# Centerville-Washington PARK DISTRICT









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## MISSION, VISION, VALUES



#### MISSION STATEMENT

Deliver fun, healthy, and outstanding park experiences that connect the community with the outdoors.

#### **VISION STATEMENT**

To become the outdoor recreation destination of choice for the community we serve.

#### **ORGANIZATIONAL VALUES**

Creating positive memories
Integrity
Public service
Fiscal responsibility
Environmental responsibility

## **FOREWORD**

Founded in 1959 as the Washington Township Park District, the Centerville-Washington Park District now operates eight community parks, nine nature parks and 34 neighborhood parks encompassing 1,063 acres in Centerville and Washington Township. Each of the 51 parks has varying amenities. You'll find a sprayground, a dog park, a skatepark and an archery range; top-notch sports fields; hiking trails and nature preserves; and more, all within the boundaries of one suburban Ohio community of 61,000 people. Thanks to the foresight of the Park District's founders, there is a park to explore within walking distance of every home in the community.

In addition to maintaining the parks, the Centerville-Washington Park District also offers <u>outdoor</u> recreational programming throughout the year for the community to enjoy. Several large special events are planned each season — from Movie Parties in the Park to the Luminary Walk! <u>Popular day camps</u> are held each summer, encouraging children to learn about nature and enjoy the outdoors. We are passionate about creating positive memories for the families of Centerville and Washington Township!



### **APPLICATION QUESTIONS**

Recognizing each public park and recreation agency is unique in its purpose, mission, culture, financing, governance, enabling legislation, etc., what does your agency do well in managing its resources to meet its stated goals?



The Centerville-Washington Park District (CWPD) is primarily outdoor focused. Our overriding purpose is to connect residents with the outdoors and the natural environment.

At CWPD, we never stop asking for community feedback! CWPD perpetually seeks resident and stakeholder input to build strategic plans, master plans, programming plans, capital improvements plans, and budgets. This allows us to align resource management with community priorities. Staff gauges community needs via surveys, focus groups, quarterly program evaluations, and creative public engagement experiences, including design-thinking techniques. Additionally, our six youth athletic leagues pitch in with our Athletic Field Use Survey by sending it to parents of league participants. We communicate the data back to each league and utilize it to make resource allocation decisions to maintain safe, top-notch, environmentally kind athletic fields.



In 2020, CWPD embarked on a <u>master plan</u> for our largest, 220-acre nature park. The public engagement piece was extremely important to the direction of the final plan. More than 450 people took the survey, providing over 800 comments, and 45 people actively participated in the public engagement workshop—all managed during the COVID-19 shutdown!

In mid-2022, CWPD completed another statistically valid <u>Community Needs Assessment</u>. Staff are already tackling the low hanging fruit discovered from the data! There is repeating data from our 2016 Needs Assessment reaffirming support to continue projects, such as adding and improving multi-use paths and hiking trails, preserving habitats and ecosystems, holding large community events and increasing health and wellness programming.

All input, and especially community survey data, is paramount to charting our strategic path. From survey data comes strategic plan priorities, which lead to action-oriented task teams, who create policies, procedures, and other plans for both facilities and programs. Community feedback and prioritizing management of agency resources go hand in hand.

# Based upon your response to Question 1, what are your agency's measurements and how are you measuring what you say you are doing well? Cite 3 examples of assessments or measurements and provide data.

CWPD utilizes both agency-wide and departmental measurements. There are four to six measurements per department. Departmental metrics tell the story of success and highlight opportunities for improvement, as well as allowing multi-year trend evaluation.

One significant, agency-wide measurement is total non-tax revenue generated through grants, donations, fees and other sources as a percentage of total agency expenses. This revenue allows us to meet resident needs without increasing taxpayer burden. Since 2020, we have obtained \$2,388,355 in non-tax revenue. Leveraging local money with 60-100% matching grants makes park improvements possible, and sooner.

Program staff measure customer satisfaction quarterly. The goal is a minimum of 4.5/5 stars. The current average is an incredible 4.8/5 stars! Staff also measures the percentage of the program portfolio that consists of new programs. In 2022, CWPD is averaging 10% new, additional programs annually in the past few years. New offerings for the community are all based on resident feedback.

CWPD's strategic plan was driven by input and community survey data. Quarterly, staff report progress on goals related to the six priorities within the plan. Each goal is graphed to show priority progress along the way, and currently shows the 2020-2023 strategic actions are 80% complete. Within the priority to provide experiences to meet diverse community needs, we track program participation, which is up 10% from 2022. Under the priority to effectively engage stakeholders, volunteer hours are up 50% from 2021.

Successful and/or well-managed agencies consistently communicate internally to ensure their team members are informed and engaged; they are included in the decision-making processes; and they are motivated to succeed. Describe 3 examples undertaken in the last 3 years of agency initiatives or actions that demonstrate how it communicates, engages, and connects with its team members. Explain the intended outcomes and how they are being measured.

It is important to CWPD leadership to have staff involved at every level, bringing to life our mission, values, and brand promise.

**Task Teams** are an important component of CWPD's strategic plan. The multi-department and multi-level teams focus on specific strategic plan goals. Examples include the Land Management Team, Sustainability Team, Measurements Team and more. Task team work is tied to the strategic plan, and results and accomplishments are communicated quarterly. Task Teams have been a fun and effective way to include, involve and engage staff.

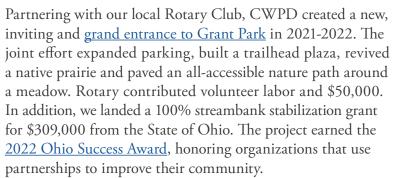
**Needs Assessment:** After completing the 2022 needs assessment, we held an all-staff workshop to communicate the results. After going through the data, we formed six groups to create action plans tied to highest priorities. Each team listed a priority, corresponding response, timeline, and how success will be measured. From this teamwork activity, we have implemented four of the six action plans created that day, all rising from resident feedback.

**Key Contributor Awards:** The Park District has a set of internal and external goals for staff. As a motivator, we launched the Key Contributor Awards (KCA) to staff exceeding these goals. Unlike most awards, KCAs

are given peer-to-peer. Staff choose the recipients and reason, tying it back to agency goals. We're measuring the impact of the awards by noting which staff receive them, and why. The awards have informed leadership about contributions they may not have heard about otherwise.

Enlisting and engaging with external entities, i.e., community members, customers, businesses, partners, or coalitions, can expand an agency's resources and influence. Describe 3 examples undertaken in the last 3 years that demonstrate the agency's efforts to increase its resources or influence by involving community members, customers, businesses, coalitions, or partners. Explain the intended outcomes and how they are being measured.







Since 2021, CWPD has started and hosted 3 "after the holidays" Styrofoam recycling events assisted and jointly promoted by community partners—the city, county, Boy Scouts and a Styrofoam recycling company, Eco Development. Our partnership initiative recycled 15,700 pounds of Styrofoam versus going to landfill. More than 1,000 people participated in this post-holidays event. In addition, the CWPD effort spurred others to host Styrofoam recycling at additional times of the year.



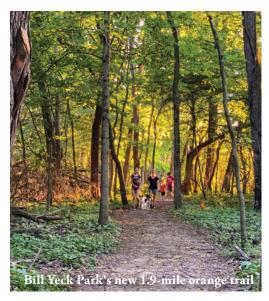
Using yet another grant, <u>CWPD</u> <u>preserved 33 acres</u> by partnering with our local school district. The schools owned but did not use the land that conveniently abuts to Grant Nature Park. Identified in our master plan, these parcels protect woodlands and stream from potential future development. The strength of the cooperative partnership to buy land from the schools generated the 75% matching grant of \$613,000 from the State of Ohio. The purchase is one more example of responding to the community's stated desires to conserve habitat and ecosystems.

Park and recreation agencies are called upon to demonstrate the results of their services and practices to decision makers and the public. Cite 3 outcomes, results, or impacts achieved in the last 3 years that your agency has measured; background about the outcome(s); and the results achieved.

Our most treasured and important measurement of park programs is participant satisfaction. This, more than any other metric, tells the Board, partners and residents how well we meet their expectations. With the increased programming, measuring the impact of new, expanded and improved programs is vital. Our primary customers are technology savvy. To make better connections, we shifted from paper to electronic surveys and send them 5 times per year. The response rate is growing, at 20%. Feedback shows a 95% program satisfaction rate. More importantly, the program team acts on the data. Feedback has stimulated dozens of program improvements and new programs.

Minimizing the cost of services is paramount to most public officials. Since 2020, we have aggressively pursued available grants, and supplemented total revenues by \$1,044,715 over the last three years. To demonstrate the value of this practice, we compare the average grant supplement from the previous three years, which was \$757,292. We've increased by 38%. By highlighting the impact, the Park Board has more readily acted to "green light" many of the projects and programs identified in this application.

Survey respondents rated hiking trails and paved multi-use paths as high priority in our past two Community Needs Assessments. Over the past 3 years, we have added 6 miles of new hiking trails, and nearly 2 miles of paved multi-use trails to the trail system, as well as installed a brand new wayfinding system. We completed multi-year improvements at our two largest nature parks. Because residents were involved from the beginning, the improvements have been widely celebrated amongst park visitors. The proof? Any day without severe weather, parking lots are full!





Park and recreation agencies focus on creativity and innovation. Cite 3 innovations implemented by your agency within the last 3 years that have had a significant impact on service delivery, customer satisfaction, partnerships, financial condition, fiscal sustainability, and/or internal operations.

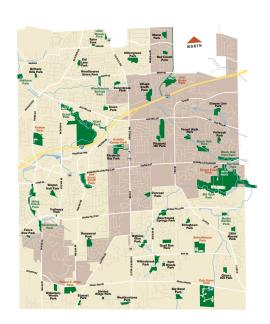


Seizing the opportunity to partner with the Dayton Foundation, we established the Foundation for Centerville-Washington Parks. The Foundation secures philanthropic funding for projects, programs and conservation efforts directly related to the Centerville-Washington Park District's mission. Now, anyone can visit CWPD's website and click the Donate button to make a one-time donation, or become a "Park Gem" by signing up for recurring giving.

Much of our success in landing more grants comes from making the Community Engagement Coordinator position full-time and redefining the objectives. She cultivates relationships with new and existing donors, researching and obtaining grant funding, and creating a culture of philanthropy to support the Park District's mission to deliver fun, healthy and outstanding park experiences that connect the community with the outdoors. In a year's time, the new redirected focus of the Community Engagement Coordinator secured \$398,720 in donations and grant funding, recovering the full-time salary many times over.

We want to walk the talk. As an outdoor and nature organization, we always look to be environmentally sensitive. In 2022 we started a "zero-waste" initiative for 3 big programs—2 youth day camps and the community, 1000-participant festival, BIG Backyard Party. Our knowledgeable staff conducted internal workshops on best composting practices. Recycling options were made readily available to participants. Vendors at Big Backyard Party cooperated by offering reusable and compostable containers and utensils. At camps, counselors reported behavior changes among campers regarding lunch contents, recycling and composting.

# What initiatives or actions has your agency undertaken in the last 3 years to ensure all members of the community have fair and just access to quality parks and recreation?



The Park District was founded on the principle of having all residents within a 10-minute walk of a park. A study of connectivity to CWPD's 51 parks tells the story of park access. Staff found that 65% of our community can safely walk to a park in ten minutes or less! According to The Trust for Public Land, only 33% of Americans can claim this life-improving benefit. The study identifies areas for CWPD to address when planning future connectivity projects to reach the ultimate goal.

Improving park access is a top priority. In 2022, we received \$20,000 from the Optimists to purchase 23 accessible swings. With this purchase, we are proud to say ALL 41 playgrounds have an accessible swing! Since 2020, we have installed two all-inclusive playgrounds, strategically added paths further providing access to countless park amenities and installed over a dozen inclusive features at neighborhood playgrounds.

What initiatives or actions has your agency undertaken in the last 3 years that advance health equity, improve individual and community-level health outcomes and quality of life? Cite efforts undertaken for team members and/or members of the community that activate and inspire health and wellness.

How about increasing fitness and wellness program partnerships by 91% since 2020? Another position upgrade to full-time added 62 new fitness programs. The programs are diverse and include fitness special events, new pickleball leagues, Activity Squad camps, community bike rides, archery and much more. The majority of these programs take place outdoors, allowing us to significantly impact both physical and mental health of participants.

Strategic partnerships are vital to reaching more residents with FREE fitness and wellness programming. Of our total fitness and wellness offerings, 20% were free. Both our 2016 and 2022 Community Needs Assessments listed fitness and wellness programming as the highest priority investment ranking by survey respondents. Forging intentional partnerships resulted in increased reach in the community. Working with our partners, such as Dayton Children's Hospital and Bike Centerville, we increased fitness and wellness enrollment by 107% from 2021 to 2022—from 1,151 participants to 2,394!





What initiatives or actions has your agency undertaken in the last 3 years to address the impact of climate change through environmental stewardship, sustainability practices, and environmental programming. Cite efforts undertaken.

We want to influence stewardship beyond our parks. To promote pollinator habitats, 1,000 native seed packets harvested from CWPD prairies were distributed at the Americana Festival, one of Ohio's largest festivals. The seeds were a popular giveaway and were gone within the first few hours of the festival.

The Park District is a regional leader in Styrofoam recycling. Since the first recycling event held, 1,035 households kept 15,700 pounds of Styrofoam out of landfills, and instead recycled into new products.



In 2022, as part of the Carbon Reduction Act funding, two CWPD parks were selected for installation of electric vehicle charging stations. Each park will get one charging station with two ports.

CWPD earned the Certified Environmental Facility from the Sports Field Management Association for our largest athletic facility, Oak Grove Park. This environmental sustainability certification is obtained by implementing best practices in irrigation, fertilization, and stormwater management.

What challenges has your agency experienced in the last 3 years and what actions has your agency undertaken to address the challenges? Cite the agency's role in identifying and addressing the challenges, the steps/actions undertaken, and the measured effectiveness of the efforts.

Every agency struggled with COVID to some extent. While most of our neighboring community and county agencies fully shut down, CWPD did not. Rather, we quickly pivoted away from typical programming to self-guided programs with kits, videos and social media-based instruction within weeks. Staff created challenges to give park visitors the chance to solve a mystery, try geocaching, see all 51 parks, and even to spot Bigfoot in the forest! We played to our strengths as a provider of outdoor programs, facilities and events. Families participated safely, on their schedules. Modified summer day camps following COVID-19 protocols allowed over 600 children to enjoy the outdoors without a single case of COVID reported. CWPD worked tirelessly with youth soccer, football and baseball volunteer organizations to comply with COVID guidelines. Feedback showed that the creativity and determination of staff absolutely contributed to residents' physical and mental health, while drawing record numbers to our parks.

Because of term limits, we lost all three veteran Park Board Commissioners from 2020-2022. Additionally, in March of 2021, the Executive Director retired. Within three years, 34 years of experience went out the door. The challenge has been continuing to progress and improve upon the past decade of service delivery. The new Executive Director worked with the Park Board to update several policies, create a reporting procedure for Strategic Plan progress, and evaluate future funding needs. The management team boosted employee engagement by recognizing staff who consistently deliver on our mission, values and brand promise. Board and management has also provided resources to support planned action by strategic task teams. CWPD modernized the process of performance evaluations with tailored software. To ensure common direction for new Board and Director, the District promptly embarked on another Community Needs Assessment, using that data to drive strategy and continuing success.







