



Fairfield Parks and Recreation Department

COMPREHENSIVE PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN

December 2014



Prepared by





Fairfield Parks and Recreation Department

COMPREHENSIVE PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN

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Contents

PART ONE: THE SETTING	v
CHAPTER 1: Introduction	1
Overview of Fairfield	2
Location	2
History	2
About the Master Plan Update	5
Purpose	5
Community Engagement	5
CHAPTER 2: Planning Frameworks	6
City of Fairfield 20 Year Comprehensive Plan	6
Cultural Arts Center Feasibility Study	6
Fairfield Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment (1999)	7
Fairfield Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment (1989)	7
The Benefits Approach	8
CHAPTER 3: The Fairfield Parks and Recreation System	9
Parkland	9
Mini-Parks	9
Neighborhood Parks	9
Community Parks	10
Regional Parks	10
Other land types	10
Nature Preserve	10
Cemeteries	11
Trails and Connections	11
Undeveloped Parkland	11
Recreation Programs	12
Other Providers	13
Other Providers of Parkland, Recreation Facilities, and Programs	13
Organizational Structure	14
CHAPTER 4: Community Trends	15
The Fairfield Population	15
Fairfield Development Patterns	15
Land Use and Housing Trends	16
Wellness	17
Recreation Trends	17
CHAPTER 5: Needs Assessment	18
Needs Assessment Methods	18
Findings on Recreation Demand	18
Level of Service Analysis	19
Parkland	19
Recreation Facilities	25
Recreation Programs	26
Organizational Assessment	27
Passionate Employees	27
Internal Communication	27
External Communication	27
The Future Organization of Fairfield Parks and Recreation Department	28

Conclusion: Key Issues and Observations	28	
Take Care of What We Have		28
Improving and Expanding Connections and Trails		28
Continued Advancement of Arts and Entertainment		29
Youth and Senior Engagement and Activity		29
Advance Partnerships		29
PART TWO: THE PLAN		33
CHAPTER 6: Community Vision and Goals		34
Fairfield Park and Recreation Strategic Foundation		34
Fairfield Parks and Recreation Mission Statement		34
Goals		34
Strategic Framework		34
Goal #1: Taking Care of What We Have		35
Goal #2: Improving and Expanding Trails and Connections		36
Goal #3: Continued Advancement of Arts and Entertainment		37
Goal #4: Advancing Partnerships		38
Goal #5: Youth and Senior Engagement and Programming		39
Conclusion		40
CHAPTER 7: Financial Framework		41
Introduction		41
General Fund		42
Recreation Facility Fund		43
Recreation Activity Fund		43
Account Totals		44
Implications for Park and Recreation Master Plan		44
CHAPTER 8: Systemwide plan		45
Introduction		45
Alternatives		46
Parkland LOS Strategic Alternatives		47
Recreation Facility Strategic Alternatives		50
Recreation Facility Strategic Alternatives		52
Chapter 9: Implementation		55
Moving Forward		55
The Annual Action Planning Process		55
Conclusion		56
Appendices		57
Appendix 1: Maps		58
All Service Area Buffers		58
Regional Parks		59
Community Parks		60
Neighborhood Parks		61
Mini-Parks		62
Great Miami River Recreation Trail		63
Harbin Park & Marsh Lake Trails		64
Huffman Park Bike/Hike Trail		65
Memorial Grove Nature Trail		66
Miami-Erie Canal Bike Path		67

The 2014 Fairfield Parks and Recreation Department Master Plan provides guidance and direction to civic leaders and residents about decisions that affect the needs, distribution, relationships, and trajectory of parkland, recreation facilities, recreation programs, and other services within the Fairfield community. The master plan is divided into two parts, The Setting and The Plan.

PART 1: THE SETTING

Summarizes background research conducted during the planning process and found in supplemental topical reports.

Chapter 1: Introduction provides an introduction to Fairfield and the planning process.

Chapter 2: Planning Frameworks reviews the critical concepts, policies, and mandates used to develop the plan.

Chapter 3: The Fairfield Parks and Recreation System includes an inventory and description of the existing system of land, facilities, and programs provided to the community through the Department and other organizations.

Chapter 4: Community Trends contains background and demographic projections about Fairfield and how it will grow over the next 10 years.

Chapter 5: Needs Assessment presents the recreational needs of the community, including a recreation demand analysis, benchmark city analysis, and recommended level of service (LOS) model.

PART 2: THE PLAN

Outlines the mission, vision, broad goals, objectives, physical elements, and critical next steps required to modernize the park and recreation system.

Chapter 6: Community Vision and Goals includes a vision and mission statement, five goals, policies, and actions required to implement the plan over the next 10 years.

Chapter 7: Financial Framework provides the development structure for implementation of the plan based on three funding scenarios: Fiscally Constrained, Action, and Vision.

Chapter 8: System Wide Plan provides the physical components, projects, and programs necessary to develop a complete integrated system of interrelated parks, recreation facilities, and programs that are linked to schools, local shops, and residents.

Chapter 9: Implementation Plan identifies the strategic actions the Department should take in the next three years to begin the successful implementation of the master plan update.

PART ONE
THE SETTING

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The area that became known as Fairfield was first settled by European immigrants in the early 1800s. It was only after the city's incorporation in 1955 that an organized effort to establish a park and recreation infrastructure began. Since the city's founding and through the Parks and Recreation Department's decades of work, access to nature and parks and recreation have played a vital role in the community's transition from an undeveloped area north of Cincinnati to a fully independent city. Today, the city's system of parks, trails, facilities, programs, and special events are major contributors to Fairfield's quality of life.

The Parks and Recreation Department is a major community asset that repays residents' investments every day. The system achieves this through returns in higher property values; improved neighborhoods, families, and community members; and enhanced lives and job performance as individuals exercise, play, and relieve stress in a greener and more beautiful and sustainable urban environment. As a sign of the Department's commitment to serving Fairfield, it has become only the second parks and recreation agency in the region, and the ninth agency in Ohio to be accredited by the National Recreation and Park Association's Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA).

The 2014 Fairfield Parks and Recreation Department Master Plan is intended to help today's leaders and residents make sound and fruitful decisions that will help the community maintain and enhance its system of recreational assets and opportunities within the city for years to come.

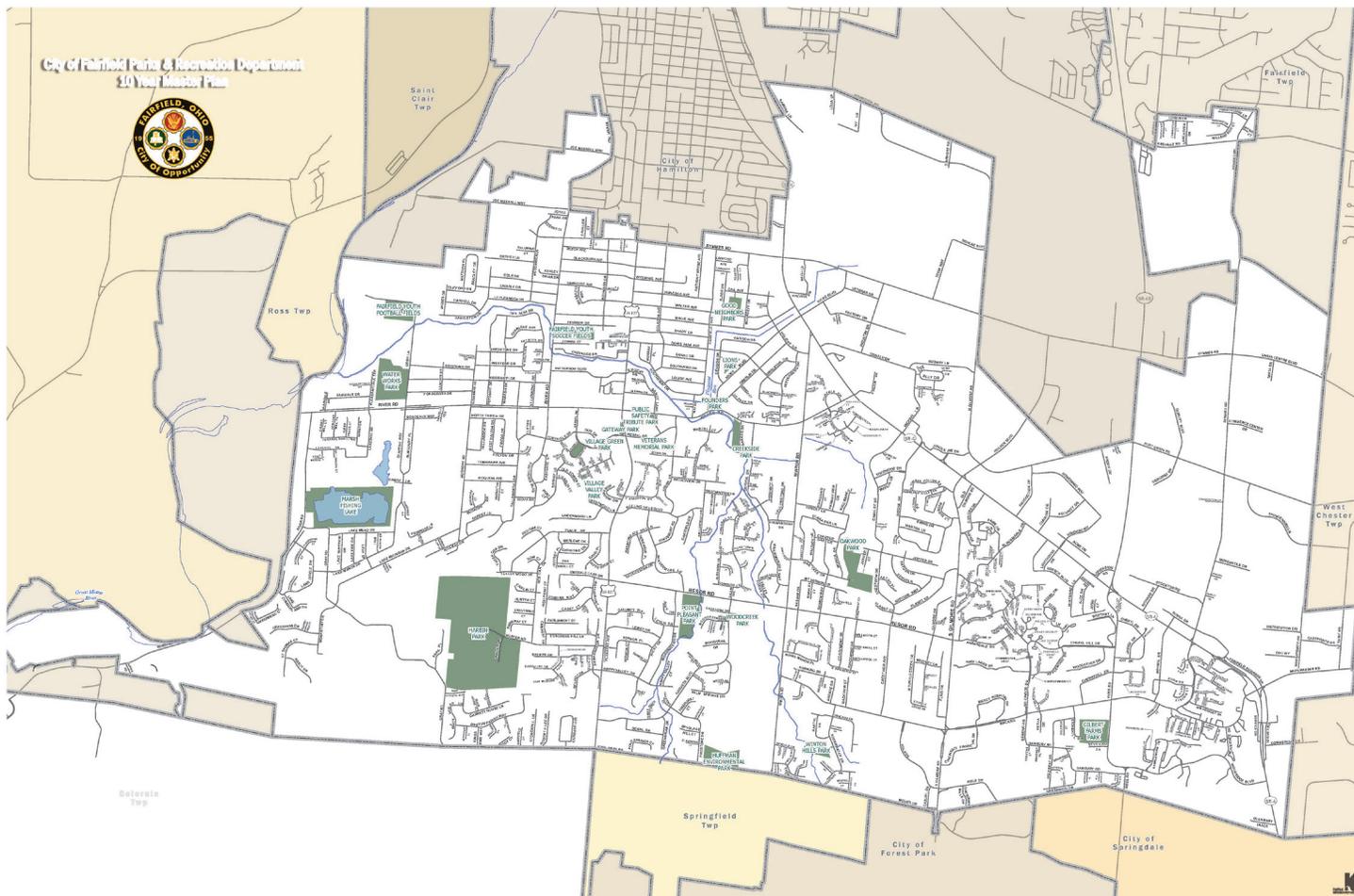


**Fairfield Parks and Recreation
Received National
Accreditation in October 2014**

Overview of Fairfield

Location

With a 2014 population of approximately 42,635, Fairfield is the 26th most populous city in the state of Ohio. Located just north of Cincinnati, the city occupies 20.94 square miles. Fairfield is bounded on the west by the Great Miami River, on the north by the City of Hamilton, on the east by West Chester, and on the south by Forest Park and Springdale.



City of Fairfield

History¹

The Beginning

Native Americans lived in Ohio for centuries before settlers of European descent came to the area. The Miami, Erie, Iroquois, Potawatomi, and various other nations had a significant presence in what would become Ohio. These peoples slowly began to move away (either by force or by treaty) as white settlers moved in from the east, claiming the land as their own.

The earliest record of white settlement in the area comes from 1787. Judge John Cleves Symmes, a colonel in the Revolutionary War and congressman from New Jersey, received word from Major Benjamin Stites that he had located “the garden spot of any place that he had seen” in what would become Fairfield. After a visit to this area, Judge Symmes purchased all the lands between the mouth and the

¹ The history presented here is predominantly sourced from <http://www.fairfield-city.org/live/history.cfm>.

source of the two Miami Rivers, approximately 330,000 acres for about 67 cents per acre. President George Washington signed the land patent that became known as the Symmes, or Miami, Purchase in 1794.

The first white settlers were veterans of the Revolutionary War who had served under General Arthur St. Clair and General Anthony Wayne. Many were from New Jersey. Life for these early settlers was treacherous. Battles with Native Americans kept many from settling on their lands, and hunger and exposure to the elements were common threats.

As one account states, "To go on their lands, was almost certain death, and to stay in the villages, without employment, brought them to the verge of starvation. The inhabitants generally, were stunted in the means of sustenance, and depended chiefly on game and fish, with such agricultural products as they could raise in the immediate vicinity of the villages. After they had endured these privations as long as they were tolerable, the more resolute determined to brave the consequences of moving on their land. The plan they adopted for safety was this: Those families whose lands were contiguous, united together to accomplish their purpose, and in this, a number of distinct associations were formed, for mutual protection. The men engaged in these enterprises went out well armed. Each party erected a strong blockhouse, with cabins contiguous, enclosed by log pickets, and commenced clearing their land. During the day, one of them was placed as a sentinel, to watch the approach of an enemy, while his comrades were engaged at work. At sunset, they returned to the blockhouse, taking everything of value within the pickets."

Pioneers gave this area the name of Fairfield for the natural beauty of the surrounding fields.

Formative Years

Then as now, the main thoroughfares were U.S. Route 127 and State Route 4. These roads at that time were little more than bridle paths, but progress came fast with advances in transportation. In the 1800s, toll roads, the Miami and Erie Canal, the Cincinnati-Hamilton & Dayton Railroad, and two electric interurban lines to Cincinnati contributed greatly to the community's growth.

Streetcars began traveling the traction line, which ran along Pleasant Avenue, in 1898. Some people walked a mile or more to gain transportation on this traction.

Predominantly an agricultural area, hamlets known as Symmes Corner, Jones Station (later Stockton Station), Furmandale (also called Snaptown), Fairplay (also called Black Bottom) and Flenner's Corner grew into thriving communities. What is now Fairfield was originally a part of Fairfield Township, one of 13 townships in Butler County, Ohio.

Birth of a City

The Hamilton Chamber of Commerce recognized the potential of Fairfield Township and wanted to incorporate it as part of the City of Hamilton. In October 1953, the Chamber published a map showing the areas under consideration for annexation. The map indicated that the Hamilton border would extend south beyond Nilles Road, and west beyond Gilmore Road. The Hamilton Chamber of Commerce launched a campaign to convince township landowners that the annexation would result in lower utility rates, better street maintenance and increased property values. Fairfield Township residents saw the annexation as the loss of industrial revenues, the loss of their school system, and the loss of the opportunity for self-government. Concerned residents joined together to form a village on July 10, 1954 and then by way of special census became a city on October 20, 1955.



Elisha Morgan Farm Mansion, built in the early 1800s, is part of the Department's facility inventory.

How the Master Plan Benefits Fairfield:

- Ensure the public health, welfare, and safety of the community
- Assess the current state of the park and recreation system
- Guide the development of the park and recreation system within a community
- Provide a foundation for financial security of the department
- Develop a tool for rational decision-making
- Engage the public in discussing issues and developing solutions
- Coordinate the various functions of the department and other municipal agencies
- Create feasible actions to translate the strategic

The 1960s were a decade of growth in Fairfield. It was a period during which the fledgling city matured and began to establish a variety of services. The City increased water production, constructed a sanitary sewer system, and expanded police and fire protection. New streets crisscrossed former farmland. In addition to city-based services, exploding population growth yielded a post office, a new high school, library and a new Sacred Heart Catholic Church for the parish established in the late 1950s.

Challenge and Change

Fairfield in the 1970s was positioned for strong residential growth. The community had already become extremely attractive to families shopping for homes. The school district was regarded as among the best in the region and the community was friendly to business.

A vital link to Interstate 275 opened just before 1970, making the community even more accessible and desirable. The population more than doubled during the decade, from 14,680 to 30,777, the greatest increase in any decade of the City's history. Voters approved a Charter for the City of Fairfield adopting the "Council-Administrator" form of government, effective January 1, 1980. Under this system of local government, political leadership was combined with strong managerial experience, making local government highly effective and adaptable.

After the unprecedented residential growth of the 1970s, the need for balanced growth became evident. General Motors announced that the Hamilton-Fairfield Chevrolet Pontiac Canada Group, known as the Fisher Body plant, would be phased out in the first quarter of 1989. The effect of the plant closing was a loss of 2,500 jobs and 28 percent of the City's income tax revenue, amounting to \$1.7 million. In addition to that challenge, the city also dealt with needs for flood control, road improvement and essential services.

The City regained economic balance in the 1990s and experienced wide, diverse business development. With a population of 39,729 at the beginning of 1990, the City's explosive population growth had begun to slow, allowing it to focus on quality development of remaining residential and commercial areas. During this time, Fairfield updated and expanded its sanitary sewers, established detention basins for better storm water control, continued to address road improvements, and began planning for a community Town Center.

Fairfield Today

At the beginning of the new millennium, Fairfield is strategically positioned to build on its strong foundation, sustain its neighborhoods and business community, and offer quality of life facilities, services and programs. As the City matures, the residential areas are approaching full development. Attracting high paying jobs to the commercial and industrial zones, and building on the respect earned from the surrounding metropolitan area will continue to be a priority.

Since its humble beginnings in 1955, the City has matured into a quality community with a reputation for excellence.

About the Master Plan Update

Purpose

This plan provides the Fairfield Parks and Recreation Department with a 10 year master plan. The plan will provide standards for levels of park and recreation services and facilities in the city, along with development priorities and an implementation strategy. It will help the City of Fairfield to more equitably allocate services and to meet identified deficiencies and shortfalls in the system for the future.

Besides providing an inventory of the facilities, properties, and programs and an analysis of use and demand, the plan also documents the extensive public and stakeholder input obtained throughout the planning process. This community input provides a framework for confirming the master plan's goals. The synthesis of information, public feedback, and measurable and definable goals and objectives can help the community act and invest in the system in a rational, system-wide approach that aligns with community priorities.

Community Engagement

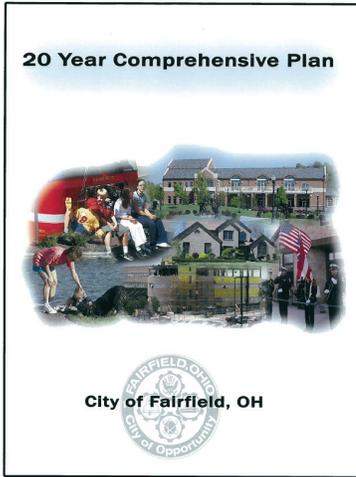
A critical part of the master plan process is the community engagement process, which is necessary to effectively deliver a community-oriented park and recreation system. A balanced, open, and collaborative engagement process will build community-wide trust in the plan and the process. Community engagement is carefully planned in order to create an outcome that will secure support for, and the ultimate approval of, the master plan update by the City Council, Fairfield Parks and Recreation Board, advisory groups, city management, department staff, and the diverse groups that utilize the Department's services.

Community engagement during the planning process included the following key elements:

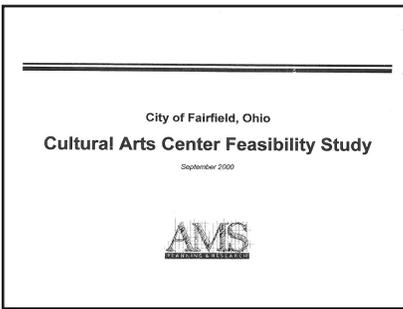
- **Stakeholder Interviews** – Starting in March 2014, the project team conducted interviews with key stakeholders in the Department and with the City Manager. Stakeholder interviews were also conducted with individuals representing a wide variety of user groups, community leaders, city staff, and special interest groups in June 2014.
- **Public Surveys** – A random, stratified sample of the community was drawn to provide statistically representative results. Surveys were distributed to this sample in May 2014, and 436 responses were received. An identical survey was made available to any member of the community as an additional tool for engagement via an online form; however, results were kept separate to preserve the statistical validity of the survey.
- **Online Engagement** – The public was kept informed about the project through www.fairfieldmasterplan.com, a non-city website designed to share information and collect feedback.
- **Public Open Houses** – Two public open houses, led by the Eppley Institute in June 2014, were designed to refine consensus and develop specific strategies for the master plan. The meetings involved stakeholders from throughout the community, including representatives from other city departments.
- **Park Board Involvement** – The Eppley Institute briefed the Fairfield Parks and Recreation Board throughout the process and received feedback. This engagement included in-person presentations and updates provided by the Department's Director to the Board.



Online engagement was provided via www.fairfieldmasterplan.com.



City of Fairfield 20 Year Comprehensive Plan cover



2002 Cultural Arts Center Feasibility Study cover

CHAPTER 2: PLANNING FRAMEWORKS

Fairfield’s parks and recreation programs are tangible ways to shape neighborhoods and the community as a whole. Communities like Fairfield are continuously evolving in ways that reflect ongoing changes to economic, political, social, and environmental processes. Residents, local organizations, and their governments collaborate to produce plans to inform and guide that evolution and thus pursue the best future possible.

City of Fairfield 20 Year Comprehensive Plan

This plan provides a strategic, long-term vision, basic goals, objectives, and policies to help guide the City’s future growth and development. It is used to guide public decision-making for the City’s departments. It is comprised of seven sections:

- Land Use Plan
- Thoroughfare Plan
- Housing
- Economic Development
- Public Utilities
- Facilities, Schools, and City Services
- Parks, Leisure Facilities, and Services
- Sustainability

Notably, the plan highlights how the Department’s parks and facilities are important to the health and quality of life in the community. It also recommends greater connectivity via a robust trail system. The plan states that the Department’s main goal should be to “preserve, maintain, and enhance a quality system of parks, open space, and recreational facilities.” The five goals developed through the master planning process directly relate to this main goal presented in the 20 Year Comprehensive Plan, ensuring that the Department and City are in alignment with their activities and direction.

Cultural Arts Center Feasibility Study

This planning study examined how the construction of an arts center could impact the City of Fairfield. Created through public surveys, market analysis, and stakeholder interviews, the document demonstrated strong support for the construction of a central gathering spot, later known as the Village Green, and the inclusion of an “arts/cultural component.” The market analysis demonstrated the demographics and lifestyles of the community would support a center. The report concluded that the “Village Green, with its library, amphitheater, and proposed Cultural Center, will eventually become a central gathering place for the residents of Fairfield.” Research for this master plan supports this conclusion and goals developed for this plan further the original vision of the downtown area as it was conceived in the feasibility study.

Fairfield Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment (1999)

Much like the survey conducted for this master plan, the 1999 needs assessment found that the public approves of the job that the Department is doing. Similarly, the 1999 needs assessment indicated that the Department's marketing plan needed to be improved, and that is one of the main areas of improvement that the 2014 survey found. The 1999 report notes the need for children's programs and facilities to handle such programs. They also supported space for senior programs. These findings informed the "Cultural Arts Center Feasibility Study" and research done for this master plan continues to identify these needs as main goals for the Department. The 1999 assessment recommended development of trails, construction of a community center, and a reorganization of the Department.

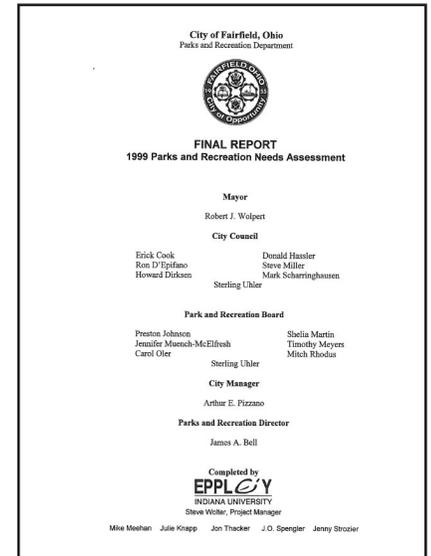
Fairfield Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment (1989)

Conducted in 1989, this was one of the first major studies conducted by the Department. Many recommendations from this study informed the Department's actions throughout the 1990s.

Recommendations included:

- A focus on programs for seniors and youth
- Improved brochures
- Relocation of the Department office to the City building or specific parks building
- Pursuing swim facilities
- Development of Winton Hills Park
- Land acquisition planning to keep pace with urbanization
- Improving the distribution of parks throughout the city

By carrying out these recommendations, the Department strategically positioned itself to pursue even loftier goals proposed in the 1999 needs assessment, like the creation of a "Cultural Arts Center."



1999 Fairfield Needs Assessment cover

The Benefits Approach

The benefits of parks and recreation services are almost intuitive. Fairfield’s parks, trails, facilities, and programs add charm to neighborhoods, increase property values, and provide a balance between nature and development.

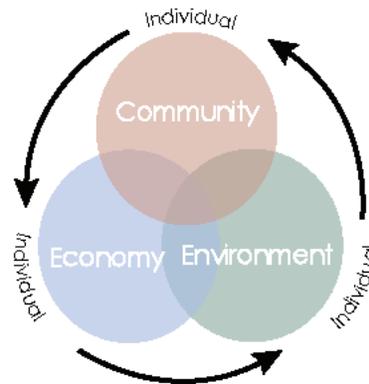


Figure 1: Benefits Approach

A parks and recreation master plan that adopts a narrow perspective, viewing the Department as a silo in the context of a broader community-wide parks and recreation system, will be ineffective in serving the city’s holistic interests. The four distinct elements illustrated in Figure 1 and listed below should be fostered and balanced within the community-wide parks and recreation system.

Benefit #1: Individual Development

Parks and recreation provide for a well-balanced and healthy community. In the resident survey, respondents pointed to health benefits as the top reason for recreating. Recreation provides the individual with a renewed sense of self-worth. Play provides an opportunity to engage our creative self, regardless of age. Community health research conducted by the Eppley Institute indicates that the City of Fairfield’s obesity rate is higher than that of the United States and Ohio, making this health focus particularly warranted.

Benefit #2: Community Building

Park and recreation systems are one of the most effective tools for building a sense of community and improving quality of life. Parks channel positive community participation by getting diverse people to work together toward a shared vision. Volunteer participation and partnerships with established organizations are important parts of community building through the parks and recreation system.

Benefit #3: Economic Enhancement

Parks improve property values, attract people to live and work in the community, and persuade retirees to stay in the area. Economic revitalization of neighborhoods and town centers is enhanced by investment in parks that in turn attract private investment capital. Parks and recreation facilities and programs are not only enjoyed by residents but also attract visitors and contribute to the local tourism markets.

Benefit #4: Environmental Stewardship

Natural areas retain and filter storm water; serve as buffers between incompatible land uses; lend definition to neighborhood areas; provide links between residential areas, parks, and schools; and protect wildlife and fish habitat while providing recreation opportunities close to home.

CHAPTER 3: THE FAIRFIELD PARKS AND RECREATION SYSTEM

The Fairfield Parks and Recreation Department manages 574.25 acres of parkland in approximately 29 parks and offers hundreds of programs for Fairfield residents of all backgrounds, ages, and abilities. The department is responsible for numerous park facilities, including the Fairfield Community Arts Center, Fairfield Aquatic Center, and Fairfield Greens. This includes 5.5 miles of hard surface trails, 1 aquatic center, 2 golf courses, 21 diamond ball fields, 14 rectangular fields, 20 playgrounds, 1 skate park, 35 shelters, 13 tennis courts, and 1 community garden.

Parkland

Urban park systems generally provide a wide array of diverse settings for diverse uses, and this is certainly the case for the community of Fairfield. A park classification system, based upon industry best practices, community engagement, and benchmark research, has been developed for the Fairfield Parks and Recreation Department to develop an equitable system of parks for the city (see Figure 2).

Park Classification	Current Acres/Miles
Mini-Parks	2.25 Acres
Neighborhood Parks	78.00 Acres
Community Parks	65.00 Acres
Regional Parks	382.00 Acres
Nature Preserves	47.00 Acres
Total Acres	574.25 Acres
Trails and Connections	13.62 Miles

Table 1: Parkland Acreage by Classification.

Mini-Parks serve residents living or working within a quarter-mile walking distance. Mini-parks are the smallest park classification and provide surrounding residences, offices, and commercial buildings with open space, which research has shown promotes health and wellness. They serve limited, typically individual daily needs and occasional group needs. Some of the mini-parks, like Veterans Memorial Park and Public Safety Tribute Park, feature special remembrances and artwork that are the sites of annual gatherings. On a more frequent basis, mini-parks provide benches and limited shelter for people to enjoy a meal. Mini-parks can also provide landscape as a buffer to surrounding roads and land use.

Neighborhood Parks are a fundamental park type because they provide focal points for neighborhood identities, gathering places for friends and family, opportunities for informal play, and natural settings for quiet reflection close to home. These parks range in size between five and 25 acres and are usually located within walking distance of neighborhood residences (within a half-mile radius).

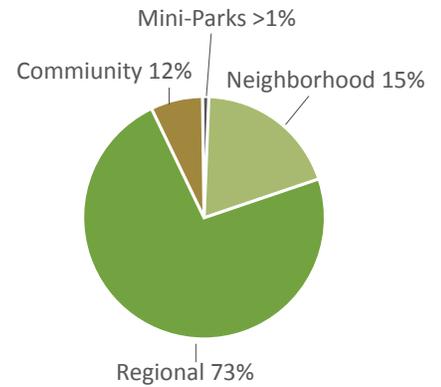


Figure 2: 2014 Acreage



Founders Park



Thomas O. Marsh Park



Regional Park
Harbin Park

Community Parks are larger than neighborhood parks and generally include a mix of active and passive park areas and active recreation facilities. Community parks provide space for those recreational activities that serve a wider population than the surrounding neighborhood and are intended to serve several neighborhoods within a larger geographic area of the city. These parks can range from 20 to 100 acres in size and provide a balance of natural environments and developed facilities. Physical features commonly found in community parks include multiple sports fields for baseball, softball, soccer, football, and other related sports that are scheduled for leagues and tournaments. They can also provide tennis courts and multi-purpose courts for basketball, volleyball, and handball. Other areas include playgrounds, picnic shelters, tables, paths, and off-street parking lots.

Although community parks are larger in size and serve a broader purpose than neighborhood parks, they can meet the need for close-to-home parks much like neighborhood parks do. The focus is on meeting the recreation needs of several neighborhoods or a large section of the community as well as preserving unique landscapes or natural use areas. They allow for group activities and offer other recreational opportunities not feasible, or perhaps not desirable, at the neighborhood level. The primary purpose of a community park is to provide opportunities for social contact among a wide variety of members of different neighborhoods and ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds. These parks meet the specialized needs of a broader community, have higher technical design requirements, provide a sense of community, and increase economic development potential. Like neighborhood parks, they should offer a balance between active and passive recreation activities.

Regional parks serve the entire community as well as the surrounding county. As defined by the National Recreation and Park Association, regional parks provide space for high-intensity recreational activities, as well as natural areas and features typical of neighborhood and community parks.² Regional parks are generally large tracts of land set aside for their scenic qualities and outdoor recreational opportunities. These areas vary in size depending on the type of facilities and are generally located within a short drive of urban areas. A regional park typically provides a majority of facilities that enhance the minimum enjoyment of the natural setting, such as swimming, boating, fishing, and camping facilities, as well as trails. Common features that might be found in regional parks include bike parks, picnic areas, botanical gardens, boating facilities, swimming facilities, and parking areas.

Other land types administered by the Fairfield Parks and Recreation Department are Nature Preserves, Cemeteries, Trails and Connections, and Undeveloped Parkland.

Nature Preserve

The Fairfield Parks and Recreation Department manages Muskopf Preserve and Village Green Hillside Preserve. The preserves provide an oasis for nature and wildlife inside the city limits of Fairfield. NRPA does not have LOS standards for what it terms “Conservancy” space, like Muskopf Preserve and Village Green Hillside Preserve.

Cemeteries

The Department oversees Miami Cemetery and Symmes Burial Grounds for the City. The cemeteries combined cover 1.5 acres.

Symmes Burial Grounds

Symmes Burial Grounds (1 acre) contains the burial sites of the area’s first European settlers. As a result, the site is deemed to have local historical significance and warrants protection and care. Symmes came under the jurisdiction of the City of Fairfield in 1955 when the land was transferred from Fairfield Township. After years of disrepair, the burial grounds came under the care of the Department in the 1970s. The burial grounds is under the care of the Department and hosts Eagle Scout projects, historical education, and remembrances at the site. The Department also provides maintenance for the location.

Miami Chapel Cemetery

According to Esther R Benzing’s *Fairfield, Ohio*, burials in the Miami Chapel Cemetery (1/2 acre) date back to 1810. With a Revolutionary War veteran, War of 1812 veteran, and four Civil War veterans buried there, the site serves as an early memorial to the area’s military. The cemetery is under the care of the Department and hosts Eagle Scout projects, historical education, and remembrances at the site. The Department also provides maintenance for the location.

Trails and Connections

Trails and connections that are managed by the Department provide close-to-home recreation and non-motorized links between residential areas, parks, and schools. They also foster improved public health and a sense of community, increase economic development potential, and protect wildlife migration corridors and habitat. Currently, the Department provides paved and unpaved trails for a total of 13.62 miles of paths.

As issues around alternative transportation, public health, and economic vitality continue to affect planning decisions, there will be increased discussion about how the physical connectivity provided by urban trails can help meet community objectives. Just as proximity of homes to neighborhood and community parks has emerged as a priority in recent years, so too has the proximity of homes to trails.

Undeveloped Parkland

There are approximately 30 acres of undeveloped parkland in the system. The area, commonly known as Black Bottom Park, is adjacent to the Great Miami River.

Marsh Park, Phase II is part of an operating quarry that is next to the existing Marsh Park property. As part of an agreement with the quarry owner, the land will be conveyed to the City once operation has ceased. The date of conveyance is difficult to determine at this time. As a result, any timeline for development cannot be determined until the land is officially transferred. Community engagement feedback indicates that this is one area in which the populace may be open to further parks development.

Recreation Facilities

The Fairfield Parks and Recreation Department operates a wide range of facilities with \$1,650,000.00 budgeted for facilities maintenance. These facilities support both general informal use by the public as well as specialized or scheduled use for athletic competitions, recreation programs, or other events. Recreation facilities have highly specialized maintenance and management requirements and are subject to different standards than urban parkland.

Fairfield Facility Inventory

Fairfield Aquatic Center	1
Fairfield Community Arts Center	1
Golf Course	2
Diamond Ball Field	21
Rectangular Field	17
Playground	20
Skate Park	1
Picnic Shelter	35
Tennis Court	13
Community Garden	1

Table 2: Inventory



Fairfield Community Arts Center

Specialized facilities operated by the Department include tennis courts, Fairfield Community Arts Center, Fairfield Aquatic Center, ball diamonds, and rectangular fields. While some of these facilities can be used for different activities, many are single- or narrow-purpose. Active recreation facilities are typically more costly to develop and operate over time. Community decisions about the provision of these facilities generally take into consideration the extent of the user base, lifecycle management costs, and existence of similar facilities in or near the community.

Passive or community recreation facilities include playgrounds, picnic shelters, community gardens, and some open rectangular fields for use that is unstructured and informal. These facilities play a significant role in giving parks their character, and as a result of their broader use, a wider segment of the general public tends to access them. While passive/community recreation facilities are usually less expensive to develop and maintain, they also have notable lifecycle costs associated with their management.

Some **specialized recreation facilities** such as the Fairfield Greens Golf Course, the skate park, and Miracle League fields are suited only for specific uses. While these facilities can garner a lot of visibility and support, they can also end up serving only a narrow slice of the community and can be the most costly facilities to maintain and operate over time. Departments typically conduct thorough needs assessments before committing to the development and ongoing maintenance of specialized facilities, carefully vetting plans with the community, advisory boards, and governing bodies.

Recreation Programs

The Fairfield Parks and Recreation Department offers a variety of recreation programs and services to Fairfield residents. The Fairfield Community Arts Center offers a variety of programs that target the young and elderly. Typical programs are theater, pottery, social activities, after school programs, art exhibits, and more.

The Department benefits from strong partnerships that it has with area youth leagues. The Fairfield Youth Baseball Association, Fairfield Optimist Soccer Club, Fairfield Youth Athletic Association, and Joe Nuxhall Miracle League Foundation have signed agreements with the Department to host leagues on Department-provided fields and even to provide for maintenance and improvements. The Department reserves the rights to use the fields when league play is not occurring, per the agreement. These agreements provide significant budget relief for the Department as staffing and materials are not needed to keep the parks operating.

A number of **special events** are also offered by the Department, most centered on Village Green Park, sometimes in collaboration with other city departments or organizations. These include summer concerts and movies, parades, and holiday events.

Other Providers

The Fairfield Parks and Recreation Department is not the only provider in the overall system of park and recreation services in the community. Organizations from the public, private, and nonprofit sectors all play a role in offering programs and/or facilities that relate to parks and recreation.

Other Providers of Parkland, Recreation Facilities, and Programs

Fairfield City School District

The Fairfield City School District maintains land around school properties, and these lands are frequently used as de facto parks – especially those with playgrounds, athletic fields, and pathways. They also provide various youth camps in baseball, basketball, bowling, football, golf, softball, soccer, and volleyball.

Great Miami Valley YMCA

The Great Miami Valley YMCA has a location in the City of Fairfield. The YMCA offers an indoor pool, fitness equipment, indoor track, racquetball courts, and a gymnasium. It also provides a long list of programs that include swimming lessons, basketball, and fitness. Most programming is focused on children while many of the facility amenities, like the gym, can be used by adults for pick-up games.

Joe Nuxhall Miracle League Fields

This organization offers programs and events for special needs children and adults. The organization has two fully accessible fields and a playground that it uses for these programs. Youth leagues for individuals aged 5-16 are hosted in the spring, summer, and fall, and each league runs eight weeks long. Therapeutic Recreation for the Disabled administers the adult softball league held at the fields and is for individuals 16 years old and up. This league is only played during the summer. The Parks and Recreation Department provided ground for the Miracle League Fields.

Mercy HealthPlex

The Mercy HealthPlex located in Fairfield is a fitness center that is devoted to “the incredible physical, emotional, social, and spiritual benefits of exercise.” Like most fitness centers it requires annual membership fees. The HealthPlex features an indoor lap pool and warm water pool, six indoor tennis courts, indoor basketball courts, racquetball courts, and a three lane track. Services include swimming lessons, gymnastics, personal training, group fitness (Pilates, yoga, Zumba, movement), nutrition coaching, and massage.

Metroparks of Butler County

The Metroparks of Butler County own/manage over 3,000 acres of parkland throughout Butler County. The Metroparks offer boating, camping, fishing, play areas, shelters, and trails. Most of the Metroparks’ holdings are located outside of Fairfield. The Ronald Reagan Lodge at Voice of America Park, though not in Fairfield, is a facility that people from around the region can reserve for functions and events.

Private Health Clubs

Fairfield has several private health clubs that provide users with exercise equipment. This includes Bee Fit Health Club, Stay Fit 21, and Planet Fitness.

Wake Nation Cincinnati

This unique organization operates a full sized cable wake park. The facility allows users to participate in wakeboarding, water skiing, kneeboarding, and wakeskating. Situated on 10 acres, Wake Nation offers summer camps, birthday parties, and lessons.

Organizational Structure

An overarching goal of the master plan is to investigate the Department's role as a provider of park and recreation services in the community and to make recommendations about the structure of the Department to allow for greater effectiveness.

The Department adopted its current organizational structure in 2012. After the construction of the Fairfield Community Arts Center in 2005, coordination of maintenance and programming became an issue. As a result, the Department reorganized into two main divisions to better align management and to provide improved direction and leadership.

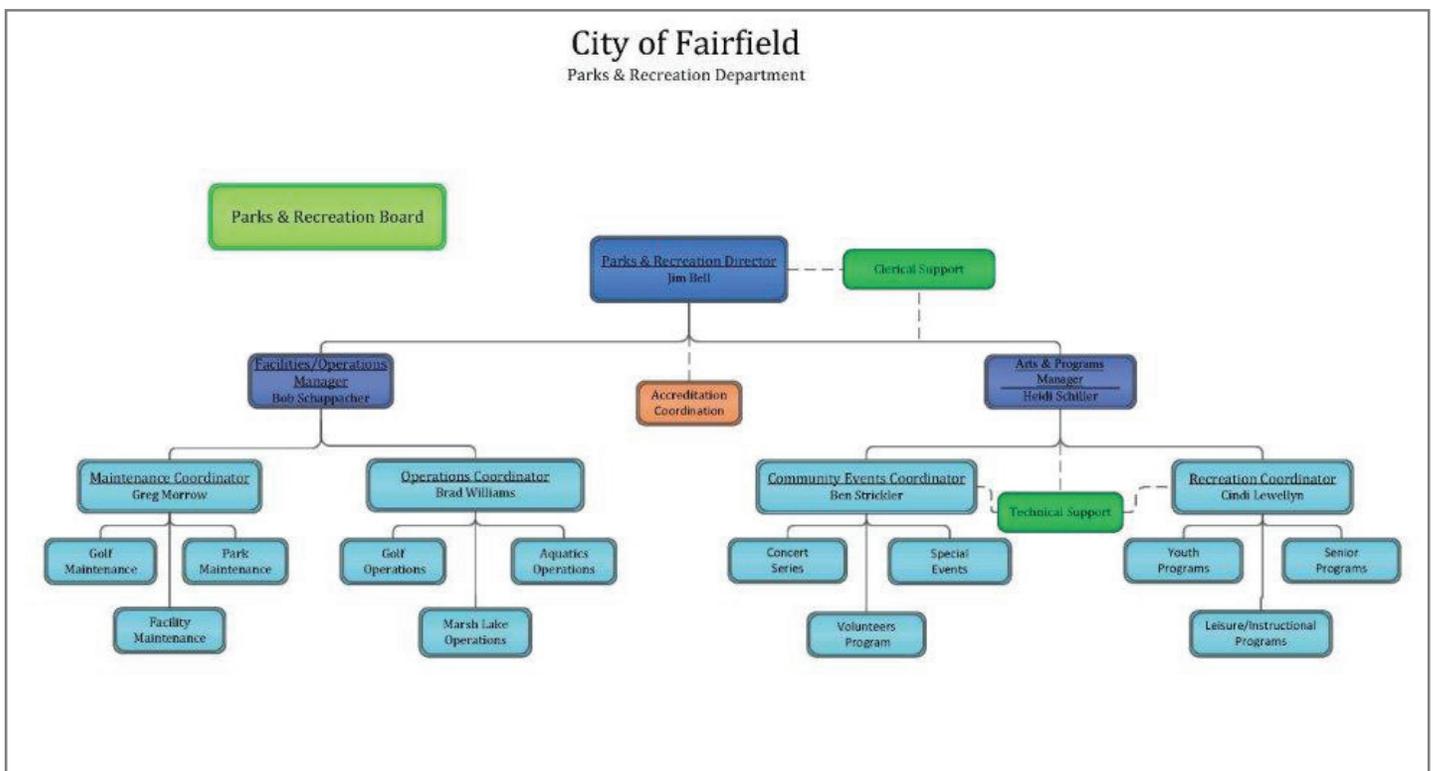


Figure 3: Fairfield Parks and Recreation Department Organization Chart

The Department is led by a Director, appointed by the City Manager. The Director oversees two main divisions; the Facilities and Operations Division and the Programs Division. The Facilities and Operations Division manages functions such as golf, park, and facility maintenance. The Programs Division is responsible for most of the programming that occurs at the Department's facilities and parks. This includes concerts, special events, youth programs, senior programs, and leisure/instructional programs. Technical support is provided to the Community Events Coordinator and the Recreation Coordinator.

CHAPTER 4: COMMUNITY TRENDS

Examining the key issues and evolving trends of the community provides a critical backdrop to other research findings and helps compose an accurate, comprehensive depiction of community needs. Exploring the key issues and trends relevant to parks and recreation in Fairfield will set the stage for the meaningful strategic recommendations of this master plan.

The Fairfield Population

Fairfield has grown exponentially since its founding in the 1950s. The earliest data indicates that 5,000 people lived in the city in 1955. The population increased dramatically between 1970 and 1990 as manufacturing boomed and Interstate 275 opened. Growth has slowed significantly since 1990 because of manufacturing plant closings and lack of additional space for the City to expand. Fairfield has very little room for growth due to surrounding cities and townships that are also developed.

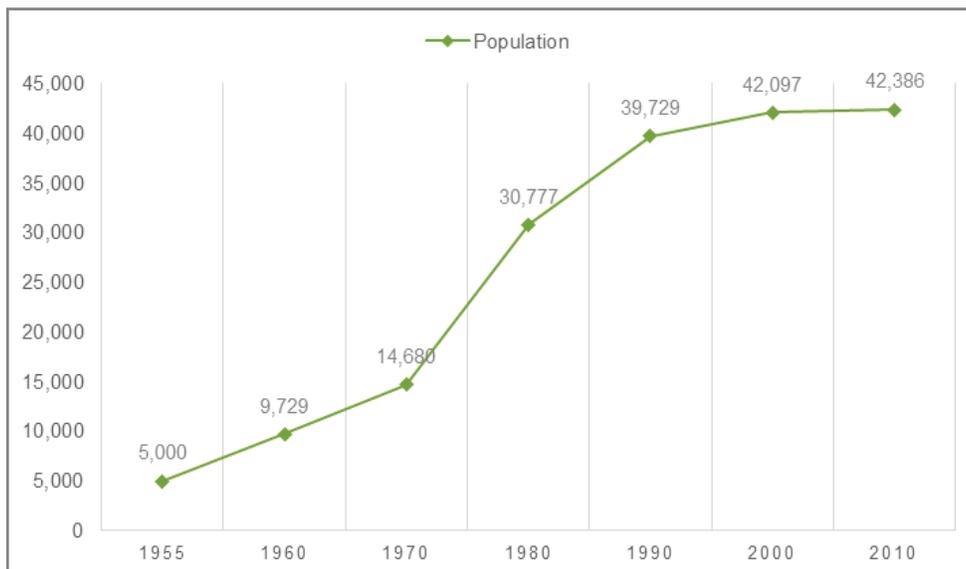


Figure 4: City of Fairfield Population 1955-2010³

Fairfield Development Patterns

There is substantial commercial development along U.S. Highway 4. In the early 2000s, the downtown area saw significant new construction, including the Fairfield Community Arts Center, designed to provide more pedestrian-friendly places to eat and shop. Areas of the city are becoming less suburban and more urban. Over the past decade, over 3,000 new housing units have been developed. Approximately five million square feet of commercial and industrial space have been built as well. However, the city limits have not expanded significantly, contributing to the trend of “infill” and the urbanization of Fairfield.

³ 20 Year Comprehensive Plan, City of Fairfield, Ohio (2009).

Land Use and Housing Trends

Trends in these areas differ from those found in the rest of Ohio. As of 2010, the U.S. Census Bureau lists 18,803 housing units in the City of Fairfield. Of these units, 65.4% are owned by their occupants while 36.9% of the housing units are in multi-unit structures.⁴ The homeownership rate is lower than Ohio's 68% and the number of multi-unit structures is higher than Ohio's 22.9%. Though the relative number of homeowners is slightly lower than Ohio's average, the value of their homes is higher. The median value of owner-occupied housing units in the City is \$148,500 while the median value found throughout Ohio is \$133,700.

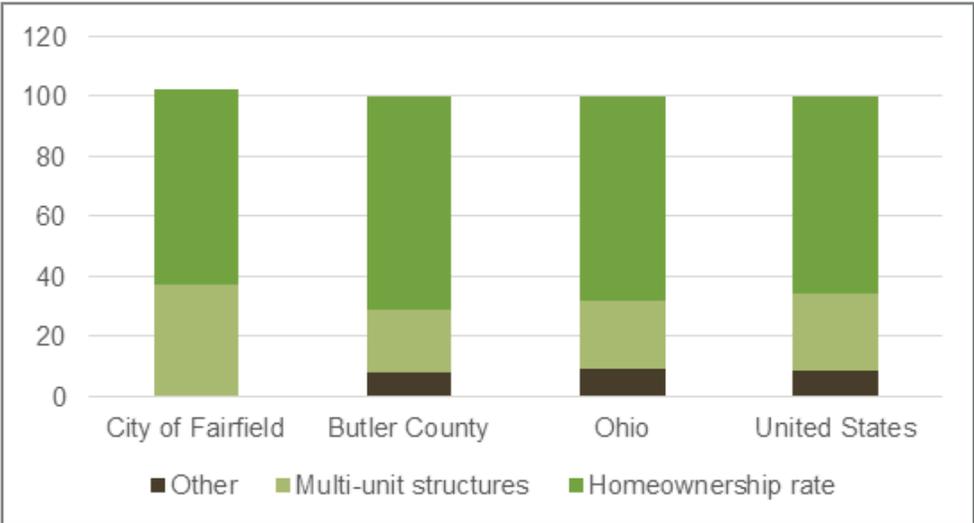


Figure 5: Homeownership and Multi-Unit Structure Comparison

⁴ U.S. Bureau of the Census, *State and County Quick Facts* (Accessed October 14, 2014) <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/39/3925970.html>.

Wellness

According to the Ohio Health Rankings, Butler County ranks 41st of 88 counties for health outcomes related to Quality of Life (see Table 4 for other health-related outcomes). Health-related quality of life is a “multi-dimensional concept that includes domains related to physical, mental, emotional and social functioning. It goes beyond direct measures of population health, life expectancy and causes of death, and focuses on the impact health status has on quality of life.” The CDC has defined health-related quality of life as “an individual’s or group’s perceived physical and mental health over time.”

Butler County is experiencing increasing obesity rates and high inactivity rates and also includes a population experiencing inadequate social support. In order to address these issues, the City of Fairfield should continue to adapt to change and combat growing social concerns. Health and wellness have become a nationwide concern, and as a result, park and recreation departments are being identified as part of the solution. Programs and facilities that address these issues thus have priority over others. Several goals identified by this master plan will contribute to a healthier community, especially the pursuit of more trails and connections and an emphasis on programs for children and seniors.

Recreation Trends

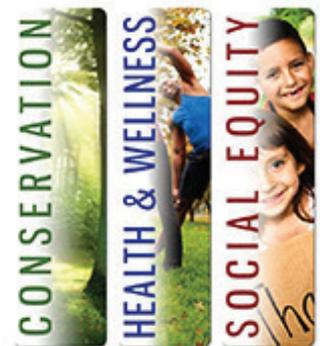
The Fairfield Parks and Recreation Department is known by many because of the Fairfield Community Arts Center and the Village Green. These facilities provide community members with cultural programs and physical fitness opportunities. Among the most popular active recreation pursuits in the community are walking/jogging, using exercise equipment, and swimming. According to the 2014 Sports and Fitness Industry Association (formerly the Sporting Goods Manufacturers Association) report, fitness sports remained the most popular physical activity in the nation. The national participation rate is approximately 60%, and activities such as boot camp-style training have led this set of activities. In addition, activities such as spinning (stationary cycling) are growing in popularity. Health and wellness have been pushed to the forefront of park and recreation agencies in recent years, and in 2014, the National Recreation and Park Association established a health and wellness pillar, thus recognizing it as a critical area to focus their efforts.⁵

Like much of the U.S., Ohio is experiencing declining youth participation in outdoor recreation activities. In his book *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Children from Nature Deficit Disorder*, Richard Louv coins the term “nature deficit disorder” to describe the phenomenon of many of today’s youth not experiencing the social, mental, and physical benefits of being outside and recreating. Moreover, young adults become significantly less active as they enter adulthood, from about the ages of 17 to 22.

While the Department does provide many programs to children under the age of 18, many of these programs take place mainly at the Fairfield Community Arts Center. The Department’s other facilities, notably the parks, are not featured in these programs. To address this lack of exposure to nature, an increase in programs using Harbin Park, Marsh Park, Huffman Park, and Muskopf Nature Preserve would contribute to youth appreciation for nature, increase physical activity, and increase the variety of programs that the Department provides for its community.

Topic	Ohio	Butler
Health Behaviors		39/88
Adult smoking	21%	23%
Adult obesity	30%	30%
Food environment index (0-10 best)	7.4	7.6
Physical inactivity	27%	26%
Access to exercise opportunities	78%	81%
Social & Economic Factors		30/88
High school graduation	80%	86%
Some college	62%	61%
Unemployment	7.2%	7.1%
Children in poverty	24%	20%
Inadequate social support	20%	16%
Children in single-parent households	34%	30%
Violent crime (per 100,000 population)	318	339
Injury deaths (per 100,000 population)	60	55
Physical Environment		48/88
Air pollution - particulate matter (micrograms per cubic meter)	13.5	13.3
Drinking water violations	2%	0%
Severe housing problems	15%	15%
Driving alone to work	83%	84%
Long commute - driving alone	29%	35%

Table 4: Health Status Indicators



National Recreation and Park Association’s areas of focus.

⁵ National Park and Recreation Association (Accessed October 14, 2014) <http://www.nrpa.org/About-NRPA/Impacting-Communities/>.

Benchmark Communities

Benchmark	Pop.
Fairfield, OH*	43,635
Blue Ash, OH	50,000
Dublin, OH*	42,000
Kettering, OH*	56,163
Mason, OH	30,172
Miamisburg, OH*	20,181
West Chester Township, OH	61,000
Westerville, OH*	36,120

Table 5: Benchmarks
* Indicates CAPRA Accredited Communities

The Needs Assessment should be validated by Department staff on an annual basis. This can be done by reviewing local participation data, national park and recreation trends, data from future community surveys, and program evaluation reports.

CHAPTER 5: NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Accurately assessing needs is one of the fundamental parts of planning. Informed by data about the situation and environment, timely and appropriate decisions need to be made about how to meet the community's demand with a supply of the right mix of services. Demand is derived from multiple sources: community engagement, research on trends, findings from benchmark communities, and related research. Supply is informed by policy guidance, organizational structure, available resources, and other factors. As such, conducting a needs assessment requires a synthesis of a wide array of inputs that ultimately yield valuable information about how to establish Level of Service (LOS) standards.

Needs Assessment Methods

The needs assessment conducted for the Fairfield Parks and Recreation Department's master plan utilized a triangulation approach to derive findings that inform service levels for the department. One source was the **community engagement** activities discussed earlier in Chapter 1, which included stakeholder meetings, the community survey, and two public open house meetings. Another source was the **research** drawn from topical reports developed as part of the planning process. **Benchmarking** was also used to assist Fairfield in comparing its park and recreation facilities, programs, and administration to cities determined to be desirable comparisons. Seven benchmark communities were selected after input from staff, stakeholders, and the planning team.

Findings on Recreation Demand

- **Maintenance of current parks and facilities** rated the highest in survey respondents' ranking of priorities for the Department over the next 10 years. With the City's limited ability to expand or to procure new land, maintenance would be the primary driver of the Department's ability to provide quality services
- **Development of trails and connections** rated the second highest priority by survey respondents. It is also featured significantly in the City's 20 Year Comprehensive Plan. Development of these paths would connect more citizens to parks and promote healthy lifestyles through physical activity.
- **Use of technology to promote Department offerings for citizens.** Community engagement indicates that citizens would like more information regarding Department offerings via the internet and social media. This could increase participation in Department activities.
- **Continue and add concerts, programming, and cultural events at the Fairfield Community Arts Center and Village Green.** The Fairfield Community Arts Center and Village Green area is a fantastic location that can draw people from the region. Concerts and theater events rank in the top four activities that citizens rely on the Department to provide.

- **Traditional Programming**

Compared to national trends that have shown a decline in participation in team sports, Fairfield maintains steady participation in baseball, football, soccer, and softball. Residents indicated an interest in keeping these programming options in Fairfield.

- **Access to close-to-home parks**, playgrounds, and picnic areas is highly valued by residents according to the community survey and public meetings. This aligns with research suggesting that neighborhood parks in close proximity to homes provide opportunities for children to experience nature and engage in physical activity.



Village Green Park hosts many concerts throughout the year.

Level of Service Analysis

Needs are expressed through a Level of Service (LOS) analysis that considers all findings. Numeric LOS metrics are most commonly used when analyzing parkland and recreation facilities so as to express acreage or availability in per capita terms. However, effective assessments of recreation programs often rely more heavily on other factors, such as specific programming trends.

Parkland

The analysis and projections of future parkland needs are based upon industry and community standards in addition to other needs assessment research. Table 6 provides an overview of the LOS for the Fairfield Parks and Recreation Department.

Park Classification	Current Acres	Current LOS ⁶	2024 LOS ⁷	National Recreation and Park Association Standards
Mini-Parks	2.25	0.05	0.05	0.25-0.50
Neighborhood Parks	78.0	1.82	1.81	1.00- 2.00
Community Parks	65.0	1.52	1.50	5.0-8.0
Regional Parks	382.0	8.96	8.87	5.0-10.0
Nature Preserves and Cemeteries	48.5	1.13	1.12	N/A
Developed Parkland Subtotal	508	13.48	13.35	11.25-20.5
Undeveloped Land Types	30	0.70	0.69	N/A
Total	538	N/A	N/A	N/A

Table 6: Parkland Level of Service

Fairfield’s existing acreage for neighborhood and regional parks fit within NRPA guidelines. Mini-parks and community parks fall below NRPA guidelines for acreage. Overall, Fairfield’s total park acres fit within the minimum NRPA standards for level of service.

⁶ Unless otherwise specified, LOS is presented as per 1,000 residents and based upon a population of 42,635. This population estimate is found in *2013 Population Estimates by County, City, Village, and Township*, Ohio Research Office, U.S. Census Bureau (May, 2014).

⁷ Based on a population of 43,061 people. Population estimate derived from Ohio Research Office growth estimates from 2010-2013. 0.1% estimated population growth rate per year was found and applied from 2014-2024.

See Appendix 1 for maps featuring park classifications and trails.



Veterans Memorial Park

Mini-Parks

Fairfield’s park system includes a number of mini-parks that serve residents living or working within a quarter-mile walking distance. Mini-parks are the smallest park classification and provide surrounding residences, offices, and commercial buildings with open space, which research has shown promotes health and wellness. They serve limited, typically individual daily needs and occasional group needs.

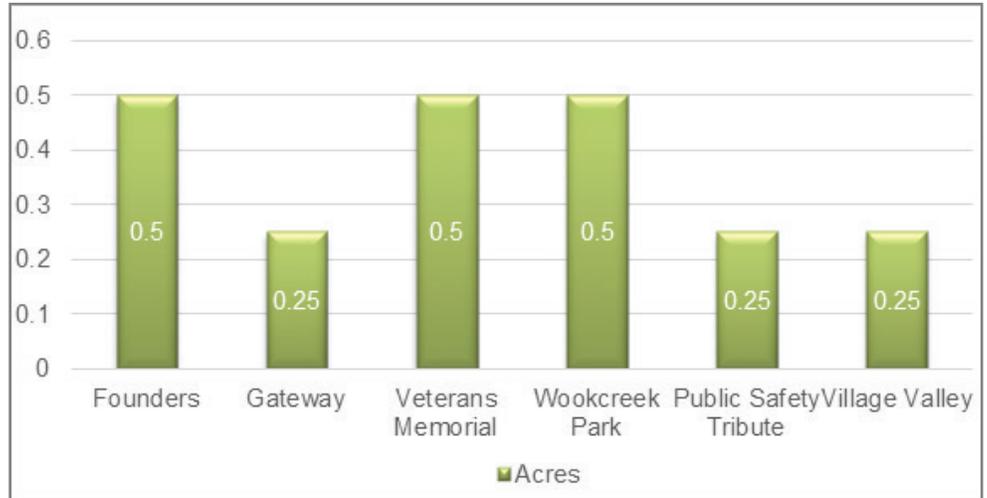


Figure 6: Mini-Park Acreage

Some of the mini-parks, like Veterans Memorial and Public Safety Tribute Park, feature special remembrances and artwork that are the sites of annual gatherings. On a more frequent basis, mini-parks provide benches and limited shelter for people to enjoy a meal. Mini-parks can also provide landscape as a buffer to surrounding roads and land use.

For most members of the community, these parks are rarely visited if they are known at all. According to the public survey, three of the Department’s six mini-parks did not have weekly visitors and the other three only had one person visit them once a week each. The location of the mini-parks could contribute to this. About 4% of residents say that the closest park to them is a mini-park. Three mini-parks are not selected at all as the closest park to a person.

These results are illustrative of several points. First, the Department’s LOS for mini-parks is below NRPA’s recommendations. Acreage will need to triple in the next 10 years if the Department wants to meet NRPA’s minimum ratings. Second, mini-parks are collected together in the center of town. There is an absence of these parks on the east and west sides of town. Third, given low usage levels, it is likely that people do not know that some of these parks exist. This knowledge gap could be attributed to the Department’s promotional materials. Survey results suggest that increasing public outreach via the Department’s website, email, and social media would engage citizens in a manner more to their liking than current practices.

Neighborhood Parks

Neighborhood parks are a fundamental part of community development because they provide focal points for neighborhood identities, gathering places for friends and family, opportunities for informal play, and natural settings for quiet reflection close to home. These parks typically range in size between five and 25 acres and are usually located within walking distance of neighborhood residences (within a half-mile radius).

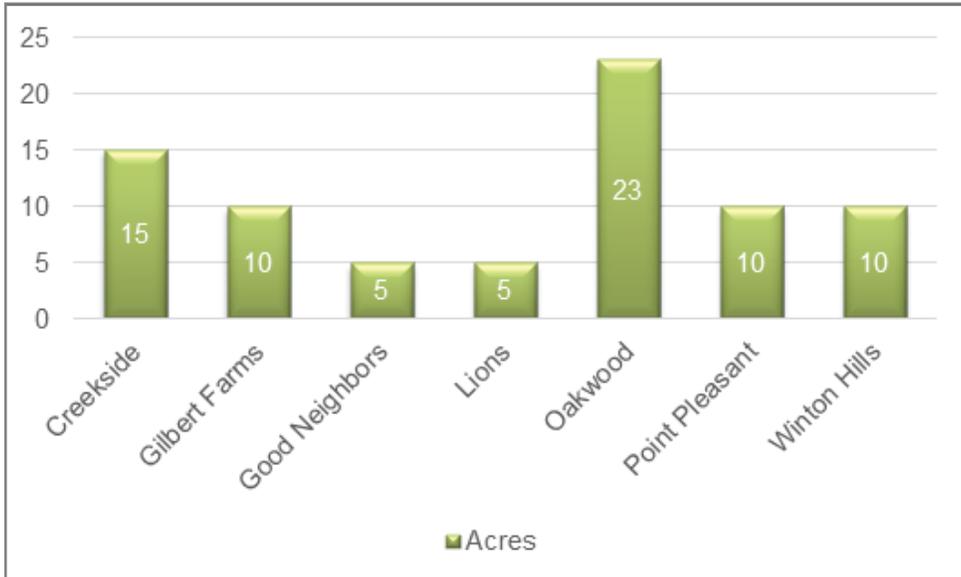


Figure 7: Neighborhood Park Acreage

Access to neighborhood parks is important; however, Fairfield survey results indicate that neighborhood parks are not used as much as expected. Neighborhood parks in Fairfield tend to be more closed off to the general public than other parks. Good Neighbors, Lions, and Oakwood parks do not have formal parking lots. Additionally, signage is minimal, which makes it difficult for people outside of the neighborhood to know that the parks exist.

Survey results indicate that, besides Gilbert Farms, these parks are infrequently used. Gilbert Farms feature the Elisha Morgan Mansion, which could explain the increased use of this park. The other neighborhood parks are difficult to access due to lack of formal parking and lack of signage.

Results from community engagement sessions also demonstrate low use of and attention to these neighborhood parks. When asked, "In the next 10 years, what locations will have the most potential to promote community building?", not one of the 64 participants listed any activities or uses for the neighborhood parks. Of the 34 stakeholder interviews conducted with Department and City officials and employees, no neighborhood park is listed as important to Fairfield in 10 years' time.



Annual Cyclocross Mountain Bike Race at Harbin Park



Hatton Park/ Joe Nuxhall Miracle League Fields

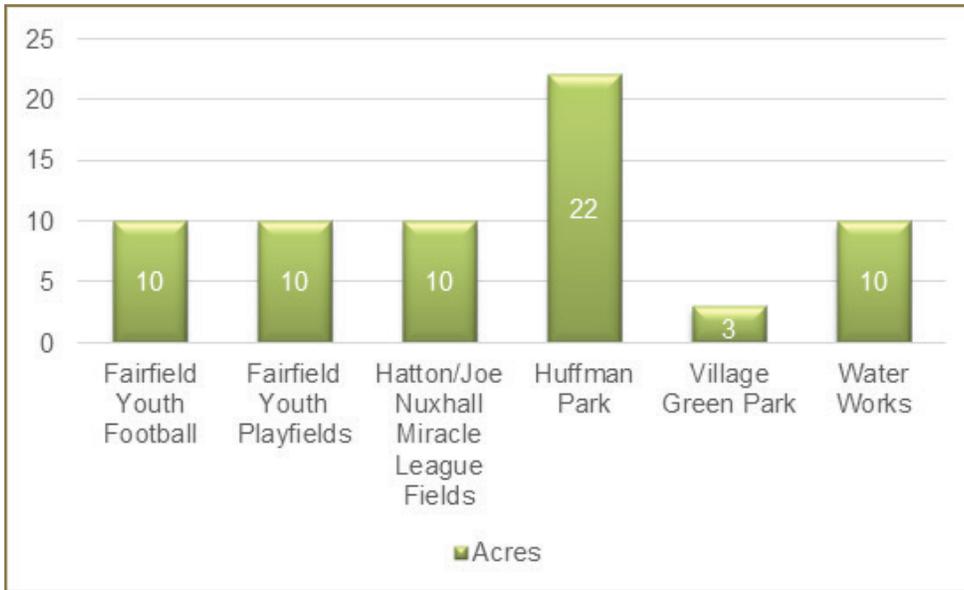
Community Parks

Community parks are larger than neighborhood parks and generally include a mix of active and passive park areas and active recreation facilities. Community parks provide space for those recreational activities that serve a wider population than the surrounding neighborhood and are intended to serve several neighborhoods within a larger geographic area of the city. These parks can range from 20 to 100 acres in size and provide a balance of natural environments and developed facilities. Physical features commonly found in community parks include multiple sports fields for baseball, softball, soccer, football, and other related sports that are scheduled for leagues and tournaments. They can also provide tennis courts and multi-purpose courts for basketball, volleyball, and handball. Other areas include playgrounds, picnic shelters, tables, paths, and off-street parking lots. In some communities, this classification has been retitled as “community parks and open space” to better fit the type of land use in the park system.

Although community parks are larger in size and serve a broader purpose than neighborhood parks, they can meet the need for close-to-home parks much like neighborhood parks do. The focus is on meeting the recreation needs of several neighborhoods or a large section of the community as well as preserving unique landscapes or natural use areas. They allow for group activities and offer other recreational opportunities not feasible, or perhaps not desirable, at the neighborhood level. The primary purpose of a community park is to provide opportunities for social contact among a wide variety of members of different neighborhoods and ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds. These parks meet the specialized needs of a broader community, have higher technical design requirements, provide a sense of community, and increase economic development potential. Like neighborhood parks, they should offer a balance between active and passive recreation activities.

Findings from the survey and community engagement sessions indicate that community parks are used frequently in Fairfield, especially with partnering organizations. Organized activities, such as the youth baseball, football, and soccer leagues, along with spaces for large gatherings, make them particularly popular. In general, the community parks are easier to access and in better condition than neighborhood parks. Leagues that utilize the parks have maintenance agreements with the Department to assist with upkeep. Since most of the community parks are located on the west side of the city, people who live on the east side of town do not have ease of access to the parks and their programs, which can contribute to health disparities for those who live on the east side.

Fairfield’s community parks tend to be smaller in terms of average acres due to the city’s land constrictions; however, they still provide all necessary characteristics of community parks as described by NRPA. Community parks benefit from external partners who help maintain and run programs. The Department works with outside groups to put on programs and raise money. The Miracle League, Fairfield Youth Athletic Association, Fairfield Youth Baseball Association, Anna and Harold W. Huffman Foundation, and Fairfield Fire Department utilize community parks. The programs these outside groups organize result in increased park use.



Harbin Park

Figure 8: Community Park Acreage

Regional Parks

Regional parks serve the entire community as well as the surrounding county. As defined by NRPA, regional parks provide space for high-intensity recreational activities, as well as natural areas and features typical of neighborhood and community parks.⁸ Regional parks are generally large tracts of land set aside for their scenic qualities and outdoor recreational opportunities. These areas vary in size depending on the type of facilities and are generally located within a short drive of urban areas.

These parks are usually larger in size and can range from 100 to 300 acres. They generally provide a mix of natural beauty and developed facilities. Extensive wooded areas are often part of large urban parks, lending a sense of the natural landscape to the urban setting. The types of facilities often found in large urban parks include athletic fields, nature centers, day camps, boating/swimming areas, picnic areas, and shelters. Other facilities include a mixture of trails and off-street parking facilities. The parks listed as regional in Fairfield are Harbin Park, Marsh Park, Grange Park, and the Hamilton-Fairfield Skate Park.



Figure 9: Regional Park Acreage

⁸ National Recreation and Park Association, *Recreation, Park, and Open Space Standards and Guidelines*, 56-57.

Trails and Connections

Trails and connections that are managed by the Department provide close-to-home recreation and non-motorized links for the community, increase economic development potential, and protect wildlife migration corridors and habitat. Currently, the Department provides 11 trails for a total of 13.62 miles. Paved trails include the Great Miami River Recreation Trail, Pleasant Run Creek Path, Harbin Park Bike Path, Huffman Park Bike/Hike Path, Miami-Erie Canal Bike Path (M-2-M), and Marsh Park Bike Trail. Unpaved paths are Harbin Park Mountain Bike Trails, Harbin Park Fitness Trail, and Memorial Grove Nature Trail.



Figure 10: Trail Mileage

As issues around alternative transportation, public health, and economic vitality continue to affect planning decisions, there will be increased discussion about how the physical connectivity provided by urban trails can help meet community objectives. Just as proximity of homes to neighborhood and community parks has emerged as a priority in recent years, so too has the proximity of homes to trails.

Survey and community engagement results indicate that trail development is at the forefront of community needs. Connectivity rated the lowest of all categories in respondents' evaluations of 10 topics covering satisfaction with open space, facilities, and programs. In addition, 55% of respondents indicated that walking/biking trails were very important to Fairfield, surpassing open spaces, programs, and river access. Finally, walking/jogging is rated as the highest participatory activity for people in Fairfield. Trails also provide excellent space for physical activity that curbs obesity, a health indicator that could be addressed with additional trail miles. With increasing connectivity between parks and the City ranking just behind maintaining facilities on a list of importance, the development of trails and connections will need to be considered for the next 10 years. Benchmark communities, on average, have 29 more miles of paved trails than Fairfield. With community members voicing their support for increased connectivity and the comparatively few miles of trails currently available, trail development could prove to be a popular program over the next 10 years that will address the needs of the community.

Undeveloped Parkland

There are approximately 30 acres of undeveloped parkland in the system, commonly known as Black Bottom Park. It is adjacent to the Great Miami River.

Marsh Park, Phase II is part of an operating quarry and adjacent to the current Marsh Park. As part of an agreement with the quarry owner, the land will be conveyed to the City once operation has ceased. The date of conveyance is difficult to determine at this time. As a result, any timeline for development cannot be determined until the land is officially transferred. Community engagement feedback indicates that this is the one area that the populace may be open to further parks development.

Recreation Facilities

The following recreation facilities classifications are intended for use as guidelines to analyze and plan for a recreation facility inventory that represents and reflects the interests of the Fairfield community, accounts for relevant national trends, provides direction for future recreation facility management, and fits within current and future funding levels. Table 7 provides a summary of the current and projected LOS for each facility type based on the current population (i.e., 42,635) and provides a summary of the benchmark communities.

Facility Type	LOS per	Qty	Benchmark Comparison		
			Existing Current LOS	NRPA LOS Median	TPL LOS Median
Basketball Courts	10,000	13.5	3.16	N/A	2.2
Diamond Fields	10,000	21	4.92	2.93	1.5
Rectangular Fields	10,000	17	3.99	2.35	N/A
Playgrounds	10,000	20	4.46	2.60	2.2
Skate Parks	100,000	1	2.38	N/A	0.40
Golf Courses	100,000	2	4.76	0.33	0.7
Swimming Pools Total*	100,000	5	11.9	3.29	2.0
Community Arts Center	100,000	1	2.38	4.05	0.70
Tennis Courts	10,000	13	3.05	2.33	1.7
Shelters	10,000	35	8.21	N/A	N/A
Gardens	100,000	1	2.38	3.07	0.4

Table 7: Recreation Facility Level of Service

***Fairfield Aquatic Center is made up of five separate pools.**

The Fairfield LOS for all but two categories is higher than the NRPA Median LOS. Fairfield LOS is higher than all Trust for Public Lands Median LOS standards. The Department is exhibiting relatively high levels of service, which is reflected through the public engagement process. Condition assessment inspections conducted in August 2014 indicate that basketball courts, diamond and rectangular fields in neighborhood parks, playgrounds in neighborhood parks, and shelters in most parks need regular repair work. The maintenance includes painting, resurfacing, structural support, and other repairs. The diamond and rectangular fields used by leagues were in much better condition than the other fields found in the neighborhood parks due to maintenance agreements between the Department and various sports leagues. The Department's most used facilities—the Fairfield Community Arts Center, golf courses, and Fairfield Aquatic Center—were in excellent condition.



Fairfield Aquatic Center

Facility	Acres
South Trace Golf Course	120
North Trace Golf Course	55
Fairfield Community Arts Center	5
Fairfield Aquatic Center	5
Fairfield Land Library	5

Table 8: Facility Acreage



The Department's programming includes outdoor educational programs by a naturalist at Huffman Park.

Based on usage and importance, the LOS for any facilities that are used by leagues or clubs or that host regular programming by the Department should be maintained at the highest level possible to ensure that Fairfield residents are receiving the service that they expect from the Department. Facilities in neighborhood parks should be addressed with a maintenance action plan to resurface, fix, and alleviate deficiencies as a strategy to increase use of these parks. The Department could consider partnerships with local groups to assist with maintenance of the neighborhood park facilities to ensure that the quality of service is as high as possible.

Recreation Programs

The Fairfield Parks and Recreation Department offers a variety of recreation programs and services to Fairfield residents. Programs and services were examined by using national trend information provided by the Sports & Fitness Industry Association's 2014 Sports, Fitness, and Leisure Activities Topline Participation Report, benchmark data, and information gleaned throughout the civic engagement process.

The Department benefits from strong partnerships that it has with area youth leagues. The Fairfield Youth Baseball Association, Fairfield Optimist Soccer Club, Fairfield Youth Athletic Association, Joe Nuxhall Miracle League Foundation, and the YMCA have signed lease agreements with the Department to provide youth services on City properties. The Department reserves the rights to use the fields when league play is not occurring, per the agreement. These agreements provide significant budget relief for the Department as staffing and materials are not needed to keep the parks operating.

Meanwhile, the Fairfield Community Arts Center offers a variety of programs that target the young and elderly. Typical programs are theater, pottery, social activities, art exhibits, and more.

In terms of the programs themselves, fitness, yoga, swimming, weight lifting, and nature programming are likely to be the most popular in coming years, and service levels for these program areas should be closely monitored. Fitness sports remained the most popular physical activity in the nation, with a national participation rate of approximately 60%.

An area for programming that should be explored by the Department are youth and senior programs that expose participants to nature via the Department's many parks and nature preserves. These programs would provide physically engaging activities that can foster new interest in nature and lead to healthier lifestyles through exercise.

Organizational Assessment

Through extensive interaction with Department staff, including interviews and daily encounters, research for this master plan indicates that restructuring is not recommended at this time. First, the current state of the Department is strong, and second, the Department has not been in its current format for more than three years. More time is needed to make a full assessment of the 2012 reorganization. It is recommended that the Department re-evaluate its organizational framework in 2016 or 2017. This will have allowed enough time to evaluate the current format and make recommendations for changes.

The organizational assessment did identify four Observations/Trends that should be acted upon by the Department moving forward to keep it moving in the correct direction:

- Passionate employees
- Need for improved internal communication
- Need for improved external communication

Passionate Employees

Through individual interviews and observations of employee behavior over the course of six visits to the City of Fairfield during the development of this master plan, it is clear that Department employees are passionate about their work and care about what they do in delivering Parks and Recreation service to the community. To continue this excellent trend, management needs to keep staff connected with the Department's mission and provide a vision for where the Department is going. This will provide continuing support for employee work and demonstrate how what employees do directly contributes to the Department's success.

Internal Communication

Internal communication should be re-examined by the Department to meet a higher level of demand for information by employees. Staff interviews revealed that many employees were not in alignment with goals and objectives for their responsibilities after the conclusion of meetings. This could be easily remedied through the adoption of new practices, including the drafting and disbursement of action items after meetings that clearly state what occurred during meetings and who is responsible for executing any assigned tasks. This will help managers ensure that employees are carrying out their tasks and demonstrate to leadership that direction is being executed by staff at all levels of the organization.

External Communication

External communication methods need to improve to better represent what the Department has to offer the community in terms of programs and facilities. Staff interviews demonstrated a clear interest in an update of the Department's marketing plan and delivery methods used to communicate to the public. Public survey results support these staff conclusions. Survey results indicate that the community wants more electronic communication. Moving forward, the Department should conduct a full review of its communication plan and procedures. The focus of this review should be the integration of electronic media, particularly targeted email listservs, social media promotion/use, interactive program calendars, and online registration systems for programs and facilities.



Summer Showers located in Village Green Park.



Activity guide is published tri-annually along with the city's newsletter.

MISSION

The mission of Fairfield Parks and Recreation is to enrich the quality of life for the citizens of the community, sustain the City's natural resources and environment, and provide broad based leisure activities, cultural opportunities, facilities, and services for all ages.

The Future Organization of Fairfield Parks and Recreation Department

It is clear that the Fairfield community values and expects a great deal from their Parks and Recreation Department. In order to meet these demands, the Department will have to focus on becoming a high performing organization, which will require particular attention to the following efforts:

1. Establishing a clear vision statement for the Department that is supported by flexible and achievable strategic plans, and clearly articulated philosophies that set the standards for everyone's behavior.
2. Emphasizing customer retention in programs and business processes through an engagement program that emphasizes use of the internet, including but not limited to targeted listservs, social media, interactive calendars, and online registration options.
3. Clarifying communication regarding actions expected top-to-bottom and cross-divisionally on specific projects and programs that stem from regular meetings.

The Department has the need to foster employees who are creative, innovative, and capable of measured risk-taking within a results-oriented, collaborative organization that provides a team-based framework of support and trust.

Conclusion: Key Issues and Observations

While the system is strong, there are challenges to be met to maintain the quality and accessibility of the system. Through research, observation, community engagement, and analysis, several goals emerged that frame the overall key issues facing the Fairfield Parks and Recreation Department.

Take Care of What We Have

- The Department should shift from developing new parks and facilities (except trails, Marsh Park, and Black Bottom Park) with existing funding to prioritizing the ongoing operations and maintenance of existing parks and facilities with existing funding.
- Condition assessment and lifecycle data on facilities must be used to prioritize maintenance work throughout the entire system.
- Direction and a long-term planning framework are needed in order to focus on sustaining maintenance and operations for existing facilities.

Improving and Expanding Trails and Connections

- Strong support was received for extending Fairfield's current trails to connect with other jurisdictions to the north, east, and south.
- Trails will promote wellness, leading to an improved standard of living in the community that will help address Fairfield's obesity rate, which is higher on average than the rates for both Ohio and the United States.
- Trails can provide an alternative route for local transportation that could alleviate automotive congestion.
- Connections throughout the community will allow people more access to all of Fairfield's parks, leading to increased use.

Continued Advancement of Arts and Entertainment

- The public stated a desire to continue events in parks and facilities to engage the community, such as concerts at Village Green, regional and national acts at the Fairfield Community Arts Center, and local celebrations.
- Dance and arts programs hosted at the Fairfield Community Arts Center have some of the highest participation rates in the Department and are unique offerings that will continue to attract participants.

Youth and Senior Engagement and Activity

- Survey data and public engagement comments indicated a need and desire to actively engage youth and seniors with places, facilities, and programs.
- Access to nature should be facilitated through connectivity to the parks and an increase in the number of programs that utilize the Department's parks, not just the Fairfield Community Arts Center.
- Access to programming could be maximized through partnerships and improved use of technology (e.g., social media).

Advance Partnerships

- Continue strong partnerships with local youth leagues to run baseball, football, soccer, and softball at affordable prices for participants and to benefit from maintenance assistance provided by the leagues.
- Continue to work with local organizations/businesses to put on free community events throughout the year.
- Work with local businesses to sponsor well known acts to play the Fairfield Community Arts Center for fees.

PART TWO

THE PLAN

CHAPTER 6: COMMUNITY VISION AND GOALS

There is strong public support for maintaining and improving Fairfield’s parks, recreation facilities, and programs in order to enhance residents’ quality of life. Public support, however, is defined around residents’ key concerns and priorities. The strategic directions found in this section are intended to empower the full capacity of the Fairfield Parks and Recreation system; to resolve the issues revealed in the research process; and to set the stage for development of a high quality, equitable system of parks and recreation land, facilities, and services. To be successful, the Plan will require the focused energy, commitment and resources of the City, other government agencies, local businesses, user groups, and the general population.

The foundation of Fairfield Parks and Recreation is built on the Department’s mission and goals. The principles and strategies found in this section are related to the Department’s mission and goals and based on the public involvement process. The individual goals, objectives, actions, and recommended policies that have emerged through this process are informed by these principles and strategies, which will be necessary to carry out the intent of the Plan.

Implementation of the specific actions and recommendations presented in this chapter will require incremental action planning and follow-through on a 1-to-10 year basis. The most immediate actions and priorities for implementation are presented in Chapter Nine’s Implementation Plan, which will be updated on an annual basis. Together, these goals, objectives, and actions provide a framework for the Department to work toward effective implementation of Fairfield Parks and Recreation plans, including the Master Plan. To succeed, specific tasks as well as individuals responsible for leading them will need to be identified as projects are moved forward.



**Groovin’ on the Green Concert
at Village Green Park**

Fairfield Parks and Recreation Strategic Foundation

Fairfield Parks and Recreation Mission Statement

The mission of Fairfield Parks and Recreation is to enrich the quality of life for the citizens of the community, sustain the City's natural resources and environment, and provide broad based leisure activities, cultural opportunities, facilities, and services for all ages.

Goals

Five core goals emerged from the community engagement process as the basis for future action and decision-making for Fairfield's Parks and Recreation Master Plan. These goals are the product of a comprehensive, on-going public engagement process. The five strategies are:

- Taking Care of What We Have
- Improving and Expanding Trails and Connections
- Continued Advancement of Arts and Entertainment
- Youth and Senior Engagement and Programming
- Advance Partnerships

The public input, extensive research, and best practices review in the Fairfield Parks and Recreation Plan have resulted in strategic directions that will reshape the Fairfield Parks and Recreation system to reflect community need and emerging issues. The Plan continues the vision Fairfield has of a high quality, equitable system of Parks and Recreation land, facilities, and services. The resulting strategic direction will focus energy, commitment, and resources of the municipality, other departments, local businesses, and user groups to revitalize and maintain parks, recreation facilities, and programs as needed.

Strategic Framework

Clearly, parks and recreation facilities, in the public's opinion, are not just a luxury: they are important building blocks for creating a healthy community. Parks are one of the most visible and positive public services, affect the lives of all age groups, and contribute to quality of life. In addition, the park system balances individual growth, community building, economic development, and environmental stewardship at the local level. The Department's commitment to public engagement in this Master Plan Update has been rigorous and included broad segments of the community. Continued dedication is critical to the Strategic Framework.

The five goals will directly inform the development of strategic recommendations for the Parks and Recreation Department. The remainder of this chapter will discuss each goal. After a description of each goal, a proposed departmental policy statement is presented along with a set of long-range actions. Long-range actions describe the desired future condition of the Fairfield Parks and Recreation system.

Goal #1: Taking Care of What We Have

Description

The maintenance of existing facilities and parks was a consistent theme with the public and civic leaders. There is a clear preference for spending tax revenue on maintaining or enhancing existing park and recreation facilities. Fairfield will need to identify ways to allocate resources to ensure the long-term viability of the Parks and Recreation system for the future while addressing any maintenance backlogs that exist.

Policies

- Continue to provide robust funding from the General Fund for maintenance work.
- The Fairfield Parks and Recreation Department shall ensure adequate resources are available to maintain and operate assets within community sustainability goals, by implementing a lifecycle approach.
- An asset management system that tracks asset condition, critical systems maintenance, and repair and rehabilitation requirements will continue to be utilized to make park and facility investment decisions.
- The proposed development of any new park or facility assets shall be evaluated through a feasibility study that includes a needs assessment, user profile, projected participation analysis, development funding method, lifecycle cost pro forma, and alternative development trade-off analysis. This will assist the Department in anticipating the maintenance cost of the new asset.
- The Department shall seek and develop partnerships and opportunities to leverage maintenance and capital improvement funds.

Long-Range Actions

- Eliminate maintenance backlog by scheduling all pending projects along a reasonable timeline for completion.
- Provide multi-functional, flexible facilities that can accommodate a variety of unforeseen needs and recreation use trends.
- Collect, analyze, and routinely use appropriate data to make decisions regarding asset management and budget priorities. This includes contingency plans for decreases in funding so that maintenance can be prioritized based on a facility's importance to the Department's mission and overall use.
- Adapt part-time employees' schedules to meet maintenance needs.



Fairfield Greens South Trace Clubhouse

Goal #2: Improving and Expanding Trails and Connections

Description

The City of Fairfield currently features a number of paved and unpaved trails that citizens use for physical fitness and as alternative transportation routes to work and businesses. The connections provide the community with excellent opportunities to stay fit in safe outdoor settings. Trails also allow Fairfield to connect with neighboring communities, bringing in visitors from the surrounding areas.

Based on community feedback, there is very strong support for the continued maintenance of the Department's current offerings and the expansion of these trails to allow the community to be better connected to park facilities. There are several trail expansion plans that should be pursued by the Department, including the Great Miami River Recreation Trail, Miami to Miami Connection, Pleasant Run Creek Path, and the Harbin Park bike trail.

Policies

- The Department shall categorize the list of trails and connections that are marked for expansion and, to determine development order, create a priority index based on the organizational mission, underserved populations, geographic distribution, service outcomes, and redundancy with services provided by other organizations in the community.
- The Department shall work with qualified contractors to design trails using sustainable materials to mitigate environmental impact.
- The Department shall work with adjacent jurisdictions to ensure that new trails are connected to one another in a logical manner.
- The Department shall seek out grants to assist in funding planning and construction.
- The Department shall ensure that all new trail construction is in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Long Range Actions

- Collect, analyze, and routinely use appropriate data to make decisions about future trail expansion and to monitor use.
- Develop a maintenance plan and budget for the new trails to take into account lifecycle management practices.
- Continue to utilize trails that connect with other communities for annual cross-jurisdictional events and to fund community events.

Goal #3: Continued Advancement of Arts and Entertainment

Description

The arts and entertainment are important to the citizens of Fairfield. There is a desire to allow for more community events in the parks and facilities that engage the local community and neighborhoods.

The Fairfield Community Arts Center and Village Green provide economic impact for the community. These unique facilities can be used by both residents and visitors through specialized features and programs such as special events, concerts, plays, dance classes, theater classes, and festivals.

Policies

- The Department shall categorize its arts and entertainment programs and guide its offerings using a priority system based on the organizational mission, target population served, service outcomes, partnership value, and redundancy with services provided by other organizations in the community.
- The Department shall establish cost recovery rates and associated pricing when appropriate for certain programs. Fees shall be based on the recreation priority index, community versus individual benefit, cost to provide services, concern for equity of service, and the prevailing market rate for comparable services.
- The Department shall promote its offerings via multiple methods, including extensive use of electronic media such as the website, email listservs, and social media.
- The Department shall work with external partners to attract well-known musicians and entertainers to increase interest in the Department's offerings and lure attendees from the region.

Long-Range Actions

- Cost recovery targets and subsidy application are clearly defined and applied (including cost definitions) depending upon the degree of community/individual benefit provided as defined by a priority system.
- The total cost of facility ownership and total cost of providing programs and services are defined and utilized in resource allocation.
- Booking of high-profile acts will contribute to the Fairfield Community Arts Center and Village Green's reputation as a regional attraction for arts and entertainment.



The Fairfield Community Arts Center provides unique opportunities to advance the arts for the city and region.



Partnerships, like the Hatton Park/Joe Nuxhall Miracle League Fields, are vital to providing Fairfield’s residents with the programming that they desire.

Goal #4: Advancing Partnerships

Description

Building community engagement through outreach programs and initiatives is crucial to the Department’s continued success. Partnerships allow the Department to defray costs for programs and services, allowing money to be spent on other important activities. They can also insulate the Department from decreases in funds provided by the City. Partnerships also allow the Department to engage more people through the use of its facilities and infrastructure. Partnerships can include sports leagues, trail development, and music/entertainment functions, among others.

Policies

- The Fairfield Parks and Recreation Department shall build community through partnerships that are mutually beneficial, mission-focused, and grounded in the Department’s guiding principles as demonstrated in parks, facilities, and programs.
- Parks and Recreation services conducted by partners shall be promoted by the Department and ensured to be accessible to all community members.
- The Department shall use inclusive and transparent community engagement practices that encourage participation by all community members.

Long-Range Actions

- The full community, including underserved populations, youth, and minority groups, participate in the Parks and Recreation system and are engaged in decision making. This will require meeting with representative organizations of these groups so that programs reflect their needs.
- The Department will conduct, at regular intervals, analysis of gaps and unnecessary redundancy in the greater community’s parks, recreation facilities, and recreation programs (not just Department services) in order to coordinate program offerings or service provision by appropriate service providers. This includes the Fairfield City School District, Metroparks of Butler County, Great Miami Valley YMCA, and Mercy HealthPlex.
- The Department has systems in place to effectively measure the outcomes of programs, parks, facilities, and services with a focus on strengthening communication of the Department’s influential role in advancing knowledge of programs and services that result from its partnerships.
- The Department will develop and implement a strategic framework for developing, managing, and stewarding new and current community partnerships.

Goal #5: Youth and Senior Engagement and Programming

Description

As in much of the nation, there is a need to actively engage youth and senior groups with parks, facilities, and programs that are place-based. This includes the need to provide facilities for youth sports as well as more access to nature in the parks system. After-school programs greatly contribute to these goals. Additionally, senior programming that takes advantage of high-quality meeting areas and excellent places to walk promotes physical and mental health. The community feels that youth and seniors should be priorities for the Parks and Recreation Department.

Parks offer children and seniors the daily benefits of direct experience with nature. Children find the motivation to explore, discover, and learn about their world while seniors get to engage in health-promoting physical activity. Parks engage children in experiential learning through play and shared experiences with peers. Moreover, parks provide a valuable resource for closing the educational achievement gap and offer a vehicle for children's participation in community development, citizenship, and democratic processes.

Policies

- The Department shall enhance the health of Fairfield's youth and seniors through programs that utilize all of its parks and facilities. The focus will be on exposing youth to nature through programs at nature preserves and parks in Fairfield.
- The Department shall continue to support after-school activities that benefit youth and build a strong sense of community and place.
- The Department shall support programs and services that promote community engagement for seniors.

Long-Range Actions

- Youth and seniors are engaged in the community through the use of parks, facilities, and trails and participation in health-enhancing activities, service learning, and decision making.
- Youth participation in physical activity and nature programs will increase year-round through the use of outdoor facilities at parks and nature preserves.
- The Department's programming will have a significant effect on increasing environmental awareness and conservation ethics among Fairfield youth.
- The Department's programming will have a positive impact on the mental health of seniors through engaging activities and partnerships.
- The Department provides a balance of nature play and developed areas in parks in order to improve exposure of youth to the outdoors.
- Partnerships with agencies that serve youth (under 18) and seniors are leveraged within the Department's strategic framework for community partnerships in order to increase participation in all forms of recreation, sport, outdoor activities, and play.



Youth programming, such as annual Easter Egg Hunt at Harbin Park, provide children with opportunities to enjoy nature and be active.

Conclusion

The five goals presented in this chapter provide a framework for addressing the needs of the Parks and Recreation system that is reflected by community input and overall city planning guidance. Specific action items are derived and presented in the rest of this plan. Monitoring the effectiveness of the policies, long-term goals, and action items is important to the success of the Department, and efforts to evaluate implementation should be rooted in quality data. The action plan itself will lay out a progression of steps to identify the most useful metrics and build capacity to collect and analyze the data required to perform these assessments. Combined with the ongoing involvement of the Fairfield Parks and Recreation Board, City Council, stakeholders, and the community at large, the Department's policy framework and action plan can be adjusted on a regular basis to ensure the continued provision of quality facilities and services.

CHAPTER 7: FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

Following the economic downturn of 2009, parks and recreation departments across the nation faced challenging budgetary issues. In spite of the difficult financial climate, the Fairfield Parks and Recreation Department strived to provide high-quality facilities, programs, and services to the community. Budget information provided by the Department demonstrates that the Department has been able to keep its costs and revenues in balance.

The Department is funded by multiple sources that vary in stability and required use. Since 2012, the Department has experienced an almost across-the-board increase in general fund accounts, recreation facility fund accounts, and recreation activity fund accounts.

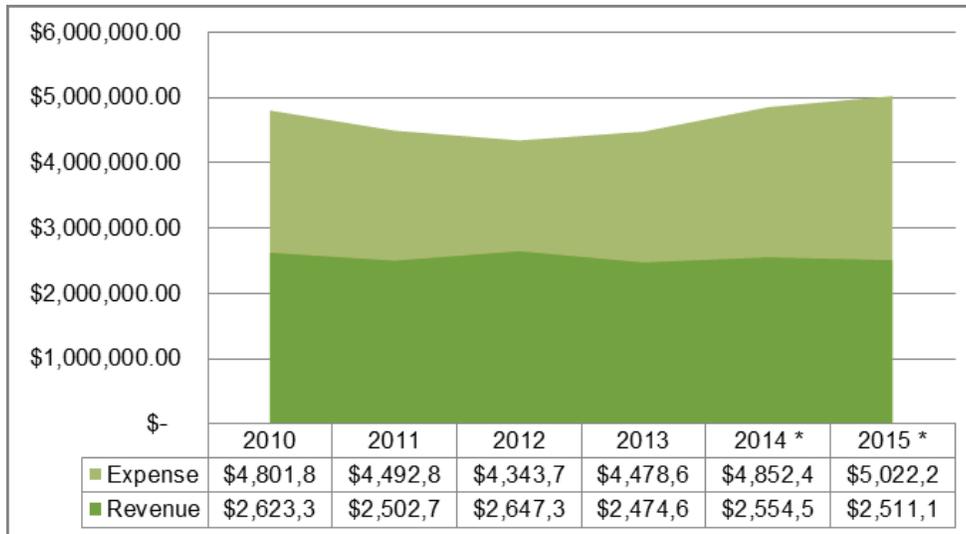


Figure 11: Fairfield Parks and Recreation Department Annual Budget, 2010-2015.

(* Indicates estimates)

Year	% Recovered
2010	55%
2011	56%
2012	61%
2013	55%
2014*	53%
2015*	50%

Table 9: Fairfield Parks and Recreation Department Cost Recovery rates (*Indicates estimated recovery).

Revenue sources come from the General Fund, User Fees, Lodging Tax (from Hotels), Income Tax, and Other Funds. Administration and Park Maintenance funds come completely from the General Fund while Marsh Lake, the Fairfield Community Arts Center, Golf Operations and Maintenance, and the Fairfield Aquatic Center derive funding from a mix of General Fund, User Fees, and Lodging Tax. Capital Needs are provided via Income Tax and Other Funds.

Type of Operation	General Fund	User Fees	Lodging Tax	Income Tax	Other Funds
Administration	100%				
Park Maintenance	100%				
Marsh Lake	30%	70%			
Fairfield Community Arts Center	44%	31%	25%		
Fairfield Aquatic Center, Golf Operations and Golf Maintenance	1%	99%			
Capital Needs				80%	20%

Table 9: Revenue Sources

Costs have been kept down with a steady decline in full-time personnel from a height of 23 in 2005 to 20 in 2013.

General Fund

The General Fund is taxpayer money collected by the City and distributed to its departments. The City's General Fund Budget is formally adopted at the department and object level. Financial reports, which compare actual performance with the budget, are prepared monthly and presented to the City Council for review. The City receives most of its revenue for this account from local income tax.

For the Fairfield Parks and Recreation Department, its portion of the City's General Fund is broken up into four sub-accounts: Administration, Park Maintenance, Fairfield Community Arts Center, and Marsh Lake. Since 2012-2013 there has been an uptick in funds for all sub-accounts, particularly for Administration and Park Maintenance.

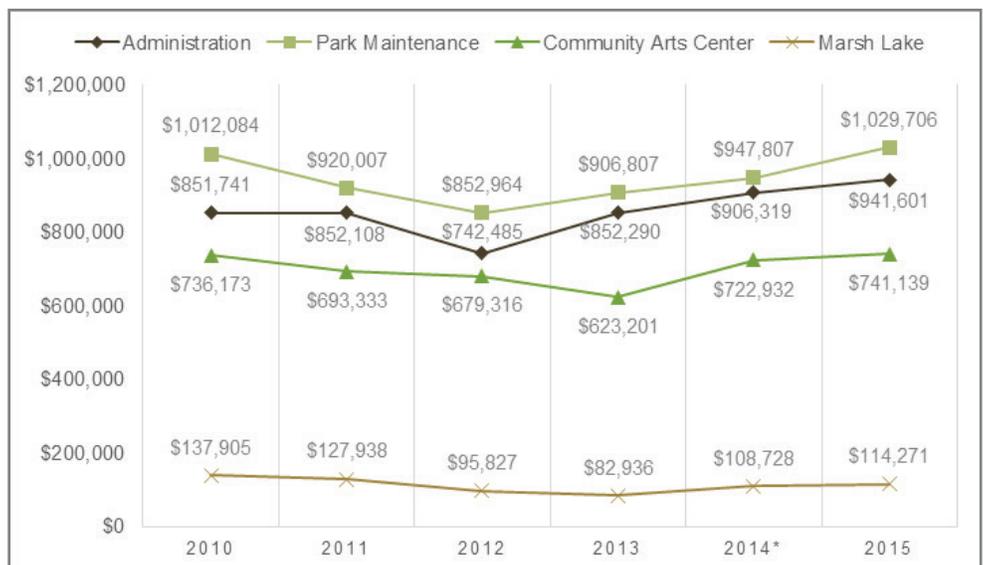


Figure 12: General Fund Accounts (* Indicates estimates)

Recreation Facility Fund

This fund is comprised of three sub-accounts: Aquatic Center, Golf Operations, and Golf Maintenance. Like the General Fund, there has been an overall uptick in money since 2012. However, the Aquatic Center and Golf Operations each experience slight decreases for the 2015 budget.

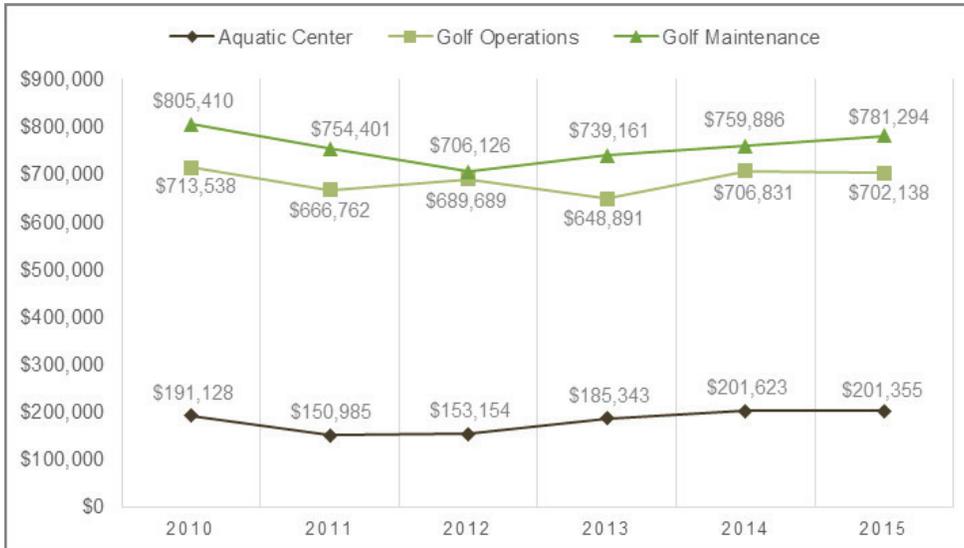


Figure 13: Recreation Facility Fund

Recreation Activity Fund

The final fund available to the Department is the Recreation Activity Fund. It does not feature sub-accounts. It reflects all monies collected for programs and services from the programs' users, and it is separate from tax-collected money. The level of money in this fund is directly related to how much people use a particular program or service, thus it is sensitive to oscillations in program enrollments and perceptions of program quality. Since fees are typically kept low to encourage participation, this fund is significantly smaller than the General and Recreation Facility Funds.

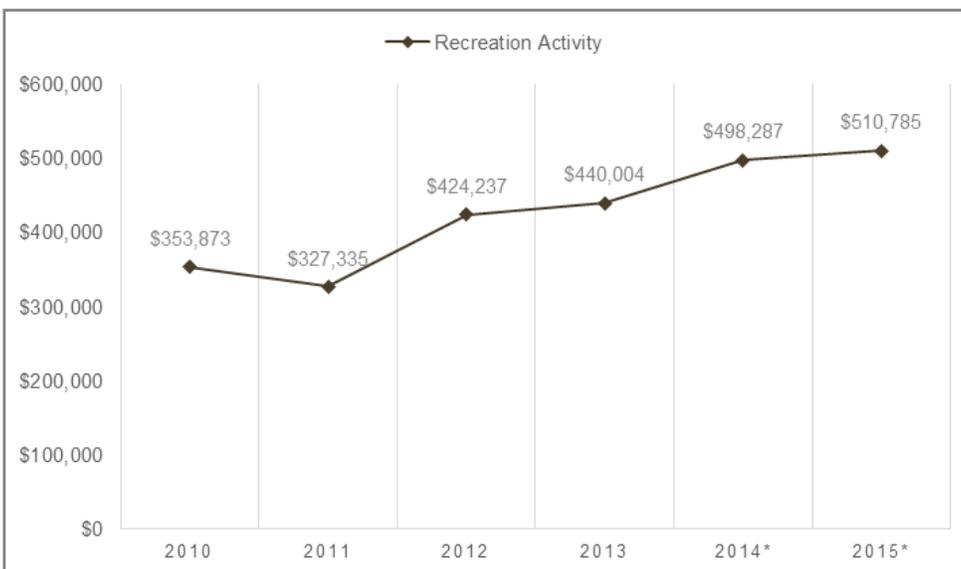


Figure 14: Recreation Activity Fund (* Indicates estimates).

Account Totals

Running totals from 2010-2015 demonstrate a steady rise in funds from 2012-2015. This four-year small, but steady trend is encouraging for the Department and demonstrates a certain stability in its funding. This stability helps with planning because wild changes in funding levels typically do not occur.

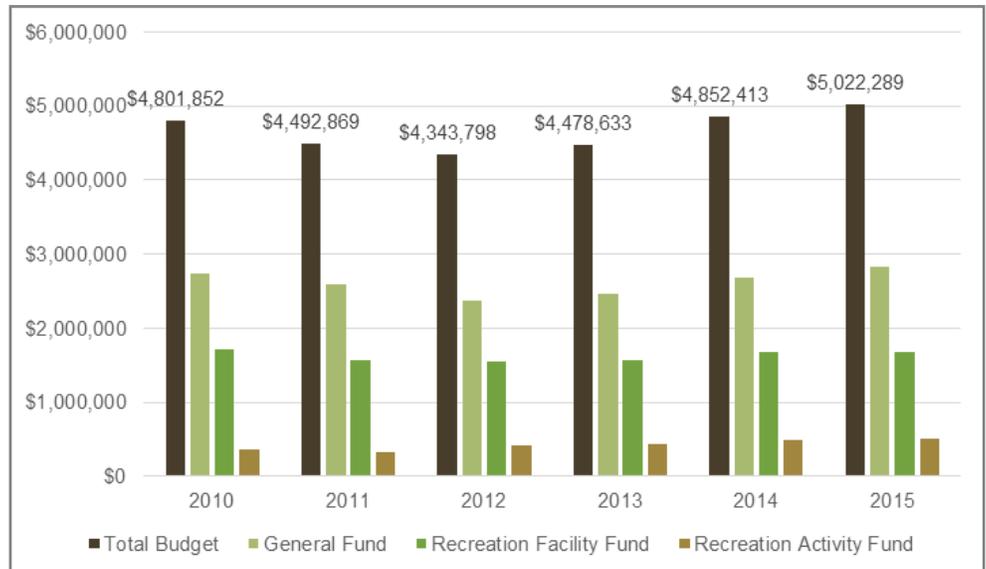


Figure 15: 2010-2015 Fund Levels

Implications for the Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Current funding levels and their allocation for particular tasks are encouraging for the Department. Given that one of the Department's five goals for the next years is "Taking Care of What We Have," the available data suggest that the Department is currently prioritizing such activities and can continue this trend in the future. The largest fund available to the Department, the General Fund, allocates \$1,029,706 for park maintenance out of \$5,022,289. This represents 20.5% of the Department's budget and is its largest dedicated fund. Continued increases to this fund over the years will be necessary to keep pace with the Department's growth via trails and to keep up with lifecycle costs. From 2012 through 2015, park maintenance funding averaged a 6.0% increase from one year to the next. This sustained growth will be a key factor in the Department's success over the next 10 years.

The current budget reflects an economic reality that is not predicted to shift anytime soon, and it is within this reality that the Department must plan for the future. With the Department prioritizing maintenance of current assets over the development of new facilities, and through the planning process, the community has indicated strong support for this concept in 2014. At the same time, the Department must respond to the community's shifting values related to recreation activities, not only by providing adequate facilities and programs to meet those needs, but by making them accessible to the entire community.

CHAPTER 8: SYSTEM WIDE PLAN

Fairfield's Parks and Recreation facilities provide broad benefits to the community including individual, social, economic, health, and environmental benefits.

Introduction

The facilities, programs, and services provided by the Fairfield Parks and Recreation Department form a quality parks and recreation system enjoyed by the community. This system offers health and economic benefits to Fairfield, and community members highly value the Department's facilities and services.

The Department's mission statement provides a framework for addressing its needs moving forward. It provides the Department with a focus on providing for the community's overall well-being through a variety of methods. This mission statement, coupled with the Department's partnerships and focus on maintaining its current facilities and programs, provides a solid future for the Department.

This chapter builds off of the financial information presented in the last chapter by presenting alternatives for ways the parks and recreation system will need to change in order to meet critical needs, to maintain relevance with the community, and to continue to provide a high quality of life for the city. It lays out the alternatives by describing the system's three inter-related elements:

- **Parks** – the land base that provides areas for active and passive recreation as well as the location of parks and recreation assets.
- **Recreation Facilities** – these are the major park assets that provide both active and passive recreation opportunities, from playgrounds to picnic shelters to the Fairfield Community Arts Center and golf courses.
- **Recreation Programs** – these are the planned activities that provide instruction, socialization, competition, and learning to a wide range of community members and visitors to Fairfield.

All of these elements fit together to form a parks and recreation system that is enjoyed by the entire community. Fairfield's parks and recreation facilities provide broad benefits to the community including individual, social, economic, health, and environmental benefits. Residents place a high value on Fairfield's facilities and services and have grown to expect high standards from the Department. The local economy benefits through attracting and maintaining an educated and healthy workforce, the local tourism industry benefits through attracting visitors for special events, and local businesses benefit through increased sales, which in turn produce increased tax revenues for the City.

As proposed in these alternatives, the parks and recreation facilities along with programs and services are unified into a single system with recreation services and programs geared toward a healthy community. Trails and greenways can be thought of as strands that link parks and facilities together like a string of pearls. With the implementation of this master plan update, the majority of Fairfield community members will be able to have recreation opportunities close to their home with safe, walkable connections to parks and recreation facilities throughout Fairfield.

Alternatives

The three alternatives listed below require the Department to prepare for a future without increased revenue. This approach acknowledges a stark fiscal reality leading to the continuous rebalancing of priorities, and their associated expenditures, using a three-tier spending plan. Each tier reflects different assumptions about available resources.

The **FISCALLY CONSTRAINED alternative** plans for prioritized spending within existing budget targets. The intention of this alternative is to refocus and make the most of existing resources, the primary goal for the department being to maintain services and major facilities. The actions associated with the FISCALLY CONSTRAINED alternative are those that are mostly procedural or operational changes that require limited or no funding to accomplish.

The **ACTION alternative** describes the extra services or capital improvement that should be undertaken when additional funding is available. This includes strategically enhancing existing programs, beginning new programs, adding new positions, or making other strategic changes that would require additional operational or capital funding. In coordination with the City Council, the Department would evaluate and analyze potential sources of additional revenue, including but not limited to capital bond funding, program income, grants, and existing or new taxes.

The **VISION alternative** represents the complete set of services and facilities desired by the community. It is fiscally unconstrained but can help provide policy guidance by illustrating the ultimate goals of the community and by providing a long-range look to address future needs and deficiencies. In this master plan update, the VISION alternative addresses aging facilities to make improvements in operational effectiveness and the overall sustainability of the parks and recreation system.

Parkland LOS Strategic Alternatives

	Acres	LOS	2024 LOS Projection (Partial Dev.)	Likely Scenario Impacts of FISCALLY CONSTRAINED Alternative
				Meets limited community themes/goals:
Mini-Parks	2.25	0.05	2.25	1. Continue current maintenance funding levels.
Neighbor-hood Parks	78.0	1.82	78.0	2. One neighborhood park per year will be upgraded with new equipment.
Community Parks	65.0	1.52	65.0	3. One community park per year will be upgraded with new equipment.
Regional Parks	382.0	7.76	331.0	4. Pursue grants for the development of trails that will connect Fairfield with other communities.
Nature Preserves and Cemeteries	48.5	0.74	0.73	5. Pursue grants for the development of local trails only after securing funding for trails that connect with other communities.
Trails and Connections	13.62 Miles			6. Develop partnerships with neighboring cities like Hamilton and with Metroparks of Butler County to connect new trails to a larger system.
				7. Utilize parks in programs provided by the Department without any improvements to facilities.
Total	575.25	11.92	11.79	Total Estimated available funding: \$5.02 million through current budget.

Table 10: Parkland LOS Under FISCALLY CONSTRAINED Alternative

	Acres	LOS	2024 LOS Projection (Partial Dev.)	Likely Scenario Impacts of ACTION Alternative
				Generally meets community themes/goals as listed above in addition to the following:
Mini-Parks	2.25	0.05	2.25	1. Pursue grants for the development of trails that connect Fairfield with other communities and trails that are solely within the city.
Neighbor-hood Parks	78.0	1.82	78.0	2. All neighborhood parks will be improved with upgraded equipment and increased scheduled maintenance will occur.
Community Parks	65.0	1.52	65.0	3. One community park per year will be upgraded with upgraded equipment and increased scheduled maintenance will occur.
Regional Parks	382.0	7.76	331.0	4. Current parks maintenance will be emphasized through upgrades to critical park facilities.
Nature Preserves and Cemeteries	48.5	0.74	0.73	5. Four existing parks will be upgraded on an annual basis to meet adopted design standards.
				6. Upgrade land acquired at Black Bottom Park and Marsh Park for recreational use.
Trails and Connections	13.62 Miles			Funding increases at continued 6% annual rate to \$5.32 million budget.
Total	575.25	11.92	11.79	

Table 11: Parkland LOS Under ACTION Alternative

	Acres	LOS	2024 LOS Projection (Partial Dev.)	Likely Scenario Impacts of VISION Alternative
Mini-Parks	2.25	0.05	2.25	Meets community themes/goals as listed above in addition to the following: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pursue city funding for new trails and connections. 2. All neighborhood and community parks currently owned will be improved with increased scheduled maintenance. 3. Current parks maintenance will be emphasized through upgrades to critical park facilities. 4. Five existing parks will be upgraded on an annual basis to meet adopted design standards. 5. Design new mini-parks along new trails to enhance services to users. <p>Funding increases at a new annual rate of 12% to \$5.62 million budget.</p>
Neighbor-hood Parks	78.0	1.82	78.0	
Community Parks	65.0	1.52	65.0	
Regional Parks	382.0	7.76	331.0	
Nature Preserves and Cemeteries	48.5	0.74	0.73	
Trails and Connections	13.62 Miles			
Total	575.25	11.92	11.79	

Table 12: Parkland LOS Under VISION Alternative

Recreation Facility Strategic Alternatives

Facility Type	Existing Qty.	LOS	2024 LOS Projection New Facilities	Likely Scenario Impacts of FISCALLY CONSTRAINED Alternative
Diamond Ball Field	21	4.9	0	<p>Generally meets community themes/goals as listed above in addition to the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. No new major structures or buildings will be developed. 2. Athletic Field study and feasibility analysis will be conducted regarding surface quality. 3. Recreation facility study and analysis will be conducted. 4. Continued partnerships that support youth sports leagues will be established to share facilities. 5. Provide ADA upgrades in compliance with transition plan. 6. Acquire land for expansion of trails and connections and land at Black Bottom Park and Marsh Park for expansion. <p>Total Estimated available funding: \$5.02 million through current budget.</p>
Rectangular Field	17	3.9	0	
Playground	20	4.4	0	
Basketball Court	13.5	3.1	0	
Picnic Shelter	35	8.2	0	
Tennis Court	13	3.0	0	
Community Garden	1	2.3	0	

Table 13: Recreation Facility LOS Under the FISCALLY CONSTRAINED Alternative

Facility Type	Existing Qty.	LOS	2024 LOS Projection New Facilities	Likely Scenario Impacts of ACTION Alternative
Diamond Ball Field	21	4.9	0	<p>In addition to those actions above the department will focus on the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Maintain existing diamond and rectangular fields at playable levels where youth leagues play. 2. Provide ADA upgrades to achieve 15% above compliance. 3. Replace shelters at major park sites. 4. Add one community garden to existing park. <p>Funding increases at continued 6% annual rate to \$5.32 million budget.</p>
Rectangular Field	17	3.9	0	
Playground	20	4.4	3	
Basketball Court	13.5	3.1	0	
Picnic Shelter	35	8.2	4	
Tennis Court	13	3.0	-2	
Community Garden	1	2.3	1	

Table 14: Recreation Facility LOS Under the ACTION Alternative

Facility Type	Existing Qty.	LOS	2024 LOS Projection New Facilities	Likely Scenario Impacts of ACTION Alternative
Diamond Ball Field	21	4.9	4	<p>In addition to those actions above the department will focus on the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continued upgrades to Fairfield Community Arts Center based on outcome of a facility study to ensure it stays at the cutting edge in the region for arts and entertainment. 2. Repair diamond and rectangular fields, tennis courts, and basketball courts to maintain quality. 3. Provide ADA upgrades to achieve 30% above compliance. <p>Funding increases at a new annual rate of 12% to \$5.62 million budget.</p>
Rectangular Field	17	3.9	6	
Playground	20	4.4	5	
Basketball Court	13.5	3.1	1	
Picnic Shelter	35	8.2	6	
Tennis Court	13	3.0	0	
Community Garden	1	2.3	2	

Table 15: Recreation Facility LOS Under the VISION Alternative

Recreation Facility Strategic Alternatives

The development of systematic plans for recreation programs and level of service is usually less clear than planning for physical assets like parks and community centers. Planning efforts rely on three factors that are not easily quantified: cost recovery goals that translate into fees/charges for services, market rate for fees/charges, and new program service initiatives based on the community needs assessment. These three factors are the major considerations under the Fairfield scenarios that forecast alternative choices for accepted recreation system policies.

In considering the LOS for Recreation Programs and Services, the Department needs business practices that establish fee/charge rates for direct, indirect, and administrative costs for services. The practices are presented on the following pages, within the context of market willingness to pay rate and financial assistance need for community members who may not be able to afford user fees. In addition, program and service business practices for recreation program lifecycle management must consider outcomes, alignment with mission and high-quality programming, annual reviews, and duplication of services.

	Benefit Community --- Individual ←-----→	Fiscally Constrained Likely Fee Scenarios	Action Likely Fee Scenarios	Vision Likely Fee Scenarios
Youth Programming	←●-----→ Community benefit except where program is for advanced level programs		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dedicated taxpayer-subsidized direct costs and partial indirect costs recovered through fees/donations, or • Direct cost plus partial indirect cost recovered through fees/donations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dedicated taxpayer-funded program with no cost recovery, or • Earmarked taxpayer-subsidized direct costs recovered through fees/donations
Adult Programming	-----●→ Community benefit except where program is for advanced level programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct costs plus all indirect costs and all administrative costs recovered through fees/donations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct costs plus all indirect costs and partial administrative costs recovered through fees/donations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct costs plus partial indirect costs recovered through fees/donations
Special Events	←●-----→ Community benefit with strong fundraising potential through fees/charges, sponsors, and donors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct costs plus partial indirect costs recovered through fees/donations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dedicated taxpayer-subsidized direct costs recovered through fees/donations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dedicated taxpayer-funded program with no cost recovery
Targeted Community Programming	←●-----→ Targeted toward the special populations of the community with few, if any opportunities to charge fees. Taxpayer- or donor-supported.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct costs plus partial indirect costs recovered through fees/donations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dedicated taxpayer-subsidized direct costs recovered through fees/donations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dedicated taxpayer-subsidized direct costs recovered through fees/donations
Overall Recreation Programming	-----●→ Targeted toward the special populations of the community with few, if any opportunities to charge fees. Taxpayer- or donor-supported.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct costs plus all indirect costs and all administrative costs recovered through fees/donations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct costs plus all indirect costs and partial administrative costs recovered through fees/donations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct costs plus partial indirect costs recovered through fees/donations

Table 16: Recreation Programs and Services Fee Scenarios

	Fiscally Constrained Likely Implementation Scenarios	Action Likely Implementation Scenarios	Vision Likely Implementation Scenarios
Youth Programming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductory-level youth programming is expanded where subsidy, donations, or sponsorships fund all direct, indirect, and administrative costs. • Community-desired outdoor programs, emphasizing health and wellness, and other areas will be expanded by eliminating or brokering current Department programs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outdoor Recreation Programming expands with additional funding source. • Introductory Programming is further expanded, and available at multiple locations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductory-level youth programming is expanded and subsidized by dedicated City funds. • Community-desired outdoor programs, emphasizing health and wellness, and other areas will be expanded by donations, sponsorships, and/or dedicated City funds.
Adult Programming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programming service costs, including drop-in fees, will increase to recover full direct, indirect, and partial administrative costs in response to community trends. • Department-staffed programs recover all costs plus indirect costs in support of community benefit programming. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Market rates to recover direct costs only are charged. • Alternative funding sources (grants, City innovation allocation, etc.) allows the Department to offer new trending programming at direct and indirect costs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alternative funding sources (grants, City innovation allocation, etc.) allows the Department to offer new trending programming at direct costs only.
Special Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding is allocated or donations received to support events that promote health and wellness or other community benefit outcomes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional community-building events are provided or facilitated by the department. 	
Community Programming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnerships and grants funds leverage Department resources to better serve low-income and underserved youth groups. • Dedicated taxpayer funding is allocated for specific target populations with specific outcomes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnerships required to fund direct costs, plus a portion of indirect costs for low-income and underserved youth groups. • Financial assistance for low-income participants will increase, decreasing financial limitations as a barrier to participation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low-income and special population program costs are funded 100%. • Taxpayer funding for specific target populations with specific outcomes is allocated.
Overall Recreation Programming		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources available to expand and/or enhance revenue-generating programs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Department indirect and administrative costs are funded by the City without request to recover through user fees. Direct costs are recovered only for designated programs.

Table 17: Community Priority Recreation Service Implementation Scenarios

CHAPTER 9: IMPLEMENTATION

Moving Forward

With the acceptance of this master plan, the Fairfield Parks and Recreation Department commits to the goals, policies, actions, and initiatives contained herein. The Fairfield Parks and Recreation Department Master Plan identifies the system-wide levels of service that the Department will use for implementation of an annual “strategic action” planning process that will be an integral part of the annual work plan and budgeting process.

With this master plan as a guide, the Department’s strategic action planning process includes:

- Reviewing the potential initiatives for the next five years
- A three-year action plan, and
- A deliberate, planned annual process of evaluating the current year’s action plan with updated planning for the following three years.

This approach is adopted to ensure that the Fairfield Parks and Recreation Department Master Plan is a living document that does not sit on a shelf but is used to improve the overall system that reflects the stated goals of the community well into the future.

The Annual Action Planning Process

The action planning process is simple in its approach. The purpose of this deliberate process, started prior to budget formation and in concert with the Fairfield Parks and Recreation Board, is to make mid-course adjustments in the three-year action plan in order to make the most effective use of resources that meets community need. The Annual Action Planning Process is depicted in Figure 16 and includes the following:

- Review of the master plan.
- Review current year Action Plan and update status.
- Update the Needs Assessment, including review of local participation and population data, national recreation and park trends, findings from community engagement, levels of service, and the next two years of the Action Plan.
- Development and approval of next three-year Action Plan in tandem with budget submission to the City.
- Implement Action Plan.

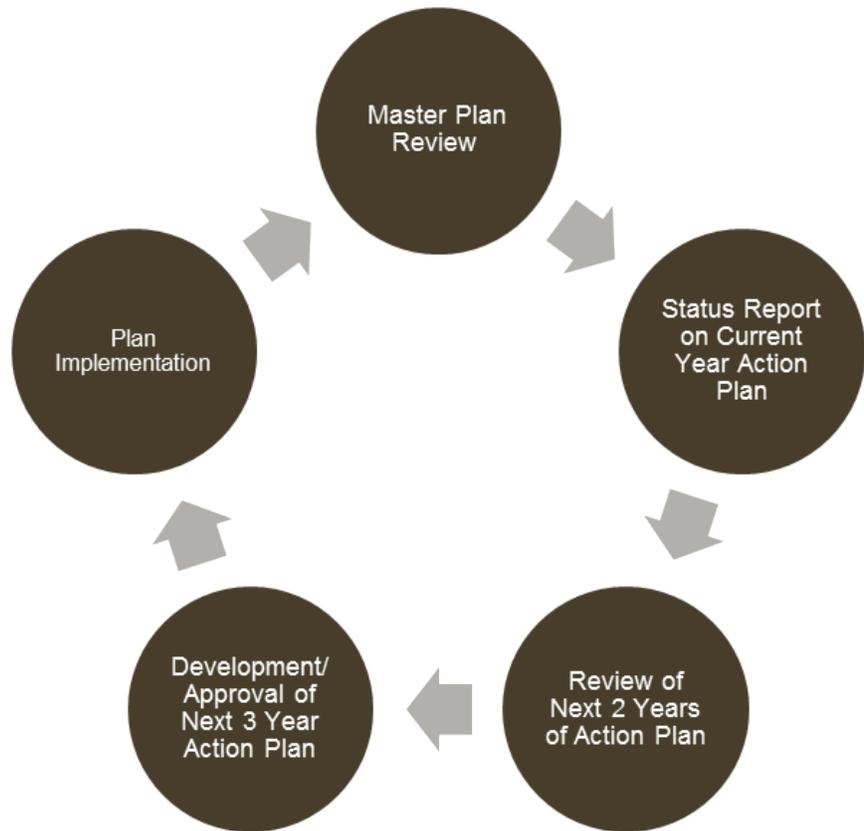


Figure 16: Annual Action Planning Process

Conclusion

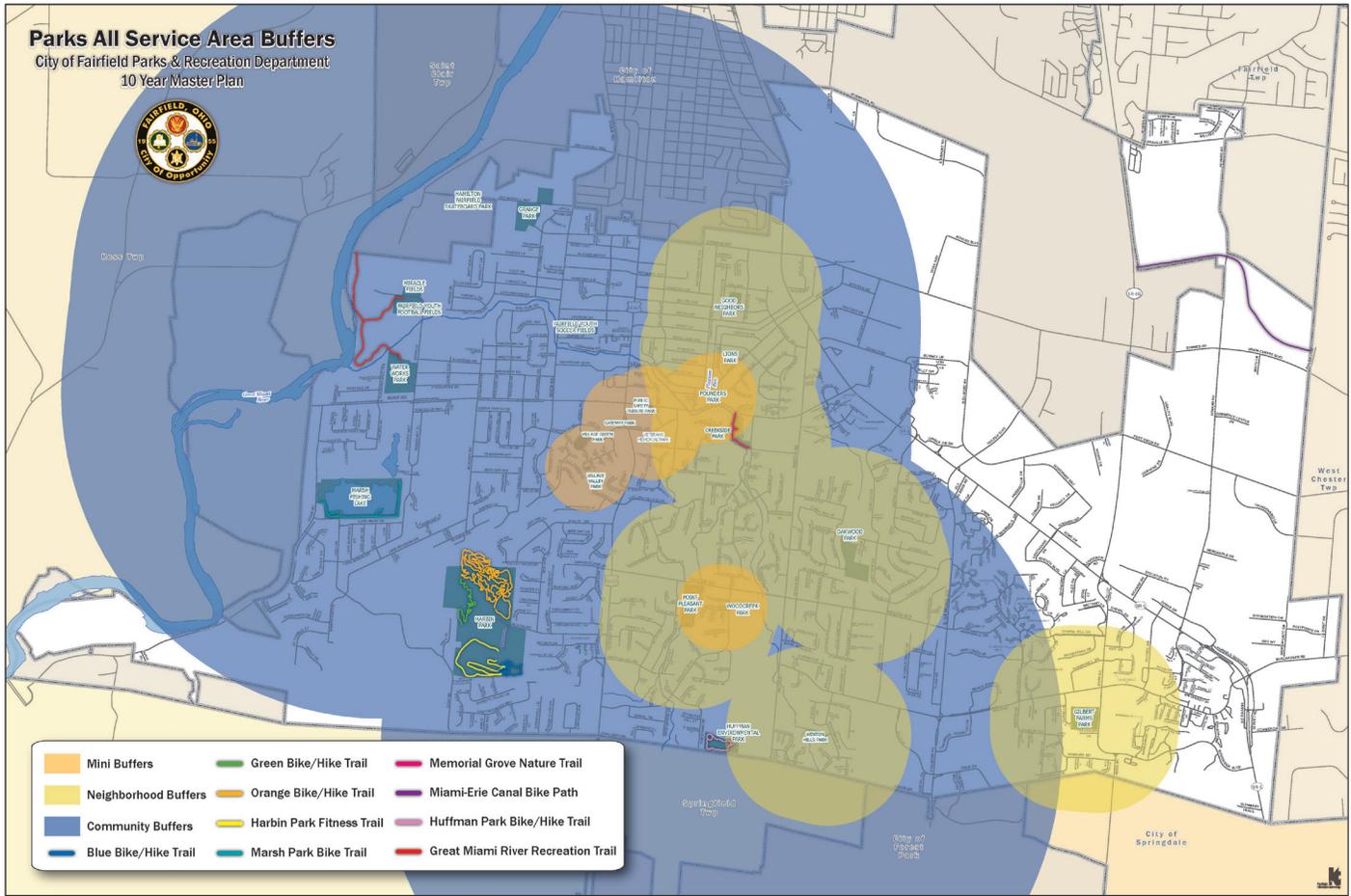
The framework for facility improvements will be directly tied to increases in funding. The constrained plan includes some upgrades to existing facilities and basic maintenance. Funding at Action and Vision levels will allow for additional resources available to maintain the trail system and an aging Fairfield Community Arts Center and will allow the Department to seriously address any maintenance backlog.

The forecast for recreation programs and services is clear. In the constrained plan, recreation programs would be funded at the current levels, reinforcing the importance of ensuring resources are directed toward the programs of highest community benefit. The Department will make trade-offs between current programs to develop new ones and enhance programming that aligns with community priorities. Action and Vision Alternatives demonstrate a greater change in programs and services to meet community needs. Alternative funding sources allow for broader participation and increased levels of service.

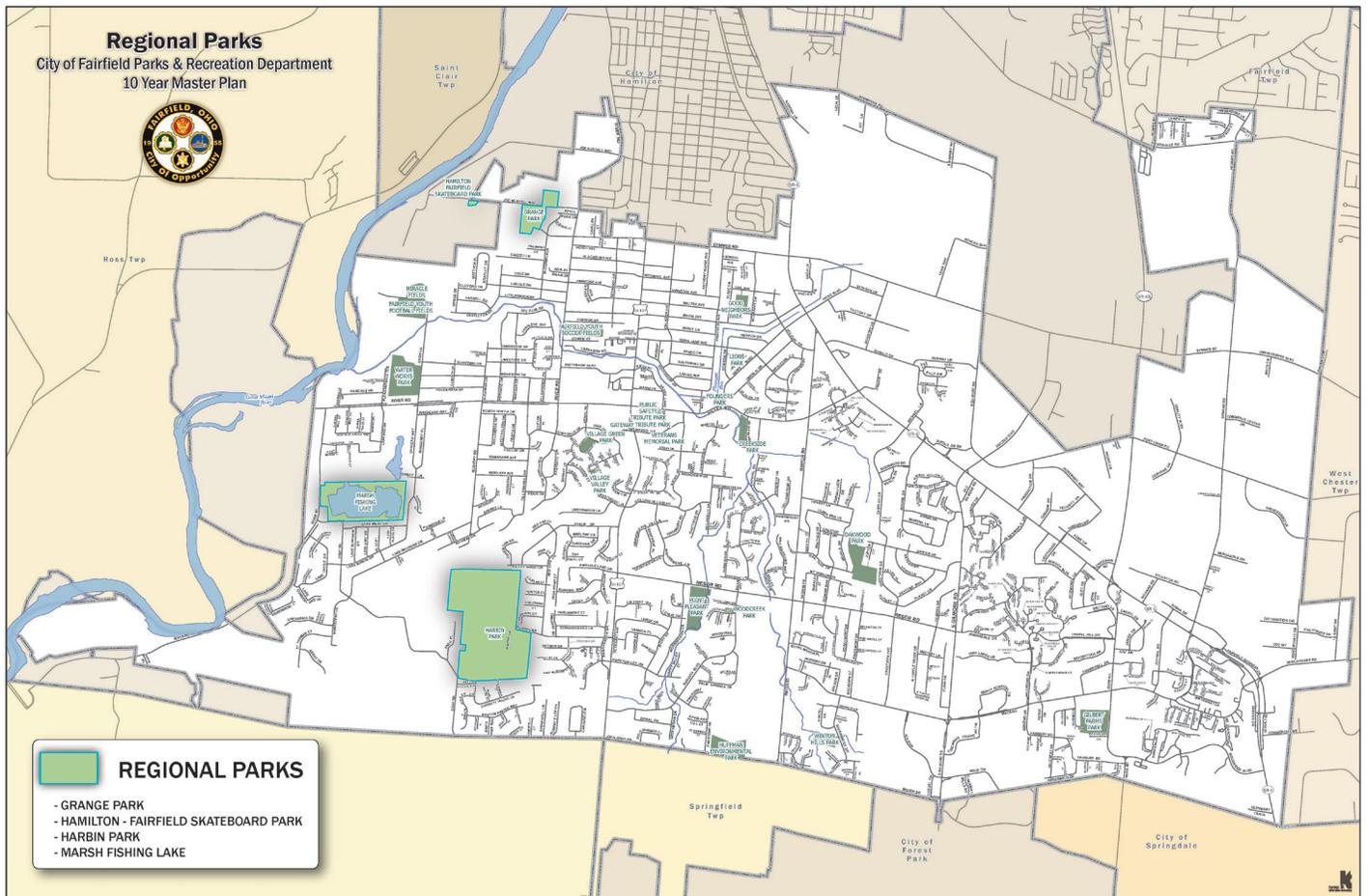
APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Maps

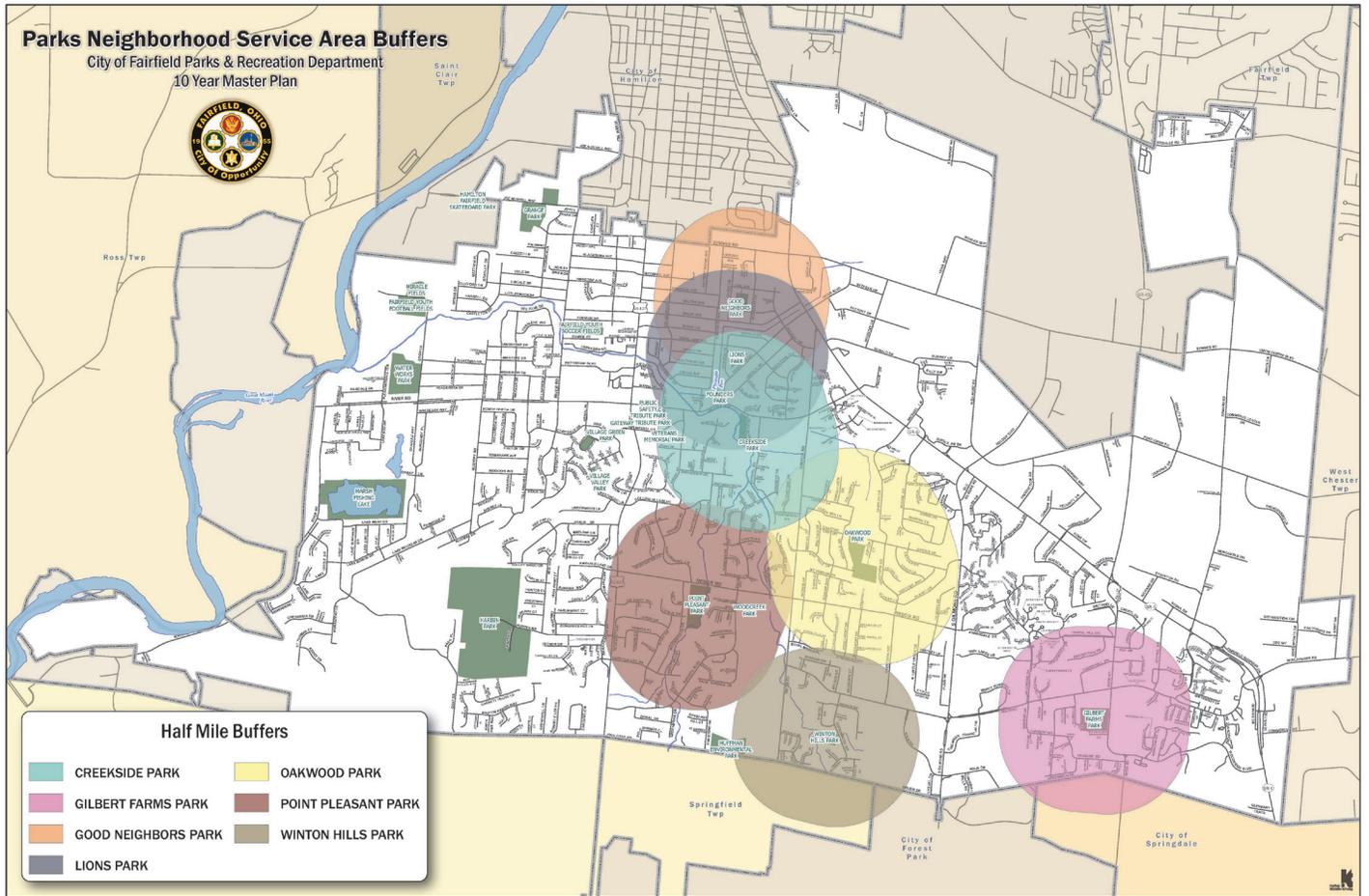
All Service Area Buffers



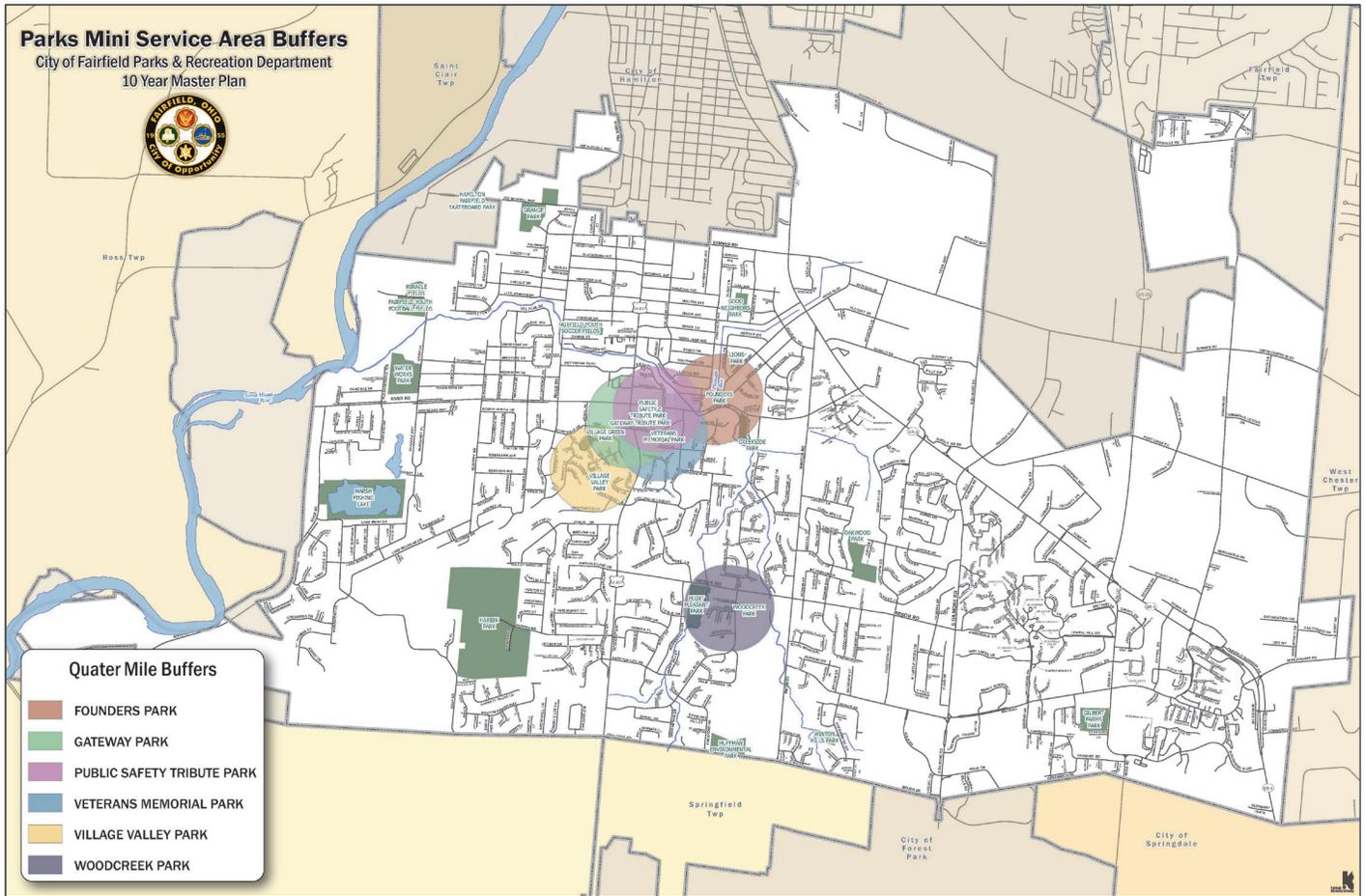
Regional Parks



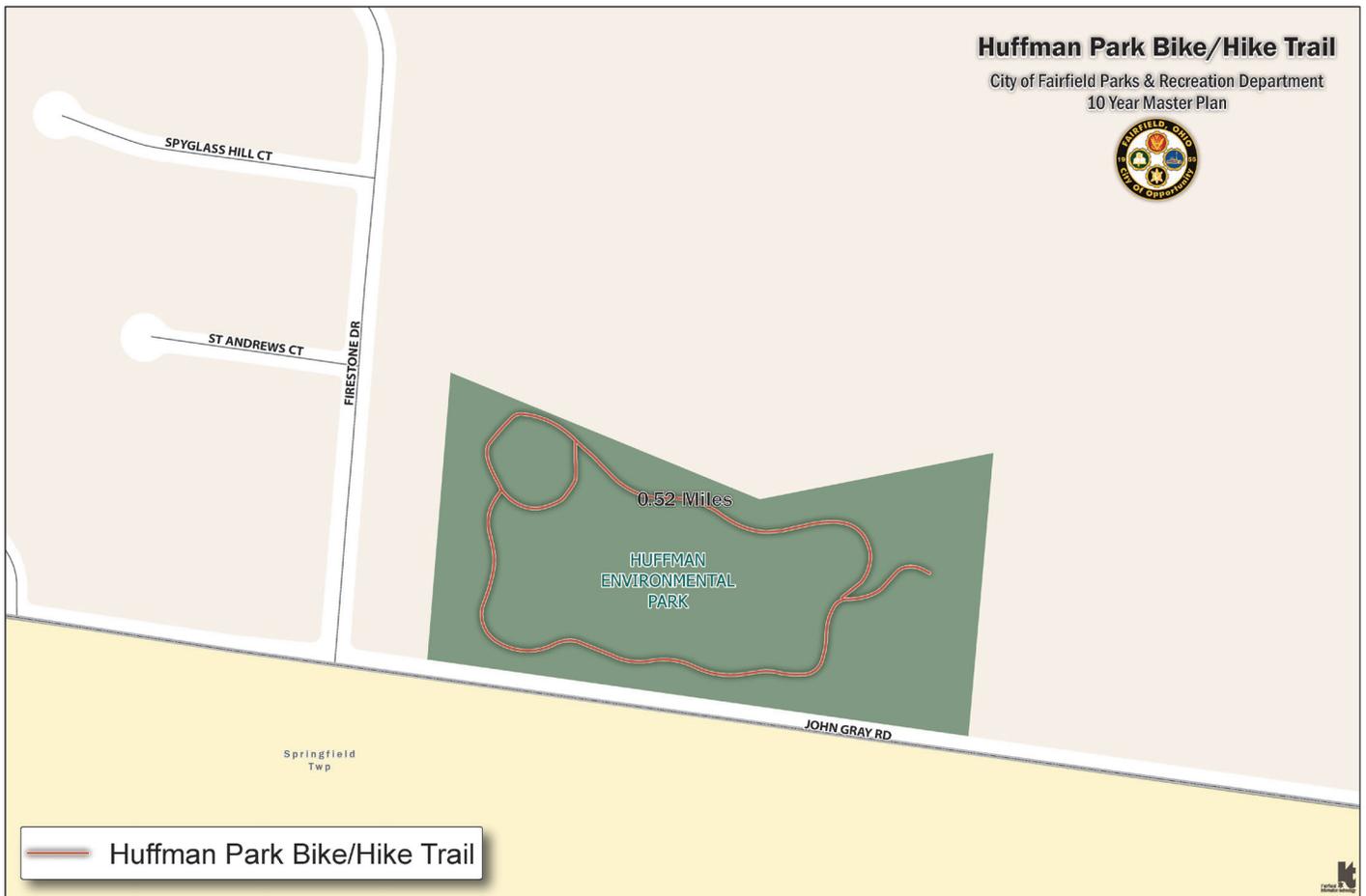
Neighborhood Parks



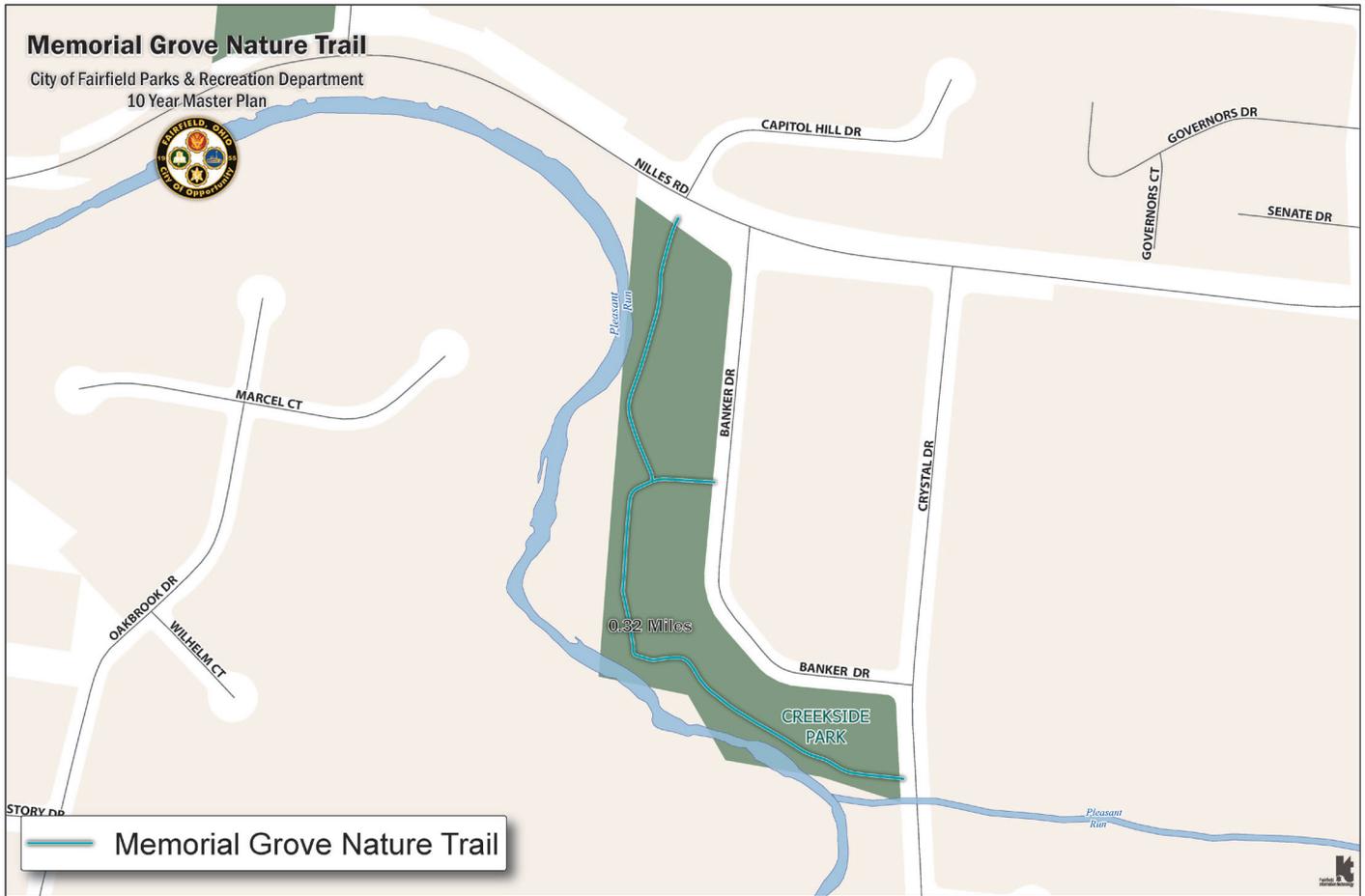
Mini-Parks



Huffman Park Bike/Hike Trail



Memorial Grove Nature Trail



Miami-Erie Canal Bike Path

