has expanded. We've identified three major focus areas crucial to eliminating barriers within the organization and the community we serve: Employment/Training, Program Offerings, and Business/Procurement Opportunities



Residents Value a Vibrant Park System

- ➤ Toyota Terrace at Skybox remodeled, thanks to new partnership locally with Anderson Toyota and the Chicago Region Toyota Dealers Association
- ► Save Sinnissippi Golf Course group formed, resulting in increased advocates and donations
- ► GE Aviation donated 100 trees
- Collins Aerospace donated funds to support summer playground programs
- Disc golf volunteers raised money for course maintenance improvements
- Kids Around the World and Rockford YouthBuild helped remodel Walker and White Swan playgrounds

Priority 3 Progress

Priority Given to Areas of Greatest Public Benefit

► Help Me Play 2019 fundraising raised more than \$110,000 to support youth programming

Reasonable Tax Subsidies are Achieved

► Illinois Bank & Trust Pavilion profit reinvested into Aldeen Golf Club; in 2019, the tax subsidy for Aldeen Golf Club was reduced by \$100,000 due to the success of the pavilion

Seek Non-Property Tax Revenue

- Multi-sports simulators added to ISC
- Video gaming revenue at select facilities
- Thanks to the leadership of the Loves Park mayor and city council and the support of Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau (RACVB), \$40,000 will fund youth programming and operational support of facilities in Loves Park
- Awarded a \$275,000 state grant (IDNR/OSLAD) and \$100,000 Blazer Foundation Challenge grant for the renovation of Keye-Mallquist playground, plus received \$37,000 in donations from local businesses and individuals

The brutal facts ...

- ▶ District funding: Unlike other government entities, the Rockford Park District operates mainly on two revenue streams property taxes and fees. The District does not receive sales tax, motor fuel tax, hotel tax, utility tax, marijuana tax revenue, etc. When we hold the line on property taxes, which we have for the last six years, we have limited revenue streams to offset the expense increases each year.
- Minimum wage impact: The minimum wage law was passed in February, 2019, and will impact the Park District budget by \$2 million over the next five years. The District has just under 1,000 team members in this pay category, making it the largest local organization to experience this major financial impact with no state funding or other revenue to help offset this cost increase.
- ▶ Sports tournaments do not benefit the District financially: The District's Mercyhealth Sportscore Complexes and UW Health Sports Factory operations are tax subsidized by \$500,000 per year combined. It's a significant expense to maintain these facilities at tournament-level quality, yet the fees that we charge must be competitive to attract tournaments and events to our community. Prior to COVID-19, the District's sports tournaments brought in an excess of \$15 million of economic impact for the community annually.
- ► Fewer golfers playing means less revenue: Prior to COVID-19, rounds have declined year after year, while course expenses continued to increase.
- ▶ Land sale limitations: By state law through the Illinois Park Code, the District can only sell 2.99 acres of land. Selling anything over three acres would require a referendum on the ballot.
- ▶ Team member reductions while expanding: Our dedicated park and recreation team members are the best in the industry, providing outstanding services to the community. The team continues to dwindle as the District has cut internally to make budgets for the past 10 years. We are down 12% in full-time team members from 2009, even including the new facility expansions during that time.

COVID-19 Impact

For the first time in the District's history, facilities, programs, playgrounds, events, rentals, and tournaments were closed due to the State of Illinois "Stay at Home" order.

Not being able to do the things you love causes increased physical and mental stress.

Here's what life without play looked like this year:

- ► Mandated shutdown of Park District facilities, programs, events, and rentals
- Sports and recreation facilities closed
- Playgrounds closed
- Basketball rims, tennis nets, and soccer nets removed
- No recreation programs offered
- ▶ Juvenile crime up 100%
- ▶ Estimated \$1.5 million loss in fee revenue
- Significant economic impact to community and state due to cancelled tournaments and special events





Next steps to achieve priorities ...

CTION

Increase Investment in Neighborhood Parks

+ 1+

Plan: Refurbish playgrounds and shelters, and provide new trending amenities and programs for youth, teens, and families. Reduce underutilized amenities.

Why?

- ▶ Neighborhood parks ranked as the top priority for funding allocation and value to community members surveyed in 2018
- ▶ Well-maintained neighborhood parks increase property values
- ► Increased usage of parks is resulting in the need for greater maintenance, security, and program resources
- ▶ Increased need for health, wellness, and community connectivity

Priority Result:

- Investment in Priority Areas
- Next Generation

Anticipated Start Date:

2021

1-3 YEAR

3-5 YEAR

Increase Investment in Next Generation

Plan: Expand youth programming, leadership development, and employment opportunities throughout our community.



Whv?

- Our youth are our future. Investment in our youth and teens is essential. Through programs and employment opportunities, the District believes in linking youth and teens to mentors and coaches who make a lifelong impact.
- ▶ During the COVID-19 pandemic, juvenile crime has gone up 100% from 2019 to 2020, as youth and teens had more time on their hands.

Priority Result:

Next Generation

Anticipated Start Date:

2021

1-3 YEARS

3-5 YEAF

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Increase Investment in Trails and Paths

Plan: Maintenance of existing trails, and addition of new trails throughout the District.



Why?

- ▶ Paths and trails ranked as the #3 priority for funding allocation and value to community members surveyed in 2018
- ▶ Path and trails will help spur economic development, retain our tax base, and connect other assets throughout the region
- ▶ Increased usage of trails is resulting in the need for greater maintenance and security resources
- Increased need for health, wellness, and community connectivity

Priority Result:

Investment in Priority Areas

Anticipated Start Date:

Alpine Hills

2021

−3 YEARS | 3−5 YE/

Atwood

2021

1-3 YEARS

3-5 YEARS







Invest in Beyer Park

Plan: Sell north part of Beyer Park to International Women's Baseball Center. Use proceeds to invest in Rockford Peaches Stadium on the south side Beyer Park, in partnership with Friends of Beyer.

Why?

- Provides a reduction of footprint for District
- Investment in neighborhood youth, plus enhancement of a popular historical tourist destination

Priority Result:

- Investment in **Priority Areas**
- ► Sale or Lease of District Assets

Anticipated Start Date:

Invest in Clarence Hicks Memorial Sports Park

Plan: Add additional soccer and softball fields, sports park amenities, and improve the quality of current playing fields. Create new entrance to improve traffic flow.

Why?

- Investing in neighborhood parks is a top priority, based on community feedback.
- ▶ Park is home to our Youth Sports program, which continues to grow and offer new sports opportunities

Priority Result:

- Investment in **Priority Areas**
- ▶ Next Generation

Anticipated Start Date:

Invest in Lockwood Park

Plan: Construct an indoor riding arena for 12 months of non-weather dependent programming. Enhance and add amenities at the park.

Why?

- Indoor arena provides a year-round revenue stream to help offset annual expense for horses and animal operations
- ▶ Lockwood Park offers a unique venue with opportunities for youth and families to interact with animals and experience life on a working farm
- Opportunities for leadership development for area teens

Priority Result:

- Investment in **Priority Areas**
- Next Generation

Anticipated Start Date:

1-3 YEARS 3-5 YEARS

Invest in Levings Park

Plan: Continue water quality improvements for Levings Lake. Redesign road system at Levings Park to enhance safety. Expand fishing opportunities. Build permanent amphitheater, with funding provided by Hard Rock Casino Rockford.

Why?

- Investing in neighborhood parks is a top priority, based on community feedback
- ▶ Arts and cultural programming remains a top priority for residents
- ▶ Levings Park is a regional destination park that provides unique recreational experiences with summer concerts, West Rock Wake Park, and fishing

Priority Result:

- Investment in **Priority Areas**
- Next Generation

Anticipated Start Date:

1-3 YEARS 3-5 YEARS

Invest in Washington Park Community Center

Plan: Expand facility, and invest in technology for greater programming opportunities.

Why?

- ▶ Demand for WPCC continues to increase, along with need to find unique ways to engage with youth and teens
- ▶ Thanks to a partnership with Hard Rock Casino Rockford, an expansion would include a music production studio

Priority Result:

- Investment in **Priority Areas**
- Next Generation

Anticipated Start Date:

1-3 YEARS 3-5 YEARS

Seek Partnerships to Provide Neighborhood Pools

Plan: To the best of our ability, the District plans to offer outdoor swimming for the community. The District will seek assistance to help offset operational costs of swimming pools. In the best case scenario, Alpine Pool, Harkins Aquatic Center, and Sand Park Pool will open. In the worst case scenario, the District will no longer be able to operate seasonal swimming pools. Instead, we would partner with other agencies who have year-round swimming pools, and explore more splash pad/aquatic playground locations throughout the community.

Why?

- ▶ Operating multiple pools will be cost prohibitive due to the minimum wage increase and ongoing capital expenses
- ▶ Summer pool season is short and very weather-dependent

Priority Result:

- Infrastructure
- Next Generation
- ► Reasonable Tax Subsidy Achieved

Anticipated Start Date:

Reopen Snow Park at Alpine Hills Adventure Park

Plan: When additional financial resources are available, the District would like to reopen this operation.

Why?

- ► Facility offers unique outdoor winter experiences for families and snowboarders, close to home and at an affordable price
- ▶ The District has previously made significant investment in the equipment and infrastructure needed to operate the snow park

Priority Result:

- ▶ Investment in **Priority Areas**
- Next Generation

Anticipated Start Date:











Reinvent Outdoor Recreation & Education Experience

Plan: Eliminate overnight programming at Atwood Center to focus on expanding daytime environmental education learning and tours. Increase volunteers and partnerships.

Why?

- ▶ Currently, significant tax dollars are required to operate Atwood Center
- ▶ Environmental education and recreation trends are going toward more daytime program opportunities vs. overnight programming
- Provide new programming to capitalize on new revenue streams

Priority Result:

- Investment in Priority Areas
- Next Generation
- Reasonable Tax Subsidy Achieved

Anticipated Start Date:

2021 1-3 YEARS 3-5 YEARS

Reduce Tax Support for Reclaiming First Facilities

Plan: Seek financial assistance on revenue sharing to reduce tax support for Mercyhealth Sportscore Complexes and UW Health Sports Factory. If not, utilize more for local programs and citizen use versus outof-town tournaments.

Why?

► The District's Mercyhealth Sportscore Complexes and UW Health Sports Factory are funded by over \$1 million of local property tax per year. It's a significant expense to maintain these facilities at tournament-level quality, yet the fees that we charge must be competitive to attract tournaments and events to our community.

Priority Results:

- Next Generation
- Reasonable Tax Subsidies Achieved

Anticipated Start Date:

1-3 YEARS 3-5 YEARS

Repurpose Mercyhealth Sportscore One

Plan: Repurpose to natural flood plain, and introduce other recreational opportunities (fishing, conservation clubs, etc.). Enhance investment in Clarence Hicks Memorial Sports Park, and continue improving fields at Mercyhealth Sportscore Two.

Why?

- Mercyhealth Sportscore One is more weather-dependent, and flooding remains a high concern for the long-term stability of the complex
- ▶ Consolidation of resources will allow District to focus on two remaining turf field complexes – Mercyhealth Sportscore Two and Clarence Hicks Memorial Sports Park

Priority Result:

- Next Generation
- Reasonable Tax Subsidies Achieved

Anticipated Start Date:

1-3 YEARS 3-5 YEARS

Consolidate Golf Courses

Plan: Increase investment in Sinnissippi, Ingersoll, Sandy Hollow and Aldeen Golf courses. Aldeen Practice Centre and Ingersoll Learning Links will serve as the District's home for Junior PGA and LPGA programs for all ages. The District will continue its successful golf outreach throughout the community to expose youth of all backgrounds to the game of golf.

Why?

- ► Free up capital dollars for District-wide priorities
- ▶ Elliot land has the highest potential for being sold or redeveloped into something other than a golf course

Priority Result:

- ▶ Investment in **Priority Areas**
- Sale or Lease of District Assets

Anticipated Start Date:

Consolidate Ice Facilities

Plan: Close Riverview Ice House, and expand Carlson Ice Arena. Explore public/private partnership for Riverview Park.

Why?

- ▶ Riverview Ice House is 45 years old, and well beyond its life span, with the current refrigeration system and required components becoming obsolete
- ▶ Riverview's location prohibits a realistic expansion opportunity (not enough land to expand and still have adequate parking available on site)
- Riverview Park has the highest potential for being sold or redeveloped

Priority Result:

- Infrastructure
- Reasonable Tax Subsidy Achieved
- Sale or lease of District Assets

Anticipated Start Date:

2021 1–3 YEARS 3–5 YEARS

Sell or Lease Identified Property and Assets

Plan: Sell or lease obsolete, inefficient, duplicative, underutilized, or non-trending parks, facilities, and amenities.

Why?

Continue to reduce the District's footprint, free up capital and operational resources, and reinvest in the community's top priorities

Priority Result:

Sale or Lease of District Assets

Anticipated Start Date:







Community Impact through the Rockford Park District

The Rockford Park District provides a vibrant park system that increases property values, stimulates economic development, decreases juvenile crime, and improves our communities' health. The Rockford Park District also protects the environment, employs thousands of area kids for the first time, and brings the community together to enjoy life.

Property Value

Rockford Park District is critical to increasing property value.

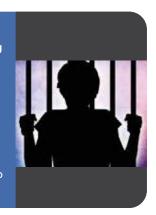
Key Fact: Research shows that property values can be up to 20% higher if a home is located within 500 feet of a well-maintained park. (Source: Dr. John Crompton, Texas A & M University)



Crime Prevention

The Rockford Park District is committed to increasing and creating youth opportunities and positive experiences that decrease juvenile crime

Key Fact: It costs \$111,000 to confine one youth for one year in a juvenile facility in Winnebago County. Prevention or intervention? (Source: Justice Policy Institute and Winnebago County Crime & Safety Commission).



Economic Development

Rockford Park District stimulates economic development.

Key Fact: Parks and facilities can ignite redevelopment, revitalization, and investment. A vibrant park system offers a higher quality of life for prospective new homeowners and businesses looking to invest in the community.



Health and Wellness

Rockford Park District facilities and parks provide the opportunity to improve physical and mental well-being through exercise or recreation, which leads to an enhanced quality of life.

Key Fact: National health expenditures hit \$3.35 trillion in 2016, which works out to \$10,348 for every man, woman, and child. That's two times more than any other developed country. (www.cms.gov)



RISE UP!

"What people don't understand, they don't value; what they don't value, they don't protect; what people don't protect, they lose."



Our future starts with you; visit rockfordparkdistrict.org to do your part.





CONNECT WITH US!

Carlson Ice Arena / CUSTOMER SERVICE

4150 N Perryville Rd – Loves Park, IL (Perryville and Riverside) **Phone:** 815-969-4069

UW Health Sports Factory / CUSTOMER SERVICE

305 S Madison St – Rockford, IL (downtown)

Phone: 815-966-8770

Indoor Sports Center (ISC) at Mercyhealth Sportscore Two / CUSTOMER SERVICE

8800 E Riverside Blvd – Loves Park, IL

Phone: 815-987-8890

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