

Fort Wayne Parks and Recreation Master Plan Summary

The mission of the Fort Wayne Parks and Recreation Department is to enhance the quality of life in Fort Wayne by providing positive opportunities for leisure time and by being stewards of our park lands, facilities, public trees, and other resources entrusted to our care. Our master plan, completed and adopted by the Board of Park Commissioners in 2018, starts with this mission as its guiding principle, informing everything within the plan. This mission is translated into department goals, which are also informed by the core values of the department for both its employees and its pursuit of excellence.

The Parks and Recreation employees' value:

Honesty – Truthful answers to questions and statements provided from all levels of the organization are important.

Teamwork – It is essential that everyone works together and treats one another with dignity and respect.

Fairness – Guidelines must be dealt with in a fair and consistent manner.

Integrity – The professional code of conduct must be of a high standard at all times.

The identification of Board/Department goals and objectives helps to provide the basis for the implementation of the Park Master Plan. Additionally, goals and objectives serve as a framework for formulating Department policies and Board planning decisions. Goals can be defined as broad general statements which describe a desirable accomplishment, and which provide the impetus for more specific and directed actions.

Objectives are defined as more specific actions that are to be accomplished within an identified time frame, which when achieved, help to meet a goal.

The Fort Wayne Parks and Recreation over-arching goals (Identified in the Department's Comprehensive Plan):

1. Celebrate the park system's rich tradition of stewardship
2. Provide an equitable distribution of parks and services
3. Connect the parks through greenways and trails
4. Establish and define the park system's essential services
5. Enhance parks with events and improvements that interconnect citizens and promote community pride
6. Enhance the park system's role in economic development
7. Secure sufficient funding to maintain and enhance the park system

These over-arching goals remain consistent year to year - though they are evaluated every five years to be certain we are responding effectively to the needs of the community.

We have identified more specific objectives that align with the goals above and lay a foundation for all of the department's choices related to capital improvements, programming, and short- and long-term planning.

The Fort Wayne Parks and Recreation Department objectives for the next five years are:

Fort Wayne Parks and Recreation Master Plan Summary

MAINTAIN EXISTING FACILITIES AND MAKE IMPROVEMENTS WITHIN AFFORDABLE SPENDING LEVELS

1. Protect and maintain all aspects of the natural environment.
2. Provide sufficient resources, both financial, material and personnel to properly maintain facilities.
3. Conduct daily inspections of park grounds, pavilions and restrooms for cleanliness and safety, and take necessary corrective measures. Cleaning, repair or removal from public use will occur during one working day.
4. Playgrounds will be constructed and upgraded to Consumer Product Safety Commission standards and the staff will conduct and document monthly safety inspections.
5. Provide barrier-free access to facilities utilizing A.D.A. standards.

PROVIDE WELL-BALANCED RECREATIONAL SERVICES FOR ALL CITIZENS REGARDLESS OF SEX, AGE, RACE OR ABILITY

1. Programs will emphasize wellness, nature appreciation, crafts, the arts, education and special events.
2. Coordinate efforts with other agencies providing recreational services and facilities to minimize duplication and to maximize programming opportunities through cooperative strategies.

PROPERLY MANAGE THE DEPARTMENT'S FINANCES

1. Monitor income and expenses monthly.
2. Review fees at least annually, taking into consideration the Department's need to generate income while providing reasonably priced services.
3. Consider new sources of revenues, which are consistent with other Department goals.
4. Seek state and federal grants; solicit foundations, donations and other funding sources when appropriate.

ANTICIPATE FUTURE NEEDS AND SEEK REASONABLE SOLUTIONS

1. Encourage communication between the Department and the general public, recreation interest groups, students, seniors and others through open meetings, questionnaires, newsletters, brochures, personal contacts and other means.
2. Seek shared commitments from special interest groups to accomplish common goals.

ANTICIPATE GROWTH AND INCREASED DEMANDS ON FACILITIES AND SERVICES

1. Acquire available open space in advance of development to minimize costs and ensure adequate spatial requirements for future development in areas of expected growth.
2. Explore modernization and revision of the existing Open Space provision of the Sub-Division Control Ordinance so that it is responsive to both current and future park needs of the community.
3. Continue the tradition of coordinated plans with the School Corporation for jointly sponsored programs, services and shared facility use. Determine if it is prudent to document the details of relationships to adequately define the role of each agency. As leadership changes in each entity, policy changes may occur without a full comprehension of the history and outcome.

To summarize, the department utilizes the goals and objectives outlined in our 5 year master plan to guide our decisions on capital projects, programming, employees, and interaction with the citizens of Fort Wayne. Each year we evaluate our progress in achieving those goals and objectives as we establish our work plans for the following year.

Fort Wayne Parks and Recreation Master Plan Summary

Major projects listed in the master plan - completed or in progress:

PARK SYSTEM'S ROLE IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: In 2011, the City of Fort Wayne commissioned a master plan for its downtown riverfront. Landscape architecture firm SWA worked in partnership with the City Planning and Parks and Recreation Department on this plan which was completed in 2012. A first phase was identified and the Parks and Recreation department led the design team for that phase. Completion of Riverfront Phase I culminated in the grand opening of Promenade Park August 2019. Months before Promenade Park opened to the public, we began schematic design for Phase 2 and 3 of riverfront with a consultant team led by landscape architecture firm Land Collective. Multiple public input events have taken place and the plan is entering the Design Development phase with expected ground-breaking for Phase 2 in summer of 2021. Interdepartmental collaboration and community participation created a seamless process for emphasizing downtown redevelopment. To date, hundreds of apartments have been added to living opportunities, and numerous private businesses have established their presence in downtown.

RICH TRADITION OF STEWARDSHIP: In 2019, the Fort Wayne Parks and Recreation department prioritized the restoration of outdoor open-air pavilion #3 at Foster Park. To that end, they entered into a partnership with Friends of the Parks of Allen County to fund the restoration. Each entity committed 50% to the anticipated budget of \$400,000. Drawings have been completed for the project with bidding and construction anticipated in late 2020. The Foster Park example follows an established pattern of collaborations with the Department and nonprofit or private groups.

SUFFICIENT FUNDING: Buckner Park's upcoming trail and pavilion is 50% funded by a Land & Water Conservation Fund and the Department is paying for the rest. The Buckner Park Trail Project helps connect residents from nearby and surrounding neighborhoods via the recently completed Bass Road trail. The Buckner Park Trail will create a spur from Bass Road that leads patrons through not only the developed portion of the park (including past the pavilion, playgrounds and splash pad), but into the undeveloped, wooded portion of the park. The new trail will offer the opportunity for patrons to experience landscapes that are otherwise difficult to traverse via a fully accessible paved trail. This phase of development is an important step in helping to realize a portion of the Buckner Park Master Plan.

EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION OF PARKS/SERVICES: As the City of Fort Wayne grows, and demographics slowly change, the department regularly evaluates park resources, amenities, and programs to determine if they are meeting the needs of the community. They prioritize park improvement projects in every quadrant of the City as they prepare the yearly Capital Improvement Budget. The completion of the Franke Park Master Plan in 2019 resulted in a planning document, informed by the public, with recommendations for future growth of this regional park. The Department has also worked to meet the recreation needs for all demographics by creating a Futsal court, Cricket Pitch, and BMX facility improvements. Also, staff is working with neighborhoods to create master plans for area parks.

ENHANCE/INCREASE PARKLAND: Promenade Park required the purchase of private property along St. Marys River downtown – four acres that had been industrial and former brown field is now used for recreation, leisure and education. In addition, 15 acres were purchased in a rapidly-growing suburban area. It is adjacent to 17 acres filled with mature trees already owned by the Department. This new nature preserve will be conserved and cherished by area residents that are rapidly seeing open acreage become developments and shopping centers.