



CHAMPAIGN
PARK DISTRICT

Champaign Park District
**DECENNIAL
COMMITTEE
ON LOCAL
GOVERNMENT
EFFICIENCY
REPORT**

Approved by the Park District's
Decennial Committee on
Local Government Efficiency
On January 10, 2024

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PURPOSE

The Champaign Park District (“Park District”) formed its Decennial Committee on Local Government Efficiency on June 10, 2023, to study efficiencies and report recommendations regarding those efficiencies and increased accountability pursuant to 50 ILCS 70/1, et seq. (the “Committee”).

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP ◆

The Committee consisted of the following individuals:

- Craig W. Hays, President/Chair
- Timothy P. McMahon, Vice President
- Barbara J. Kuhl, Commissioner
- Jane L. Solon, Commissioner
- Michael R. Somers, Commissioner
- Amy A. Durukan, Resident Member
- Brian A. Davidson, Resident Member
- Sarah Sandquist, Executive Director
- Jarrod Scheunemann, Secretary, Deputy Executive Director

COMMITTEE MEETINGS ◆

The Committee met as follows:

Meeting Date	Meeting Time and Place
September 13, 2023	6:00 p.m., Bresnan Meeting Center
November 8, 2023	6:00 p.m., Bresnan Meeting Center
January 10, 2024	6:00 p.m., Bresnan Meeting Center

Minutes of these meetings are available on the Park District’s website (<https://champaignparks.com/board-meeting-minutes/>) or upon request at the Park District’s administrative office.



GENERAL OVERVIEW OF GOVERNING STATUTES, ORDINANCES, RULES, PROCEDURES, POWERS, JURISDICTION ♦

The Champaign Park District (Park District) was established as a Township Park District in 1911 and was reorganized by a referendum initiated and approved by the voters into a general Park District in 1955. All Illinois park districts, including the Park District, are governed by the Park District Code, 70 ILCS 1205/1 et seq.

Having a separate and distinct taxing body for parks, recreation, and conservation within the local community, which operates apart from general purpose governments, is extremely beneficial to the community for many reasons, as detailed further in this report.

- ♦ Elected, non-partisan, non-compensated board. The Park District is governed by a board of five commissioners. Commissioners must reside within the boundaries of the park district and are elected at the Consolidated Election in odd-numbered years. Pursuant to state law, commissioners are non-partisan and serve without compensation.
- ♦ Accessible and focused representation. Having a dedicated board to oversee these essential facilities, programs, and services provides



the community with increased access to their elected representatives and allows those elected representatives to remain focused solely on those facilities, programs, and services. This is contrasted with general purpose governments where elected representatives are responsible for broad oversight on a wide range of issues. This special purpose benefit is particularly advantageous when it comes to budget and finance oversight.

- ♦ Increased transparency. Having a dedicated unit of local government to provide park and recreation services also improves the relationship between the park district and its residents because of the transparency and openness related to the board and park district operations. Having detailed agenda and action items allows taxpayers to be better informed about the inner workings of their local government. When individual units of government are responsible for providing specified services like park districts, transparency is increased because action items and budget procedures are more detailed. Additionally, these items and budgetary decisions are subject to more scrutiny by locally elected officials than is the case with larger, multi-purpose governments with a multitude of departments.
- ♦ Protection of revenues. Because the Park District is a separate unit of local government, the revenues it generates can only be used for park district purposes. This assurance is contrasted with general purpose governments like cities, villages, and counties that provide a multitude of services such as fire, police, public works, economic development, etc., where revenues that are generated specifically for parks and recreation can be expended on these other services with limited, if any, input from voters.
- ♦ Protection of assets. Public parks and other real property owned by the park district is held in trust for the residents of the park district, and, subject to very limited exceptions, can only be sold or transferred if residents approve of the sale or transfer by a referendum. This is contrasted with general purpose units of government, which have authority to sell or dispose of property by a vote of the governing board.

LIST OF SHARED SERVICES AND PARTNERSHIPS

The Park District works diligently to provide the best possible programs, services, and facilities to our community at the least possible cost. One of the many ways the Park District achieves this goal is by partnering with neighboring park districts, school districts, other units of local government within or near the community, the State, non-profit organizations, and for-profit corporations. Below is a comprehensive list of the current partnerships, agreements, and other relationships that assist the Park District's mission of delivering the best possible services at the least possible cost to our community.

Membership in Special Recreation

The Park District is part of Champaign Urbana Special Recreation ("CUSR"). Special recreation associations are a form of intergovernmental cooperation among units of local government that are authorized under the Illinois Constitution, the Intergovernmental Cooperation Act, the Park District Code, and the Municipal Code. Their formation is rooted in a fundamental belief and recognition that "Recreation is for Everyone." They are shining examples of local government efficiency.

By partnering together, local communities are able to effectively and efficiently deliver more successful program opportunities to community members who have special needs. Furthermore, by participating in CUSR, the Park District cooperatively partners with Urbana Park District and networks with Champaign School District Unit #4 and Urbana School District Unit #116 to provide many more program opportunities for our community members who have special needs and offers a choice between participating in CUSR's programs or in programs that are provided by the Park District.

The Park District and CUSR also achieve efficiency by utilizing existing facilities that are owned and operated by the CUSR's members, including the Park District. Utilizing these existing facilities allows CUSR to deliver services to its member communities at a lower cost. Currently the Park District provides CUSR access to the following facilities for their program offerings:

- ◆ Providing the Community More with Less. The Park District does more with much fewer funding options. Unlike other units of local government that receive direct state funding, and income, sales, use, hotel/motel, motor fuel and other numerous taxes, the Park District's only tax revenues come from a modest portion of a resident's overall property tax bill. In fact, despite its limited funding options, the Park District share is only .007259 of the local tax bill. Additionally, only 65.67% of the revenue earned by the Park District is generated through property taxes. The remaining 34.33% is generated charges for services, interest income, and other revenue sources.

As part of good governance and implementing best practices in the management of day-to-day operations, the Park District has also adopted the following ordinances, rules, policies, and procedures:

- ◆ Board Policies and Procedures Manual with the following appendices:

- Administrative and Operations Procedures Manual
- General Conduct Ordinances and Use Regulations
- Personnel Policy and Employee Manual
- Safety Manual
- Transportation Manual
- Volunteer Manual
- Hazard/Crisis Communication Programs



- ◆ Park District Strategic Plan
- ◆ Special Recreation Strategic Plan
- ◆ Comprehensive Master Plan
- ◆ Park District Trails Plan
- ◆ Joint City and Park District Trails Plan
- ◆ Annual Capital Improvements Budget and Rolling Ten-Year Plan
- ◆ Other Reporting at www.champaignparks.com/about-us/open-government
 - Annual Budget
 - Annual Comprehensive Financial Report

- ◆ CUSR Center; In 2021, the Park District renovated its Bicentennial Center for CUSR to use for its administrative offices and programming/event space.
- ◆ Martens Center (Champaign)
- ◆ Leonhard Recreation Center (Champaign)
- ◆ Sholem Aquatic Center (Champaign)
- ◆ Douglass Community Center (Champaign)
- ◆ Prairie Farm (Champaign)
- ◆ Springer Cultural Center (Champaign)
- ◆ Virginia Theatre (Champaign)
- ◆ Phillips Recreation Center (Urbana)
- ◆ Brookens Gym (Urbana)
- ◆ Anita Purves Nature Center (Urbana)
- ◆ Crystal Lake Aquatic Center (Urbana)

CUSR also provides the support needed for participants with special needs who choose to register for the Park District programs or inclusive programming. CUSR collects information on the registered participant and determines what support is needed for that participant to be successful in this inclusive setting or the Park District program. This could include additional training of the supervisory staff, additional support staff, the use of adaptive equipment, behavior management, and/or other measures that will assist in the successful participation of this individual in the Park District program. Although success may not look the same for everyone, CUSR works with the Park District's staff to ensure the best possible results for all the participants in the program. The Park District's cost of providing these services would be much greater without its participation and partnership in CUSR.

In 2022-2023, CUSR successfully served 91 residents in 267 programs. The Special Recreation Association (SRA) also supported 15 participants in inclusive programs that were provided by the Park District.

The Park District is very proud of the ongoing collaboration with CUSR. By working cooperatively with other local governments, not only are we better able to collectively serve all citizens within our communities, including persons with disabilities, but we are able to do so in the most efficient and effective manner possible.

Other intergovernmental agreements with other park districts, forest preserve districts, conservation districts, or municipal recreation agencies

- ◆ Reciprocal agreement with Urbana Park District (1972) for residents of either District to have the opportunity to participate in programs and use the facilities of either District at the same fee schedule (when charged) as the residents of that District.



- ◆ The Park District has a partner resident agreement with the Urbana Park District to offer the same fees, regulations, and shared memberships for both agency's dog parks.
- ◆ Member of the Park District Risk Management Association (PDRMA), a risk pooling association that collectively and cost effectively serves the needs of 160 Illinois Park Districts.
- ◆ IPDALF - The Illinois Portfolio is a diversified, open-end, actively managed investment trust designed to address the short-term cash investment needs of Illinois public Investors, including park districts, forest preserve districts, conservation districts, joint recreational programs, and other public agencies. The Trust, through its various services, provides investors an opportunity to maximize their income potential while maintaining safety, liquidity, and yield as their primary investment objectives.

Intergovernmental agreements with other units of local government

- ◆ **Champaign School District Unit #4**
 - Shared development and use of gymnasiums at Barkstall and Stratton Elementary Schools.
 - Shared renovation and use of Spalding Park Baseball Field and Tennis Courts by the Park District and Champaign Central High School baseball and tennis teams.
 - Priority rental of the Park District's Lindsay tennis courts and Morrissey Park tennis courts by Champaign Centennial High School tennis team.
 - Several Park District facilities function as evacuation centers for schools during emergencies.

◆ **City of Champaign**

- Shared redevelopment costs for the Park District's Glenn Park to expand the park, add new amenities and create water detention basins for surrounding neighborhoods.
- Shared redevelopment costs for the Park District's Bristol Park to expand the park, add new amenities and create water detention basins for surrounding neighborhoods.
- Shared redevelopment costs for the City of Champaign's Skelton Park in partnership with Champaign County, Experience Champaign-Urbana, and the African American Heritage Trail.
- Management and maintenance of Hedge Park after the City of Champaign develops the park site and eight-acre detention basin in the Garden Hills neighborhood.
- Lease of facility to the Champaign Public Library for the Douglass Branch at Douglass Park.
- Subrecipient Agreement through the CommUnity Matters Program to provide summer youth program registrations and memberships for at-risk youth.
- Agreement with the Champaign Police Department to hire officers for special event needs.
- Agreement to provide the Park District with shared space for its material handling needs.
- The Park District has supported several tax increment financing (TIF) districts to attract private development and support redevelopment projects in specific neighborhoods.
- The City and Park District share health insurance.
- The City is providing funds to renovate the Douglass Park ballfields and concession stands.
- Participate in the Community Coalition, which includes all branches of local government and law enforcement with a shared goal of eliminating gun violence.

◆ **Urbana and Champaign Sanitary District (UCSD)**

- UCSD leases space for the Park District to develop and manage a dog park program.



◆ **University of Illinois**

- The Park District has several agreements with departments and colleges within the University of Illinois for internships.
- An agreement with University of Illinois Extension defines the terms for it to offer various programs at Park District facilities.
- The University of Illinois created a public engagement program entitled, "Campus Community Compact." As part of the compact, the University of Illinois provides funding for two staff members to offer technology programs and training at the Martens Center Joe DeLuce Innovation Center.

◆ **County Clerk**

- The Park District provides space for two of the County's vote by mail election boxes.

◆ **Champaign-Urbana Mass Transit District (CUMTD)**

- The Park District receives a CUMTD bus to use for transporting program participants. CUMTD mechanics repair and maintain the bus on an as needed basis.

◆ **Champaign County Forest Preserve District (CCFPD)**

- CCFPD provides various environmental education programs at Park District facilities.



Intergovernmental agreements with the State of Illinois

- ◆ The Illinois Department of Natural Resources leads a joint fishery program in which it manages the sport fish populations at the Park District's Kaufman, Heritage, and Mattis lakes.
- ◆ Illinois Department of Central Management Services Joint Purchasing program to combine the buying power and streamline the bidding process for local and state governing bodies in Illinois.
- ◆ A cooperative purchasing agreement with Sourcewell that combines the buying power of and streamlines the bidding process for 50,000 units of local government and education.

Partnerships or agreements affiliate organizations that operate sports leagues, or recreation and cultural arts programs at Park District facilities and parks

- ◆ First String – facility and field use agreement, joint programming, sport clinics, and camps
- ◆ Little League – field use agreement
- ◆ Prime Time Volleyball – facility use agreement
- ◆ Point Fencing Club - facility use agreement
- ◆ Silver Sneakers – walking program for active adults
- ◆ Illinois Football Club – youth soccer program, leagues, clinics, and field use agreement
- ◆ Central Illinois Youth Football League - field use agreement
- ◆ Champaign County Table Tennis Club – facility use agreement
- ◆ Champaign Urbana Ballet – Theatre use agreement
- ◆ Champaign Urbana Theatre Company – Theatre use agreement

Partnerships or other interrelationships with non-profits

- ◆ The Park District provides jobs for individuals with disabilities through its partnership with the Developmental Services Center. Their staff clean parks and facilities throughout the Park District.
- ◆ The Park District provides jobs for individuals without addresses through its partnership with CU at Home. Their staff clean parks throughout the Park District.
- ◆ 40 North stewards the lease and purchase of sculptures that are placed throughout the Park District.
- ◆ The Don Moyer Boys and Girls Club has a license agreement with the Park District to utilize space for youth programming at the Martens Center.
- ◆ Project Read utilizes the Martens Center to offer tutoring services.
- ◆ The Park District uses the YMCA pool to train and certify its lifeguards.
- ◆ Carle Foundation Hospital and OSF Hospital offer mobile health clinics and educational programs at Park District facilities.

Partnerships with for profit organizations

- ◆ One Week Boutique rents the Leonhard Center two times each year to offer a community-wide consignment sale.
- ◆ Mowing, IT, and janitorial services are contracted throughout the Park District to reduce staffing and equipment costs.
- ◆ The Park District frequently contracts with fitness and program instructors to offer affordable and innovative programming.
- ◆ Champaign Urbana Pepsi Bottling Company provides beverage and snack vending machines at Park District facilities. In turn, Pepsi offers free products, sponsorships, and donates various equipment to support the Park District.

OTHER EXAMPLES OF EFFICIENT OPERATIONS ◆



Use of volunteers. One way in which the Park District reduces the burden on taxpayers is through the use of volunteers. Last year, 2041 individuals volunteered for 9022 hours of service to the Park District.

Youth employment. The Park District is a major employer of youth in the community. Last year, the Park District employed 222 youth. Not only is this an efficient way to deliver services, but youth employment serves as a valuable training tool for the future workforce.

Joint purchasing (if not listed above). The Park District participates in joint purchasing cooperatives pursuant to the Governmental Joint Purchasing Act (30 ILCS 525/0.01 et seq.) thereby saving taxpayer dollars through economies of scale. These include:

- ◆ Fitness equipment at the Leonhard and Martens Center.
- ◆ Playground equipment for several parks.
- ◆ Several trucks and vehicles.

Champaign Parks Foundation. Last year, the Foundation raised \$1,169,282 in private donations, which help alleviate the burden on taxpayers. The Foundation also supported the Park District by:

- ◆ Providing scholarships for residents who could not otherwise afford programs.
- ◆ Stewarding several grants to support CUSR theatre programming, tree plantings, and other programs.
- ◆ Volunteering at Park District events throughout the year.
- ◆ Partners with the Park District to offer a memorial tree and bench program.

Collaboration with other park districts on best practices. Because park districts are not in competition with one another, they are more willing than the private sector to share best practices. These best practices help to avoid unnecessary costs and deliver services more effectively and efficiently.

Reliance on Non-Tax Revenue. Unlike most local governments that rely on a wide range of sales, use, and income taxes, the Park District is not permitted to assess these types of taxes. Additionally, although the Park District is an economic engine for the community and generates much revenue for the state and our community in the form of hotel/motel, sales, and motor fuel taxes, our Park District does not receive any of these revenues. Also, unlike Illinois cities, villages, counties, and school districts that received billions of dollars in direct financial assistance from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act and the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), our Park District did not receive any such direct federal aid. Our Park District also does not receive state funding under the Local Government Distributive Fund (LGDF) or General State Aid (GSA) that these same cities, villages, counties, and school districts receive through the State budget.

Instead, the Park District provides all of the programs, facilities, and services to the community with a very modest amount of property taxes and from non-tax sources such as memberships, program registrations, and other user fees as well as private donations and grants.

The following information about the Park District may be obtained by citizens in the location listed.

Document

- Annual Tax Levy
- Annual Budget and Appropriation Ordinance
- Board Meeting Agenda and Minutes
- Comptroller’s Annual Finance Report (AFR)
- Annual Audit
- Conduct Ordinances
- Comprehensive Master Plan
- Strategic Plans
- ADA Transition Plan
- Community Survey Results
- Municipal Directory of Information
- Bids and Requests for Proposals

Location(s) Available

- Website, Administrative Offices

The Park District offers residents many opportunities to provide feedback. These include:

- ◆ The board of commissioners meets twice each month. Residents may provide public comment at every meeting.
- ◆ The Park District’s annual Budget and Appropriation Ordinance is available in tentative form at least 30 days prior to its adoption at an open meeting of the Park District board. Additionally, at least one public hearing is held prior to final action, and notice of the hearing is published in the newspaper at least one week prior to the hearing.
- ◆ The Park District’s annual property tax levy is approved at an open meeting of the Park District board in accordance with the Open Meetings Act. The Park District follows all public notice and hearing requirements under the Truth in Taxation Law prior to the adoption of this annual tax levy. The Park District’s annual levy is also subject to the limitations of the Property Tax Extension Limitation Law.
- ◆ Residents may contact or request information from the Park District by phone at 217-398-2550 or email at info@champaignparks.org.
- ◆ The Park District completed a community-wide survey in 2017. Facility (Sholem Aquatic Center, Dog Park, Recreation Center) and CUSR surveys and program evaluations are administered on a monthly and annual basis. Public forums are utilized for park and facility development projects as well.
- ◆ The Park District most recently held a public hearing and conducted a community survey regarding an update to its ADA Transition Plan.





DISTRICT AWARDS AND RECOGNITION ◆

The Park District's achievements have been recognized in numerous ways.

Illinois Distinguished Agency Accreditation (Reaccreditation achieved in 2023)

Staff completed a rigorous assessment process that resulted in the Park District receiving Illinois Distinguished Accredited Agency by the Illinois Association of Park Districts and the Illinois Park and Recreation Association. The accreditation process focuses on efficient and effective operational practices and the implementation of professional standards. The Park District has been accredited since 2000.



2023 National Gold Medal Award in Parks and Recreation

The American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration (AAPRA), in partnership with the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA), awarded this honor to the District at the NRPA Annual Conference on October 11, 2023, in Dallas, Texas. This is the Park District's fourth gold medal. CUSR also received a gold medal in 1996.



2021 Helen Doria Arts in the Park Award

The Arts in the Park Award recognizes agencies (park districts, forest preserves, conservation, recreation, and special recreation agencies) that support the arts and partner with artists and arts organizations to enhance the quality of life in their communities.

2018 Exceptional Workplace Award

The Park District was among nine Illinois park districts to be awarded the 2018 Exceptional Workplace Award from the Illinois Park and Recreation Association's Health and Wellness Committee. The applicants were scored on staff wellness programs, continuing education, team building, community involvement, environmental policy, risk management, and professionalism

BENEFITS AND SERVICES ◆

The Park District serves the entire community from the youngest child to the oldest adult and all ages in between. It does so in a variety of ways.

Facilities

The Park District offered the following facilities to the community last year:

Centennial Park, with Leonhard Recreation Center, CUSR Center, Sholem Aquatic Center, and Prairie Farm Complex (70 acres)

◆ Centennial Park

- Eight (8) Tennis Courts
- Eight (8) Pickleball Courts
- Baseball Field
- Playground
- Sledding Hill
- Soccer Field
- Horseshoe Pit and Bocce Courts

◆ Leonhard Recreation Center

- Indoor Track access during all open hours
- Weight/Cardio Room access during all open hours
- Indoor Playground access during all open hours
- Gymnasium access for basketball, pickleball and volleyball during designated open gym hours

◆ CUSR Center (Special Recreation Center)

- Two basketball courts
- Two sensory rooms
- Activity room

◆ Sholem Aquatic Center

- Sholem features a zero-depth pool with play-and-spray features, an 8-lane 25-yard lap pool, a kiddie pool with slide, a tube slide that'll send you into the lazy river, and concession stand.

◆ Prairie Farm

- Seasonal petting zoo featuring farm animals such as turkeys, sheep, goats, pigs, bunnies, calves, and koi fish.

Martens Center & Human Kinetics Park (9 acres)

- ◆ Gymnasium
- ◆ Three-lane Indoor Track (12 laps = 1 mile)
- ◆ Wellness Center
- ◆ Interactive Games
- ◆ Joe DeLuce Innovation Center
- ◆ Games Room
- ◆ Group Fitness Rooms
- ◆ Multi-Media, Art, Multi-Purpose, and Library/Resource Rooms
- ◆ Instructional Kitchen
- ◆ Changing Rooms
- ◆ Outdoor Futsal Court
- ◆ Outdoor Soccer Field
- ◆ Outdoor Volleyball Court
- ◆ Outdoor Basketball Court
- ◆ Community Gardens

Virginia Theatre

The historic, 1,463 seat, Virginia Theatre is available for rent by individuals, organizations, governmental agencies, schools, and businesses for dance and theatrical performances, concerts, film screenings, meetings, receptions, corporate events, conferences, parties and other public and private events.



Douglass Park (16 acres)

- ◆ Home to Douglass Community Center, Douglass Annex (Senior Center), and Douglass Branch Library
- ◆ Splash pad, open daily 10am-7pm between Memorial Day and Labor Day
- ◆ Playground with poured in place safety surface
- ◆ Fitness Trail (.74 mi) with outdoor exercise equipment (Ab Crunch/Leg Lift, Assisted Row/Push-Up, Balance Steps, Cardio Stepper, Chest/Back Press, Mobility Station, Plyometrics, Pull-Up/Dip, Squat Press, Stretching Station, Tai Chi Wheels)
- ◆ Pavilion (available for rent)
- ◆ 2 Baseball Fields
- ◆ 2 Basketball Courts



Dodds Park (104 Acres)

- ◆ 4-Plex tournament quality lighted softball complex with indoor concessions and restroom facilities.
- ◆ 3-Plex tournament quality lighted softball fields.
- ◆ 11 tournament quality outdoor soccer fields of various sizes for preschool through adult play.
- ◆ Eddie Albert Community Gardens
- ◆ 18-hole disc golf course (2 pin positions: A and B course depending on setup).
- ◆ “Tribute to Olympic and Paralympic Athletes” by Jeffery S. Poss
- ◆ “Champaign County Worker’s Memorial” by Local Chapter AFL-CIO made possible by a \$25,000 IL First grant in 2001
- ◆ Greenbelt Bikeway Trail
- ◆ Disc Golf Course

West Side Park (14 acres)

- ◆ Playground
- ◆ Walking paths
- ◆ “Capron Memorial Sculpture Garden” sculpture by William Fothergill
- ◆ “Double Dutch Jump for Joy” sculpture by Gary Bibbs
- ◆ “Fire and Police Memorial” sculpture by Brodin Studios
- ◆ “Lincoln Megalith” sculpture by Truman Jefferson
- ◆ “TJ” Strong
- ◆ “Prayer For Rain” sculpture by Edward Kemeys
- ◆ “Tootsie” sculpture by Dean Rose
- ◆ “Uppercutted” sculpture by Ted Sitting Crow Garner

Sixty (60) park sites totaling nearly seven hundred (700) acres, ranging in size from mini-parks, neighborhood parks, and community parks.

Nearly thirty-five (35) miles **multi-purpose trails** within parks and throughout the community.

- ◆ Additional recreational facilities include two senior centers, the Springer Cultural Arts Center, a six-court indoor tennis facility, 24 outdoor tennis courts, 25 softball and baseball fields, 22 soccer fields, six volleyball courts, 33 outdoor playgrounds, two skate parks, a dog park, 20 picnic shelters, four small lakes for fishing, and shared gymnasium space at two elementary schools.

Programs

The Park District offered the following programs last year. Registration numbers are also provided.

The Park District offered over 1,300 programs and activities to 12,000 participants in 2022. Programs and activities include but are not limited to athletics, group fitness, fitness events, music, dance, drama, day camps, cultural and performing arts, preschool and youth programs, swimming, tennis, senior programs, special events and trips.

Additional Services

The Park District provided the following additional services to the community.

- ◆ Temporary shelter for individuals without addresses during COVID-19.
- ◆ Various clothing, food, and supply drives to benefit local charities and food banks.
- ◆ Volunteer for various not-for-profits and charities.

Other Benefits

While the Park District is a special purpose district, its impact to the community is multi-faceted and far-reaching. For example, the Park District’s parks, recreational programming, and other opportunities improve the community’s overall physical and mental health and wellness, thereby reducing health care costs. Before and after school and summer programs offer safe, convenient, and affordable childcare options for working families during critical times when school is not in session. These opportunities also help reduce juvenile crime. The Park District’s open space, prairie restorations, and water detention improve water quality and mitigate flooding. The Park District’s more than 7,000 trees have been measured for diameter at breast height (DBH) and when calculating their size and species-specific allometric equations, it is estimated that these trees sequester nearly 7.3 million lbs. of carbon in above and below ground biomass, i.e., trunks, limbs, and roots. This amount of carbon is equivalent to removing 26,000,000 lbs. of CO₂ from the atmosphere. Based on the current social cost of carbon (around \$51.27/ton of CO₂), this has saved the community roughly \$615,104.65.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INCREASED ACCOUNTABILITY AND EFFICIENCY ◆

Intergovernmental Fees and Charges

One opportunity for efficiency would be the elimination of fees and charges assessed by other units of government. By way of example, below are amounts that other units of local government charge the Park District even though the Park District's taxpayers are also taxpayers of these other units of local government. Such fees and charges, and the bureaucracy that accompanies them, inhibit the park district's ability to deliver programs, facilities, and services at the least possible cost. The Park District routinely pays fees and charges on an annual basis for the following:

- ◆ Stormwater Management
- ◆ State and Local Liquor Licenses
- ◆ Elevator License and Inspection
- ◆ Fire Inspections
- ◆ Illinois State Police Background Checks
- ◆ Pool Permits
- ◆ Building Permits
- ◆ Police Protection Fees for Special Events
- ◆ Health Department Inspections

Examples of fees paid to other units of government include:

- ◆ City of Champaign building permit fee for the Martens Center construction: \$11,496
- ◆ Urbana Champaign Sanitary District sanitary fee for the Martens Center construction: \$29,500
- ◆ City of Champaign building permit fee for Operations yard expansion: \$1965
- ◆ City of Champaign building permit for Bicentennial Center renovation: \$3,696
- ◆ City of Champaign building permit fee for the Virginia Fire Escape and Masonry Repair project: \$1,925
- ◆ City of Champaign parking permit fees for Springer Cultural Center and Virginia Theatre – FY17 to FY24: \$9,374 per year.
- ◆ City of Champaign stormwater utility fee: \$15,090 per year.

Other units of local government should recognize that intergovernmental fees often lead to inefficiency in the expenditure of taxpayer dollars through extra bureaucracy and administrative costs. In many cases, the unit of government assessing the fee ultimately benefits from the project or event, meaning it can recoup its costs through the extra sales tax or other revenue that will be generated. Where such fees are absolutely necessary, general purpose units of government should offset the fee by crediting the park district for all benefits they will receive from a project, event, or property. For example, open space that is protected and maintained by the Park District helps mitigate stormwater management costs, so assessing stormwater management fees on the Park District not only leads to inefficiency, but it is also shortsighted.

Governmental units should be discouraged or prohibited from charging more than their out-of-pocket costs associated with the activities covered by a fee that is assessed to another unit of local government with the same taxpayers. Put another way, one unit of local government should not profit by taxing another. Eliminating local permit fees is a way to reduce administrative costs without impacting overall public revenue. Local government best serves the people when it cooperates and works together. Some communities recognize this and do not charge fees to other units. All communities should be encouraged to follow that model to receive the best results for local taxpayers and to promote governmental efficiency.

Inefficiency of Other Governments

The Park District is also negatively impacted by the inefficiency of the state and other units of local government.

State grants are often overly complicated to apply for and staff at the state level are not routinely available to answer questions or provide guidance, which causes delays for the Park District attempting to apply for grant funds. Once grant funding is obtained, cumbersome and time-consuming reports are due on a monthly or quarterly basis.



Unfunded Mandates

Unfunded state mandates are another cost driver. While the Park District recognizes that there are benefits to some of these mandates, modifications could help alleviate some of the burden to the park district.

Non-resident FOIA Requests. Last year, the park district spent numerous hours in staff time and legal fees to fulfill FOIA requests. Often the individuals/businesses submitting the FOIA requests are from outside of the park district boundaries, and they appear to be serving a specific agenda, rather than assuring better local government.

Under current law, resident taxpayers end up footing the bill for these non-resident or commercial requests. In order to help alleviate the burden for these non-resident requests the law could be amended to: (1) add a requirement that non-residents identify/explain the purpose of the request for information; (2) add a time limit on how far back a non-resident can request information; (3) staff time and costs could be included in the amount that is reimbursable for non-resident and commercial requests; (4) move back the deadline for non-resident requests 10 business days so that the park district does not have to delay services to its residents in order to comply with a non-resident request.

Sunshine laws are supposed to protect taxpayers by allowing them to shed light on any issue that is not exempt from FOIA. However, local government can be burdened by having to drop everything to rearrange priorities to meet FOIA deadlines, particularly if it has limited resources. Since local residents ultimately bear the expense of complying with FOIA, treating resident and non-resident requests differently would be justified.

Criminal Background Checks. All park districts are statutorily required to conduct criminal background checks on all employees pursuant to Section 8-23 of the Park District Code. The background checks must be done through the Illinois State Police (ISP). Last year, the park district spent \$11,040 for criminal background checks. The Park District does not recommend eliminating this mandate because it is necessary to ensure the safety and well-being of children and other park district patrons. However, the State should explore ways in which it could improve the current system and make it less costly for park districts to comply with the law.

The mandate also raises the fundamental question as to why one layer of government is forced to charge its taxpayers to comply with a State mandate when the State made the determination to impose the mandate. Put another way, if the State has determined that criminal background checks are necessary for public safety, the State should assist with compliance.

The Park District recommends studying whether there can be a more efficient background check process implemented through the ISP to reduce the time and expense it takes for background checks. Another suggestion is for ISP to waive the fee for checks on minors or waive all fees for name checks. If there is a "hit" from a name check, the fee could be charged for the more costly fingerprint check. Since it is a state mandate, perhaps the fee structure for park districts should also be reviewed to determine whether the fee being charged exceeds the actual cost of doing the check and, if so, perhaps the ISP could consider reducing its cost to local governments.

Prevailing Wage. One way to reduce burden on local government staff is to limit the prevailing wage requirement to larger capital contracts. This would free up tracking of the paperwork on small repairs and projects. One reason for creating a threshold requirement is the cost of the administrative burden relative to the cost of the actual project. For example, eliminating prevailing wage on smaller projects, e.g., those less than \$50,000, will result in more local bids and decrease the overall cost for these smaller public works projects.

Newspaper Publication. The newspaper is no longer the most effective way to provide notice. Websites are cheaper and reach more people. Permitting the park district to post the information on its website in lieu of newspaper publications would reduce costs.



Dated: January 10, 2024

[INSERT DATE FINAL REPORT APPROVED BY EFFICIENCY COMMITTEE]

Signed: [Signature]

[CHAIR'S SIGNATURE]

Signed: [Signature]

[SECRETARY'S SIGNATURE]

