



Great Parks of Hamilton County

2019 ANNUAL REPORT



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A Great Year at Great Parks

I am honored and excited to share with you some amazing insights and accomplishments from your Great Parks of Hamilton County in this Annual Report! As stewards of some of the most treasured resources and habitats in Hamilton County, we take great pride in providing and creating experiences through 17,733 acres of protected green space.

In 2019, your Great Parks concluded the most important planning process in our 89-year history – completion of the Comprehensive Master Plan. This Comprehensive Master Plan will guide parks, facilities, programming and services over the next 10 years, through 2028.

Through the course of an inclusive community engagement and planning process, the master plan involved the input of more than 2,200 members of the public. Great Parks would like to thank all of those who participated in the creation of the comprehensive master plan, including workshops, community events, stakeholder interviews, surveys and the direction and guidance of the Advisory Committee.

The Comprehensive Master Plan established five goals and a series of recommendations that were then distilled into eight priorities for implementation:

- Build more trails
- Add programming and events for diverse audiences
- Establish a defined blueway system
- Provide access to conservation areas
- Focus on partnerships
- Build ecological resiliency and sustainability
- Expand access for all users
- Plan for the future of every park

To plan for the future of every park, the process for implementation of Park and Facility Master Plans began in fall 2019. Park and Facility Master Plans ensure that the recommendations of the Comprehensive Master Plan are reflected in operation and physical design of all parks, facilities, nature preserves and conservation areas.

On behalf of the Board of Park Commissioners, thank you for the dedication and enthusiasm in support of your Great Parks. We look forward to seeing you and sharing your stories in 2020!

Todd Palmeter, Chief Executive Officer



Board of Park Commissioners serve without compensation and are appointed by the Judge of Probate Court, the Honorable Judge Ralph E. Winkler.

From left to right: Joseph C. Seta, Geraldine Warner, Marcus Thompson, HC Buck Niehoff, William J. Burwinkel

Numbers to Know



17,733

We protect 17,733 acres of Hamilton County, Ohio

Through **21** parks and nature preserves, we provided space for **4,338,498** guests to explore and connect with nature! On average, **385** guests shared experiences with us every day.



688

83% of our land is preserved

More than **688** native plant species are documented in our natural areas, including **65** species of trees.

These natural areas hosted **22** research projects this year. During one project at Shawnee Lookout, **3,305** archaeological artifacts were unearthed!



18,205

Three of the area's largest lakes are in our parks

18,205 watercraft were rented from boathouses this year so visitors could paddle Miami Whitewater Forest Lake, Winton Lake and Sharon Lake, as well as Lake Isabella.



2,525

We hosted 2,525 nature programs and special events

668 of those programs were offered for free to the public! Our Interpreters and Adventure Outpost Instructors led **479** in-park field trips for local schools.



A New Kind of Nature Center

Serving the communities of Hamilton County and providing residents the best in outdoor recreation and nature education have always been paramount to Great Parks' mission. That mission happens in a variety of ways, including partnerships. Thanks to a new partnership with New Prospect Baptist Church, a Roselawn church that's been a part of Greater Cincinnati since 1919, Great Parks was able to open its newest addition, Nature Center at The Summit. This area is known as The Summit Center, a central hub in the community, providing residents with a place to gather, host events and now, learn more about the natural world and enjoy outdoor recreation.

At this nature education facility, Great Parks offers scheduled programs for preschool, elementary, after-school and day camp aged children and families, all provided by an on-site nature interpreter. Since opening in July, Nature Center at The Summit has served more than 400 community members with events and programs. The largest of these events was an open house during Great Outdoor Weekend in September, where more than 80 people from Roselawn and the surrounding communities explored the outdoors. Open house guests participated in activities ranging from learning about birds you can spot in your own backyard to discovering humans' place in the ecosystem. Great Parks also provides field trips to programs and events at other park locations for Roselawn residents and surrounding Cincinnati communities.

Great Parks team members have become active in the community to create lasting connections with residents. Nature Interpreters have attended and spoken at Roselawn and Bond Hill community council meetings. Volunteers from Starfire Council, a local organization that focuses on building inclusive lives and communities, donate their time to the Nature Center every Monday, helping with crafts and caring for the animal ambassadors that call Nature Center at The Summit home.

Looking ahead, Great Parks plans to expand Nature Center at The Summit and its programming. This includes collaborating with the Civic Garden Center to start the first community garden in Roselawn. The garden will be guided by Great Parks Nature Interpreters, under the care of a community initiative. Expanding the outdoor area along the Mill Creek will provide outdoor recreation opportunities and innovative programming as a gateway to nature exploration. Proposed plans include an archery range, amphitheater updates, outdoor classroom, hiking trail, access to the Mill Creek and more.

Thanks to this ongoing partnership, Great Parks is able to provide nature education and outdoor recreation opportunities to a community that we have not previously served. Nature Center at The Summit is a stepping stone for establishing future nature education facility locations in other communities throughout Greater Cincinnati.



Sparking a Brighter Future

Great Parks takes pride in conservation, not only through preservation of green spaces and protection of wildlife, but also through partnerships that encourage sustainable practices in our community. By providing ways to recycle locally, we are able to make an impact in protecting the environment on a larger scale. These partnerships create connection and reliability among residents who are looking for options to be more eco-friendly.

Electronics Recycling Day

This was the second year Great Parks partnered with Mount St. Joseph University for Electronics Recycling Day, an event which encourages residents to properly dispose of old or unwanted electronics. It resulted in 508 vehicles coming through in four hours and 64,708 pounds (32.35 tons) of e-waste collected, filling three semis and three box trucks!

Offering our region an opportunity to dispose of old, unwanted or broken electronics is vital in reducing waste in landfills where the components would further harm the environment.

Holiday Lights Recycling

This was the sixth year for the Holiday Lights Recycling program in partnership with Cohen, a locally owned company that specializes in industrial and electronics recycling. The program encourages residents to recycle their broken or unwanted holiday lights instead of throwing them away. During the program, 11,500 pounds of lights were collected, processed and refined into materials that will reenter the manufacturing stream and be made into new products. That's approximately 44,500 strands of lights. Thanks to these results, Cohen was able to give \$2,000 back to the parks with a matching donation that supports Great Parks' ongoing conservation initiatives.

Great Parks continues to seek opportunities and partnerships that will help sustainability initiatives inside and outside the parks. We will maintain fostering these initiatives to promote awareness and action within our community.



Wild About Wildflowers

Thanks to a generous donation from William Garnett to Great Parks Forever, a new wildflower overlook was opened in Winton Woods. This park holds a special place in William's heart: over the past 20 years, William and his late wife Gina would walk through Winton Woods every winter and spring to view blossoming wildflowers. After Gina's passing, William wanted to honor his wife and share the memories they cherished together as a couple.

As educators and avid nature lovers, William wanted to celebrate what was important to Gina. An overlook was an ideal way to share about all of the wildflowers the Garnetts admired in what was once a rarely visited area of the park.

Construction began on the William and Gina Gerwin Garnett Wildflower Overlook in October 2018 with the installation of a wood framed deck with composite decking and wire railing, and land restoration. When building the overlook, part of William's gift included management of invasive



species to make space for native wildflowers such as wild blue phlox, harbinger-of-spring, cut-leaved toothwort and Dutchman's breeches. Interpretive signs were installed to inform guests about wildflowers and biodiversity found in local forests. The project was completed in the spring of 2019 and officially opened with a ribbon cutting ceremony on May 21, with William as the guest of honor.

The William and Gina Gerwin Garnett Wildflower Overlook allowed Great Parks to transform this space into a place where guests can visit and learn. This project serves as a model for funding future projects with donations from community members who feel a connection with a cause that Great Parks supports. William Garnett's generosity and love for his wife and nature is symbolized by this overlook and is a feature that will be enjoyed for generations to come.



Infrastructure Updates Let Everyone Enjoy the Lake



Some of our newest work at this lakeside park happened right beneath your feet. Great Parks updated infrastructure at Lake Isabella, creating an outdoor space that is more user friendly for all park guests.

A newly installed, accessible ramp provides access from the Boathouse and upper deck area to the lower deck, better serving guests with disabilities, as well as making it easier to carry fishing gear right to the water. Guests will also find easier fishing access at the Boathouse with a modified rope railing.

The improvements at Lake Isabella didn't stop there; Great Parks refurbished the dock to broaden recreation opportunities at the Boathouse. 6,000 square feet of aging wood decking was replaced with long-lasting, low-maintenance composite decking. The floating dock was also renovated with the same materials and the upper deck area received a new modified railing. The composite decking will allow anglers to continue to enjoy fishing at Lake Isabella for years to come.



Knocking It Out of the Park

Triple Creek and Francis RecreAcres continued to grow as hubs for athletic opportunities in 2019. Both are able to host large sporting events and have seen an increase in popularity and attendance, especially on weekends.

Triple Creek has transitioned to a mix of softball leagues and baseball tournaments. An average weekend attendance for a tournament was more than 1,500, with the largest three-day event hosting more than 2,700 park guests. Approximately 90% of the baseball teams came from within a 40-mile radius, which shows the impact the park had regionally as a leading baseball facility.

Francis RecreAcres is a small park that can pack a large crowd, with an average number of 550 vehicles each weekend, estimating 1,100 to 1,600 park guests. The park is known for soccer fields that have grown popular with Liga Latina de Futbol. On average, 500 to 700 park guests turned out for this Sunday league.

Francis RecreAcres has become a central point for a portion of the Hispanic community in Hamilton County where they can play or watch soccer, enjoy authentic food and listen to live music several weekends out of the month.





40 Years of Impact

2019 marked 40 years of volunteering at Great Parks. When you stop to think about it, that's pretty amazing! How and why do they do it? Quite simply, volunteers believe in Great Parks' mission and love what they do. Take these four remarkable individuals, for example.

Dot, Steve, Randy and Jim have each been serving Great Parks for 40 years in various capacities: Dot assists at Shaker Trace Nursery, Steve leads our bluebird-monitoring program, Randy brings Native American culture to life during educational programs and Jim leads groups during the Annual Winter Hike and Walk Club series.

The day-to-day difference volunteers make is extraordinary. Whether they're protecting wildlife and native habitats, assisting with a nature education or outdoor recreation program or simply helping a guest with a purchase or answering a question with a friendly smile, they make a positive difference in the environment, our community and Great Parks.

1,738
Volunteers

47,773
Hours Served

4,220
Pounds of Trash
Collected



Our Philanthropic Partner

It was a productive year for Great Parks Forever. As the philanthropic partner of Great Parks of Hamilton County, Great Parks Forever translates an early conservation promise into everyday experiences and lasting legacies — in multiple ways.

Throughout the year, Great Parks Forever was able to secure philanthropic funding for projects, such as the design of the Glenwood Gardens to Winton Woods trail and construction of a music garden at Highfield Discovery Garden. Legacies can be created in other ways as well. Great Parks Forever helped 10 families create an everlasting memory for loved ones through the Legacy Tree Program.

The final year of this decade was also one of change for Great Parks Forever. In December, the first President of the Board, Jon Hoffheimer, retired from the Board after 12 years. Mr. Hoffheimer became a passionate ambassador and advocate for Great Parks long before his Board service. Beginning in the 1970s, Mr. Hoffheimer helped many families create generous legacies for parks. His hard work, dedication and

lifelong admiration for Great Parks will benefit the community for generations to come.

In all, Great Parks Forever's giving to Great Parks of Hamilton County in 2019 was more than \$335,000. Together, we can continue to protect our shared, bigger backyard.

\$335,000
Given to
Great Parks

Sponsorships, Partnerships & Grants

Each year we rely on sponsors, partners and grants to support capital costs, provide quality programs, produce special events and acquire new land. In turn, we are able to provide better experiences for our residents by supplementing tax dollars. We thank each of our sponsors, partners and grantors for a successful year!

SPONSORSHIPS



\$52,625

We rely on sponsorships to produce community events and programs, including the following:

- Kids Outdoor Adventure Expo, presented by The Carol Ann and Ralph V. Haile, Jr./U.S. Bank Foundation
- Summer Concert Series, presented by Miller Lite
- Bands, BBQ & Brews, presented by Fifty West Brewing Company
- Holiday in Lights/Santaland, presented by Rumpke
- Annual Winter Hike Series, presented by L.L.Bean

PARTNERSHIPS



\$20,575

Our partners provided a total of \$20,575 of in-kind food, products and support. Donations included 120 "The Polar Express" books for a holiday program, a cooling bus for one of our hottest events of the year and carabiners for our winter hikers. Our partners included:

- Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center
- Morgan's Canoe & Outdoor Adventures
- Cincinnati Metro
- Reinhart Foodservice
- Literacy Network of Greater Cincinnati
- L.L.Bean

GRANTS



\$2,833,600

Grants help us offset the cost of capital projects, programs and land acquisition. Some of these projects include stand-up paddleboarding programming, nature education programming, Sharon Lake funding and a pollinator garden. This year, our grants totaled \$2,833,600.

Land Acquisition: \$2,121,642
 Projects: \$668,700
 Programs: \$43,258



Awards

We have an incredible and dedicated team of staff and volunteers committed to providing excellent experiences for all of our guests. Awards include:

Meadow Links & Golf Academy, Golf Range Magazine's Top 50 Range in America

Finance, Auditor of State Award, Ohio Auditor of State

Holiday Lights Recycling, Ohio Parks and Recreation Association Award of Excellence

Planning, Green Umbrella, Greenspace Hero Award

Marketing, Public Relations Society of America Blacksmith Award, MarCom International Awards (11 total), Ohio Travel Association RUBY Award

PGA Golf Professional Matt Starr, Southern Ohio PGA Player Development Award

PGA Golf Professional Mike Deiters, Southern Ohio PGA Teacher of the Year Award

PGA Master Professional Dennis Wells, Southern Ohio PGA Southwest Chapter Hall of Fame Inductee

Rangers, Above and Beyond Award, Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve



Public Input Guides Park Plans

As a public agency, Great Parks of Hamilton County relies on the tax support of Hamilton County residents to sustain one of the state of Ohio's largest and most diverse inventories of parks, nature preserves and conservation areas. The most recent levy approved by Hamilton County residents in 2016 highlights the community's passion and support of the park district for the next 10 years.

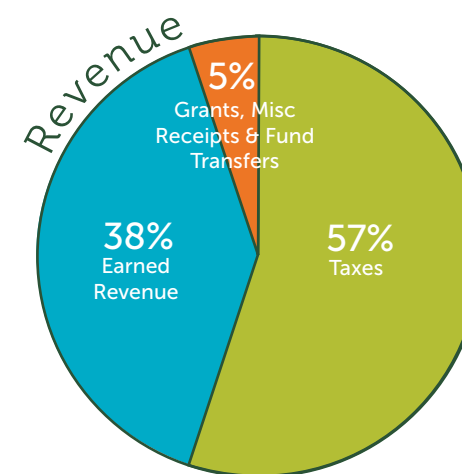
Great Parks currently protects 17,733 acres of green space and takes its responsibility as a steward of the public's funds very seriously. Levy funds are used to provide outstanding parks, facilities, programs and services and address critical infrastructure needs. To ensure that its plans continue to meet community needs, Great Parks used an inclusive and thorough public planning process to develop its first Comprehensive Master Plan, completed in 2019.

The Comprehensive Master Plan is a guiding document that sets the vision for the park district over the next 10 years, through 2028. Now, Great Parks is working on more detailed Park and Facility Master Plans to help achieve that vision. The park district is engaging with community members, staff and stakeholders in a two-year process to develop recommendations for improvements and programs that align with the goals and priorities set forth in the Comprehensive Master Plan.

By working with surrounding communities to understand their needs, Great Parks can be sure future park plans properly serve the county and continue to be an effective and responsible use of public funds over the next decade.



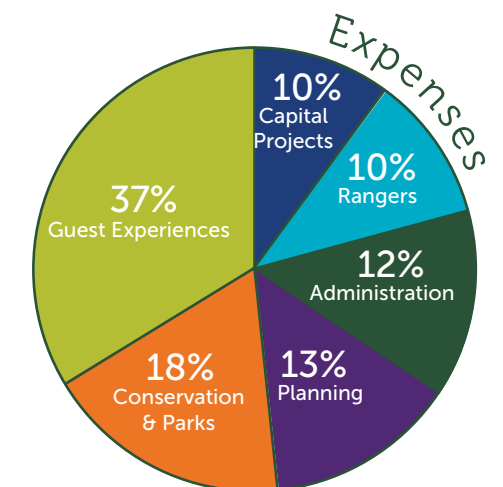
Financials



2019 Financial Summary

General Fund

Unencumbered	\$ 14,513,503
Encumbered	<u>3,420,603</u>
Balance 1/1/2019	17,934,106
Revenue Received	34,658,275
Total Funds Available	<u>\$ 52,592,381</u>
Expended	33,833,734
Balance 12/31/2019	\$ 18,758,647



Revenue

Taxes	\$ 19,929,446
Earned Revenue	
Adventure Outpost	36,116
Athletics	418,679
Banquets & Catering	271,482
Harbors	1,691,575
Business Development	45,275
Campgrounds	887,756
Golf Courses	6,942,021
Interpreters	190,315
Welcome Booths	1,320,863
Nature's Niche	229,504
Park's Farm	274,803
Reservations	516,345
Special Events	101,967
Total Earned Revenue	13,122,966
Grants, Misc Receipts & Fund Transfers	1,605,863
Total Revenue	\$ 34,658,275

Expenses

Administration	
Finance	\$ 1,768,689
Human Resources	670,830
Volunteer Resources	189,610
IT & Data Management	1,471,481
Capital Projects	3,252,690
Conservation & Parks	
Parks Maintenance	5,235,853
Natural Resources	731,924
Guest Experiences	
Education & Events	1,890,060
Golf	5,833,753
Guest Experiences	4,910,504
Planning	
Facilities & Infrastructure	2,064,440
Marketing & Public Engagement	1,176,761
Design & Land Acquisition	1,065,770
Rangers	3,571,369
Total Expenses	\$ 33,833,734



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2019 Board of Park Commissioners:
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HC Buck Niehoff Geraldine Warner
Joseph C. Seta

Chief Executive Officer: Todd Palmeter



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