BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS

FINAL PLAN OVERVIEW

January 31, 2019
MEETING AGENDA

1. Introduction
2. Plan Insights + Analysis
3. The Impact of Great Parks
4. Recommendations
5. Priorities
QUESTIONS THE PLAN ADDRESSES

» How do we continue to build bonds between people and nature as Hamilton County grows and society changes?

» How do we advance the legacy of conservation while exploring opportunities for public use and education?

» How do we build on the authentic, cultural, natural and historical qualities of Hamilton County to create educational and exciting park experiences?

» How do we equitably improve physical connectivity and social access to the parks system?

» How do we inspire the next generation of environmental stewards of Hamilton County?
FIVE GOALS

1. BE A RECOGNIZED LEADER IN CONSERVATION

2. PROVIDE INNOVATIVE PROGRAMMING AS A GATEWAY TO NATURE EXPLORATION

3. CREATE OUTSTANDING EXPERIENCES

4. ADVANCE FISCAL HEALTH

5. OPERATE WITH HIGH STANDARDS OF EXCELLENCE
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

105
STAKEHOLDERS INTERVIEWED

216
ONLINE SURVEY RESPONDENTS

976
COMMUNITY EVENT ATTENDEES

109
COMMUNITY WORKSHOP ATTENDEES

801
COUNTY-WIDE SURVEY RESPONDENTS

2,200+
PEOPLE ENGAGED IN THE PLANNING PROCESS
1 There is strong public support for conservation and preservation of natural lands.

Preservation of greenspace and protection of the environment is recognized as one of the top benefits that Great Parks provides to county residents.

“Preserve as many natural areas as possible, as soon as possible. Please!”

Investing in natural areas and wildlife habitats is one of the top five priorities.

Where in Hamilton County should Great Parks prioritize acquisition of land for conservation?

- 29% Riparian corridors/rivers
- 15% Within City of Cincinnati
- 10% West side of Hamilton Co.

84% of survey respondents are supportive of Great Parks purchasing land that protects the environment.
2. Great Parks has a higher facility visitation rate than the national average.

A majority of park users rate the physical condition of Great Parks as excellent.

89% of county-wide survey respondents have visited a Great Parks park or facility within the past year, which is 8 points higher than the national average.

20% of county-wide survey respondents have participated in nature programming within the past year, which is 15 points lower than the national average.

Most visited parks:
- Winton Woods: 55%
- Sharon Woods: 49%
- Miami Whitewater Forest: 42%

Favorite things to do:
- Hiking: 62%
- Trail Walking/Running: 61%
- Nature Observation: 38%
Community members are seeking active recreation programs and special events.

The most popular themes include outdoor adventure, activities that enable fitness and wellness and new community events.

“More free activities for teens and twenty somethings. I’d love an adult playground.”

57% of county residents agree that their physical health & fitness is a primary benefit of parks and conservation areas.

27% of county residents are expected to participate in walking for exercise.

Top 3 Priority Activities:
1. Fitness & wellness programs
2. Special events/festivals
3. Outdoor adventure programs
Community members are seeking more nature trails, paved walking trails and biking trails.

98% of survey respondents believe it is important to use protected areas to provide a connected network of trails.

It would be nice to have some longer trails within parts of parks that are not developed or at least have current trails make deeper forays into the wilder part of the parks.

Create networks of trails within parks that give users multiple route choices of different lengths and types of experiences.

Highest community priorities for facilities in the future include:
1. Paved walking & biking trails
2. Nature trails
The vast majority of visitors drive to reach parks and participate in programs.

87% of county-wide survey respondents drive to reach Great Parks programs & activities.

42% of county-wide survey respondents walk or bike to reach Great Parks programs & activities.

"Connectivity is the key. Make it possible to access parks via trails."

"We need transit to access parks for as many residents as possible."
The community is most willing to fund park facility updates and new trails with tax dollars.

1. Updated facilities
The greatest number of county-wide survey respondents would be willing to fund updates and repairs for older park facilities.

2. Trails
The second greatest number of county-wide survey respondents would be willing to fund the development of new shared use trails.

3. Greenways
The third greatest number of county-wide survey respondents would be willing to fund the development of greenways in the floodplains of the county’s rivers and creeks.
03

IMPACT OF GREAT PARKS
THE IMPACT OF GREAT PARKS

CONSERVATION

128,000
New trees planted since 2013

83%
Park space preserved as undeveloped natural areas

25
Miles of frontage on 4 major rivers

10,000
Acres of forests and wetlands

1,800
Acres of grassland

Greetings from Great Parks!

4 conservation areas

#nature

Love!
THE IMPACT OF GREAT PARKS

RECREATION

212,000
Rounds of golf per year

218,000
Athletic guests per year

79,000
Boating experiences per year

151,000
Visits to reservable picnic areas, shelters or lodges per year
THE IMPACT OF GREAT PARKS

EDUCATION

Engaging & active programs

7,500 Programs attracting...

134,000 Special events guests per year

135,000 Program attendees

47,132 Volunteer hours from...

195,000 Nature Center guests per year

1,775 Total volunteers (2018)
THE IMPACT OF GREAT PARKS

ECONOMIC IMPACT

$91.9 M
Total economic impact (2015)

2,065
Jobs supported

$1 to $4.22
Return on investment for tax funding for GPHC

A community asset!
THE IMPACT OF GREAT PARKS

7.8% of Hamilton County’s tree canopy is within a Great Park

1.1 Million trail visits per year

Great Parks represent 1/3 of Hamilton County’s total open space

78 miles of trails within Great Parks

83% of Great Parks land preserved as undeveloped natural areas
1. BE A RECOGNIZED LEADER IN CONSERVATION

> Establish Great Parks of Hamilton County as a system of connected and ecologically resilient conservation areas, river corridors and parks.

**Protect**
- Formalize approach to land use
- Formalize criteria and methods for land acquisition
- Foster sustainability and ecological resiliency
- Establish a regional conservation community

**Connect**
- Be a leader in trails for the region
- Increase level of service for trails
- Focus on trails of all types and complete missing connections
- Partner with other trail-building and managing entities

**Explore**
- Provide measured access to conservation areas
- Enhance the experience of using trails for exercise
1. BE A RECOGNIZED LEADER IN CONSERVATION

CASE STUDY: Battelle Darby Creek Metro Park and Nature Center

» Largest park in county metro park system

» 1,600 acres of restored wetlands, prairies, and bison habitat

» 14,000 square foot LEED Silver nature center
  » 53-foot living stream inside nature center
  » Interactive educational exhibits

» Connects to regional trail system, contains internal trail system
2. PROVIDE INNOVATIVE PROGRAMMING AS A GATEWAY TO NATURE EXPLORATION

» Adopt a programming philosophy and approach dedicated to wellness, adventure and enrichment to ensure the development of impactful and evolving programming.

Programming Evaluation + Lifecycle
» Make data-driven decisions
» Establish a program evaluation cycle (with lifecycle stages)
» Increase participation by inspiring users to try something new
» Track similar providers and duplication of services

Program Types + Locations
» Expand and enhance the core program areas with a focus on trends in recreation and demographics
» Increase adventure and wellness recreation events and programs
» Enhance current user experience by maintaining popular facilities
» Approach programming from a system-wide perspective
2. PROVIDE INNOVATIVE PROGRAMMING AS A GATEWAY TO NATURE EXPLORATION

CASE STUDY: Cleveland Metroparks Programming

» Youth Adventure Seeker series teaches outdoor recreation skills to younger park users

» Adult skills-based classes
  » Orienteering
  » Mountain biking
  » Backcountry cooking

» Recreation events
  » Fishing festivals
  » Races
3. CREATE OUTSTANDING EXPERIENCES

» Integrate nature, programming and facilities to provide high quality and unique offerings in every park that instill lasting memories in all users

**Placemaking Strategies**

» Enhance the experiences that give each park an identity
» Create a fresh approach to current visitor centers
» Invest in new play and education experiences
» Embrace the cultural heritage of each park
» Increase adventure recreation experiences
» Establish a defined blueway system

**Equitable Access**

» Increase access to parks
» Enhance pedestrian connections to parks
» Increase alternative transportation access to parks
» Expand access for users with mobility and ability challenges
3. CREATE OUTSTANDING EXPERIENCES

**CASE STUDY:** Summit Park Nature Playscape

» Utilizes natural elements and building materials

» Encourages unstructured play and connects children to nature
  » Child-sized ziplines
  » Shallow creek
  » Sand pits
  » Log play structures
  » Underground hobbit hole
  » Rope spinner
4. ADVANCE FISCAL HEALTH

» Ensure the park system is financially balanced and sustainable.

Financial Planning
» Track assets and cost of ownership across life of facilities
» Expand, explore and implement varied funding strategies
» Identify program- and facility-specific operational funding strategies
» Develop regional park business plans

Partnerships
» Adopt a comprehensive partnership philosophy
» Emphasize collaboration and leverage strategic partnerships

Pricing Strategy
» Expand existing pricing strategy
» Adopt income, price and cost recovery policies
» Update naming rights policy
4. ADVANCE FISCAL HEALTH

CASE STUDY: HERO USA

» Nonprofit organization that operates kayak, canoe and paddleboarding trips throughout Central Ohio

» Devoted to making a difference for youth who face social, physical and economic challenges

» Partner with organizations to help with park cleanup efforts
5. OPERATE WITH HIGH STANDARDS OF EXCELLENCE

» Maximize the efficiency and productivity of staff, volunteers, facilities and programming through performance management.

Program Management + Evaluation
» Conduct annual evaluations
» Develop program standards
» Create a program development and decision-making matrix
» Implement a program development process

Diversity + Inclusion
» Track participation
» Support organizational diversity
» Develop gateway and in-demand programs

Efficiency + Effectiveness
» Enhance staff training and development
» Establish key performance indicators
» Conduct a capacity demand analysis
» Enhance customer satisfaction
» Standardize labor tracking

Technology
» Use technology to gather participant data
» Communicate progress and changes
» Incorporate partner organization data

Organizational Structure
» Continue to enhance current organizational structure
» Articulate organizational functions
5. OPERATE WITH HIGH STANDARDS OF EXCELLENCE

CASE STUDY: Diversity and Inclusion Committee

» What should Great Parks do to attract, retain, develop and grow a diverse workforce in a highly-inclusive work environment?

  » Process included executive interviews, facilitated conversations, online focus groups, employee survey, market research

» Recommendations

  » Unconscious bias training
  » D&I Council as internal and external ambassadors for guests and employees
  » Internal succession planning, mentoring and professional development
  » Non-traditional recruiting tactics
PRIORITIES

1. BUILD MORE TRAILS
   Trail expansion and connections should create a balanced system of trails of all types. Improvements should include paved and unpaved trails, with a focus on trails within the parks, filling in missing trail connections across the county and increasing trail/park access to underserved areas and adjacent neighborhoods.

2. ADD PROGRAMMING AND EVENTS FOR DIVERSE AUDIENCES
   New and renewed programs should reflect community interests and emerging trends in nature-based recreation and education. These include gateway programs to reach new audiences, programs focusing on wellness and adventure, community events and non-traditional sports.

3. PROVIDE ACCESS TO CONSERVATION AREAS
   Provide access to explore and understand conservation areas—emphasizing their beauty and importance, while measuring against potential negative impacts to habitats and species. Access may include improved parking and trails, special programs and technological resources.

4. ESTABLISH A DEFINED BLUEWAY SYSTEM
   Increase watercraft access points along the Great Miami, Little Miami, Whitewater and Ohio Rivers, and Mill Creek. Establish safe and user-friendly routes with defined places to put in and take out watercraft, signage systems, and online safety and real-time conditions information.
FOCUS ON PARTNERSHIPS
Establish relationships with operational and service partners, vendor partners, cross-promotion partners and Great Parks Forever. Partnerships can be utilized for programs and events, cultural resources, capital projects, marketing and public engagement.

BUILD ECOLOGICAL RESILIENCY AND SUSTAINABILITY
Continue to acquire and protect the natural assets of Hamilton County. Anticipate future threats and implement adaptive plans to increase the biological integrity of natural systems. Engage the public in conservation education and research.

EXPAND ACCESS FOR ALL USERS
Pursue new nature-based opportunities near underserved populations. Enhance pedestrian connections from neighborhoods to parks. Advocate with regional transit providers for increased transit stops near parks. Enhance accessibility of facilities and programs for all ages and abilities.

PLAN FOR THE FUTURE OF EVERY PARK
Use the Comprehensive Master Plan to guide Park and Facility Master Plans for all parks—including specific improvements and action steps for enhancing experiences in every park.
» Finalize implementation section | February 2019
» Park and Facility Master Plans | 2019
THANK YOU