

**CHANNAHON
PARK DISTRICT**

Est. 1971

2020 - 2025

STRATEGIC MASTER PLAN

#PLAYITFORWARDCHANNAHON



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

THANK YOU TO ALL RESIDENTS & STAKEHOLDERS FOR CONTRIBUTING INPUT
THROUGHOUT THE DEVELOPMENT OF THIS STRATEGIC MASTER PLAN

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CHAPTER ONE – EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The Channahon Park District (“District”) is a National Gold Medal winning agency and an Illinois Distinguished Accredited Agency that covers almost 38 square miles and serves over 16,000 people in and around the Village of Channahon, Illinois.

The District was formed in 1971 and over the last fifty years has developed an enviable variety of park and facility resources, including a 44-acre Central Park, Skateland Recreation Center, Tomahawk Aquatic Center and Heritage Bluffs Public Golf Club among others.

The District desired to update its 2009 Districtwide Comprehensive Master Plan with the creation of a Strategic Master Plan (“Plan”) that sought to combine physical elements of a Master Plan with the Strategic Vision to ensure its next half century sustains the path of excellence it has been on.

To achieve that goal, the District leadership and staff selected PROS Consulting, INC., a national management consulting firm to assist in completing its 2020-2025 Strategic Master Plan.



1.2 HISTORY

The District is located 50 miles southwest of Chicago in Will and Grundy Counties, Illinois. The boundaries include all of the Village of Channahon, unincorporated areas within Channahon Township and the Will County portion of the Village of Minooka.

As the Village of Channahon’s boundaries extend westward into Aux Sable Township, the Park District will grow with the Village. Joliet, Minooka, Shorewood, Morris, Elwood and Wilmington are all neighboring communities.

Channahon may be among the oldest venues for recreation in Illinois. Native Americans called the area ‘The Meeting of the Waters’ for the convergence of the DuPage, Des Plaines, and Kankakee Rivers that meet and form the Illinois River. Many traveled to the area for relaxing, fishing, and horse racing.

Community support for the referendum to form the District was strengthened by the planned closing of the Channahon Access to the I&M Canal, now known as Channahon State Park, by the Illinois Department of Conservation (DOC). The new District was a method to maintain the State Park for community use under a lease with the Illinois DOC.

Before obtaining its own program facilities, the Park District utilized many local partnerships, most significantly the Manor Motel pool for summer swim lessons and Channahon School District 17 gymnasiums for indoor activities.

During the 1980s and 1990s, the District continued to grow with acquisition for property now known as Central Park, Skateland Recreation Center and the development of Arrowhead Community Center on the Central Park property.

In addition, the opening of signature facilities Tomahawk Aquatic Center and Heritage Bluffs Public Golf Club, one of the finest public golf facilities in the nation highlighted the District's continued growth and resulted in accolades from the National Park and Recreation Association (National Gold Medal Finalist in 1996 and 1997). The District was also, deservedly, named the Grand Award Winner in 1997 as the top public park agency in the country with a population under 25,000.

The District's spirit of partnership has fostered ongoing growth including the development of Heritage Crossing Field House with Channahon School District 17 in 2003.

The Park District was recognized in 2014 as an Illinois Distinguished Accredited Agency by the Illinois Association of Park Districts (IAPD) and the Illinois Park and Recreation Association (IPRA).



1.3 GOALS

The following goals were established for the Plan:

- Engage the staff, leadership and stakeholders through innovative public input means to build a shared vision for the District to ensure there are appropriate balance of programs, facilities, and services.
- Utilize a wide variety of data sources and best practices, including a statistically-valid survey to predict trends and patterns of use and how to address current and potential unmet needs.
- Shape financial and operational preparedness through innovative and “next” practices to achieve the strategic objectives and recommended actions and create “living” document which reflects the outcomes of the strategic planning process.
- Develop a dynamic and realistic action plan with measurable strategies that creates a concise and useful plan to ensure long-term success of the District, as well as action steps to support the family-oriented community and businesses that call Channahon home.

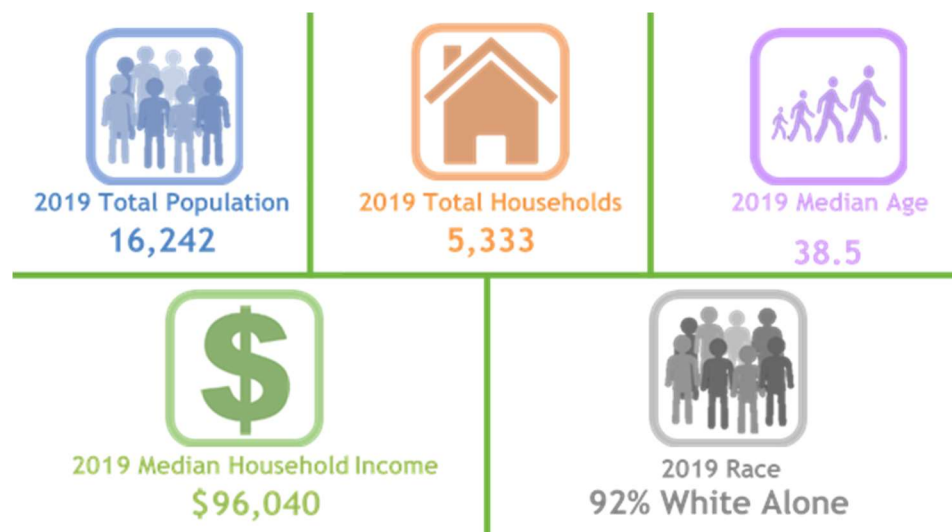
1.4 KEY FINDINGS

The following sections highlight the major elements of the Plan and outlines the key findings from the report.

1.4.1 DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

The following are the key takeaways from the Demographic Analysis found in section 2.2.

- The **annual growth rate** for both the District's **population** and **households** is slightly under the national rate; however, significantly higher than the state's annual rate.
 - The average size of the household in the District is greater than the state and national averages. Larger households may indicate the District should be considering more family focused facilities and programs.
- Assessing **age segments**, the District has a higher percentage of 0-17 and 35-54 age distributions in comparison to the state of Illinois. There is also a lower representation of ages 75+ and ages 18-34. However, the population is expected to follow the national aging trend with an increase in population of the 55+ age segment over the next 15 years.
 - The age distribution of the District, along with anticipated age demographic shifts, should be an important consideration when developing space allocation, program development plans and capital improvement plans.
 - Planning for the future, the District should support the growth of the 55+ population interest for both active seniors and inactive seniors. For active seniors, the District may consider dedicated indoor or outdoor pickleball courts, additional golf programs, low-impact fitness, and physical therapy. While considering the inactive seniors, the District may want to increase programs related to socialized enrichment classes and/or continual education opportunities.
- The District's **racial distribution** is very limited in diversity and has a significantly large White Alone population. The District's percentage of **Hispanic/Latino population** is well below the national level.
- The District's **per capita income** is slightly above average while the **median household income** (\$96,040) is well above average compared to the U.S. income characteristics. These numbers may reflect a higher level of disposable income which should be considered when designing facilities and programs which could support high cost recovery goals.

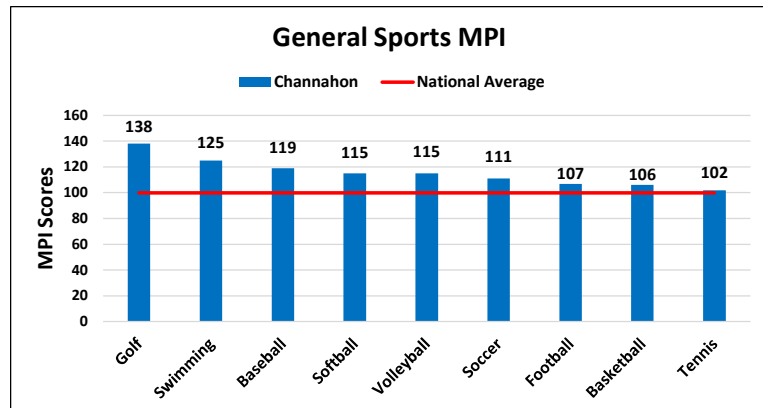


1.4.2 RECREATION TRENDS

The Plan also explored recreational trends on a national, regional, and local level to better understand the types of activities District residents are likely to participate in. The full Recreational Trends Analysis can be found in **Section 2.3**.

In order to assess local participation in recreational activities, the Plan utilized a Market Potential Index (MPI) that measures the probable demand for a product or service within the District. The MPI shows the likelihood that an adult resident of the target area will participate in certain activities when compared to the U.S. national average (i.e. MPI score of 100).

Overall, the District demonstrates strong market potential based on MPI scores. This is particularly noticeable when analyzing golf, swimming and boating. General sports, fitness activities, and outdoor activities reflect strong market potential, in that every activity within this category has an MPI score greater than 100. Analyzing MPI for commercial recreation, all but one activity scored above the national average. These



above average MPI scores show that District residents have a rather strong participation presence when it comes to recreational activities. This is important as the District considers starting new programs or improving facilities / amenities, as the MPI scores provide a tool to estimate resident attendance and participation.

1.4.3 PUBLIC INPUT

As a fundamental component of the planning process, the project team conducted a series of focus group interviews and one public forum over a two-day period in August 2019. The feedback received from community stakeholders is critical to the discovery phase of the planning process. Participants in the community input phase of the planning process included:

- Board of Commissioners
- Business Community
- Channahon School District
- Elected Officials
- Park District Staff
- Residents and user groups
- Rotary Club
- Students
- Village Departments

Although the Stakeholders have a variety of priorities for the District, some common themes were identified through interviews. First and foremost, the District must find the best path to fiscal sustainability, while addressing shortcomings related to aging infrastructure, future needs, and golf course operations. Many are hopeful this planning process clearly identifies the recreational needs of the

community, provides a vision for the District, and gauges the support for additional taxes that could solidify the operational and/or capital needs of the community.

The top priorities for the District that were most frequently mentioned during the community input process include:

- Fiscal Sustainability across all areas of the Park District
- Understand community wants and needs for facilities and programs
- Improve existing facilities, infrastructure and equipment
- Increase facility space
- Improve communication between the District and residents
- Specific priorities related to parks and programs that were suggested during the public forum included:
 - Update Skateland Community Center
 - Develop before school program to complement After the Bell
 - Multigenerational recreation center
 - Program opportunities related to Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM)
 - Biking and walking trail access across the river

Additional details about the subjective public input in included in **Chapter 3 Section 3.1**.

1.4.4 STATISTICALLY VALID SURVEY

ETC Institute administered a community needs assessment for the District in Fall of 2019 by mailing a survey packet to randomly selected households in the District. Residents were given the option of returning the survey by mail or completing it on-line at channahonsurvey.org.

To prevent people who were not residents in the District from participating, everyone who completed the survey on-line was required to enter their home address prior to submitting the survey.

The goal was to obtain completed surveys from at least 400 residents and it was met with the overall results for the sample of 400 households with a precision of at least +/- 4.9 at the 95% level of confidence.

The detailed results are presented in **Chapter 3 Section 3.3**.

Priorities for Facility Investments: The Priority Investment Rating (PIR) was developed to provide organizations with an objective tool for evaluating the priority that should be placed on Parks and Recreation investments. The PIR equally weights (1) the importance that residents place on facilities / programs and (2) how many residents have unmet needs for the facility / program.

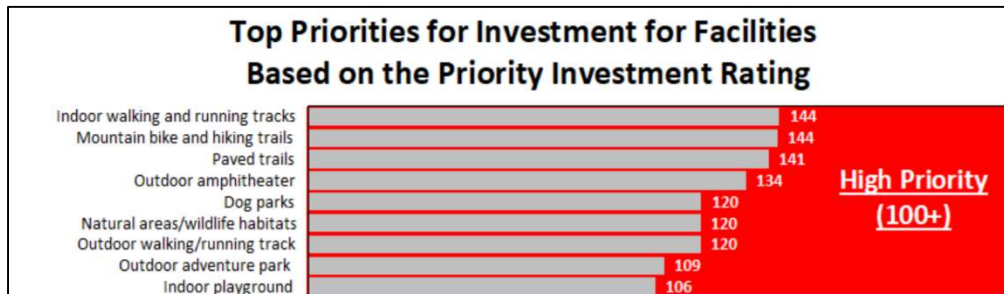
In order to ensure that the District continues to meet the needs and expectations of the community, this Plan recommends that the District sustain and/or improve the performance in the following areas that were identified as “high priorities” by the Priority Investment Rating (PIR).

FACILITY PRIORITIES

The following are the high priority investments for Facilities based on the results of the statistically-valid survey.

- Indoor walking and running tracks (PIR=144)
- Mountain bike and hiking trails (PIR=144)
- Paved trails (PIR=141)
- Outdoor amphitheater (PIR=134)
- Dog parks (PIR=120)

- Natural areas/wildlife habitats (PIR=120)
- Outdoor walking/running track (PIR=120)
- Outdoor adventure park (PIR=109)
- Indoor playground (PIR=106)

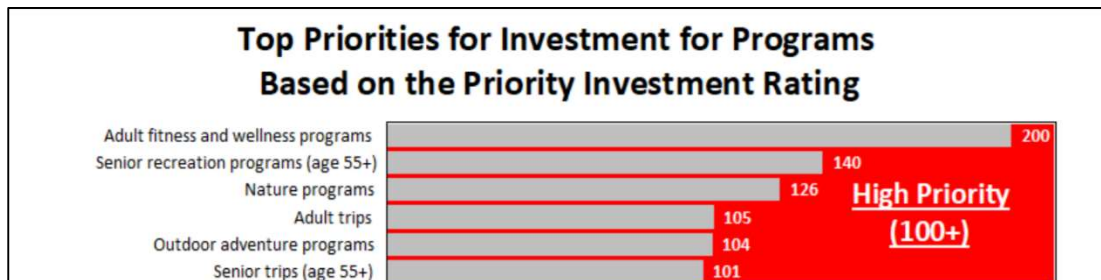


Source: ETC Institute 2019

PROGRAM PRIORITIES

The following are the high priority investments for Programs based on the results of the statistically-valid survey.

- Adult fitness and wellness programs (PIR=200)
- Senior programs (age 55+) (PIR=140)
- Nature programs (PIR=126)
- Adult trips (PIR=105)
- Outdoor adventure programs (PIR=104)
- Senior trips (age 55+) (PIR=101)



Source: ETC Institute 2019

1.4.5 BENCHMARK (HIGHLIGHTS)

This included top performing agencies from the Chicagoland area and the greater Midwest. The peer agencies in the study are great examples for the District to compare against for a better understanding of how its performance stacks up to industry best practices.

The following is a summary of the key findings from the benchmark comparison. See **Section 4.3** for detailed benchmark analysis and reports.

Key Metric	Channahon Park District	Benchmark Summary
Parkland: Acres per 1,000 Residents	33.99	Ranked 1st out of 7 benchmark peers 3 times larger than the national median (11.8)
Trails: Miles per 1,000 Residents	0.51	Ranked 3rd out of 7 benchmark peers Meets industry best practice level (0.5-1.0)
Staffing: FTEs per 10,000 Residents	53.56	Ranked 1st out of 6 benchmark peers 5 times larger than the national median (9.6)
Expenditures: Operating Expense per Resident	\$578.66	Ranked 1st out of 7 benchmark peers 6 times larger than the national median (\$95.76)
Revenues: Non-Tax Revenue per Resident	\$176.71	Ranked 1st out of 7 benchmark peers 7 times larger than the national median (\$24.92)
Cost Recovery: Operational Cost Recovery	31%	Ranked 7th out of 7 benchmark peers Consistent with the national median (30%)
Marketing: Dollars Spent per Resident	\$8.79	Ranked 1st out of 7 benchmark peers No national median or best practice figure to compare
Programs: Participations per Resident	0.73	Ranked 6th out of 7 benchmark peers No national median or best practice figure to compare
Programs: Program Cost Recovery	94%	Ranked 5th out of 7 benchmark peers No national median or best practice figure to compare
Golf: Rounds Played per Resident	1.61	Ranked 1st out of 4 benchmark peers No national median or best practice figure to compare
Facilities: Indoor Recreation Sq. Ft. per Resident	4.49	Ranked 2nd out of 7 benchmark peers More than double the national best practice (1.5-2.0)

1.4.6 SWOT ANALYSIS

The following table describes the strength, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) of the District that were identified during the planning process.

Strengths (Internal - You can control)	Weaknesses (Internal - You can control)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tenure / experience of staff • Variety of opportunities / experiences (e.g. Central Park) • Ample open space with room to grow; not landlocked • Well-trained staff • Strong brand with good community support • Foundation support • Positive community image • Fiscal responsibility / awareness • Local staff, especially among part-timers • Festival attendance and longevity • Strong traditions and community events • Well-maintained parks and facilities • Supportive Board and leadership • Biggest bang for the tax payer buck among Government departments (i.e. 4 cents of every dollar goes to parks) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial stability - reliance on tax anticipation warrant • Aging facilities / infrastructure (i.e. Skateland, golf course, pool, many buildings approaching end of lifecycle) • Doing things "the way it's always been done" • Giving up on an idea because it didn't work before • District expectation of giving away services / inequitable partnerships • Mowing of many properties outside of the District's assets • District growth versus responsibilities (i.e. mowing) • Acquiring undesirable land • Lack of staff hours / human resources in specific areas (e.g. marketing) • Revenue generation in some areas (e.g. golf) • Limited office space and lack of storage space
Opportunity (External-May not be able to control)	Threats (External - May not be able to control)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large industry presence • Young families moving back to town / young population • Industry shift moving from social services to a business mindset • Not landlocked • Located near major thoroughfares • Splash Station (neighboring competitor) closed • Need of neighboring municipalities without a Parks and Recreation department / District • Potential closures of nearby golf courses • Technology • Alternative funding (i.e. sponsorships, partnerships) • New businesses coming into town / growing tax base • Village leadership support for recreation • Role of parks and rec in improving quality of life / health impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community expectation of low-cost / free offerings • Location (e.g. golf course not getting a lot of drive through traffic) • Industry shift moving from social services to a business mindset • Philosophy that services should be free because of tax support • Reducing participation in golf on national scale • Increased competition for sponsorship dollars • Increased competition for program revenue • Unfunded liabilities • Minimum wage increases • State pension reform • State committee on property tax relief (recent bill passed) • Healthcare costs • Competition from within (i.e. libraries, school district) • State tax increases limiting disposable income • Dwindling population statewide

1.4.7 PROGRAM ASSESSMENT

As part of the Plan, the Consulting Team performed a Recreation Program Assessment of the services offered by the District. The assessment offers an in-depth perspective of program and service offerings and helps identify strengths, challenges, and opportunities regarding programming. The assessment also assists in identifying core programs, program gaps within the community, key system-wide issues, areas of improvement, and future programs and services for residents and visitors.

The following points highlight the key findings from the program assessment:

- Overall, the **program descriptions** effectively communicate the key benefits and goals of each Core Program Area.
- **Age segment distribution** is good, but needs to be annually monitored to ensure program distribution aligns with community demographics.
- **Program lifecycles:** Approximately 8% of the system's current programs are categorized in the Introduction Stage; while 1% of programs fall into the Decline Stage. A complete description of Lifecycle Stages can be found in **Section 1.3.2**.
- The District's **volunteer program** allows residents and organizations to easily get involved and give back to the community through various volunteer opportunities, special events, programs, etc. However, better promotion of volunteer opportunities is recommended moving forward (E.g. Via District's Website).
- From a **marketing and promotions** standpoint, the staff utilizes a variety of marketing methods when promoting their programs including: printed and online program guides, the District's website, flyers/brochures, direct mail, email blast, road sign marquees, road advertisements, in-facility signage, webinars, and various social media channels as a part of the marketing mix.
 - The District would benefit from identifying marketing Return on Investment (ROI) for all marketing initiatives
 - Opportunity to increase the number of cross-promotions
- Currently, **customer feedback methods** are heavily utilized. Moving forward, it is strongly recommended that the District continues incorporating user feedback, on a more consistent basis, as a key performance measure that can be tracked over time. Additionally, lost customer surveys and crowdsourcing tools are highly recommended feedback methods that should be considered moving forward.
- **Pricing strategies** are varied across the board. Currently, the most frequently used approaches include: residency rates, cost recovery goals, and customer's ability to pay. These are good practices and must be continued. In addition, it is essential to understand current cost of service in order to determine ideal cost recovery goals.
- **Financial performance measures** such as cost recovery goals are currently being utilized for a majority of programs. Moving forward, it is recommended for staff to continue tracking cost recovery for all program areas. When doing so, the staff should factor in all direct and indirect costs pertaining to programming. A focus on developing consistent earned income opportunities would be beneficial to the District's overall quest for greater fiscal sustainability.

1.4.8 LEVEL OF SERVICE (LOS) ANALYSIS

Level of Service (“LOS”) standards matrix was developed during the planning process, which describes the inventory for the District and other similar providers (e.g. Forest Preserve and Canal Trail) in relation to the population served. The LOS is an effective measure that can be used to support capital investment decisions related to parks, facilities, and amenities.

In collaboration with the District, the planning team developed the appropriate standard service level for a variety of parks, facilities, and amenities. The level of service standards were applied to the current population, as well as projections over the next five years to anticipate additional inventory that will be necessary to meet the population growth over the next five years. In addition, planned capital improvements related to the new development of Whispering Oaks Subdivision Park, Woods of Aux Sable Subdivision Park, McGowan Woods Park, and Greenwald Bluffs Park were incorporated into the projected needs.

Applying the facility standards to the service area, gaps and surpluses in park and facility/amenity types are identified. Based on this methodology, it is recommended that the District will need to add the following park acres, trail miles, and amenities by 2024:

- 3 Acres of Pocket Parks
- 8 Acres of Neighborhood Parks
- 3 Miles of Paved Trail
- 3 Miles of Unpaved Trail
- 1 Outdoor Basketball Court
- 1 Dog Park
- 16,374 SF of Indoor Community Recreation Space

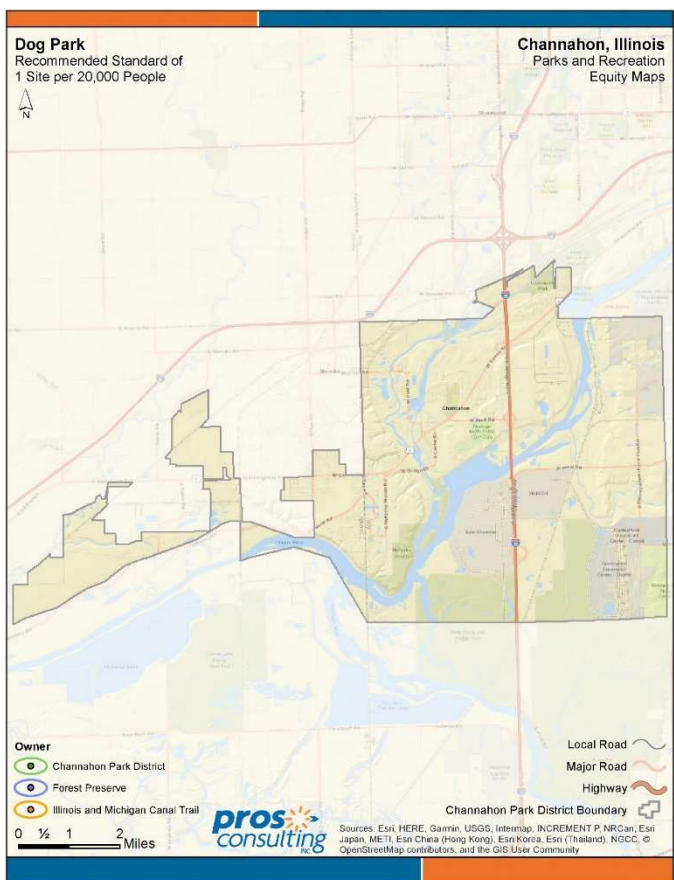
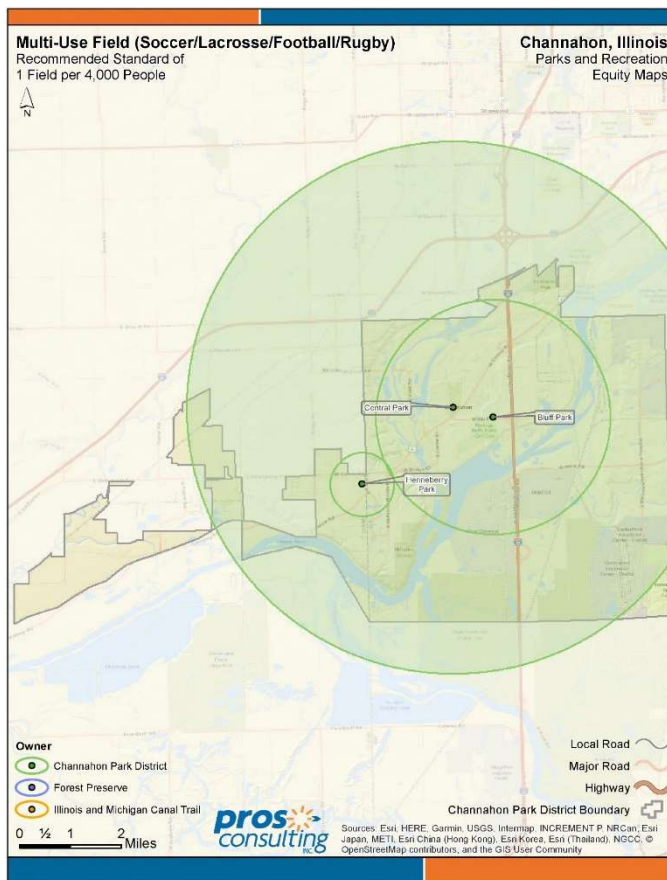


1.4.9 EQUITY MAPS

Equity Maps utilize level of service standards to assist the District leadership and staff in assessing where services are offered and determining equitable service distribution and delivery across the District. These maps provide a visual depiction of the effectiveness of the service as it pertains to the demographic density. In addition, Equity Maps allow the District to identify gaps and overlap in services with respect to a specific park, trail, facility, or amenity. This assessment allows the District to make appropriate capital improvement and development decisions based on the population needs and areas that may be under/overserved.

As seen in the maps below, shaded rings in the Equity Maps indicate the service level (i.e. the population being served by a specific park type/facility/amenity) as outlined in the level of service matrix. Thus, the central point inside the ring indicates the location of the facility or amenity. The ring extends out from the central point based on the service reach of a particular park, facility, or amenity when compared to the population nearby. Equity Maps are based on the size of a park / facility or the number of amenities at a location, the established level of service standards, and the density of the surrounding population.

As can be seen, the District is adequately served for its Multi-Use Fields but is lacking in a Dog Park for the community. The Equity Maps for various park and amenity types are in **Chapter 5 Section 5.3**.



1.4.10 CIP

The District develops its Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) over a ten-year period with appropriations occurring on an annual basis. This approach maintains flexibility in order to maximize efficiencies as the overall needs of the District change from year to year.

Over the next ten years, this Plan recommends a combination of modernizing existing parks, facilities, and amenities and building new ones. The recommendation is based on a three-tiered approach to address CIP priorities, which includes Short-Term Priorities, Upcoming Lifecycle Replacement, and Visionary Projects for the District.

The **Short-Term Priorities** category represents the most immediate improvement needs and enhancements to infrastructure that are estimated at \$4.7 million over the next 2-3 years.

Upcoming Lifecycle Replacement includes mid-range priorities for updates to parks that will have exceeded their useful life, which are estimated at \$1.9 million and an expected timeline between 2023-2028.

Visionary Projects are major improvements that would add significant value to the existing system and address community needs, but don't necessarily have expected timelines and/or budget estimates; these are estimated to cost more than \$12.1 million over a broad (10+ years) time horizon. Based on all three tiers of recommended improvements, the District's total CIP is expected to total \$18.7 million over the next ten, or more, years.

The table below summarizes the CIP plan by tier.

Note: It should be noted there are a total of three Visionary Projects that have not been assigned a capital budget amount; therefore, the overall CIP amount would increase if these projects are eventually pursued by the District.

Timeline	CIP Tier	Total Budget
2020-2022	Short Term Priorities	\$ 4,735,000
2023-2028	Upcoming Lifecycle Replacement	\$ 1,850,000
2020-2030+	Visionary Projects*	\$ 12,125,000
Total CIP Investment*		\$ 18,710,000

*Visionary Projects include improvements with no current budget estimates that will increase the total investment amount if the District decides to proceed.

1.5 VISIONING AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In February 2020, the Consulting Team conducted a visioning workshop with the District Board and staff leadership. Using this iterative process along with the community input, demographics and trends and an analysis of the Department's offerings and levels of service, the following Core Values, Vision and Mission Statement and Big Moves were identified.

MISSION

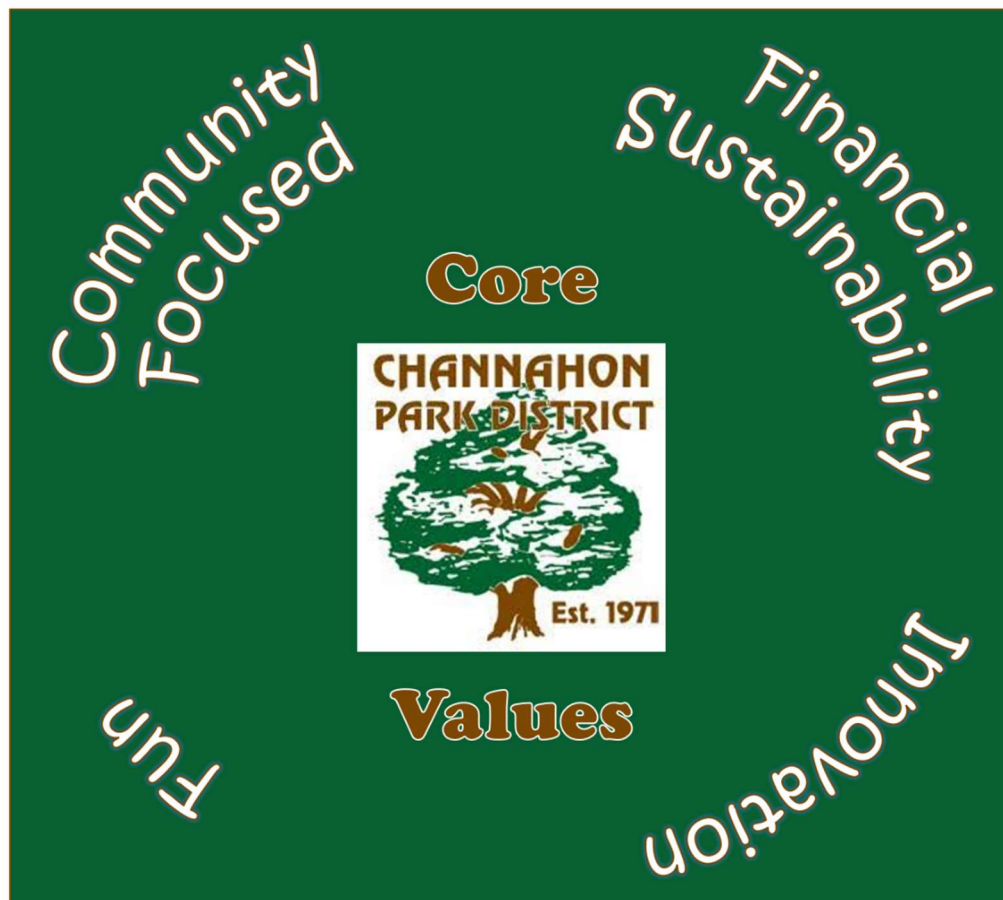
To bring people together.

VISION

To be the best provider of fun experiences that impact lives. In communicating this vision, the District can utilize the tagline, #WeImpactLives.

CORE VALUES

These represent the organization's personality and establishes the virtues that staff strive to uphold:
Community Focused, Financial Sustainability, Innovation, and Fun



BIG MOVES

The following were the major recommendations that were developed through the Visioning Process.

INCREASE FOCUS ON FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

The District is currently at a crossroads with its financial situation. It has been blessed with a supportive community and dedicated property tax funding over the years. However, with decreased (and uncertain) revenues due to the Covid-19 Pandemic and impending staffing cost increases based on increases in minimum wage, it will be increasingly harder to sustain the existing level of quality and service for the Channahon community.

The District leadership has taken a critical step in the right direction with embracing Financial Sustainability as a core value. The following are some key action items that the District needs to be implement to make that a reality.

- **Create a Reserve Fund** - This will ensure the District is positioned to weather unforeseen circumstances or economic shocks in the future. It is recommended that the Reserve Fund have a minimum of 4 months and ideally 6 months of operating dollars in it.
- **Focus on Cost Recovery** - Chapter 5, Section 5.3.3. and Section 5.3.4. outline the various Program Classifications and their proposed cost recovery goals. The cost recovery needs to factor in the true cost (direct, indirect and overhead, if possible) of providing the services and the pricing strategies must be developed to help the District meet or exceed the cost recovery goals.
- **Maximize Earned Income Generation** - Park and recreation agencies will continue to become more creative and collaborative in their revenue and earned income generation. This entails exploring partnerships, sponsorships, advertising etc. that can help complement the revenue generated from tax support and user fees. Chapter 6 Section 6.2 provides funding and revenue strategies that have been developed in collaboration with District staff.

BUILD A CULTURE OF CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE

Now more than ever, the District faces increased competition and its customers have more choices for offerings. The one sustainable advantage is a superior customer service experience that consistently goes above and beyond. The District must embark upon a multi-year Customer Service / Organizational Culture Training process that emphasizes superior customer experiences (for internal and external customers), diversity, equity and inclusion, consistent onboarding and ongoing staff training to help create the “Channahon Park District Way”

FIX / IMPROVE EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURE

Based on the statistically-valid survey, Sixty-one percent (61%) respondents indicated they would be “very supportive” or “somewhat supportive” of repairing and improving infrastructure and security and 28% cited “repair and improve infrastructure and security facilities” as the project they would most support funding with your tax dollars.

The District has a wide variety of facilities and amenities at a high level of service in comparison to other agencies, as seen in the Benchmark (**Section 4.3**). However, many facilities are aging past their lifecycles and upgrading them would significantly elevate the quality and safety of the user experience, and maximize revenue generation potential for each of them.

UPGRADE HERITAGE BLUFFS GOLF CLUB AND CLUBHOUSE

Golf is the top sport based on local participation trends for General Sports (Section 2.3.5) in Channahon (138 compared to a national average of 100). While Heritage Bluffs has been an award-winning golf course in the 1990s, it is due for an upgrade.

Community input from stakeholders also indicated a need to renovate the Clubhouse to help make it more viable for group rentals, small events etc. as well.

RENOVATE TOMAHAWK AQUATIC CENTER

Despite the cancellation of the summer season due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, aquatics continues to be a very popular, and much needed, activity in Channahon and nationwide. Local participation trends in Channahon also demonstrate the popularity of Swimming (125 compared to a national average of 100) as a Fitness activity (Section 2.3.5). The current facility is aging and with outdated features that need to be reinvigorated to generate excitement and additional revenue for the facility.

EXPAND FIELDHOUSE & FITNESS CENTER

Based on the Level of Service Analysis (Section 5.2), the District is currently facing a shortfall of over 16,000sf of indoor recreation space. As we have seen, one of the core values embraced by the District is Financial Sustainability and nationwide trends indicate that Indoor Fitness and Classes are among the most heavily participated and highest revenue generators in parks and recreation agencies.

REPURPOSE OR BETTER UTILIZE SKATELAND RECREATION CENTER

Skateland Recreation Center served as is the place for community memories over the years. The original design and current condition of this 12,000-sf facility is not suitable for future trends, optimal revenue generation or a quality experience befitting a National Gold Medal Agency like the District.

Nationwide, there has been rapid growth in Virtual Offerings, driven by the Covid-19 Pandemic, (the District recently started Virtual Programs) and eSports both of which must be explored, along with Fitness Programs and Classes, as potential additions as the District evaluates future offerings at Skateland Recreation Center.

EXPAND TRAIL NETWORK AND COMPLETE ARROYO TRAILS (NATURE PARK) MASTER PLAN

Trails and connectivity rank among the top priority needs in virtually every community nationwide. The Arroyo Trails Master Plan (see Appendix) addresses multiple top priority investment needs according to the Statistically-Valid Survey (#2 - *Mountain Bike and Hiking Trails*; #4 - *Outdoor Amphitheater*; #6 - *Natural Areas / Wildlife Habitats*; #8 - *Outdoor Adventure Park*).

In addition to that, several other planned innovative, interpretive and educational offerings will make this “A Discovery Woodlands” a true destination for the Channahon community and beyond.

CONTINUE TO BUILD THE DISTRICT’S NATIONAL PROFILE

The District has been a former Gold Medal winning agency and it has all the right elements in place to recreate past successes. To set upon that path again, it must embrace a data-driven and performance standards-based culture, continue to benchmark against the best of the best agencies and aim for two key national recognitions in the next 5 years:

- CAPRA Accreditation (Commission for the Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies)
- National Gold Medal (American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration)

BE A LEADER IN ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

The National Recreation & Parks Association (NRPA) identifies *Conservation* as one of its three pillars, which calls for protection of open space, connecting people to nature, and engaging the community in conservation efforts. The District is undoubtedly the most important entity related to conservation efforts for the residents it serves due to its significant inventory of developed greenspace and undeveloped / natural areas.

It is important that the District positions itself as an environmental steward as the system continues to develop and ensure that the community has adequate opportunities for environmental education and create experiences that connect people with nature. The District should also dig into its core value of *innovation* to better the environment by exploring alternative energy sources and sustainability measures, such as electric charging stations in parking lots and solar panels for facilities.

BUILD A NEW DOG PARK (POSSIBLY ON THE WEST SIDE)

As the Level of Service Analysis (Section 5.2) and Equity Maps (Section 5.3) indicate, the District does not currently have a Dog Park and based on current population numbers is in need of one. In addition, a Dog Park is one of the highest priorities for investment based on the results of the Statistically-Valid Survey (Section 3.3).

Nationwide, pet ownership and the need for dog parks continues to grow and the Covid-19 pandemic has only resulted in accelerating that trend. The west side of the District has a greater population concentration and projected future population growth which would be well served by the addition of a Dog Park. In addition, the Will County Forest Preserve District does currently operate a dog park on the eastside of the District.

CONTINUE TO STRENGTHEN MARKETING EFFORTS

As identified in the Benchmark Analysis, the District is spending much more on marketing per capita than its peers. In addition, based on the results of the Statistically-Valid Survey, only 6% of the respondents rated “Lack of Awareness” as a barrier to participation. All of this speaks well to the District’s understanding of the importance of marketing and investing in it. At the same time, there continues to be increasing competition and more “noise” that consumers are exposed to and the District must ensure that its efforts are effective in delivering a return on investment (ROI) and that performance metrics are established to gauge success.

This includes understanding the value of the product the District delivers to its residents, effectively communicating that value and telling “our story”, and pricing programs and services to reflect the value received by the user. Although essential services are expected to be widely accessible to the public and supported by the tax base, value added services must be priced competitively to reflect the benefit to the individual user, especially for enterprise facilities like Heritage Bluffs Public Golf Club.

1.6 CONCLUSION

The District has had a track record of excellence in offerings and operations over the years. It's Board and staff are dedicated to serving the community's needs and played an admirable role over the years in doing so over the past 50 years. Looking at the next half century, the District is facing a number of significant challenges that are further compounded by the Covid-19 pandemic situation. With aging infrastructure, a minimally growing population and rising costs, the District will have to emphasize revenue generation and financial sustainability in order to continue its growth story. In addition, the upcoming minimum wage increases and the uncertainty around the revenue situation due to the pandemic will certainly impact operational cost recovery in the future.

This Plan aims to provide a roadmap for the short and the long term. In the short term, it is key to commence the implementation of the Big Moves identified in this plan while in the mid to long term setting the District up to continue its National Accreditation and Gold Medal ways.

One of the rare silver linings in this pandemic has been the eye-opening realization of the value of parks, recreation, trails and open spaces and the positive impact they have on the physical, mental and emotional wellbeing of every individual. The District and its staff continue to play an essential role in connecting the Channahon community and we are confident that with this plan the District will leave no stone unturned to PLAYITFORWARD for Channahon.

