

Operational Review
of
Louisville Metro Parks



June 2012

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I. Introduction and Review Approach

A team was commissioned in November 2011 to perform an operational review of Louisville Metro Parks (or, “Metro Parks,” or “Parks”). The purpose of this review was to evaluate the effectiveness of the organization and to identify improvement opportunities. The six-member review team consisted of the following:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Organization</u>
Larry Cashen	Wyatt, Tarrant & Combs, LLP
Jim Beckett	CBDO, Frost Brown Todd, LLC
Tanisha Hackett	Internal Auditor, University of Louisville
Barbara Kalkhof	Internal Auditor (ret.), Louisville Metro Government
Ingram Quick	Internal Auditor, Louisville Metro Government
Jim Wood	CEO, Louisville Convention & Visitors Bureau

In addition, the Office of the Mayor assisted the team in the collection of materials and analysis. The review could not have been performed without the assistance of Parks management and staff, who were forthright and cooperative. To a person, we were impressed by their openness and professionalism.

The review took place over several months, and the review approach included:

- Interviewing Parks executive, middle management, and line staff
- Interviewing department heads and staff of other Metro agencies and various external organizations
- Reviewing financial data maintained by Parks, such as budgets and profit and loss (P&L) statements
- Reviewing Parks’ application for accreditation and other materials intended to evaluate agency performance
- Reviewing benchmarking data from other cities
- Reviewing information previously gathered by the Mayor’s Office

Although the Special Events division of Parks and Brightside are actively involved in significant Parks projects, they were not included in this review.

The Team evaluated this information and formulated 134 recommendations for Parks and Metro Government to consider.

II. Executive Summary

Having one of only four completed Frederick Law Olmsted Parks and Parkways systems in the world, the largest municipal urban forest in the United States, an award-winning waterfront park, and one of the nation’s largest parks developments creating the finest urban edge in the country, Louisville is truly a City of Parks.

The mission of Metro Parks is, “to enhance our City of Parks and recreation programs for citizens of Louisville Metro by maintaining and acquiring attractive, vibrant parks and recreation facilities, offering safe, diverse programs, and protecting these lands and resources for future generations.” This mission statement was adopted following strategic planning meetings in 2006.

Parks is a large and complex organization with 344 permanent employees and 310 part-time or seasonal employees. Along with its private, non-profit partners, Parks is responsible for managing, enhancing, and maintaining 122 parks, one of which, Jefferson Memorial Forest, comprises 6,191 acres. Parks also provides a wide range of recreation, fitness, and nature opportunities.

An indication of the complexity of Parks operations is the diversity of responsibilities under its jurisdiction. By the numbers, Louisville Metro Parks is responsible for:

- 122 Parks
- 12,254 Acres (12,447 acres, including Parkways and Cemeteries)
- 12 Community Centers
- Four (4) Swimming Pools
- One (1) Aquatics Center
- 16 Spray Pads
- 12 Spraygrounds
- Nine (9) Golf Courses
- Two (2) Historic Homes
- Two (2) Outdoor Amphitheaters (Iroquois and Central Park)
- Two (2) Senior Centers
- Two (2) Arts Education Centers
- One (1) Adapted Leisure Center (for citizens with disabilities)
- Five (5) Cemeteries
- One (1) Nature Center
- 135 Athletic Fields
- 178 Tennis Courts
- 65 Miles of Paved Exercise Paths
- 52 Miles of Marked Hiking Trails
- Over 5,000 Acres of Mowing (every two weeks)
- 219 Miles of Snow Removal

Metro Parks is one of only 101 U.S. city parks agencies to receive accreditation by the Committee for Accreditation of Parks and Recreation Agencies (or, “CAPRA”). Yet despite its unique assets, skilled and dedicated managers and employees, and a generally supportive and approving public, Metro Parks is in jeopardy of diminishing performance due to a lack of maintenance funding. For Fiscal Year 2010-2011, the total amount allocated to Parks for maintenance (general repairs) was \$500,000. A few years ago Parks developed a Deferred Maintenance Plan, but it has not been kept up to date because funds are so inadequate. \$0 was allocated for deferred maintenance in FY 2011. To help put this in context, 21st Century Parks, the private, non-profit corporation that is developing the Parklands of Floyds Fork, has banked \$10,000,000 in an endowment fund to maintain its assets in the future. Parks management estimates that at least \$2,700,000 annually is needed to address both general repairs and deferred maintenance.

In these economically difficult times, it is essential that Metro Government identify and pursue alternative sources of funding to ensure Parks’ long-term sustainability. That effort might begin with a cultural change within Parks itself. Parks employees consistently claim that there is no incentive to self-generate income because it only results in the next fiscal year’s budget

allocation being reduced in equal proportion. Metro Government needs to fashion a remedy. However, each division in Parks needs to understand that its own long-term solution to present budget problems is to identify and actively pursue new ways to self-generate operating income. It is the only way for the department, as a whole, to fulfill not only its mission but its vision “to be the community’s first choice for recreation, fitness programs, and the natural experience.”

We asked several of the persons we interviewed if Parks had conducted a survey of the public, its external customer, to determine public satisfaction, perception, and other useful information about Parks’ operation. We generally received information about focused, non-scientific surveys. However, we learned from Parks’ Communications Director that a fairly comprehensive survey was conducted in 2008. The survey has a good deal of potentially useful information, and it verifies the public’s general high opinion of Parks. The survey reported that, “The parks played an important part in most everyone’s life in Jefferson County.” The great majority of those surveyed (76%) said they were extremely or very satisfied with the Louisville Metro Parks.

Approximately three out of four people agreed that the parks were places:

- To gather with family and friends
- That made them proud to be from Louisville
- To build memories
- To escape to find quiet or tranquility
- Where everybody can find something to do

Significantly over half of the sample, representing 280,000 Jefferson County adults, was open to the idea of either volunteering time or donating funds to the parks. The survey included the following chart:

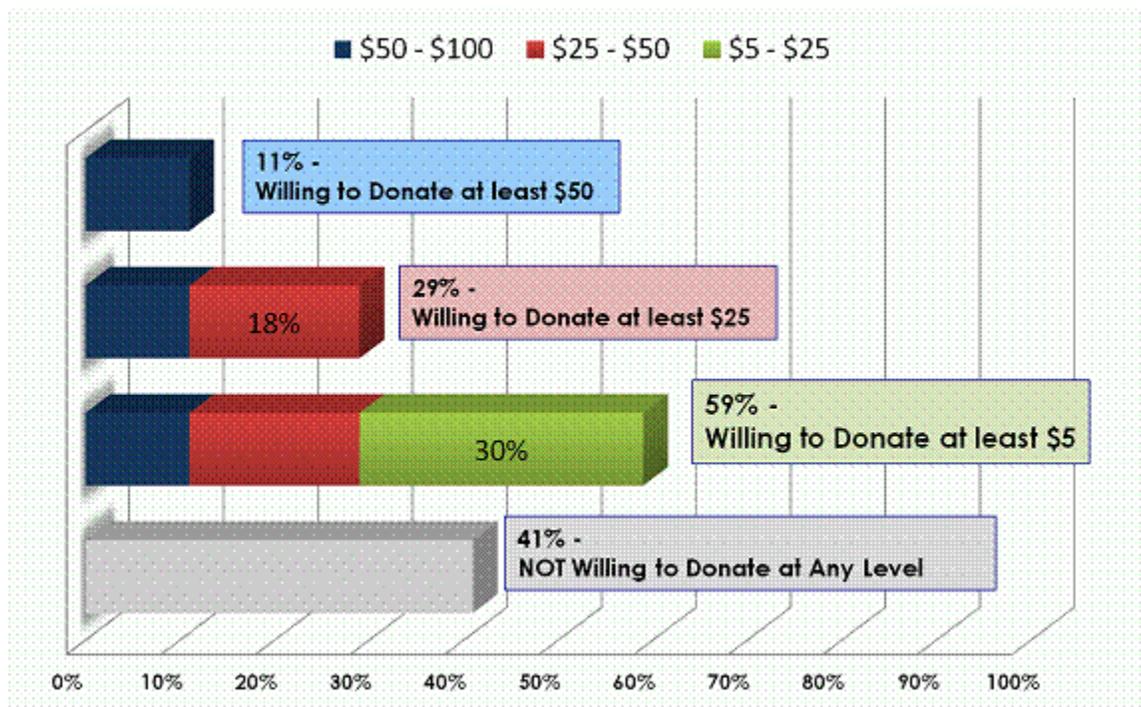


Figure 1: Public Willingness to Contribute to the Parks

Consideration should be given to an annual appeal for public donations and, given the short staffing in areas such as the community centers, more volunteers.

The Team's recommendations are set forth in the body of this report. However, there are a few recommendations that permeate the report and affect nearly every area under review. Those consist of the following:

- **Parks is underfunded.**
 - **Funding for Operations.** At \$34 per resident, Louisville's park operational spending is well below the median \$56 expenditure per resident of the 100 most populous U.S. cities. Parks cannot be sustained, much less enhanced at this level. At \$11 per resident, Louisville's park capital spending is well below the median \$18 per resident capital expenditure, as well.
 - **Funding for Deferred Maintenance.** For FY 2010-2011, the total amount allocated to Parks for maintenance (general repairs) was \$500,000. Parks management estimates that at least \$2,700,000 annually is needed to address both general repairs and deferred maintenance. Parks needs to update and implement its Deferred Maintenance Plan.
 - **Self-Generated Income.** It is essential that alternative sources of funding be identified and pursued. It will require a cultural change but every division in Parks needs to identify and actively pursue ways to generate income for its operations.
 - **Development Director.** Parks should hire a Development Director to explore some of the ideas suggested in the Survey, and to increase revenues through economic development perhaps by hosting regional or national athletic events, nature events, and other revenue generating activities.
 - **Better marketing is a must.** We understand that Parks has significant issues when it comes to prioritizing allocation of its resources. Nevertheless, if Parks is going to self-generate income, then it needs to thoroughly examine its marketing efforts. Whether it is golf, community center programs, athletic events, or a special event, Parks' marketing effort needs improvement. (Employment of a Development Director should also result in an enhanced marketing program.)
- **Some services need to be reviewed to determine if they should be transferred to another agency or eliminated.** Parks cannot afford to duplicate services and in some cases serious consideration should be given as to whether Parks is the most appropriate agency to provide certain services. Specifically, intentionally or not, there appears to be two Recreation divisions. They do not appear to be in sync with each other. Consideration should be given to: (1) combining the two divisions into one; (2) separating Recreation from Parks and placing it in a separate Metro Government agency; and (3) moving Parks' youth development programs out of the department, or moving the Youth Development Director into Parks. We cannot offer a solution to this problem, but it needs to be addressed.

- **Youth Services.** We did not review all of the youth services provided or supported by Metro Government. We understand that several government agencies in addition to Parks and many private agencies provide youth services. We recommend that Metro Government review these programs in order to eliminate duplication and to determine the agency in which they should be housed in order to maximize their effectiveness.
- **Intradepartmental Issues.** There is an old saying that, “Money, like speed in baseball, will cover a lot of mistakes.” The other side of the coin is that a lack of money can cause problems that might not otherwise exist. There appears to be some tension, jealousy, and misunderstanding between the various divisions of Parks and, more importantly, between some managers within a division. We did not attempt to investigate or determine the root cause. We do suggest that Parks take advantage of the Team Building Program by the training division of Metro Government. All managers should be required to attend.
- **Strategic Plan.** Parks has a strategic plan. However, when we raised the issue with Parks staff, they almost never referenced the plan. Instead, they referred to individual park master plans or plans they had developed for their own division. Parks should develop a five-year plan, with specific action items for the first two years. The plan should be linked directly to Parks’ budget and reviewed annually. The plan should be made known to all Parks employees, especially managers, and managers should be held accountable for achieving plan milestones.
- **Internal Audit.** Several concerns were expressed as to whether funds were being credited to the right “accounts” and whether donations were being acknowledged in accordance with IRS requirements. Until this fiscal year, the Parks business office was responsible for depositing and crediting funds to proper accounts, acknowledging donations, and overall internal controls. With the transfer of the business office to the Office of Management and Budget, concerns were raised. We recommend that the Office of Internal Audit schedule an audit in this area to make sure that all necessary controls and procedures are in place.
- **It is essential that Metro Parks retain its accreditation.** To retain accreditation, certain matters need to be attended to immediately. Included among those are the adoption of a management succession policy and the reconstitution of a Citizens Advisory Board.
- **Parks needs to develop better communication lines with other agencies.** In order to fulfill its mission, Parks works with a number of other Metro Government agencies and private, non-profit organizations. Staff of the agencies with whom we spoke were highly complementary of the skill and dedication of the Parks staff but, nevertheless, were somewhat critical of joint projects not being implemented or not being implemented as they envisioned. Something must have gotten lost in the translation.
- **Safety is a significant issue.** There are two key areas that should be addressed: (1) One of the obligations of the Forestry Division is to inspect 15,000 trees. The standard is to inspect each tree every three years. Currently, each tree is being inspected about every 15 years. The only solution we know is to either increase staff or reassign duties, which of course means something else will be neglected. (2) Certain parks are deemed not safe for children and young adults to visit alone or even in small groups. We understand this is more of a neighborhood problem than necessarily a parks safety issue. There are no Park

Police. One of two things needs to occur. Metro Police needs to become more engaged in patrolling and policing the parks, or a Parks Ranger or Security Ambassador Program needs to be instituted. This is discussed in more detail in Section IV.B, Accreditation.

- **Lack of training is costing the agency.** We heard from several interview subjects that training of new employees, annual update training, and training related to new programs is deficient. This is a safety issue for maintenance employees and a significant efficiency issue for other employees.
- **Involve senior managers in the budget process.** We understand that Parks does not have much control over the general fund dollars actually appropriated to the department. However, we heard from many that relatively few senior managers are involved in the budget discussions. Involving more senior managers in this process might improve Parks’ chance of a greater allocation of general fund dollars, and it will certainly help senior managers who do not receive the allocation they think is needed to better understand the reasons why.
- **Project Budgets.** Review the budgeting process for Community Centers and Recreation and for the individual programs they support. A casual review of their budgets and self-generated P&Ls demonstrates that the revenue item “Agency Receipts” is often not realistic and that all expenses, particularly overhead, are not charged to various projects. We think this may be a Metro Government process issue. Properly prepared budgets and other financial data are useful management tools.

III. Metro Parks Overview/Background

A. Organization

Parks is a large and complex organization. For FY 2010-2011 it had a total of 654 employees, 310 of whom were part-time or seasonal. At the time of city/county merger, Parks had 1,070 employees, with the majority being seasonal employees, for whom funding was unavailable. The organization structure is indicative of the complexity of Parks operations.

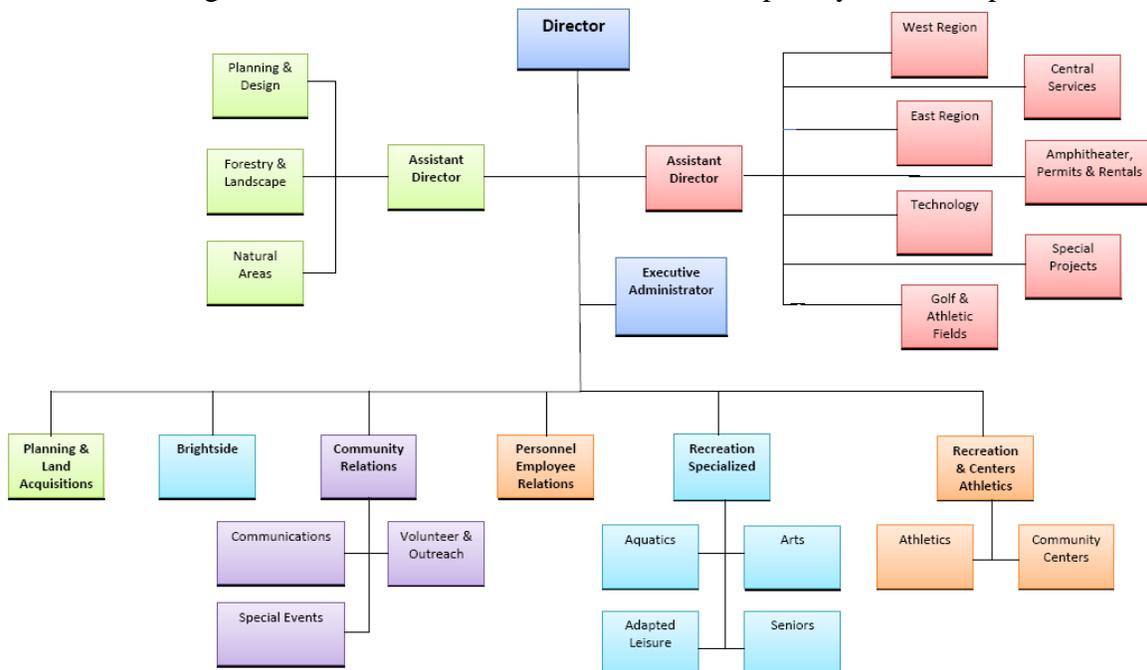


Figure 2: Metro Parks Organizational Structure

B. Key Departmental Functions

1. Director's Office:

- Mayor's Strategic Plans and Initiatives
- Metro Council Relations
- Affiliated Boards and Commissions
- Accreditation Standards
- Interdepartmental Relations

2. Operations:

- Golf Course Maintenance – Nine (9) Total
- Maintains Over 12,000 Acres of Parkland – 300 Restrooms, 500 Structures
- Maintains 165 Playgrounds
- Maintains Over 100 Athletic Fields
- Iroquois Amphitheater Scheduling and Operations
- Reservations and Permits
- Skilled Trades
- Safety and Security
- Logistics for Major Events
- Indigent Burials – 5 Cemeteries
- 219 Miles of Snow Removal
- Swimming Pool Maintenance

3. Park Resources:

- Manages Natural Areas
- Forestry
- Evaluates Infrastructure
- Capital Improvement Projects

4. Community Centers/Athletics:

- Provides Neighborhood-Based Recreational Services
- Youth Programming – Leagues, Summer Camp, Reds Rookie Success
- Adult Leagues
- Mayor's Healthy Hometown Initiatives

5. Recreation Programs:

- Community-Wide Programs
- Aquatics
- Arts & Culture
- Therapeutic Recreation
- Adapted Leisure Activities
- Seniors Programming

6. Planning & Design:

- Develops Plans to Improve Parks
- Archives Historical Information
- Conducts Public Meetings
- Capital Projects

7. Historic Properties:

- Operates Historic Homes as Museums (Locust Grove and Riverside, the Farnsley-Moremen Landing)
- Preservation
- Tourism Destination
- Education

8. Community Relations & Events:

- Manages Marketing
- Website/Social Media
- Public Information
- Manages Parks 501(c)(3)
- Mayor's Special Events
- Fundraising
- Volunteer Programs (Adopt-A-Park)
- Community Outreach
- Open Records Requests
- Archives
- Graphic Design

9. Personnel:

- Labor Relations
- Payroll Processing
- Policy and Procedures
- Discipline

C. Vision

On its website, Parks states that its vision “is to provide Louisville Metro citizens a nationally accredited, world-class system of parks and recreation programs that will strengthen the social foundations of our society. We will strive to be the community’s first choice for recreation, fitness programs, and the natural experience. We will work to bring parks and recreation services to areas of the community that we do not yet fully reach, and we will maintain our parks and facilities to the highest-possible level.”

This vision for Parks can be gleaned from its Master Plans for individual parks and its current major project, building the Louisville Loop. Parks has a pretty good website, www.louisvilleky.gov/metroparks/, and we recommend that you visit the site to get an idea of the many things in which Parks is involved, including the Louisville Loop.

A vision represents where an organization wants to be – not where it is. This is true with Parks. Our report reflects that in order for Parks to achieve its vision, some changes will need to be implemented. No doubt, inadequate funding is its most serious problem. In addition to securing alternative funding sources, Metro Government will also need to review how funds are allocated to Parks and what programs and services it should offer.

D. MetroCall

MetroCall is the customer service center for Metro Government, where any person can request a service, offer a suggestion, ask a question, share an opinion, register a complaint, and even pass on a compliment relating to Metro agency services and events. During 2010,

MetroCall answered close to 283,000 calls. MetroCall notifies the subject agency of each call and collects data on responses and resolutions. During 2010, MetroCall received 1,143 calls relating to Parks. Substantially all matters were resolved by the 15th of the following month. Below are MetroCall charts identifying the nature of the calls and how they were resolved. In discussions with Parks management, we did not identify any significant issues regarding calls received by MetroCall. All issues appear to have been handled satisfactorily.

MIDAS Entries – Department of Parks and Recreation 2011

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total	Dec'10
Parks and Recreation														
Abandoned Vehicles	1												1	
Accessibility Concern						1							1	
Baiting for Rats							1						1	
Bicycle Lane or Path Issues								1					1	
Compliments	1		1			2	2	1	1			2	10	
Dead Animal Pickup													0	
Drainage								1					1	
Equipment Repair						3	2	1					6	
Graffiti	1		5	4	4	1	3		1	2	1	2	24	1
Illegal Dumping							1	3	1	1			6	
Illegal Signs					2		3						5	
Insects							1						1	
Litter Basket Concerns									1				1	
Louisville Loop Concern	1							2					3	
Miscellaneous	6	10	20	9	26	36	16	12	12	9	13	5	174	3
Mowing Request		1		2	8	15	5	4	1	3			39	
Park Maintenance (general)	12	12	29	34	43	68	64	81	33	32	24	16	448	14
Pothole		1			1	1							3	
Recreation Repairs (swings etc.)	7	5	11	12	19	32	28	19	7	4	3		147	1
Right-of-Way			1	3	2	3	2	5	4	3	1		24	2
Sidewalk Concerns			1										1	
Sign Requests and Repair											1		1	
Snow	1												1	1
Storm Debris				1	4	2	6	22					35	
Street Lights			1					1					2	
Suggestions/Opinions							1	1	2		1		5	
Swimming Pool Concerns													0	
Trash								1					1	
Tree Concerns	2	3	16	14	31	26	22	29	15	14	8	3	183	3
Weeds					2	1		1					4	
Total	32	32	85	79	142	191	157	185	78	68	52	28	1,129	25

Figure 3: Total Number of MIDAS Entries for 2010

E. Labor Relations

We interviewed the Metro Parks Union Representative (MPUR), who works in Parks' maintenance division. He has been a full-time employee (or, "FTE") for nine years. He started as a summer intern or seasonal employee. He has served on the Union Executive Board for several years and has been a Union Steward for 18 months.

The MPUR describes relations between union employees and Parks as very good. Parks' Administration advised us that they meet monthly with a labor relations representative. We think Parks should continue this policy.

Currently there is a union grievance pending over the issue of uniforms. The issue is how often the union contract requires Parks to furnish uniforms to maintenance employees.

The MPUR states that union employees understand that Parks has budget problems and there is a lack of adequate funding. In that regard, overtime has been significantly reduced. For example, last year he had 18 hours of overtime. Four years ago he might have 18 overtime hours in a week. Nevertheless, he says that employees would rather have a job than see someone laid off.

The MPUR stated that he would like to see more training, especially for new employees, because lack of training is a safety issue. The MPUR also thought the annual refresher courses for experienced employees could be enhanced. Another safety issue is that sometimes maintenance employees work alone and/or at night. He believes that they should not.

The MPUR concluded the interview by saying that he loves his job and loves working for Parks. The MPUR knows of no significant work-related issues between union employees and Parks. It is a compliment to Parks that nearly everyone we interviewed, unprovoked, made a similar statement; they love working for Parks and genuinely want to serve the public.

Recommendation 1: Parks needs to review its training program. As a part of that review, it should discuss its training program, including its deficiencies, with line staff in order to develop a more comprehensive program for new employees and its annual update courses. []

Recommendation 2: Parks needs to review its policy of requiring some maintenance work at night and work requiring use of equipment that can malfunction without having at least two people on the job site. []

Recommendation 3: Prior to the next contract negotiation, Parks needs to review the union contract to see if there are ways to address the salary compression issue. []

IV. Team Reviews

A summary of the team reviews and recommendations follow. A couple of things should be noted. While we did look at some financial information, this is by no means a financial audit. We did not have the expertise or resources to perform such an audit. In an effort to demonstrate the complexity of Parks operations, we included an organization chart and list of the major functions of its divisions. We did not review every operation listed above, but focused on those identified as being of particular interest by various constituencies or that we otherwise felt should be reviewed. Most of the recommendations we make reflect general trends or issues that were to some extent common to every division we reviewed. A more thorough review might develop

some additional specific recommendations but would not likely develop additional general recommendations.

DIRECTOR'S OFFICE

A. Director Interview

Mike Heitz has been the Executive Director of Parks since 2003. Mr. Heitz has an excellent resume and received generally high marks from those we spoke to, in and out of Parks. He holds numerous university degrees, is a licensed architect and has been involved with park management here and in Texas for more than 15 years.

In our interview, Mr. Heitz emphasized that Parks makes a concentrated effort to balance its activities throughout Jefferson County and over any reasonable period of time can demonstrate that it expends approximately the same amount of its resources in each area of the county: east, west, and south. He is proud of his staff, both executive and line, and believes they are professional and dedicated to their work in Parks and for the community.

The current project that is most significant to him is the Louisville Loop. When completed it will be an estimated 105-mile trail system that will encircle the city and link existing and new parks and neighborhoods to civic attractions, transportation alternatives, and recreation opportunities.

He defines Parks' external customers as the public. Parks should service the entire make-up of its users: those who drive through the parks, walk, cycle, jog, participate in individual or organized sports, engage in contemplative activities, or are there to enjoy and be surrounded by natural surroundings. All of the Parks staff with whom we talked seemed to have this same concept of Parks customers.

Parks' internal customers primarily consist of Metro Council, the Mayor's Office, and to some extent other Metro agencies. Mr. Heitz believes that Parks has a good relationship with Metro Council members.

Parks used to have, but no longer has, a Citizens Advisory Board. Mr. Heitz serves on the boards of 21st Century Parks, Olmsted Conservancy, and the Parks Foundation. He considers those boards to collectively serve as a Parks advisory board.

He considers Parks' number one problem to be deferred maintenance caused by lack of funding. Soon after arriving at Metro Parks, Mr. Heitz had a deferred maintenance plan prepared and submitted it as a part of his budget request on several occasions with no success. The report now gathers dust.

Another significant problem caused by lack of funding is the replacement of key personnel. At times when a key person has left Parks, the department has had to simply reassign duties to existing personnel. Parks does not have a management succession plan. By the time this report is completed, one Assistant Director will have retired, as will have another key management employee. Many at Parks are concerned that the Assistant Director position will not be replaced. Another key employee will become a part-time employee (or, "PTE") whose sole function will be to work on Parks' accreditation application. There is like concern that he may not be replaced as well.

Mr. Heitz does not believe that as an agency Parks has any major safety issues but he does state that some small parks are located in high crime areas. Safety in the parks is the responsibility of Metro Police. Mr. Heitz would like to see a Park Ranger force put in place, or at least more concentrated police safety procedures instituted by Metro Police.

Mr. Heitz meets with his senior, executive management staff once per week and with operations management staff once per month. Others told us that he used to meet for lunch with line staff monthly but, with the press of time and other demands, those meetings no longer take place. Those who mentioned it said they would like those meetings reinstated. Others spoke of a lack of communication between upper management and line staff and a lack of communication between the various divisions.

Recommendation 4: Review and implement the deferred maintenance plan. []

Recommendation 5: Encourage all Parks divisions to generate income to support their operations. []

Recommendation 6: Work on establishing better communications between divisions and from upper management to line staff. []

Recommendation 7: Develop a succession plan and replace key personnel. []

Recommendation 8: Parks and Metro Police should adopt safety protocols to ensure that parks are safe for users. Consider engaging a Park Ranger or Security Ambassador Program as discussed later in this Report. []

Recommendation 9: Parks should employ a Development Director to identify and implement fund/income-generating activities. []

Recommendation 10: Re-establish the Parks Citizens Advisory Board, an accreditation requirement. []

B. Accreditation

Parks earned its accreditation from the Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies. There are currently 101 accredited park and recreation agencies in the United States. Parks is a member of the Kentucky Recreation and Park Society and the National Recreation and Park Association. The CAPRA accreditation is a five-year cycle that includes three phases: (1) preparation of the self-assessment report; (2) on-site visitation; and (3) Commission's review and decision. Accreditation is based on the agency's compliance with the 144 standards for national accreditation. The agency must comply with all 36 fundamental standards and at least 92 of the remaining 108 standards (85%) in order to earn the accreditation. The standards are a measure of effectiveness set forth by experienced professionals.

In reviewing the accreditation application, we found it to be very thorough and accurate. The only minor discrepancy we saw was the use of a citizens' advisory board. In order for Parks to be reaccredited it must reenergize the citizens' advisory board. It was also noted that inspectors will come to the city to review portions of the application on-site to ensure its accuracy and authenticity. We found that to be an excellent part of the overall process. The accreditation has helped Parks to get most of its policies and procedures in line with national

standards. Because of the uniqueness of city governments nationwide it was noted that governance is not a part of accreditation.

Recommendation 11: Train an upcoming manager on how to process the accreditation application. []

One of the goals for Parks in the accreditation process is to become a Gold Medal City. Each year, one city in each of five separate population classifications receives the designation of being a Gold Medal City. This means they have achieved the highest standards in their classification. One of the common threads of parks departments nationwide when becoming a Gold Medal City is they have their own dedicated funding. It was noted that nearly 70% of Gold Medal City parks departments have their own sources of revenue coming in to operate their department. There are many self-funding models that should be evaluated to determine how Parks can develop itself into a self-funded department.

Recommendation 12: Conduct a study to determine what other revenue opportunities exist to help make Parks less dependent on general funds and more reliant on its own funding sources. []

An example is the 2013 World Cyclocross Championship to be held next year in Louisville. This will be the first time the championship has been held outside of Europe. Parks converted Eva Bandman Park into a world-class cyclocross park at the cost of approximately \$125,000. Cyclocross is a growing sport nationally and internationally, so having a cyclocross park allows Louisville to pursue multiple cyclocross championships. This concept is a joint collaboration between Parks and the Louisville Sports Commission. Because of Parks' forward thinking and investment in Eva Bandman Park, Louisville has attracted the following events:

- U.S. Grand Prix of Cyclocross (Annually)
- Masters World Championship (2012)
- Masters World and the Elite Championship (2013)

The 2013 Elite Championship is an international event that will attract thousands of riders and spectators from Europe and around the world. Combined, the above-mentioned events will have an estimated economic impact of over \$3,000,000 to Louisville's economy. Other cyclocross events are currently being pursued by the Sports Commission, including USA Cycling's cyclocross championship. While this event will not provide a direct economic benefit to Parks, the securing of regional or national events at a park venue should result in fees and other income sources for the department.

A new accreditation requirement is to have a senior management succession plan. Based on our conversation, it is apparent from senior management that there is no succession plan currently in place. This must be corrected immediately. Parks is in a dangerous position from a continuity of leadership standpoint.

The strategic plan is an integral part of the accreditation process. Parks' strategic plan is an opportunity for the department to define its strategy and make decisions on allocating its resources in order to pursue that strategy. The strategic plan was updated at the beginning of 2011 in anticipation of the mayoral transition and was recently updated at the end of 2011 at the request of the Mayor.

Recommendation 13: *In anticipation of the reaccreditation process and the reduction of resources, the strategic plan should be updated and communicated to all Parks staff. []*

We were told that, because of hiring policies resulting from budget cuts, Parks has downsized key administrative personnel. This seems to be one of the major weak links within Parks. A lack of a succession for senior management has led to empty positions not being filled. In non-administrative positions some staff felt that Parks is promoting less competent employees because it is not allowed to bring in someone from the outside, thus limiting their candidate pool to only inside candidates.

Recommendation 14: *Begin the process of developing a deeper bench to replace retiring administrators. Fill these two top positions from either inside or outside candidates. []*

It was discussed that, due to budget cuts, staff training and cross-training have all but been eliminated. Untrained staff can lead to serious accidents. Also, having untrained or not cross-trained staff hurts productivity and limits manpower flexibility.

Recommendation 15: *Devise a plan to make training and cross training mandatory. []*

In our conversation it was noted that portions of historic preservation seem to bounce around and there is no Metro Government agency currently in charge of historic preservation.

Recommendation 16: *Decide on the role of Louisville Historic Preservation. Decide which agency should have authority on all matters related to historic preservation. []*

It was discussed that the current piece of land earmarked for the proposed botanical gardens is unsuitable because it is an old landfill and subject to more settling. In addition, the bedrock is 100 feet deep, thus making building on the site nearly cost-prohibitive.

Recommendation 17: *The Louisville Zoo should be reconsidered as a viable botanical gardens site. Another consideration is to dedicate five (5) acres of Waterfront Park for use as a botanical gardens site. []*

We have seen some levels of tension between the Parks and Recreation Divisions. Both are important to the city and provide valuable services to constituent groups. Several people felt that separating the two divisions into separate departments ought to be looked at.

Recommendation 18: *Conduct a feasibility study of the benefits of separating Parks and Recreation into two agencies. At the very least, the website currently named Metro Parks should be renamed Metro Parks and Recreation. []*

Since January 2011, Parks has spent \$136,644.02 on repairs caused by 125 reported incidents of vandalism. Currently there are only two security tools being used in public parks, with the exception of the golf courses, to help curtail vandalism. Vandalism is on the rise, thus thwarting it should become a higher priority. It could save Parks considerable dollars in the future.

Recommendation 19: *Place surveillance cameras in vandalism hot spots and monitor accordingly. []*

Vandalism - Cost of Damages over \$1,000 (since January 2011)		
LOCATION	Incidents	Cost of Damages
SYLVANIA CC	1	\$35,000.00
SUN VALLEY GOLF COURSE	2	\$24,000.00
RIVER VIEW PARK	1	\$10,000.00
SUN VALLEY PARK	3	\$9,750.00
IROQUOIS PARK	14	\$7,459.00
CALIFORNIA CC	2	\$5,312.50
SHELBY PARK	5	\$3,700.00
FLAGET COMMUNITY CENTER	1	\$3,500.00
ALGONQUIN PARK	1	\$3,000.00
MCNEELY SOUTH	10	\$2,885.94
TYLER PARK	5	\$2,650.00
WYANDOTTE PARK	8	\$2,558.00
FERN CREEK PARK	3	\$1,973.54
GEORGE ROGERS CLARK PARK	3	\$1,869.30
CHEROKEE PARK	1	\$1,500.00
MCNEELY LAKE	3	\$1,342.00
FARNSLEY PARK	2	\$1,300.00
EXTREME PARK	3	\$1,274.29
VETTINER PARK	4	\$1,237.13
SCENIC LOOP, LOWER DINGLE	1	\$1,200.00
THURMAN HUTCHINS	2	\$1,147.34
IROQUOIS GOLF COURSE	1	\$1,000.00
PARK BOUNDARY AND SPRING HILL ROAD	1	\$1,000.00

Figure 4: Incidents of Vandalism and Cost of Damages

It was also noted that having Park Security Ambassadors in high-traffic parks would be a good security measure. Currently, there are no security or service park employees walking the parks, so the public has no one to assist them if there is a need. Parks relies on Metro Police to patrol the public parks. This is one service to consider. In this report, Park Ambassadors are sometimes referred to as Park Rangers.

Recommendation 20: Consider hiring Park Security Ambassadors for high-traffic and/or high-risk parks. They would not serve as Police Officers but as Park Ambassadors. Park Ambassadors would be on location educating patrons on public safety and the environment. Also, Park Ambassadors would carry radios that so they could contact Police in case of an emergency. []

There seems to be some tension between the Waterfront Development Corporation (WDC) and Parks. Former Mayor of Louisville decided that Riverview Park should fall under the management arm of WDC. Often WDC contacts Parks for repairs. It is clear there is little collaboration between these agencies.

Recommendation 21: A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) should be written outlining specific roles and responsibilities of each agency to the other. This type of clarity will help to rebuild their strained relationship. []

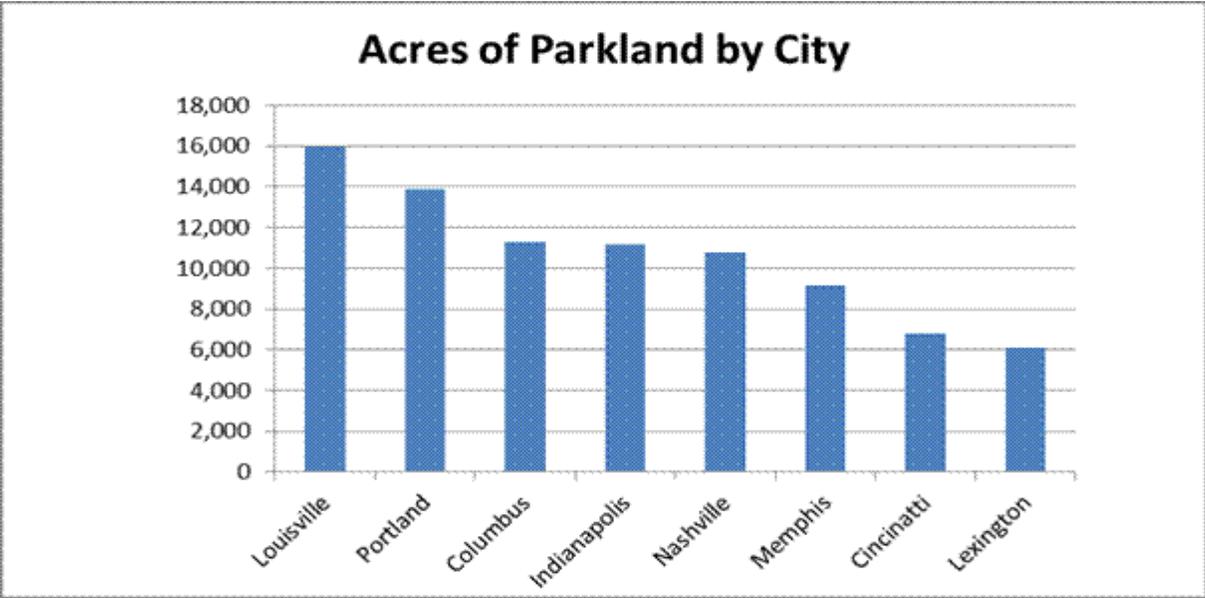
There seems to be a good relationship between Parks and 21st Century Parks (or, “21CP”). It was also noted that they both feel complementary to one another serving a similar mission. Parks Director serves on the 21CP Board, which helps greatly with communication between the agencies. The advantage 21CP has over Parks is their ability to operate independently. It was noted that Parks envies 21CP’s ability to operate much more independently than Parks can.

C. Benchmarking

One of the areas discussed is that Parks is still trying to provide the same level of services it has delivered over the past several years but with less revenue. Parks says that it is trying to “do less without the public noticing it is doing less.” This means Parks has cut back on a variety of services and initiatives. It is still to be determined how much leaner Parks can operate and remain efficient without a thorough reassessment of its current business model as a whole.

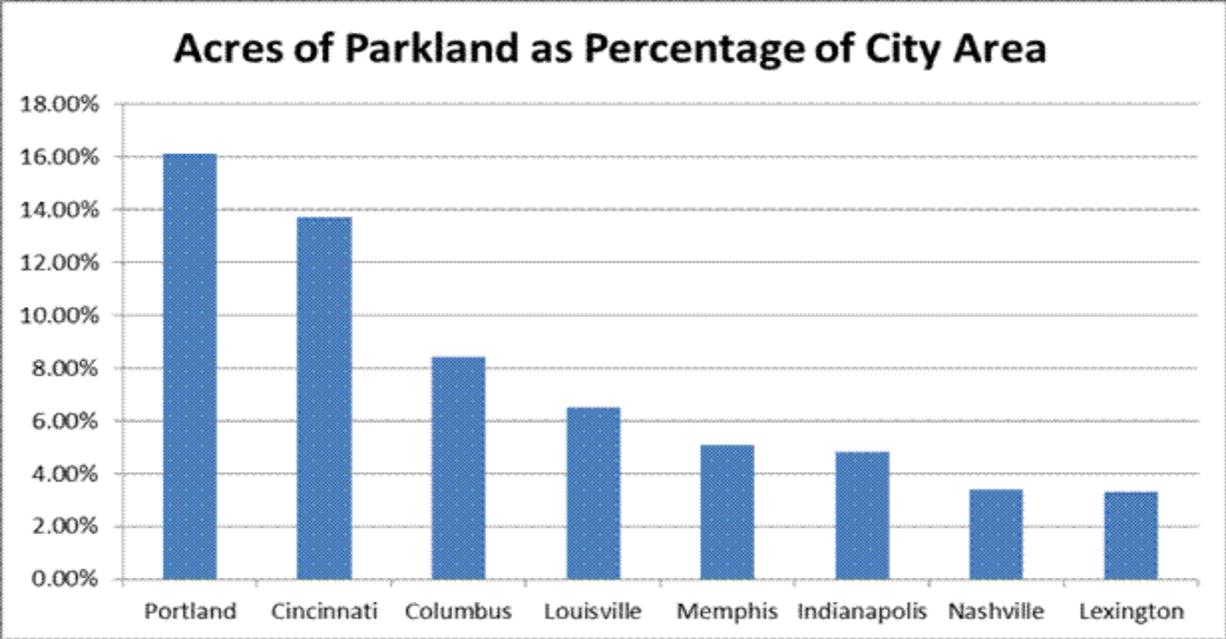
The Trust for Public Land publishes a lot of statistical data regarding parks systems throughout the county. We looked at data for Louisville and benchmark cities Columbus, Indianapolis, Nashville, Memphis, Cincinnati, Lexington, and Portland. Portland is considered the gold standard for city parks systems.

The indicators for comparable U.S. cities charts below show that Parks has the second leanest budget in its peer set. This should be taken into consideration as part of the overall Parks review process.



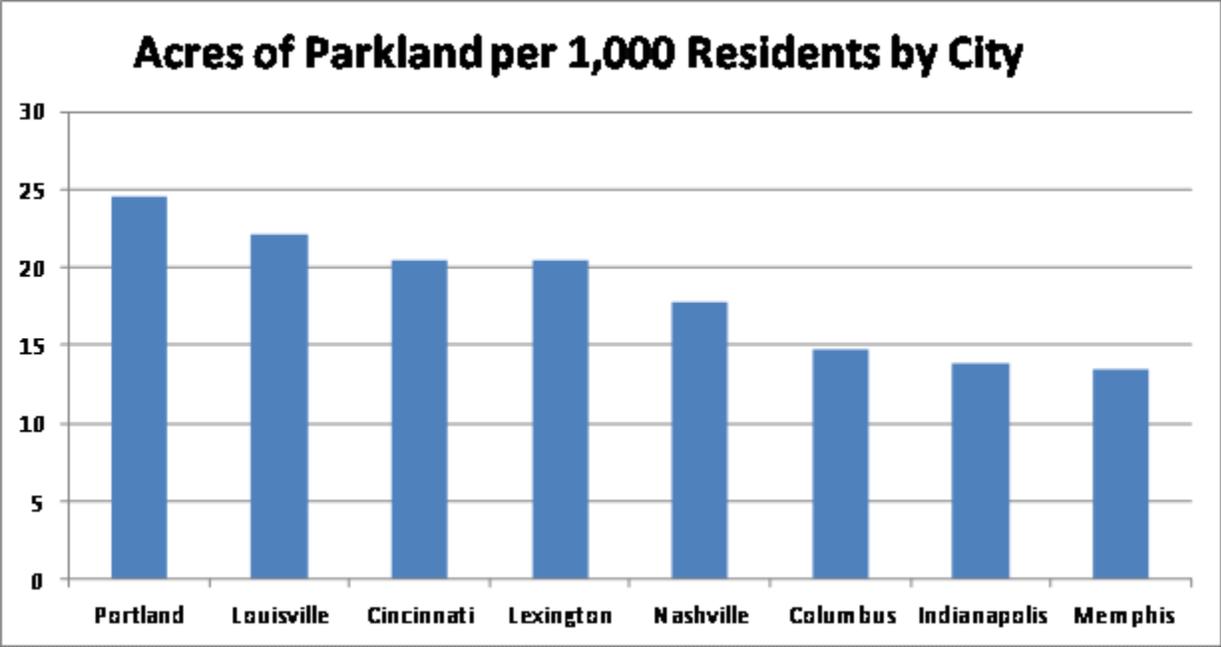
Louisville	15,939
Portland	13,864
Columbus	11,274
Indianapolis	11,147
Nashville	10,765
Memphis	9,140
Cincinnati	6,817
Lexington	6,077

Figure 5: Acres of Parkland



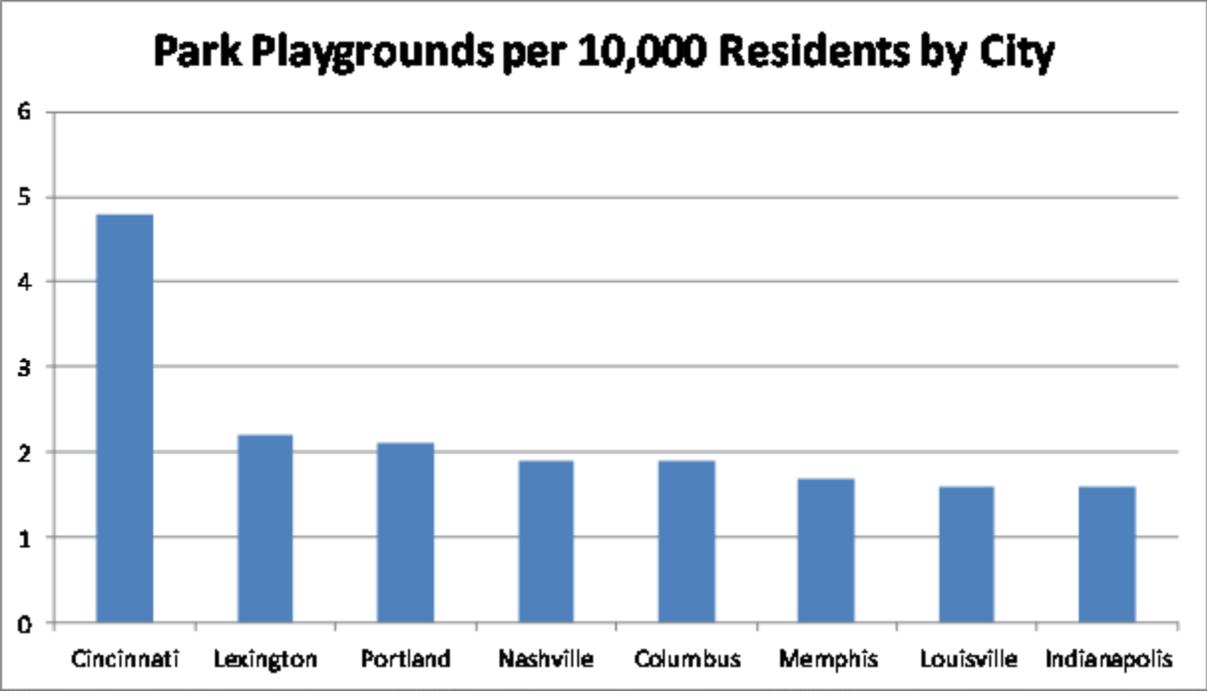
Portland	16.1%
Cincinnati	13.7%
Columbus	8.4%
Louisville	6.5%
Memphis	5.1%
Indianapolis	4.8%
Nashville	3.4%
Lexington	3.3%

Figure 6: Acres of Parkland as Percentage of City Area



Portland	24.5
Louisville	22.1
Cincinnati	20.5
Lexington	20.5
Nashville	17.8
Columbus	14.7
Indianapolis	13.8
Memphis	13.5

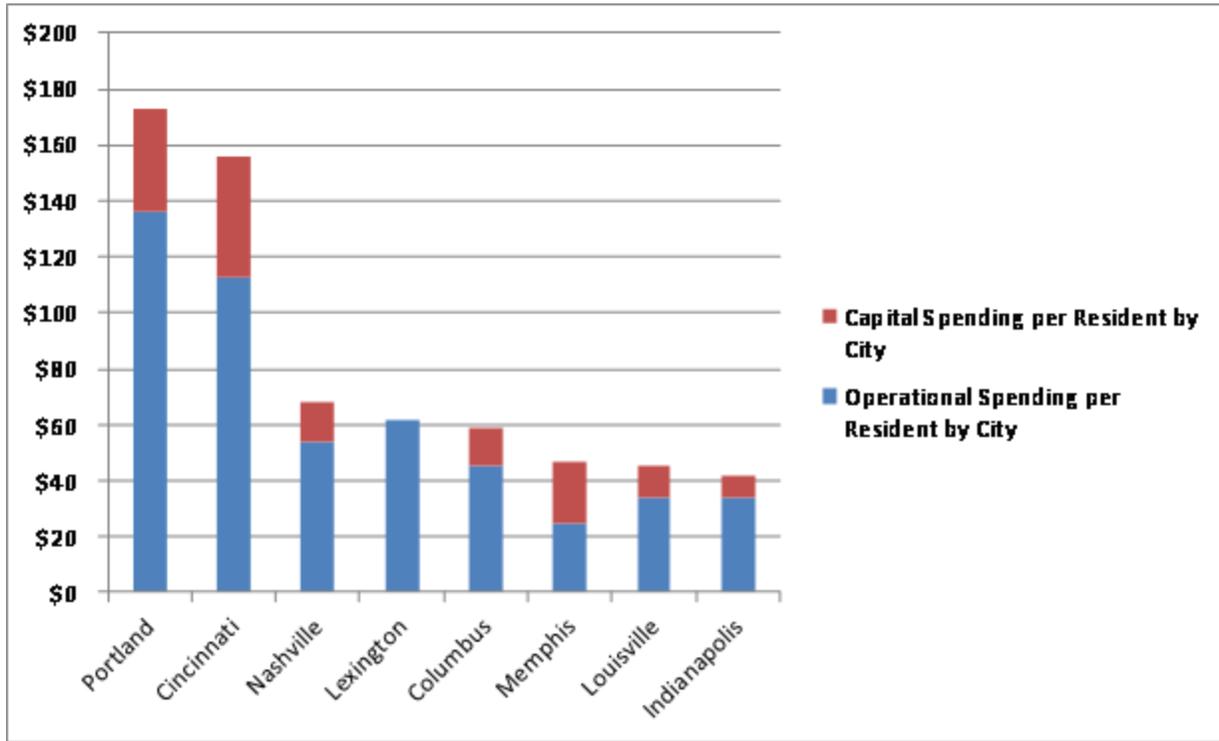
Figure 7: Acres of Parkland per 1,000 Residents



Cincinnati	4.8
Lexington	2.2
Portland	2.1
Nashville	1.9
Columbus	1.9
Memphis	1.7
Louisville	1.6
Indianapolis	1.6

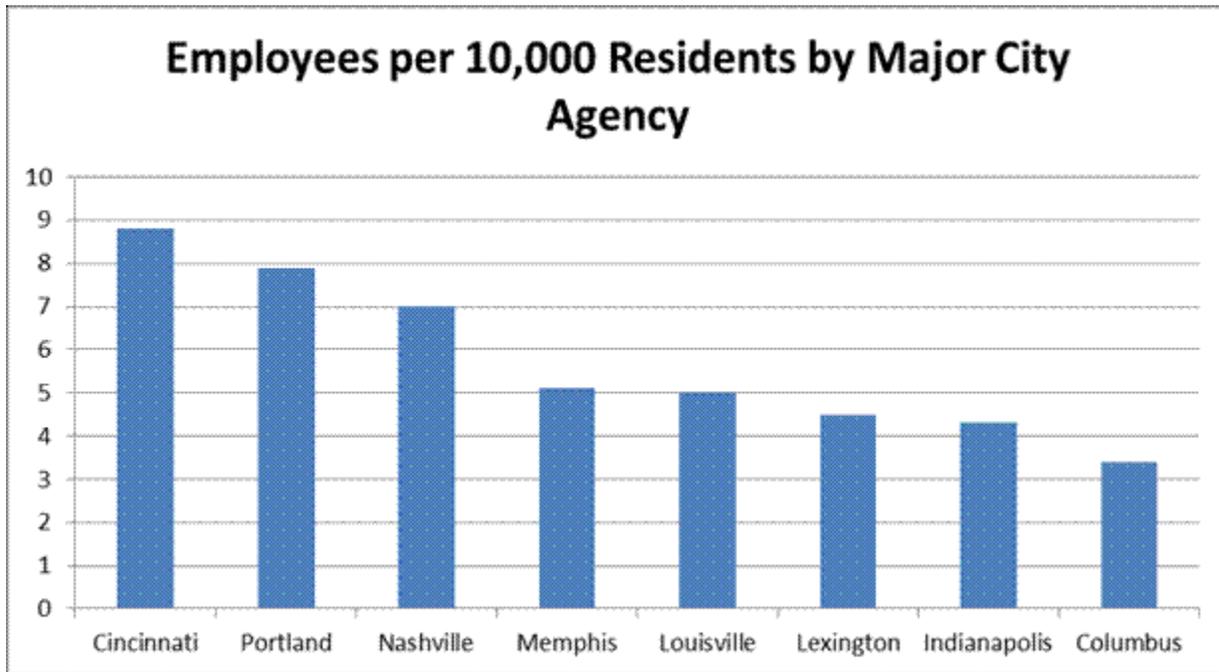
Figure 8: Park Playgrounds per 10,000 Residents

Parks is responsible for the most acres of parkland of any benchmark city, including Portland, but the table below shows that its operating capital is the second least per capita: \$34.



<u>Name</u>	<u>Capital Spending per Resident</u>	<u>Operational Spending per Resident</u>	<u>Total Spending per Resident</u>
Portland	\$37	\$136	\$173
Cincinnati	\$43	\$113	\$156
Nashville	\$14	\$54	\$69
Lexington	\$0	\$62	\$62
Columbus	\$14	\$45	\$59
Memphis	\$22	\$25	\$47
Louisville	\$11	\$34	\$45
Indianapolis	\$8	\$34	\$42

Figure 9: Total Spending per Resident by City



Cincinnati	8.8
Portland	7.9
Nashville	7
Memphis	5.1
Louisville	5
Lexington	4.5
Indianapolis	4.3
Columbus	3.4

Figure 10: Park Employees per 10,000 Residents

Examining the above data does not tell you which cities provide the best quality experiences with their parks, and we did not have the resources to make such an evaluation. However, it does show that Parks not only has the second smallest per capita funding, it also has the most acres of parkland and the 7th fewest park playgrounds per 10,000 residents. It will be difficult for Louisville to continue to identify itself as a City of Parks if it is unable to maintain its Parks infrastructure or provide the services that a first-class park system should provide.

Recommendation 22: *As stated elsewhere in the report, Parks must find significant sources of revenue other than the General Fund. []*

OPERATIONS

A. Municipal Golf Courses

In January 2012, USA Today reported that fewer Americans play golf today than in the past and Baby Boomers don't have the time, money, or interest in the game that their parents did. According to the National Golf Foundation, the number of golfers in the U. S. has fallen by 13% in the past five years and the number of golf rounds played nationwide through November 2011 was down 3.5% from the previous year. "Nationally, golf memberships have dropped by a million since the early 1990s, and of the 3,400 courses built across the country in the past

decade, 93% are daily fee courses, according to industry associations,” said USA Today. The Louisville Municipal Golf Courses are daily fee courses.

Out of the nine municipal golf courses, we personally inspected and visited five courses and we interviewed the golf pro at each course. It was our belief that after the fifth golf course visit there were several consistent themes that affected every municipal golf course managed by Parks. Thus we didn’t see the need to visit the remaining four golf courses.

After a review of the golf revenue streams which included evaluating the contract between the City and the contracted Golf Pros it appears that the current revenue model is fair and reasonable. The Golf Pros revenue must also cover all staff salaries plus some additional expenses of running the golf courses. A summary of the revenue and expense line are as follows:

- Golf Pros operate with 5-year contracts.
- Golf Pros are independent contractors with the Parks Department.
- All golf course employees except maintenance are hired by the Golf Pros and are not city employees.
- Golf Pros set and pay the salaries for all of their employees.
- Golf Pros must lease or purchase all of the golf carts. This is the primary revenue source for the Golf Pro
- Golf Pros keep all revenues from private lessons
- Revenue to run the golf courses comes from food and beverage (F&B) sales, golf cart rentals, lessons, and pro shop gear.
- Parks receives the following revenue from the Golf Pros’ gross revenue streams:
 - 10% on F&B
 - 10% on the golf range
 - 10% on cart rental
 - 1% on the pro shop gear
 - 100% of all greens fees

While it is our opinion that the current structure is a sound business model for Parks, we are not experts in golf course operations.. Having Golf Pros operate the golf courses as independent contractors seems to be working very well. It keeps them hustling for customers while providing excellent customer service. Nevertheless, given the investment Parks has in the public golf courses we believe the Mayor should consider engaging a golf operations consultant to review the business model to see how it compares with the best public golf course operations.

Recommendation 23: *The existing business model for municipal golf courses should remain intact, subject to review by an outside consultant. []*

Point of purchase equipment at golf shops is outdated. Most every golf course currently utilizes an older cash register system. Registers and processes need to be brought up to date.

Recommendation 24: *Add new cash register/computer point of purchase machines to improve accountability and reduce the possibility of cash register theft. []*

Golf has seen a slow but steady decline in participant numbers since 9-11. Several issues are contributing to the decline, including time and skill needed to play the game. Also, private course development has continued to eat into the public golf course business. Another weak

point is that the nine public golf courses only spend approximately \$6,000 combined on marketing each year. We discussed the need for a business plan and there appears not to be a plan in place to which the Golf Pros are privy. However, goals are submitted annually by the Pros to Parks leadership to be included in the overall Parks annual budget.

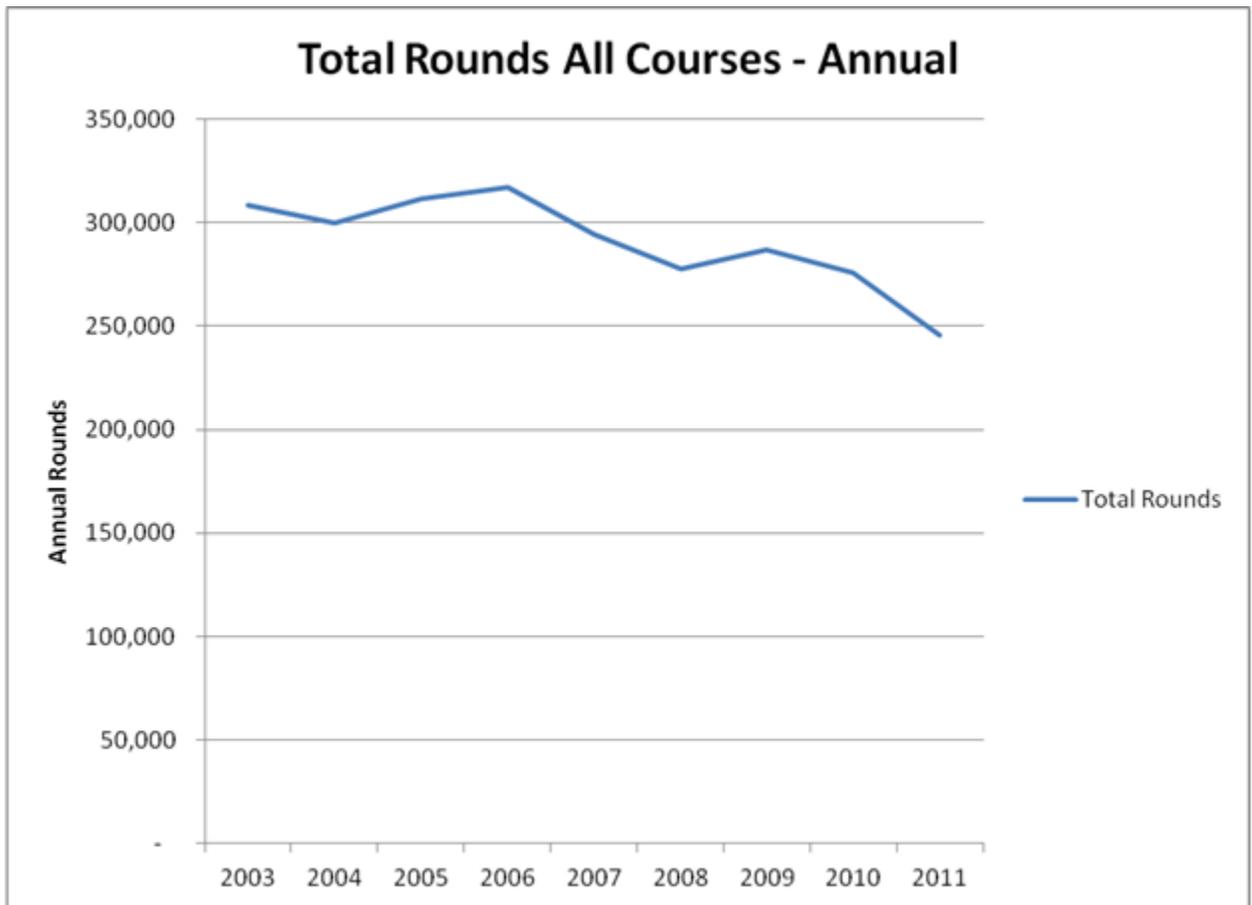


Figure 11: Total Rounds of Golf, All Courses – 2003-2011

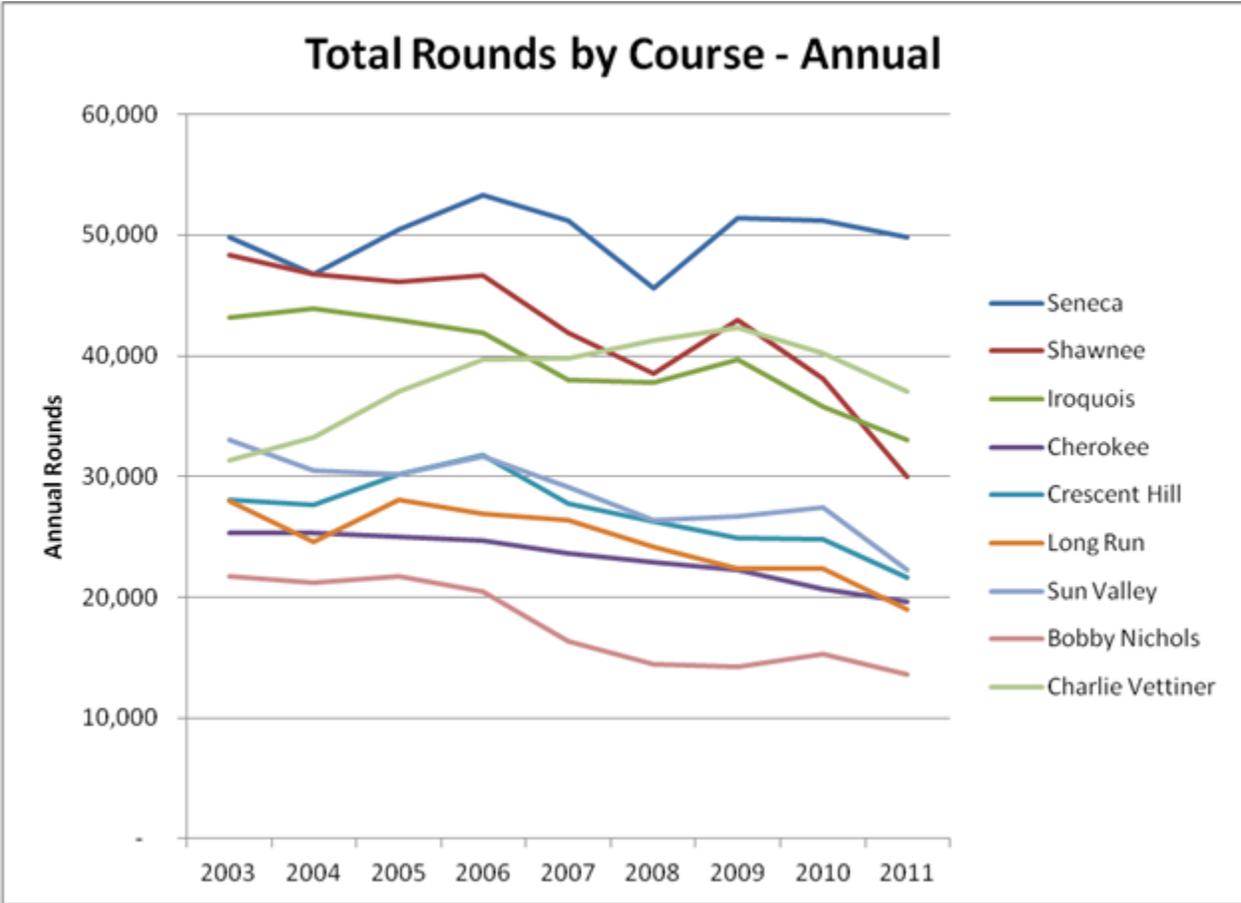


Figure 12: Total Rounds of Golf, by Course – 2003-2011



Figure 13: Total Rounds of Golf, by Course – % Change Since 2006

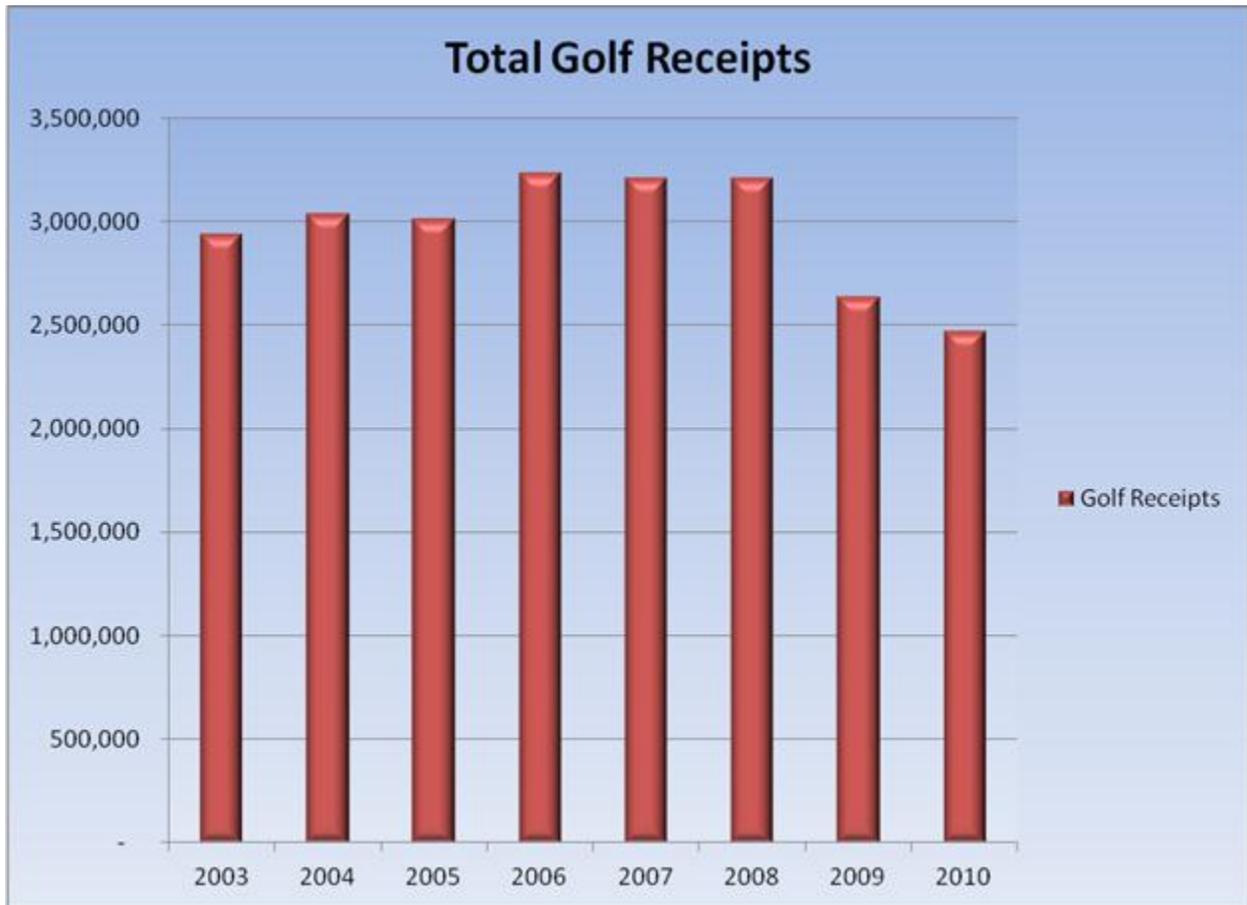


Figure 14: Total Golf Receipts – 2003-2010

Recommendation 25: *Have a 3-5-year Business Plan in place for all nine golf courses. Make sure it is reviewed twice annually by Parks leadership with the Golf Pros. This may require nine (9) individual plans under the umbrella of one over-arching Municipal Golf Courses Business Plan. []*

Recommendation 26: *The annual marketing budget (\$6,000) needs to be increased substantially in order to remain competitive for golf rounds, tournaments, etc. []*

It is the belief of the Golf Pros that Parks marketing efforts are more reactionary than strategic in regards to growing Parks’ golf business. The first major concern is the constant turnover in the Parks Marketing Division. We were surprised to hear that approximately \$6,000 annually is spent marketing the nine municipal golf courses. That is a difficult way to grow and attract new customers. The annual Metro Parks Golf Trail Pass was delivered just days before Christmas. The Pros would like to receive the Golf Trail Pass by Thanksgiving each year so that they can sell more Golf Trail Passes in time for the holidays.

Recommendations 27-32: *The following are recommendations for the golf course marketing efforts:*

- *Have the Metro Parks Golf Trail Pass delivered to each golf course by Thanksgiving each year. []*
- *As a revenue source, consider developing a gift card for usage at all golf courses which could be sold in local retail stores along with other gift cards. []*

- *Because constant turnover of staff in the Marketing Division has led to inconsistency in marketing efforts all the way around, we encourage the development of strong staff members who plan to stay in the position for an extended period of time. []*
- *The development of strategic corporate partners should be looked into. []*
- *Collect email addresses for future email blasts to the golfers about course specials or changes in operations, etc. []*
- *Develop a comprehensive social and electronic media campaign to include:*
 - *Facebook page development;*
 - *Data mining from visitors to the web site;*
 - *Online map layouts of each golf course; and*
 - *Feedback opportunities. []*

The Parks website for each golf course has an inconsistent look. Other cities elect to use one standardized template for all of their golf courses, thus making their websites more user-friendly and easier to navigate. Currently, it appears to be the responsibility of each Golf Pro to develop their individual websites.

Recommendation 33: *Develop a standardized template so that each Golf Pro can fill in the information, including photos, individual golf courses. Make sure the web link is easily accessible, even for the novice computer user. []*

We consistently heard from the Golf Pros that they have weekly conversations with the Assistant Director, especially during the peak golf season, and they hear from the Director about four times per year. However, the Golf Pros would like to be informed regarding how much Parks is investing in their respective golf courses each year.

Recommendation 34: *Senior Parks management should continue to meet with the Golf Pros in order to keep the channels of communication fluid. After the approval of the budget each fiscal year, the senior management team should communicate with each Golf Pro as to the annual investment Parks is making into each golf course. []*

Maintenance is not a direct report to the Golf Pros, which is identified as a challenge at times. Pros must rely on the Parks Maintenance Division for scheduling all ongoing maintenance and repairs of each golf course. It appears that communication is hit or miss depending upon the relationship between the individual Golf Pro and the maintenance team on site.

Recommendation 35: *We strongly recommend the implementation of a written work order system. Currently, the Golf Pros and maintenance staff meet about specific projects whenever possible but rarely are the communications from the Golf Pros to the Maintenance Division submitted in writing. Such a system will allow for better coordination of priorities between the Golf Pros and the Maintenance Division. []*

Another issue is the decline of golf course attendance during the off-season. Why do all of the golf courses stay open 12 months out of the year? With a decline in business, two questions need to be asked: (1) Should Parks close any of the existing golf courses? And (2) can Parks close several courses every winter for full-scale enhancements, maintenance, and repairs? During the course of our review we learned that there are at least two underperforming golf courses, one an 18-hole course the other a 9-hole course. Taking a more strategic look at all golf courses, Metro Parks would be better served to close the two most under-performing golf

courses. By doing so would push those golfers to other courses that could easily absorb the demand and it has the potential to help raise capital for the City budget down the road.

Recommendation 36: *A further evaluation of the declining use of the public golf courses needs to take place. A possible consolidation of one or more golf courses should strongly be considered with the closing of one 18-hole golf course and one 9-hole golf course. This will push golfers to other public golf courses. Then determine the best use for the available land. Housing development, retail, mixed use, sports field's complex, etc.*

Recommendation 37: *At least three golf courses should close between December and March each year for full-scale maintenance and repair. This will also lower costs associated with running the golf courses when demand is at its lowest of the year. Golfers will still have six choices from which to choose for their regular golf when weather permits. []*

One other overall factor is the desirability of the existing golf courses. With maintenance and repair budgets being slashed and revenues remaining flat at best, the golf courses are receiving less attention each year. It is readily noticeable in the clubhouses and the conditions of some of the holes.

Recommendation 38: *Having in place a 10-year maintenance and repair plan is essential for the survivorship of the nine public golf courses. This would be a comprehensive plan that would prioritize existing needs while rotating ongoing maintenance projects. []*

Several golf courses have extensive real estate surrounding them. Seneca Park, in particular, is the trophy course for Parks. It has 240 acres in the heart of the city, which is significantly larger land mass than most golf courses built today, whether publicly or privately-owned. Should the opportunity arise, a small piece of real estate from Seneca Park could possibly be sold for residential real estate usage, which wouldn't impact the overall golf operations.

Recommendation 39: *Consider annexing a small portion of Seneca Park for residential real estate should the economy ever turn around and the City has an opportunity to capitalize on a financial gain. []*

Maintenance takes care of all nine golf courses, plus 130 assorted sports fields. The working relationship between the Golf Pros and the Maintenance Division seems to be working well. The Turf Grass Manager meets monthly with all of the Pros while the Course Superintendent usually meets with the Golf Pro on a daily basis. A weekly maintenance schedule is properly communicated through the ranks.

After evaluating several municipal golf models, we were also told that Lexington, KY is looking to adopt Louisville's Golf Pro business model based on its effectiveness. It was also suggested that the Maintenance Superintendent be included in a yearly review of each Golf Pro.

From our analysis it is apparent that the greens fees are way too low. Maintenance would agree, as well. However, greens fees are approved by Metro Council and are tied to the Consumer Price Index.

Recommendation 40: *Develop a three-year price increase formula to bring the greens fees up to a more competitive level. Allow Parks staff (instead of Metro Council) to set the annual prices for greens fees to remove politics from the equation. []*

Maintenance believes that Public Works is “fixing” and making unnecessary repairs to equipment that does not require it, in order to grow their budget.

Recommendation 41: *A more thorough inspection of equipment needing repair should be communicated to Parks with an adequate turnaround time for when the equipment will be ready. The perception is that Public Works has more discretionary dollars to play with than do other departments. []*

Maintenance routinely scavenges for equipment in the Public Works facilities.

Recommendation 42: *Public Works should have a list with accompanying photos of any and all equipment that is not in use and could go for a useful purpose. []*

Maintenance is told each year what their annual budget will be with little to no input.

Recommendation 43: *When developing the budget, each department should submit and clearly justify any projects outside the normal business operations. []*

Central Services is doing a good job on lawn mower repair. However, some equipment is over 20-years old and replacement parts for some equipment are no longer manufactured.

Recommendation 44: *Evaluate all purchased equipment to determine if it is a better business decision to move from owning some of the equipment to leasing it. []*

B. Iroquois Amphitheater

The Iroquois Amphitheater, the official amphitheater for the Commonwealth of Kentucky, is a state-of-the-art, handicapped-accessible theater with seating for 2,407 that can stage a variety of performing arts and cultural programs. It is located in Iroquois Park.

The Iroquois Amphitheater was constructed in the spring of 1938 through federal Works Progress Administration labor. After the 2000 performance season, Parks began a renovation project to modernize the amphitheater. The renovation was completed in summer 2003, and a first full season of productions took place in 2004. Improvements include more seating, a partial roof that protects performances from rainouts while still giving the audience an open-air experience, a new stage, expanded concession options, increased number of restrooms, and a year-round room for community meetings.

The department has seven (7) total employees, four (4) FTEs and three (3) seasonal employees. The Amphitheater is also responsible for bookings at Central Park and for the Parks Rental and Reservation Office. The Rental office oversees/maintains/facilitates all ballpark rentals, site rentals, park shelters, and special events (e.g. marathons, Light Up Louisville, WorldFest, Bike-A-Thon). Staff coordinates all 122 parks with other divisions to ensure preparation for specific events. Its annual budget is about \$500,000, and the division is expected to generate about \$250,000 in revenue. Its external customers are the general public and its internal customers are primarily Metro Government agencies; for example, the Mayor’s Office when planning special events.

To be successful, staff believes that Iroquois Amphitheater needs to consistently book events, bring in revenue, increase the number of concerts and festivals, host good quality programs, and track events and attendance.

As we heard from other divisions, the staff felt that the more revenues they generated, the more their budget appropriation decreased. The four FTEs have an impact on identifying and calculating the budget. Iroquois Amphitheater receives a rental payment from promoters, a \$1 facility fee on every ticket sold, 15% of outside sales from vendors who come and set up for events (e.g. beer and food vendors), and any fees from equipment rental and labor. Usually the promoter will pay by check the night of the event, otherwise checks are sent to the downtown office. The Amphitheater does not directly receive the revenue generated from events. Nevertheless, staff feels that management provides adequate financial support for the venue.

Recommendation 45: *Keep track of all participating vendors and request a report of sales breakdowns to ensure the compensation based on the 15% outside sale is accurate.* []

Management feels that the Amphitheater understands and is included in the Strategic Plan. Management also feels that Parks is moving in a good direction, is setting goals, and getting better.

The Amphitheater identifies its biggest challenges as being staffing, equipment, and updating/maintaining facilities and systems (e.g. lighting and sound).

The Amphitheater identifies environmental and public education as being a departmental challenge but necessary tool to better communicate Parks' offerings to the public.

The Amphitheater Manager stated that the areas of improvement are growth in attendance, adequate laborers, hosting winter events, and buying unplanned equipment.

Communication is good between the Amphitheater and Parks senior management. The Amphitheater Manager meets with Assistant Director once a week, receives input, and trusts the employees. However, ways to improve communication between the Amphitheater and the rest of Parks should be considered. The Amphitheater Manager's relationship with area Metro Councilpersons is good and they sponsor several events. The Amphitheater does not conduct, but has discussed implementing, surveys.

Recommendation 46: *The Amphitheater, and other Parks operations, should prepare an annual budget that is based on reasonably expected revenue and expenses, without balancing numbers. It should also develop a business plan that reflects its vision of Amphitheater operations.* []

We heard from other divisions that there are multiple recreation agreements with many leagues throughout the city. There may be some inconsistencies with the recreation agreements currently in place. Also, an evaluation of price is in order. For example, Trinity High School rents Thurman Hutchins Park for baseball for six (6) months for \$600. Though Trinity makes some improvements to the fields, the rental agreement seems light.

Recommendation 47: *Independently audit all recreation agreements to ensure they are consistent and in compliance.* []

Recommendation 48: *Independently audit all rental agreements. Evaluate the rental price structure to ensure that Parks is charging a fair price. []*

Recommendation 49: *While the Amphitheater may be well-known throughout the community, the availability to rent out the space for various types of events may not be as well known. Efforts should be made to publicize the facility and its availability. Not only should this be included on the Parks website (including pictures of events), but also directly marketed to large local businesses and to the Convention & Visitors Bureau because this is an asset to the community that could be used for corporate and convention functions. []*

Recommendation 50: *While the Amphitheater appears to be a reasonably well-run operation, we think the Mayor should consider appointing a committee or engaging a consultant to determine the most efficient and productive use of this valuable asset.. []*

C. Central Services

Central Services is responsible for improving and preserving the department's assets in order for Parks to provide safe and attractive parks, grounds, facilities and recreation areas to the citizens of Metro Louisville. There are approximately 30 employees under the Central Service Managers supervision. Central Services includes skilled tradesmen such as plumbers, electricians, shop mechanics, and cemetery workers. They provide specialized maintenance for facilities and swimming pools and provide signage for all parks and park facilities. If a situation arises where a job is requested that is beyond the skills of Maintenance staff, Central Services is contacted and a skilled tradesman is requested. If Central Services does not possess the necessary skill set on staff, then the work is contracted out to a vendor following Louisville Metro Procurement Policy. In addition to the services listed above, Central Services also coordinates with Public Works to provide snow removal services for 11 routes throughout Louisville Metro.

Recommendation 51: *Currently Parks has no in-house labor to repair the HVAC systems in their facilities. This work is contracted out to vendors, and it is expensive. Parks should consider if it would be feasible to hire sufficient staff skilled in repairing HVAC systems. []*

Central Services has four (4) mechanics on-site who repair and upkeep equipment used to maintain Parks properties. Equipment brought in to the Helm Avenue shop is manually logged into a folder. The folder documents the type of equipment, name and division of the person delivering the equipment, and date that the equipment was received in the shop. The Central Services Manager stated that most of the maintenance or repairs to the equipment are completed in a timely manner. The need to order additional parts not in stock may cause a delay and/or drive up the cost of the repair.

Recommendation 52: *Equipment should be standardized whenever possible to create economies of scale and make it easier to provide consistent service. []*

Requests for maintenance are made via email or phone. The request is entered into the computer and a work order is created. A supervisor assigns the work order to either a skilled tradesman or a shop mechanic. Once the work is completed, the work order is closed out in the computer and is signed by appropriate personnel. Completed work orders are filed by division and alphabetically. Also, shop mechanics and skilled tradesmen are required to fill out Daily

Work Reports to list a description of repairs completed during the day, and the time and location of the repair. This is submitted daily and filed by employee, by date. There are smaller maintenance shops located at the golf courses and East and West regions which perform minor maintenance assistance. Central Services is called upon for any specialized maintenance assistance required. The Central Services Manager stated there are times when skilled tradesmen are called out to perform jobs that the maintenance shop should be able to do (e.g. changing light bulbs).

Recommendation 53: *Parks should ensure skilled tradesmen are used in an effective and efficient manner. []*

Central Services has no maintenance schedule in place for the equipment used to maintain the parks, grounds, and facilities. The equipment is fixed as needed. However, they do perform winter maintenance checks on the landscaping equipment in anticipation of the cutting season.

Recommendation 54: *Central Services should implement a preventative maintenance schedule to provide care and service to extend the life of the equipment. This would allow for the detection and correction of incipient failures either before they occur or before they develop into major defects. Additional resources may be needed. []*

Central Services maintains a significant amount of inventory materials on hand for particular projects. Inventory materials used for particular projects are tracked in the Chevin inventory system. Inventory items are stored in a locked, secure area. The materials shipped to Central Services are entered into the Chevin system by the storekeeper. Materials used for particular projects are listed on the internal work order and a storage requisition (S&R) form that is given to the storekeeper once the work is completed. Using the Chevin system, the storekeeper uses this information to charge out the inventory materials used in the project.

Central Services does an internal verification of driver's license for employees that are required to have the appropriate license for their work duties. This is done in addition to the license verification performed by Human Resources. Verification is performed for employees in positions requiring a Commercial Driver's License to ensure compliance with requirements and to ensure the licensee has the applicable updates.

D. Cemetery

Parks administers respectful indigent burial services to the public free of charge on behalf of Louisville Metro Government. Central Services has two (2) people assigned to cemeteries. Central Services coordinates with the Coroner's Office to retrieve the bodies. The indigent burials take place at Meadow View Cemetery. Parks will also perform burials at Portland Cemetery for a nominal fee (\$645). In addition, they will perform a disinterment from Meadow View Cemetery to Portland Cemetery for a fee (\$1,000). Parks maintains the grounds at Meadow View Cemetery, as well as the grounds at Manslick, River Valley, and Western Cemeteries, which all are full. The Parks Administrator estimates that it costs approximately \$900 per day to perform the burials, including equipment, supplies, and labor. He would like to see this service stay within Parks and feels that progress has been made over the years.

Recommendation 55: *It was reported in the New York Times that coroners across the country are reporting spikes in the number of unclaimed bodies and indigent burials, with states and counties having to foot the bill when families cannot. Many places are*

turning to cremation, which averages one third to half the price of a burial. Parks should consider cremation as a preferred alternative to burial. []

E. Information Technology

We met with the acting supervisor for the Information Technology (or, “IT”) Division of Parks. Parks is currently interviewing for the vacant position. Parks IT has two (2) full-time positions and one (1) permanent part-time position. Parks IT is responsible for all technical assistance relating to Parks computers. Staff is well-aware of the deficiencies regarding computers at the Community Centers.

Replacement and purchase of computers is the responsibility of the Metro Technology Department (or, “Technology”). There is a policy regarding replacements and Technology will not support computers over a certain age. When we inquired about the possibility of the Community Centers receiving donated computers, we were informed that any donated computer would have to be approved by Technology before Parks could accept them.

The supervisor was aware of the Kids Trax System (discussed later in this report) but had not reviewed it. Parks IT supports Class System software relating to reservations, Hanson System software that supports Metro Call, Point of Sales System software relating to golf, and Road Base System software that tracks other Parks assets.

There seems to be a good relationship between Parks IT and Technology, and there are regularly scheduled meetings.

***Recommendation 56:** Given the recommendations made elsewhere in this report concerning expanding technology in the Community Centers and at the Golf Sites, we recommend that the vacant manager position be filled. []*

East Operations/West Operations

We interviewed the East Operations Manager and West Operations Manager separately and received similar information. Both have been with Parks for more than 20 years.

Their responsibility is to provide maintenance for the parks, grounds, and buildings in their respective divisions. These activities primarily include:

- Cutting grass (including traffic islands)
- Picking up trash
- Keeping up yards
- Delivering bleachers for special events (e.g. Derby)
- Managing rentals for the lodge in George Rogers Park and various other shelters
- Maintaining buildings, lodges, community centers, and Iroquois Amphitheater

The East district budget is approximately \$2,800,000, the West \$3,800,000. These Divisions do generate some revenue, which goes to the general Parks fund.

Their staff is composed of fairly senior union employees and both report a good working relationship with the union. This was confirmed by the union representative we interviewed.

The two primary challenges appear to be adequate staffing and equipment. In recent years, their budgets have typically been reduced by 5-10%. Both divisions have significant difficulty in having enough man hours to do the necessary work and the budget cuts add to the problem.

The lack of equipment is the most critical challenge. The Fleet Services Division of Public Works does not operate as they understand that it should. They understand that there should be an amortized amount on equipment to replace outdated equipment (e.g. mowers and vehicles). This has not been their experience. Vehicles in service are kept an extraordinarily long time and the service is expensive. They believe that, in many cases, it would be cheaper and quicker to take the vehicles to Jiffy Lube, but they are not authorized to do so. This matter only gets worse with the seriousness of the vehicles' service needs. A specific issue is that the East is short on king cabs and trucks. They have been held up for a long time and are currently with the snow crews and there has been no snow.

Both managers believe their relationships with third parties such as the union and other Metro Agencies are good. Some issues do arise from time to time with the Olmsted Conservancy, as was indicated in our conversations with Olmsted. Olmsted felt that some of the maintenance work, specifically grass cutting, did not meet Olmsted's standards, whereas the maintenance managers felt that some of Olmsted's fixtures are aesthetically tailored to the 1890's, extremely costly, and not a great use of limited resources.

***Recommendation 57:** Parks and Public Works should review the vehicle maintenance policies and procedures to ensure that the vehicle amortization process is followed and that Fleet Services is keeping vehicles for only the time necessary to properly service the vehicle. []*

***Recommendation 58:** Public Works should review its pricing policies to determine if it is passing on costs higher than the market, and, if so, Parks and other Metro agencies should be given some flexibility to look to other service providers. []*

***Recommendation 59:** As stated in another section of this Report, Parks and Olmsted Conservancy need to work on their communication with one another, as Olmsted is a valuable Parks partner on the one hand, but Parks has limited resources on the other. []*

F. Tennis

Tennis is an area on which we did not focus. However, it does appear to be an area that has significant potential for generating income while providing a recreation option enjoyed by many. We did receive some good comments from an avid tennis player knowledgeable of Parks tennis operations. Overall, the comments were favorable but a few suggestions were made. We passed those comment on to the Assistant Director of Operations and, by and large, he agreed with them and added a few comments of his own. We think some of the comments are worth passing on in this report as recommendations.

The Head Tennis Pro manages the Louisville Tennis Center across from the Zoo. He conducts clinics, has facility-based leagues, conducts the Falls City tournament, and hosts summer USTA league play. We have been told that he does an excellent job with the Center.

There are several Community Tennis Associations (or, "CTAs") that use Park facilities, two of which are facility-based. The West Louisville CTA, which uses the Chickasaw Park facility, holds a tournament in June, conducts clinics, and has a strong youth program. Players

travel as far as Nashville to play competitive tennis. The Newburg CTA uses the Newburg courts. They have a strong youth program and also conduct a tournament each year.

The Louisville Tennis Association (LTA) has the largest presence in the parks. LTA manages the adult Tri-Level League. Last year matches were scheduled across the county at parks such as Fern Creek, George Rogers Clark, and the new courts at Central Park. LTA conducts clinics in many parks such as Tyler, Highview, and Fern Creek. Every year LTA distributes over 10,000 flyers in the schools to determine interest. The parks chosen for clinics are based on the response to the flyers. LTA also conducts Junior Team Tennis leagues in the parks.

Currently, with the exception of the tri-level program, USTA outdoor summer league play, which includes mixed doubles and combo, does not use Metro Parks facilities. Tri-level represents less than 20% of summer league play.

Louisville has multiple opportunities to host state and regional championships. Currently, the Metro Parks courts are not used for these competitions. Seneca used to be used, and the courts are in such condition that they can be used.

The Louisville area has received a \$100,000 USTA grant (over three years) to develop “10 and Under” tennis programs. These programs use shorter nets and racquets and foam balls to get kids playing tennis quickly. Up to four youth matches can be conducted at one time on a regulation tennis court. The business plan calls for a multifaceted approach to reach children, with Parks tennis courts as the key component of summer play. USTA representatives are currently at work with Assistant Director to redo the two (2) courts in the California neighborhood and to line courts in the existing parks for youth matches. Both of these items would be done at USTA expense.

Recommendations 60-66: *The following are recommendations for Tennis:*

- *Streamline permit processes. The current process for applying for a permit to use Parks courts for organized leagues is cumbersome and generates more paper than necessary. []*
- *Develop a procedure for posting the use of courts for organized play on-site so that recreational players know when and which courts are open for play. []*
- *Establish a system to receive and process maintenance requests. Nets come loose, unchecked weeds erode surfaces, and light bulbs need to be replaced. []*
- *Have a section on the Parks website for announcing tennis events, processing registration, and similar information. []*
- *Create a tennis business plan. Parks must decide what role it wants to play with respect to tennis (facilities management, program provider, a mix thereof) to generate enough income from the courts to provide for their maintenance. []*
- *Focus on developing partners who can provide operational and revenue assistance. For example, instructional clinic participants can form teams and play in USTA leagues. The Louisville Tennis Association should pay a fee to Parks to be used for general maintenance. []*
- *Consider new fees and charges policies. It is not uncommon for outside groups to host leagues without first obtaining a permit, or for tennis professionals to give private lessons without a court reservation. Develop a fine structure or other mechanism for penalizing those who violate park policy on court usage. []*

PARK RESOURCES

A. Natural Areas

The Parks Administrator for Natural Areas has been with Parks for 11 years in resource management. There are 15 FTEs under his supervision. Natural Areas is responsible for:

- Jefferson Memorial Forest, a 6,000-plus acre park that provides nature-based educational programs for more than 20,000 people (primarily kids) and welcomes in upwards of 150,000 visitors each year.
- Beargrass Creek Greenway
- Caperton Swamp
- Fairdale Mini Park
- Fairmont Falls Park
- Kilmer Reserve
- Waverly Park
- Clifton Heights Greenway
- Louisville Loop (Off-road)

The mission of the Natural Areas Division is "to offer the highest quality outdoor recreation, nature-based education, and resource management." As with other Parks divisions, lack of funding is a serious issue. The recent budget cuts have resulted in an effort to focus on finding efficiencies to fund activities and initiatives.

One promising area on which they are focused is the Louisville ECO (Louisville is Engaging Children Outdoors) program, which is of great interest to the school system. This could result in increased revenues and funding grants and an increase in volunteers for the Natural Areas Division. The Parks Administrator for Natural Areas also believes there should be a marketing emphasis on the educational aspects of Natural Areas and a focused effort to develop a group of "friends" to raise money for capital projects.

Consistent with comments from other divisions, the Parks Administrator for Natural Areas also felt that communications between and about the various Parks divisions could be improved. In that regard, there is some concern as to whether the Parks strategic plan should be reviewed and what the relative level of Forestry is in the plan. He pointed out that there is a trend in outdoor activities. Also of concern to him is the salary compression problem of staff being compensated at a higher rate than supervisors or of people with the same responsibilities and work load but with different titles and different pay.

***Recommendation 67:** Develop better lines of communication between executive management, supervisors, and line staff and, also, between divisions. []*

***Recommendation 68:** Include Forestry in the Parks marketing program and emphasize the educational aspects of the Forestry and Natural Areas Divisions. []*

***Recommendation 69:** Develop a plan to deal with the salary compression issue and make the plan known to all Parks employees. []*

B. Forestry & Landscape Management

There are a total of seven (7) Landscaping employees, two (2) of whom are supervisors. Their primary duties are tree planting and maintenance. There are a total of 10 Forestry employees. Their primary duties are maintaining mature trees up to 20 years old. Between the two groups, 80% of the employees are certified arborists or landscapers.

Landscaping staff is planting and replacing trees on an average of 300 per year without a budget. There is no allocated funding for tree planting. The survival rate of trees after 3 years is 97%.

The National Forestry Standard planning guideline provides that each tree should be examined every three (3) years for safety. With its current staff, Parks is only able to examine each tree approximately every 15 years, which constitutes a safety hazard. In 2011, with six (6) employees, only 1,000 out of 15,000 trees were properly maintained. These trees are located in the parks and parkways (not forest trees). All 15,000 needed attention. Maintenance by the department is 50% proactive, 30% by Metro Council request, and 20% due to emergencies.

***Recommendation 70:** Develop a tree maintenance plan. Acquire and implement the DAVEEY-TREE KEEPER software package to create a tree maintenance database. []*

***Recommendation 71:** The positions in Forestry are skilled positions, with various qualifications required. This is why historically the positions have been hard to fill. The question that should be asked is whether the same worker qualifications are required if the only responsibility is examining the trees. If not, then perhaps some seasonal positions could be used to take care of the backlog in examining the trees. The pool of applicants for this could be drawn from employees of private tree services during their down time. []*

Discussions with Forestry & Landscaping, as well as other Parks divisions, indicated some communications issues.

***Recommendation 72:** Encourage and monitor communication among the various Parks divisions. For example, Landscaping should know some of what Recreation is doing, and Recreation should know some of what Forestry is doing. []*

***Recommendation 73:** Implement a process to alert all departments of job openings, employees leaving Parks, and similar newsworthy items of interest. []*

***Recommendation 74:** Every Parks division should be familiar with the Parks strategic plan, how each division fits within that plan, and plan status. Some divisions, including Forestry & Landscaping, have developed their own plans but are not certain that upper management is aware of them. []*

Again, similar to comments heard elsewhere, there is concern over the retirement of Assistant Director and whether he will be replaced.

***Recommendation 75:** Develop a management succession policy. []*

The single biggest concern of Forestry & Landscaping is insufficient revenues to carry out its mission.

Recommendation 76: Here, as in the other Parks divisions, it is imperative that creative thought be given to generating revenues. It is feasible that some of the Division's expertise in landscaping and forestry could be put to commercial use. Understandably, Metro Government may not want to compete with local landscapers and gardeners, but it may be feasible to supply trees and plants to other parks throughout Kentucky and Southern Indiana. []

COMMUNITY CENTERS

This section relates to the 11 Community Centers that do not fall under special programs. They are: Cyril Allgeier Center, Baxter, Parkhill, Shelby Park, Beechmont, Newburg, California, Portland, South Louisville, Southwick, and Sun Valley. Two of these Community Centers are housed within Housing Authority sites.

Our review consisted of interviewing the Administrator of Recreation over the Community Centers and the two Recreation Managers. We also performed four site visits to Community Centers (Shelby Park, Beechmont, South Louisville and Southwick), where we interviewed the site supervisors and took a tour of the facilities. We were provided with information concerning programming, staffing, financial budgets, expenditures, and revenue.

We also interviewed several Metro employees of other departments that work either with youth programming or with the Community Centers.

A. Facilities

As stated above, we visited four of the Centers. Only two (South Louisville and Southwick) were actually built to be used as Community Centers. Shelby Park was originally a library and Beechmont was a school. Because the two repurposed buildings are old, they are in need of repair and are not really conducive to the activities of a Community Center. Because of budget cuts over the past several years, the recreational staff assumed the responsibility of cleaning the facilities. The Centers that we visited were clean; however, in older buildings this task becomes more difficult.

Many of the Community Centers are aging and, therefore, need repairs. This is another example of Parks' significant deferred maintenance problem. Also, the cost of utilities is not included in the Community Centers' budgets. Utility costs are paid for out of the Parks budget, not out of the Recreation budget. Because of the limited funds available, realistically there is little to recommend as it relates to upgrading the facilities.

Recommendation 77: A detailed assessment should be performed as to the repairs/cost needed at the Centers. []

Recommendation 78: Any analysis of the cost of Recreation programs needs to include the cost to run the facilities. []

Recommendation 79: Keep the Community Centers repaired as much as possible and continue to be on guard for potential health issues such as mold. []

B. Staffing

Staffing at the Community Centers ranges from a high of 240 regular staff hours per week to a low of 80 staff hours per week. According to the Recreation Administrator, the Community Centers are opened at least 44 hours per week with an average of 2.7 staff members at the Centers when they are open. Because of the configuration of many of the Centers, with staffing at this level a great deal of the staff time is utilized monitoring the activities in the various rooms instead of conducting programs or otherwise interacting with the users or potential users of the Centers. One of the responsibilities of Center Managers is to go out into the community to determine what programs are wanted and needed. It is hard to do that if you basically spend the day guarding the Centers. With current financial restraints, there is little opportunity to increase paid staff in the near future.

***Recommendation 80:** Each Center should review its participation roster to determine if there are times when the Centers are being underutilized. Perhaps hours of operation could be reduced without a large negative impact to users. []*

Staff members at the Centers have individual talents. If hours at the Centers are adjusted, then there may be an opportunity to “share the talent” among the Centers without shortchanging any of the “home centers.”

***Recommendation 81:** Parks should explore the possibility having staff with specific talents conduct programs at other Centers. This would increase the programming at the Centers with no additional costs. []*

C. Technology

To say that technology at the Community Centers needs to be upgraded is an understatement. Many of the computers at the Centers connected to the internet still function by dial-up. Because of this limitation, access to computers is limited to staff, and the number of programs that can be utilized is limited. The computers at the Centers are outdated. A number of years ago, when the Community Centers were renovated, wiring was done to setup computer labs at the Centers. Because of limited upgrades in technology, these labs are unused.

While it would probably be cost prohibitive to run fiber optic cable to those Centers that do not have it, each of the Centers has cable television hook-ups. Since cable operators now offer internet connections, Parks should explore the cost involved in accessing the internet through this method. This should be able to be accomplished without risking Metro Government’s computer system.

***Recommendation 82:** Explore the cost involved in upgrading to cable internet connections. []*

If this is accomplished, the next challenge is to furnish the actual hardware needed. This could be a two prong approach. The first need is for the computers used by staff to be upgraded. Since the level of technology needed at the Community Centers is not as great as other areas of Metro Government, this could be handled by the “hand me down” method. As other computers in government are upgraded to handle larger programs, those older, but usable computers could be reassigned to Centers staff. There is also a need for computers that would be utilized by Centers patrons. This is not a duplication of the function of the Library, but should be viewed as a supplement. For this we recommend that Metro Government contact the private sector and request that as they upgrade the computers at their businesses, they consider donating their

usable computers to the Community Centers. This could be considered a win-win. The businesses could receive tax write-offs for their donations, recognition (perhaps their company names on the computer lab), and it would also save the cost of disposing of the old equipment.

***Recommendation 83:** Upgrade Community Centers staff computers by the “hand me down” method as older computers in other areas of Metro Government are upgraded. []*

***Recommendation 84:** Upgrade Community Centers patron computers by soliciting “hand me down” computers from the private sector. []*

This is not a recommendation to open the computer labs at the Centers to supplement the game rooms that are already there. These labs should be used as an educational tool which would dovetail into the Mayor's educational theme. While many of the Community Centers are within walking distance to the youth, it would supplement the access to the internet and thus its educational value.

***Recommendation 85:** Use Community Centers computer labs to help achieve the Mayor’s education initiatives. []*

D. Needs Assessment

From the documents we reviewed, and the interviews conducted, it became obvious that Community Centers have different needs and serve different populations. As stated above under Staffing, there needs to be an analysis done to determine whether or not the Centers are open at the appropriate hours. We were shown a Recreation Plan, and also documents reflecting additional programs being considered.

***Recommendation 86:** Conduct a survey at the individual centers to determine the programs in which patrons are interested. This should include a listing of the programs and whether or not they would be willing to pay a fee to participate. The results could then be tabulated by age group to determine the interests of certain programs, by center. []*

E. Programming

For this section of our review we examined individual Community Center schedules, the Recreation Plan, and a listing of various programs with associated costs. We also interviewed Parks employees and employees of Metro Public Health and Community Services.

Everyone agrees that there needs to be more structured programs at the Community Centers. However, the key is to accomplish this objective with little or no additional Metro general fund dollars. One key is to do a better job linking programs that are already available.

An obstacle in determining the needs of the patrons at the Centers is the record keeping. The staff produces reports as to participation; however, this is all done manually. Participants are required to sign in and this information is manually tabulated, and transferred to forms. It was impossible to tell whether a patron counted as a “sign in” was also counted under various programs. This system also cannot track the actual number of different users at the Centers.

***Recommendation 87:** Perform a detailed “mapping” of all programs that are offered in Community Centers neighborhoods. This includes programs that are offered by non-*

profit groups for seniors, youth, and adults. Particular attention should be given to areas that are in close proximity to the Community Centers. []

If Parks is interested in improving the recreation programs offered in this community, it cannot afford duplications. For example, if the Boys and Girls Club runs programs in Newburg, should the Newburg Community Center be running youth programs, as well? Could resources be better used running senior programs? We are not recommending reducing expenditures, just redirecting them.

Recommendation 88: *Explore linkages with educational institutions. This includes Jefferson County Public Schools and the University of Louisville. If there is a recreation major at U of L, intern opportunities should be explored. []*

Another area that should be explored is the program through Metro United Way that recruits volunteers. There are many citizens in this community who have particular talents that they may be willing to share. Volunteers not only increase the opportunity to offer quality programs to more people but help alleviate the short-staff problem. It is entirely possible that each Center could recruit a volunteer to serve as a volunteer coordinator.

Recommendation 89: *Explore with community organizations opportunities to recruit volunteer coordinators for each Community Center. []*

In our meeting with Metro Public Health employees, we reached the conclusion that there could be better linkages between the two departments. Currently there is an agreement (though the memorandum of understanding has not been signed) to fund exercise programs. However, there was general agreement among the staff that additional programs could be conducted at the Community Centers. These programs would dovetail into the “Mayor’s Healthy Hometown” programs. The advantage of these linkages is that it would not only benefit the patrons of the Community Centers, but it would be programming that would not cost any additional funds since many of these programs are funded by grants. These Public Health and Wellness programs should be included in the survey of Centers patrons (see ***Recommendation 86***).

The Administrator with the Department of Community Services, among other duties, has responsibility for Youth Development and several Senior Programs. Most of our meeting centered on a program called “Kids Trax.” While the program came up in our meeting with the Recreation Administrator, this meeting presented us with more information. The Administrator with the Department of Community Services informed us that most non-profits conducting youth programs already utilize the program. A brief summary of the program is that it links with Jefferson County Public Schools and can document whether participation in youth programs improves attendance and grades at school. It also can be used to track attendance at the Community Centers.

The Administrator with the Department of Community Services informed us that Metro Government has been awarded 20 licenses at no charge. In his discussions with Parks, the Administrator with the Department of Community Services has agreed to install Kids Trax in two of the Community Centers as a test. We feel that after correction of the computer problems (mainly the internet connection problem) discussed above, Kids Trax should be installed in all of the Centers. Parks should take advantage of receiving this program at little cost. Not only would this enable Centers staff the ability to track patrons but also to analyze which programs benefit youth development and which do not. Kids Trax appears to be the state-of-the-art program for

measuring whether particular programs have a positive effect on youth performance at school. This program fits the Mayor's 55,000 Degrees initiative and supports a vision that should be enthusiastically adopted and cultivated by Parks.

***Recommendation 90:** Expand the Kids Trax program to install it in all Community Centers. []*

F. Budget

During the course of our interviews, the amount of money available for programming was constantly discussed. For Fiscal Year 2011-2012, the total budget for Community Centers is \$1,845,100. The General Fund accounts for \$1,690,300 (92%). The remaining \$154,800 (8%) is funded through Agency Receipts. A report prepared by the Parks Business Manager, which we reviewed, also projects a surplus of about \$260,000 in personnel costs available to be utilized for non-personnel expenditures. To cloud the issue a bit more, there are projected agency receipts in the Summer Camp program for FY 2011-2012. This is hard to verify because the Summer Program crosses fiscal years (camps begin on June 6 and conclude on July 29).

In examining the financial statements, we noticed that the only utility cost included in the budget is telephone and data services. The gas and electric bills are paid out of another account within the Parks budget. We recommend that these bills be paid out of individual Community Centers' budgets. This would not have a negative impact on their budgets because, obviously, the budget for the utilities would be transferred into the Centers' budgets. The benefit of this change would be twofold. First, it would reflect the true cost of operating the Centers, and second, there would be an incentive for staff to conserve energy wherever possible because it would be coming out of their budgets.

***Recommendation 91:** Account for the gas and electric costs of operating the Community Centers by paying the utility bills from the Community Centers' budgets, not from the Metro Parks budget. []*

Program income has historically been considered a "plug figure." For FY 2010-2011, the agency receipts for Community Centers were approximately \$77,500, less than half of what is currently budgeted. However, it should be noted that this is considerably less than had been generated the previous fiscal year. Some of the Community Centers consistently come close to, or make, their budgets for Agency Receipts.

With the tight financial restraints, a greater emphasis needs to be placed on generating program income. Fees should be reevaluated and charged when appropriate. Grants should be pursued; sponsorships should be explored. The Parks Director has stated that in order to continue to improve the parks system, they must reduce the reliance on tax dollars because there will probably not be any significant increases in tax dollars allocated in the near future. Recreation should follow this philosophy. Pursuing the concept of generating income and in-kind donations for the Community Centers may require a change in attitude. The current attitude appears to be, "Why generate income? It will only result in a reduced budget next year."

***Recommendation 92:** Facilitate a real cultural change within Community Centers, one that drives entrepreneurship towards the end goal of generating new revenues. Reassess the fee structure for use of the Centers and programs. []*

Recommendation 93: Review the budgeting process for Community Centers, Athletics, and virtually all Parks divisions. A casual review demonstrates that the revenue item, “Agency Receipts” is often not realistic, all expenses are not charged to a particular project, and an oral explanation is required to understand results. Properly prepared budgets are useful management tools. []

ATHLETICS

The Athletics Division has five (5) full-time positions, three (3) of which were filled at the time of our interview. They have 35 seasonal positions. Seventeen (17) of these are designated as Officials and Security. The FY 2011-12 budget reflects a General Fund appropriation of \$95,700 and recreation receipts of \$155,200. While it is impossible for us to make year-end projections based on our review, it should be noted that the reports given through mid-January showed 60% of the budget had been expended but only two calculate the cost of officials and only 5% of the recreation receipts had been received. It was explained to us that registration for softball in the spring will bring in additional funds. However, it should be noted that Athletics overspent its budget last fiscal year.

Athletics is divided into seven (7) different areas. Youth Athletics is run in conjunction with the Community Centers, and no fees are attached to these activities. Adult Athletics (leagues) are run by this division, and there is a fee attached to the registration. Recreation on the Go is a program that has a fee attached to it and has various activities associated with the program. Another category is the relationship that has been developed with Jefferson County Public Schools to administer various sports programs for middle school students. There is a fee paid to Parks for this service. The other two activities are Health Initiatives and the Reds Rookie Success Program. Athletics is also responsible for Parks vans.

We were provided with “business plans” for the different programs. We asked how the fees were determined and were told that they calculate the cost of officials, tee-shirts, and trophies.

There was also discussion that they felt programs could be expanded if they received support in publicizing them and were given more seasonal slots. Based on the documents that we received, there were a number of seasonal positions vacant; however, we realize that this is not their busy season.

Overall, we think that with appropriate support the manager of this Division has the experience and knowledge to take these programs to the next level.

Recommendations 94-98: The following are recommendations for Athletics:

- *A complete review needs to be done of all fees charged for programs run by Athletics. This should include a comparison of fees charged by other entities. When establishing fees, both direct and overhead costs should be considered. A goal should be set that within the next year or two this Division should be run completely on Agency Receipts, without the support of General Fund. []*
- *Another division of Parks is responsible for issuing permits for events and for Parks facilities rentals. Once new fees are established, a handout should be developed that would provide citizens with a list of activities that are available for their events. []*
- *On the same point, the Parks website should include these activities and prices under*

both Recreation and under facility rentals so that the public understands what is available. []

- *Since this review is taking place in a “down season,” it is impossible to determine whether or not additional staff is needed. However, since any cost associated with seasonal employees should be funded by Agency Receipts, not the general fund, this possibility should be explored to determine need. If the goal is to “grow the business,” then staff needs to be available to fulfill obligations. Seasonal positions are obviously preferred over full-time positions because Athletics would only need to pay seasonal employees as needed. []*
- *The same budget process recommendations for community centers (see **Recommendations 91-93**) should be considered for Athletics. []*

SUMMER YOUTH PROGRAM

The bulk of the Summer Youth Program is an eight (8)-week day camp program for youth ages 6-12, and a “Teen Camp” for youth ages 13-15. This is a fee-based program, with fees ranging from \$35 (reduced fee) to as high as \$95 per week. There is no General Fund money budgeted for this program. This program crosses fiscal years, so it is difficult to match program income and expenditures. While auditing these figures is beyond the scope of this review, it is confusing to determine whether or not the program is generating enough money to support other Recreation programs.

The entire Summer Program is administered out of one account. The revised budget for FY 2011-2012 is \$150,000 for Agency Receipts, with a like amount for expenditures. This budget reflects the last half of the 2011 Summer Program and the first half of the 2012 Program. The Activity Report through December 2011 shows Agency Receipts collected to be \$71,805 with expenses of \$75,165. This activity report appears to relate to last year's Summer Program. If the trend continues through June 30th (the end of Metro's fiscal year), then the program will break even. However, the final Activity Report for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2011 reflects a surplus of approximately \$42,000.

We were informed that because the full-time staff at the Community Centers supplement the temporary staff hired for the program (there is a staff to youth ratio of 1:10), the only activity at the Community Centers during this eight-week program is the Summer Youth Program. Therefore, the true cost of the program is somewhat understated because the cost of full-time staff salary is not factored in. There is a natural tendency for the Community Centers that are able to charge higher program participation fees to want any derived income to remain with that Center rather than using those funds to supplement the entire Summer Program or other Community Centers.

Recommendations 99-102: *The following are recommendations for Summer Youth Program:*

- *Since the Summer Youth Program crosses fiscal years, excess Agency Receipts should be carried over from one fiscal year to another to match the program period. This would enable Parks to determine whether or not there are excess funds that could be used to fund additional recreational programs, or cover deficits in other divisions of Recreation. []*
- *During the eight weeks of the program, the Community Centers are basically closed to everyone other than the summer participants. Parks should make sure that there are not similar programs being run in close proximity so as not to duplicate services provided by*

others. Apparently Parks is beginning to do this, as Newburg Community Center will not be conducting a camp this summer. []

- *Any Agency Receipts in excess of expenditures for this program should be allocated among the Community Centers for additional programming. []*
- *The same budget process recommendations for Community Centers (see **Recommendations 91-93**) should be considered for the Summer Youth Program. []*

RECREATION PROGRAMS

The Recreation Administrator for Community Centers and Athletics stated that the primary mission of the department should be to “provide good parks and facilities for the community.” The department should better understand the community that uses Parks services and facilities to the point of getting feedback more often, though they (Recreation) do conduct surveys from time-to-time.

The specific areas for the Recreation Administrator for Specialized Recreation Services include:

- Douglas Community Center
- Adapted Leisure
- Aquatics
- Seniors
- Arts & Culture; and
- ADA Compliance Officer

The Douglas Community Center (or, “DCC”) has three (3) FTEs and one (1) PTE. The facility was originally built as a house, converted to a school, and now is a community center. The building was not built to house a community center and like many other Parks buildings it has significant deferred maintenance issues. Like other Community Centers that were not built to be community centers, the DCC cannot accommodate multiple activities at the site. This means that some families have to go to multiple sites to meet their needs. One of the major programs at the DCC is its summer camp, which enrolled 50 youth in 2011 at \$95 each per week. The Recreation Administrator believes the program is financially self-sustaining.

The Adapted Leisure program has two (2) FTEs and three (3) PTEs and serves all citizens with disabilities out of the DCC.

The Aquatics platform is essentially the Mary T. Meagher Center (or, “MTMC”). There are eight (8) FTEs and 20 PTEs, with an additional 50 summer PTEs and seven (7) seasonal employees. There were eight (8) lifeguards needed in 2012 (one per 200 square feet). Parks recently closed all but four (4) pools in Jefferson County. As a result, MTMC is over-capacity. While MTMC brought in \$100,000 in revenues, utility costs alone are estimated to be \$250,000 annually. It is another example of a facility with significant deferred maintenance issues. In 2011, of the \$500,000 set aside for maintenance for all Parks properties, \$156,000 was spent at MTMC, and \$330,000 has been spent since 2009. Parks management is not certain that future repairs will be beneficial. Parks may have to face the issue of either shutting down or replacing the facility. The cost to replace MTMC is estimated at \$1,250,000.

The Seniors Program is run out of the Wilderness Road and Flaget Community Centers. The combined staffing is four (4) FTEs and budget funds run out quickly. An example is Wilderness Road, which has an annual budget of \$1,000. The Recreation Administrator identified the Silver Sneaker program as one that brings in “great” revenues, along with a \$30,000 KIPDA grant earmarked for seniors in the 40272 zip code. The grant benefits approximately 860 persons.

The Arts and Culture Center includes locations in Shawnee and on Dixie Highway in Southwest Jefferson County. These centers have specialized arts programs and four (4) FTEs.

The Recreation Administrator serves as an ADA compliance officer, which ties into her teaching at UofL. Her primary comment was that the Parks Director is very supportive of her role in this function.

There is a detailed Recreation strategic plan for 2011. Goals are set and tracking takes place to assess what has been accomplished. For six years running the Recreation Administrator has driven this process that identifies gaps and allows program offerings to get back to the “basics.” That said, it was noted that the Recreation plan gets very little attention and the program administrators feel like “stepchildren.” The Recreation Administrator gets requests from other cities to review her plan due to its success in driving specific goals.

The Recreation Division relies heavily on partnerships to help with staffing needs. Staffing decisions seem to be driven by budget concerns and not from input by the Recreation Administrator. While it may be improving, over the last few years only the Director, Assistant Director, Planning Director, and Business Manager meet to determine budget and staffing matters. The Recreation Administrator senses some changes, though, and is very happy with the new direction the Department seems to be moving.

As indicated above, the budgeting process including the development of revenue projections is problematic. Revenue projections are fabricated to “plug” in a number to protect staffing at its current levels or hopefully to receive more FTEs. There seems to be no incentive to raise revenues due to the belief that for every dollar raised, the budget gets cut that amount. The Recreation Administrator was not involved in the budgeting process, but the new Office Manager seems to be much more inclusive.

One note regarding technology is that the current computers are over 13-years old and do not perform many functions, such as opening certain attachments.

Recommendation 103: Analyze how communications are being handled to ensure that all divisions have a clear understanding of the key agenda items for the Department. []

Recommendation 104: Prepare realistic budgets based on actual revenues and expenses, and incent the divisions to look to revenue opportunities that can then be reinvested in key initiatives across the Department. []

Recommendation 105: Reevaluate the MTMC. There is no reason to lose money with an over-capacity issue. Look at how users of the facility are being charged and, if infrastructure is so antiquated, whether it would be more cost-effective to upgrade and take a short-term loss from the investment. []

Recommendation 106: *Create strategic plans for each of the divisions similar to what The Recreation Administrator has prepared; however, keep them focused on key areas. The Recreation Division is doing a lot, and maybe too much. This drains the limited resources and does not allow the Department to maximize potential revenue opportunities. In the alternative, the Department may consider restructuring how these initiatives are managed and allow for the Recreation Administrator to handle some, but not all. []*

Recommendation 107: *Conduct a 360 survey for all managers so that the Department can determine if things are really moving toward an inclusive environment or stuck in the old way of doing things. []*

Recommendation 108: *Seriously consider renovating the DCC or closing it. While it may provide a benefit to kids in the summer, there are some potential liabilities with the failure to keep it properly maintained and it does not provide an “inviting” atmosphere. []*

Recommendation 109: *Recreation had some of the same budget preparation issues as Community Centers and Athletics (see Recommendations 95-97). Prepare a budget based on reasonably expected revenues and actual expenses, including indirect cost. []*

PLANNING & DESIGN

We interviewed the Assistant Director and the Parks Planning Supervisor.

A. Staff

Currently there is eight (8) staff in Planning & Design: three (3) engineers, one (1) architect, two (2) landscape architects, two (2) planners and a secretary. Staffing seems to be adequate for current operations, but that assumes that the Assistant Director, who is retiring, will be replaced with another engineer. Parks is considering how to handle his retirement given current budget constraints. One option appears to be to reassign his duties to an existing employee and then complete a general reassignment of duties among the remaining employees. The Assistant Director and the other staff members feel very strongly that at least an engineer needs to be hired in order to have a reasonable complement of professionals on the Planning & Design staff.

Planning & Design is, in theory, a soup to nuts operation. It performs the initial planning and design for parks master plans, prepares construction and bid documents, acquires property, and either constructs or oversees the construction of the projects. In reality, it performs the planning and design work and acquires the property. Preparation of the bid documents and actual construction are bid out to consultants and construction companies. No doubt that will continue to be the case for large projects. However, staff believes that it would be far more cost-effective to prepare the bid/construction documents and oversee, if not construct, many smaller projects in-house. There is not sufficient staff to do so, though. In their minds, this is a matter of being penny-wise and pound-foolish, as they are convinced that significant savings would be accomplished by beefing up the professional staff.

The Assistant Director speaks highly of his staff's competence and professionalism. Within Parks they also get high marks, and Olmsted Conservancy's staff was highly complementary of Planning & Design, staff as well.

Olmsted was not so complementary of maintenance operations staff. Their primary complaint asserts a lack of good communication between Parks leadership and line workers and, perhaps, some Parks policies that inhibit working well with other agencies.

***Recommendation 110:** Adopt a management succession plan and replace Assistant Director. Whether he is replaced with another Assistant Director is an organization decision, but Parks should at least hire another engineer. []*

***Recommendation 111:** Analyze whether Planning & Design staff could effectively reduce the number of outside consultants if it beefed up its professional staff and, if so, seek funding to do so. []*

***Recommendation 112:** Review communication policies, perhaps with outside agencies, to see if some existing policies are an impediment to good working relations with other Metro Government agencies and private organizations. []*

B. Outside Vendors

Some have questioned whether there is a good old boy network that results in favoritism in awarding work to third parties. Parks is bound by and follows the Kentucky Model Procurement Code, which stipulates that any contract in excess of \$10,000 (a Metro Government threshold) generally requires bidding and award to the lowest and best bidder. One of the criteria deals with quality and experience. All other items being equal, this standard can sway the award of a contract, as well it should. Parks insists that this measure is only used for the intended purpose and is not aware of any indication of abuse of the system. However, we did not interview bidders. Parks contends that the low threshold of \$10,000 makes small purchases cumbersome. If possible, Parks would like to see the local threshold raised to the state level of \$25,000.

***Recommendation 113:** Explore the possibility of increasing the threshold for bidding work from \$10,000 to the state government level of \$25,000. []*

C. Master Plans

Planning & Design prepares master plans for individual parks and other projects. It is not unusual to prepare a plan for a project where funding for construction of the project has not been obtained or even identified. Since 1994, 39 master plans have been prepared and another nine (9) are currently underway. Parks has also prepared master plans under their own direction in partnership with other entities. Planning & Design may initiate the preparation of a plan or it may be initiated by others, particularly individual members of Metro Council, the Mayor's office, Olmsted Conservancy, or other interested parties. It has happened that plans have been prepared even though in Parks' estimation they would never be implemented because of lack of funding.

In several parts of this report we have observed that Parks needs to generate more of its own funds. With regard to the implementation of master plans, Parks has been pretty good at generating funds. Olmsted Conservancy estimates that in the last 10 years it has provided 50% of the cost of capital improvements to the 18 Olmsted Parks and adjoining Parkways. Olmsted Conservancy has been, and continues to be, an important ally for Parks, not only as a fundraiser but as an advocate and consultant. From 1994 through 2011, over \$58,000,000 from sources other than Louisville/Jefferson County general funds were secured for Parks capital improvements and land acquisition. Staff believes that it could secure even more money for capital development if it had a grant writer on staff. Considering that the projected cost to

complete all of the projects for which there is an existing master plan exceeds \$396,000,000, it is an idea worth pursuing.

Parks identified a number of reasons for developing Master Plans even in situations where there might not be sufficient funding for full implementation. Some of the identified advantages are:

- Master Plans serve as blueprints for as many parks as possible, reducing the risk of haphazard parks development. They are great tools for fundraising. Potential donors or grant funders can see that there has been a thoughtful, professional process that will guide investment. The Plan sets out a vision that invites investors to be part of something beneficial for the community.
- There is an understandable tendency by elected officials to want to “plop” new facilities in parks in order to show that they are serving the public. Master plans subject to a public vetting process check out underground utilities, floodplains, federal, state, and local regulations, and permitting requirements, and many other issues that are often unknown before the planning process begins.
- Master Plans often include a great vision, but also include a phasing plan over several years. The plan usually tries to identify “low hanging fruit” such as a play or spray ground or walking path or some other facilities that can be built early on even though the rest of the park development will require more money later.

***Recommendation 114:** Develop a system of vetting suggestions for new master plans so that Parks is not under political pressure to prepare a plan that has little chance of preparation of bid documents. Considering Parks’ budget problems, master plans should not be prepared unless a reliable source of capital has been identified. []*

***Recommendation 115:** Investigate the potential for hiring a grant writer in an effort to secure capital funding from state and federal government agencies, foundations, and other third parties. []*

***Recommendation 116:** Consider requiring that the source(s) of maintenance funds be identified as a precondition to preparing, and certainly implementing, any master plan. []*

D. Louisville Loop

While we were not charged with reviewing the Louisville Loop, or particularly agencies and organizations other than Parks who are implementing this project, it did come up in our conversations. This is an incredible project for which everyone should be complemented. However, the coordination of Loop operations is an issue. Currently, Parks, MSD, Waterfront Development Corporation, and 21st Century Parks each have some responsibility for design and construction of the project. Because it has the most expertise of all the existing agencies, we believe that Parks should be the coordinating organization. However, another alternative to consider is the Advance Planning Group, being led by Economic Development..

***Recommendation 117:** Appoint Parks or the Advanced Planning Group to be the coordinating agency for Louisville Loop. []*

COMMUNITY RELATIONS & EVENTS

This Division of Parks is responsible for communications, volunteer outreach, the Mayor's Special Events programs, and is the liaison for the Parks Foundation.. There is a staff of 10, five (5) of whom are assigned to Mayor's Special Events, which is not included in this review.

Community Relations & Events is responsible for all press releases and updates to the Parks website and Facebook page. The Community Relations Director told us that she has difficulty getting staff to provide information to update the website and Facebook. We find this interesting because in several of our meetings we heard the complaint that their programs didn't get enough publicity. This section also assists in all publications and presentations regarding Parks. It also appears that there is a good working relationship between the Mayor's Press Office and this Division.

The volunteer outreach program has a three-prong approach and has grown over the last couple of years. The first prong is the Adopt-A-Park Program, where an organization will adopt a park close to it and work on keeping it clean. The second is the Group Volunteer Program, where a business or organization contacts Parks to volunteer for a specific project in the parks, nature areas, or Community Centers. Most recently there was a project performed at Beechmont Community Center. The third prong focuses on individual volunteers, who can fill out an application to volunteer their services. The application details their interests and the amount of time that they can commit. A background check is required for all volunteers. Parks does not participate in any court-ordered community service; however, they do participate in the Dismas House worker program. This is not the responsibility of Community Relations, though.

The software Volgistics is utilized to track volunteers. We did not go into much detail on this software, but it appears that this is a good tool to show volunteers available to supplement limited resources.

The duty of liaison to the Parks Foundation is performed by two individuals who are the Outreach Managers. The Parks Foundation is a non-profit organization whose goal is to raise funds for projects in the non-Olmsted Parks. As staff assistants to the Foundation, they are responsible for preparing potential projects for consideration by the Foundation, depositing funds, preparing thank you letters for donations, and working with the various committees.

A concern was expressed about invoicing and depositing funds. Since the consolidation of the business office to the Office of Management and Budget, the process of invoicing sponsorships and depositing funds has been transferred out of Community Relations. Now, the Outreach Manager does not know whether invoices have been sent and checks have been received. Also, she was unsure as to who wrote thank you letters, which would include the necessary wording for the donor to be eligible for a tax deduction.

We asked about whether or not any surveys were performed. Surveys and comments are available at all times online. We were given a survey that was commissioned in 2008. The Outreach Manager stated that it would be great if Parks could conduct another survey, but realized that there are no funds in the budget to accomplish this.

Recommendations 118-122: The following are recommendations for Community Relations & Events:

- *The Volgistics software seems to be a valuable tool and all Divisions of Parks should utilize it. If a citizen is willing to offer their services, it is important to use their time and talents. []*
- *While we are not sure what this Division can do, it is important that all Divisions of Parks utilize Community Relations to get the word out about their programs and activities. It is easy to say that programs don't get enough publicity but the information must be forwarded to them so that it can be posted on Facebook and the Parks website. All Parks Divisions need to be encouraged to make better use of the Community Relations Division. []*
- *Throughout this report we have noted that Parks needs to supplement tax dollars with other sources of funds. However, it is imperative that a system be put into place to make sure that donations and sponsorships are properly credited and that acknowledgments are timely sent, by the Parks Director. []*
- *In another section of this Report we recommend employment of a Development Director. The Community Relations Division might be an appropriate home for that position. []*
- *Updating the survey would be helpful. The survey results should be published throughout all Parks Divisions, made known to all employees and plans developed to implement the resulting recommendations. []*

PERSONNEL

We met with the Administrator of Parks Personnel Services. Her staffing for this division consists of herself, three (3) full-time positions, and one (1) part-time position. This division is responsible for human relations, including payroll.

The discussions centered on areas of responsibilities, the diversification of the staff at Parks, and problems that occur because of it. She is also responsible for all of the hiring, firing, and disciplinary actions with input from the appropriate Parks divisions. She mentioned that for a recent posting for a management position at Parks she received 250 applications from Metro Human Resources to screen and send on to the Director to review.

Metro Human Resources is responsible for the posting and hiring of all full-time and part-time Parks positions, based on recommendations from the Department. However, the responsibility of hiring seasonal positions rests with the Administrator of Parks Personnel Services and her staff. A job fair is planned for the upcoming season. She stated that because of the economy they will receive far more applications than they have positions.

She also spoke about the Employee Assistance Plan that is available through Metro Government. She stated that Metro Parks has a zero tolerance policy when it comes to drugs and alcohol. Her plan is to emphasize to all employees the need to take advantage of this program prior to a known problem costing individuals their jobs.

She also participates in an informal group of personnel administrators from other larger departments. These administrators meet on a regular basis to share how they are meeting certain challenges and to explore ways to improve their practices. We feel that this is very positive and shows communication with other departments.

There did not appear to be any real “safety issues” other than the routine worker’s compensation issues one would expect to find in an operation this large. The Metro Office of Management and Budget (“OMB”) provides a summary report of the worker’s compensation claims and its report dated November 23, 2011 stated “there were no large claims this quarter.” Its summary of claims identified a total of 27 pending claims. The accidents ranged in severity from “Getting into truck, jammed head on door jam” (missed work 3 days) to “Cleaning supply room, raised head struck head on pipe” (missed work 83 days). The OMB reported for the same period 14 incidents involving motor vehicles and reported that there were no significant accidents year to date.

We asked the Administrator of Parks Personnel Services what areas of Parks could be improved. Several of her suggestions related to Metro-wide issues. One was that she would like to see direct payroll deposits for all employees. She felt that this would save both time and money. However, she realized that this was a policy that was being phased in for all new hires and probably could not be implemented for older employees who did not want to participate. Another problem that we discussed is the compression problem. Since union employees have consistently received annual increases and step increases, front line supervisors are not keeping up with the employees they supervise. This makes it unattractive for experienced employees to consider applying for promotions. While recognizing that this is a Metro-wide problem, she provided the following example:

For a union Recreation Leader starting right now:

- The beginning wage would be \$14.95/hr.
- July 1st 2012 the wage scale changes to \$15.25 according to contract.
- One year from today the first step increase to \$15.98.
- Three years from today an increase to \$16.78, Step 3.
- Six years to \$17.57 (Max).

Recreation Supervisors who directly supervise this union Recreation Leader position start at \$15.38 and there has been no increase, except for Cost of Living Increases (there were zero last year), since merger. The majority of our current Recreation Supervisors make less than a Step 3 Recreation Leader.

Specific to the Parks Department, her largest concern was communication. This was a theme that we heard echoed throughout our review. She was quick to point out that she has no problem with access to the Director or any member of the management team on an individual basis. Her concern centered on the fact that the Department is diverse and has work sites throughout the community, so it is important for each division to understand what the others were doing. This was consistent with what we heard from others. Communication between divisions and between middle management and line staff could stand improvement.

In the past, the Director would schedule “brown bag” lunches with the different divisions of Parks where he would eat lunch with them, discuss their problems, answer their questions, and inform them of activities and programs that were going on throughout the Agency. These meetings were mainly with line employees, not with management staff. This activity was stopped when the Metro-wide policy was established that no taxpayer dollars could be spent on food for employees. The entire management team at Parks meets once a month with upper management meeting weekly.

At one time Parks produced a printed newsletter. This was done at least on a quarterly basis. Currently, a committee of employees (The Park Spirit Committee) publishes an electronic notice of different activities at Parks every other month. They ask that a hard copy be printed and posted on a bulletin board for those employees who do not have access to computers. However, this publication does not address the communication issue as it relates to informing employees of what is happening in other divisions. Consideration should be given to producing a quarterly newsletter. This would give each division the opportunity to submit information about the activities of their division and to understand what is going on throughout the Department. Because many of the line employees do not routinely access computers and many of these computers do not have easy access to the intranet, we think that the small expense of producing a hard copy would be worth it.

Overall, we feel that this division is functioning very well. However, we do have several recommendations based on our interview.

Recommendation 123: Parks should reinstate “brown bag”(Bring Your Own Lunch) sessions in another form that does not include taxpayer-funded lunch. []

Recommendation 124: Consider increasing the frequency of management meetings. []

Recommendation 125: Consider producing a printed quarterly Parks newsletter to improve intradepartmental communication. []

Recommendation 126: Determine the feasibility of instituting direct deposit for all Metro employees. Direct deposit is a more efficient and less expensive way of making payroll payment. []

Recommendation 127: Consider adopting a random drug test policy for all Metro employees. Drug and alcohol abuse are societal problems and Parks personnel are not exempt. []

Recommendation 128: Develop an incentive plan to address compensation issues for non-union supervisors. []

PARKS FOUNDATION BOARD

Background

The chairman for the Parks Foundation has served in her role for the past three years. The Parks Foundation is a non-profit organization whose goal is to raise funds for projects in the non-Olmstead Parks (105). Currently, Parks Foundation consists of 12 members but has the capacity of up to 20 board members.

Recommendation 129: Parks need to recruit quality members to the Parks Foundation who will focus on fund raising. []

The Parks Foundation meets six times a year and active committees within the Foundation meet three to four times a year. The active committees include the following; fundraising, executive, board development, marketing, and financial.

Responsibility

The current responsibility of the Parks Foundation Board is to provide funding opportunities for recreation within the parks. At this time there is no strategic plan in place for the Foundation. Once a specific project has been identified the Board then fundraises for that specific project. One excellent example is the recent improvements to Breslin Park. Breslin Park was targeted for improvements after the closing of a Metro pool in the area. Funds were raised by the Foundation to add a walkway in the park. It took approximately eight months to raise the \$80,000 in funds with the majority coming from Metro Council's discretionary funds.

Staff Support

The Parks Foundation believes that in order for it to become more efficient, a dedicated staff person should be assigned as a full-time liaison between Metro Parks and the Parks Foundation. Currently the responsibilities fall on several individuals who have other duties so their focus and attention is often directed away from the Foundation Board. The Foundation Chair believes that a full time dedicated staff person servicing the Foundation Board would increase its effectiveness especially in raising funds for many much needed projects.

***Recommendation 130:** There needs to be a staff person dedicated to the Parks Foundation for staff support. []*

Marketing and Public Relations

The Parks Foundation believes the number of boards for Parks (Olmstead Conservancy and 21st Century) may contribute to the lack of raising funds by the Parks Foundation. Both Olmstead and 21st Century have strong financial support and are able to adequately raise funds for their purpose. There is no funding in Parks budget to market or develop raising funds for Metro Parks. As it stands right now, three organizations are raising funds for Parks which has caused some confusion with donors.

***Recommendation 131:** The annual marketing budget for raising funds needs to be increased. Coordinating fundraising efforts in the future should also be considered. []*

METRO COUNCIL COMMITTEE

With 122 Parks, Metro Parks touches every political district in Metro Louisville. The 2008 survey referenced in the Executive Summary indicates that Louisvillians have a real interest in the park in or near their neighborhood. Individual members of Metro Council also have an interest in the operations of Metro Parks and the individual parks under its supervision.

In the fiscal year 2011-2012 budget process, 11 projects totaling \$474,000 were added to the budget by Metro Council. An additional \$10,000 was added to general repair for repairs in 9 districts and \$50,000 in general repair money (of the \$500,000 for all of Parks operations) was restricted for road repair at Creason Park.

During our review, a number of staff commented on "special requests" that were made that required them to alter their work schedule.

There is currently no Metro Council committee in place to allow the Metro Parks to inform Metro Council of its activities and priorities. There was a Committee within Metro Council, however, it was disbanded this year

Recommendation 132: Metro Council should reenergize the Parks Committee. This would provide Metro Council, Metro Parks, auxiliary boards and interested citizens the opportunity to openly discuss priorities, difficulties and special requests. []

Recommendation 133: Throughout this Report, we have discussed the need for additional revenue for Metro Parks. How money is spent also affects how much money is needed. A Special Request by Metro Council Members, beyond routine procedures, has a cost associated with it. Discussions should take place as to whether Metro Parks should invoice the Council Person's Neighborhood Reserve Fund for the cost associated with "non-routine" tasks or requests. At the very least, Metro Parks should track the cost associated with these tasks or requests and report that to the Metro Council Committee referenced in Recommendation 132 []

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

The Dream Foundation is a nonprofit organization that grants wishes for young children with disabilities. The Parks Foundation has a partnership with the group to place equipment within parks that are accessible for children with disabilities.

Recommendation 134: Parks should investigate if there are any other opportunities to form strategic partnerships which would result in meeting the community's needs. []

TOO MANY PARKS

A complete assessment of all of Louisville Parks needs to take place. Do we have too many? Could a few be sold for development? Could local neighborhood groups adopt their local park and take it over? These questions need to be answered at some point in time because they could provide budget relief for the City and Metro Parks. More isn't necessarily better these days.

V. Conclusion

Louisville is very fortunate to have the type of parks product that many cities would clamor for. Managing a complex parks system in today's economy brings forth many challenges as well as opportunities. Because of the vast size of Metro Parks, this report contains 134 recommendations for both Parks and Metro Government to consider. During our review process we came upon several common threads that crossed all departmental lines; funding, the reduction of staff levels particularly in senior management and with any department of this size communication becomes a huge challenge.

Our recommendations are a compilation of feedback from ideas and suggestions that were openly discussed during our personal interviews. We utilized research when available plus we included benchmarking reports that speak volumes on how Parks operates as compared to its peer set. The report also includes several bold recommendations that will need to be examined but as we live and work in a new economy all options should be left on the table for discussion. Some of those decisions that need and should be made may appear to be tough decisions to make in the short term, but in the long term Metro Government must balance the needs of the City at large while delivering more realistic levels of services it can afford in the coming years.

On behalf of the entire review committee we wish to thank all of those individuals who cooperated fully with us in the development of this report. We received full cooperation from senior management all the way down to those individuals who work in the trenches in every discipline within Metro Parks. We also found the staff at the Mayor's office to be very supportive and responsive throughout the review process, providing us with ample direction when requested. On behalf of the six members of our review team, it has been our pleasure to have been asked to serve as the operational review team for Louisville Metro Parks.