

illinois

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PARKS AND RECREATION

The magazine of the Illinois Association of Park Districts and the Illinois Park and Recreation Association



new trends in
playgrounds, sports fields, and
park & facility construction



IPRF is the Leader in Workers' Compensation Coverage

Since our inception in 1985, the Illinois Public Risk Fund has invited public entities and government agencies to examine our outstanding record for cost-effective workers' compensation coverage. Today, over 700 risk managers rely on IPRF for:

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- Dedicated Claims Team
- Prescription Drug Programs

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FROM THE EDITOR

When talking about what makes a good community, often one question gets asked.

Is it a good place to live, work, and play?



That last element is our focus for this issue of *Illinois Parks and Recreation*. Being the father of two children, an eight-year-old daughter and an almost two-year-old son, the importance of having places for children to play is one that I hold close to my heart. It does not matter if it is as simple as a swing set or a full playground, giving children the opportunity to explore different modes of outdoor activity is important in development and growth.

Play comes in many different forms and is constantly evolving to meet the needs of a community hungry for interaction and engagement. This issue will look at some of the unique projects that agencies are doing to stay ahead of the curve, what new equipment is out there and what some of the upcoming trends are that you should be ready for.

In our first story on page 12, *Trends in Parks & Recreation*, IPARKS explores what is just around the corner for the future of play. On page 16's "They're Not Ready to Go Home Yet," the Burr Ridge Park District details innovative ways they determine what new equipment to install. In *Playground Upgrades: An Act of Continuous Process Improvement in the Plainfield Park District* on page 24, the Plainfield Park District reveals how it determined upgrades to playground equipment.

This issue is jam packed with great insights into the creative ways park districts and manufacturers are working hand-in-hand to deliver unique and rewarding experiences to visitors.

Thanks for reading!

— Wayne Utterback, Editor



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Metro East Park &
Recreation District

IPARKS PARTNERSHIPS EMPOWER YOU TO PROTECT YOUR DISTRICT, ASSETS AND THOSE YOU SERVE

We provide services, solutions, ideas and advice to protect your district, so you can feel confident in providing a safe place for your community.



Owned, operated and governed in collaboration with fellow members



Working with members who have adopted the proactive risk management culture of our membership



Members have a dedicated Risk Control Specialist, Member Services Partner and Member Representatives working as an extension of their team



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IPARKS is the Risk Management Affinity Partner of the IAPD



Let us know how we can help by contacting an IPARKS representative at 800.748.0554



Peter M. Murphy, Esq., CAE, IOM
IAPD President and CEO

The Art and Practice of Onboarding

Odd numbered years are synonymous with the election of new board members at park and recreation agencies across Illinois. With the arrival of new faces comes new ideas, energy and enthusiasm for what you do. The potential for a new winning team as a board is assisted by a great onboarding process to ensure that your agency doesn't miss a step in carrying out the agency's vision, mission, and strategic plan for the community.

As you initiate the process, consider the following suggestions. The time invested in this process is sure to bring rewards in agency staff and board cohesiveness.

The first step should be to walk each new board member through the information which forms the basis of your organization. I would suggest that you first share those "need to know" documents which command your board's closest attention.

Review the bylaws that clarify the big picture for the board, including its main policies and organizational structures.

Explain how your **individual policies** paraphrase a law, explain a procedure, clarify a principle, or interpret a particular bylaw. They are the protocol to follow and help eliminate embarrassing situations, improper behavior and ineffective decision making.

Share board related policies as well as personnel, and financial policies, while explaining that the chief executive is responsible for personnel and office procedures, and the board responsibility is to ensure that they are reviewed and adequate to meet the needs of the district.

Job descriptions for board members and the chief executive save the board from a multitude of misunderstandings and misinterpretations. Reviewing the list of expectations for individual board members and officers is a reminder for current and new members of their roles and responsibilities. Share committee descriptions which define what these groups are expected to accomplish as determined by the full board.

Explain how **agendas** for board meetings, retreats or committee meetings help keep the board focused on issues that belong to it, rather than operational matters. Discuss how your agency's vision and mission are the litmus test for decision making. Board meeting agendas guide the board's official business when its members get together to make governance decisions and provide an organized efficient exchange of information that results in sound decisions. Explain the function of consent agendas and how they help the board focus on issues of real importance.

"You will never get a second chance to make a first impression."

– Will Rogers



Meeting minutes are proof that the agenda got accomplished. They record what occurred in your meeting. Each board member needs to read the draft and approve the contents at the next meeting. Be sure to explain the executive session procedure and process, and how minutes that relate to it are reviewed.

Your **board manual** is the compilation of documents that new and current board members use to refresh their memory or to learn how to fit into your board culture. No law demands that you have a manual, but it is good practice as it provides your members with easy access to your documents. Making your manual available electronically is a great option for providing key documents that may be commonly referenced by board members.

For a quick start, review:

- The agency's history
- The district's organizational chart
- The meeting minutes from the past year
- The past six months financial reports
- Last year's annual audit; and
- The board policy manual

On the laws affecting board service, review initially and annually thereafter:

- The Open Meetings Act
- The Public Officials Prohibited Activities Act
- Rules regarding Incompatibility of Office
- The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) for its impact on board communications
- Law governing interference with public contracting
- Time off for official meetings; and
- The Truth in Taxation Act

Provide answers to the following questions:

- What are the board members' fiduciary responsibilities including ways they can avoid conflicts of interest or perceptions of conflicts of interest?
- What are the board members' responsibilities regarding attendance at meetings (before, during and after)?
- What are the board member's responsibilities regarding relationships with staff?
- How does the board expect members to interact with the public during meetings, agency events or in general?
- What other general expectations does the board have of its members?

I have found that it is helpful to use examples with the answers to each of these questions. For a new board member, it provides context for them about the agency.

Share the Board Member Code of Ethics which can be found on the back of their new IAPD membership card as follows:

As a member of the board, I will:

- Represent the interests of all people in the community. I will not favor any particular special interests.
- Not use my service on the board for my own personal advantage or for the advantage of my friends or supporters.
- Keep privileged information confidential.
- Approach all board issues with an open mind, prepared to make the best decisions for everyone involved.
- Do nothing to violate the trust of those who elected or appointed me to the board or of those we serve.
- Focus my efforts on the mission of the agency and not on my personal goals.
- Never exercise authority as a board member except when acting in a meeting with the full board or as I am delegated by the board.

Finally, it is important to have a conversation about the board's culture so that new board members have an understanding of the expectations that the board will have of them as well as the expectations they should have of the board. Every board has a unique culture, and it is advantageous to good board governance that this culture be shared as quickly as possible.

Many times, new board members may be surprised to learn that they have no individual authority. Even though they

have individual responsibilities and legal duties, unlike other boards they may be familiar with, pointing out that authority is vested in the board as a body is important to emphasize when rolling out the welcome mat.

A well thought out and effective onboarding process will make for a smooth transition for your district. For more ideas on this and other good governance topics, visit the IAPD website at ILparks.org. Don't miss the opportunity to expose new and seasoned board members to IAPD's content rich Commissioner Boot Camps scheduled in May and June.

NEW BOARD MEMBER CHECKLIST

Ask Your Agency to Add You to the IAPD database

New commissioners need to be added to IAPD's database in order to receive important emails on legislative issues, IAPD educational programs and events. To update or add your information, contact Kari Catton at 217-523-4554 or iapd@ilparks.org.

Register for IAPD Educational Opportunities *IAPD Boot Camps*

Board members learn what to expect in their role as elected commissioners including park district finances and the role of the board. This is a perfect opportunity for new board members to begin their service on the right foot, and attendance at IAPD's Boot Camp **satisfies the critical one-time Open Meetings Act training requirement.**

Order The Park District Code

Make sure you have the resources you need to help you be the best board member you can be. Order a copy of *The Park District Code* and get a guide publication FREE! Visit the IAPD Store at ILparks.org and order yours today. And, don't forget a commissioner pin! All items ship day of order.

Sign up for the Board Member Development Program

Participation in the program is free and can garner numerous benefits including recognition from fellow colleagues, legislators, media and the public. The program tracks accomplishments obtained while commissioners serve on a board, which pays dividends during re-election.

Follow Us on Social Media

Like us on Facebook, connect with us on LinkedIn, and follow us on Twitter and Instagram for important and timely information on grants, educational opportunities and more.

Read "Make the Most of Your Illinois Association of Park Districts Membership"



Jason Anselment
General Counsel

102nd General Assembly Underway Despite COVID Challenges

The 102nd General Assembly commenced on January 13 amid unusual circumstances triggered by the pandemic. Since March 5, 2020, the previous 101st General Assembly had only convened in Springfield for an abbreviated 4-day special session on May 20-23, 2020, and again for a six-day “lame duck” session beginning January 8, 2021, before adjourning *sine die*.

As lawmakers eye a return to Springfield to regularly conduct business in person this spring, both the House and Senate have authorized remote committee hearings. Although the State budget will obviously remain front and center as the State continues to confront budget shortfalls, the overall scope of the spring legislative agenda remains unclear as this issue goes to press.

One thing for certain is that there will be plenty of legislation to consider because COVID-19 has had no impact on the total number of new bills that have been filed in the past two months. IAPD has reviewed each of the nearly 7,000 bills for their impact on the IAPD membership. As always, the status of all bills we are tracking is available at ILparks.org.

IAPD Platform

IAPD has introduced several legislative initiatives as part of the 2021-22 IAPD Legislative Platform, which are identified on the brochure that is affixed to this page as a convenient, detachable guide. As always, we will be advocating throughout the Spring Session for a full OSLAD appropriation and to protect these dedicated special funds from the Governor's proposed fund sweeps as we also continue our yearlong efforts to seek eligibility for funding for IAPD member agencies for reimbursement of pandemic-related expenses and replacement of lost revenues that resulted from State-mandated closures and restrictions.

Other Newly Introduced Bills with the Potential to Impact the IAPD Membership

While it is still too early in the legislative process to know which proposals will have support to move forward or how

the General Assembly's remote committee hearings may impact the movement of legislation this spring, the bills below provide a small sample of the 659 bills we are already tracking because of the potential impact on IAPD member agencies. In addition, we will also be vigilant about more than a dozen different bills that would freeze or reduce local property taxes.

HB 162 (Keicher, J.) would require each unit of local government except municipalities and counties to form a committee within one year, and at least once every 10 years thereafter, to study local efficiencies, to analyze whether to consolidate with another governmental unit, and to create a report within 6 months of the date the committee was formed.

HB 340 (Batinick, M.) would provide a process for recalling local officeholders that are elected at a general consolidated election.

HB 433 (Carroll, J.) is a reintroduction of the "Citizen's Empowerment Act" that we have discussed on numerous occasions during the past few years. While this measure does not specifically target park districts, it would allow just 5% of voters at the last general election to initiate a referendum to dissolve any unit of local government and transfer all its property and other assets to any other unit of government. The legislation provides no safeguards or protections for citizens when it comes to their long-term investments in facilities, programs and services and, instead, places those public assets and services at risk.

HB 846 (Ugaste, D.) would amend the Bond Authorization Act to eliminate the authority of a public corporation to levy taxes in connection with the payment of bonds or other evidence of indebtedness upon the maturity date of the bond or other evidence of indebtedness or upon the discharge of the debt, whichever comes first.

HB 2496 (Lewis, S.) would require every governmental unit that is governed by an elected governing body that has

not enacted term limits for its chairpersons or presidents to consider and decide whether to impose such term limits by the end of the year and every 2 years thereafter.

HB 2530 (Rita, R.) / SB 1667 (Holmes, L.) would permit electronic certification of the annual tax levy to the county clerk, while **HB 1753 (Mazzoichi, D.)** would require all districts to annually certify their levies on or before the third Tuesday in December rather than the last Tuesday in December.

HB 2544 (Ugaste, D.) would prohibit a taxing district from holding more than 150% of its prior property tax levy collections in cash or cash-equivalent assets. If the taxing district had more than that amount in cash or cash-equivalent assets at the end of any fiscal quarter, then the excess amount would have to be refunded to taxpayers pro rata based on each taxpayer's percentage of the total levy for the previous year.

HB 2806 (Halbrook, B.) would allow a person or entity that appoints a member of a volunteer board or commission of a unit of local government to remove that member for misconduct, official misconduct, or neglect of office in addition to any other method of removal provided by law.

HB 2807 (Halbrook, B.) would create the Local Accumulation of Funds Act to limit the amount of funds a unit of local government can reserve, excluding its capital fund, to an amount equal to or greater than 2.5 times the annual average expenditure during the previous 3 fiscal years of the unit of local government.

HB 2815 (Halbrook, B.) would amend FOIA to provide an elected or appointed public official of a public body with a right to all non-exempt records of that public body and each of its subsidiary public bodies without requiring the official to submit a FOIA request.

HB 2830 (Caulkins, D.) would amend the Open Meetings Act to prohibit a public body from conducting a closed meeting by audio or video conference and require closed meetings to be conducted with the physical presence of a quorum of the members of the public body.

Conversely, **SB 482 (Castro, C.)** and **SB 2246 (Koehler, D.)** would alter last year's changes to the Open Meetings Act that established the new process for holding remote meetings during the pandemic by removing the requirement related to a disaster declaration and effectively permitting a remote meeting where it is determined to be in the best interest of the public body.

HB 2959 (Lilly, C.) would establish the Park and Museum District Business Enterprise Act and create a state council comprised of members appointed by the Governor. The bill would also impose a series of minimum requirements for park districts and museum districts related to the percentage of contracts with businesses owned by minorities, women, and persons with disabilities.

HB 3122 (Gonzalez, E., Jr.) is a reintroduction of legislation from the 101st General Assembly that would require every park district, municipal park and recreation agency, or special recreation agency to test each source of potable water in a park for lead contamination and impose minimum testing requirements. The bill would also mandate specific reporting and notification requirements depending upon the results.

HB 3410 (Morrison, T.) is similar to bills that have passed the House in recent years and would generally require a unit of local government with an operating budget of at least \$1 million to maintain an Internet website with nearly a dozen categories of information that are easily accessible from the homepage, searchable, and posted for at least ten years.

SB 1778 (Murphy, L.) is also a reintroduction of legislation from the 101st General Assembly and would amend the Park District Code to impose nearly 20 pages of training, administration and notification requirements on all park districts related to asthma medication, epinephrine injectors, and opioid antagonists used by program participants and would also require each park district to adopt certain emergency response protocols related thereto.

SB 2206 and SB 2207 (Plummer, J.) would require a unit of local government to compile a list of the pay and benefits of every employee, consultant, contractor, and other personnel of the unit of local government whose accumulated payments or compensation are at least \$1,000 during each fiscal year and a list of each entity, address of each entity, product or service supplied by each entity, and amount paid to each entity for any expenditure of government funds greater than \$3,000 from the unit of local government during a fiscal year. These lists would need to be published on the local government's website and updated throughout the year. If the local government does not have a website, the lists must be published in a newspaper of general circulation in the county in which the unit of local government is located.

SB 2553 (Bush, M.) would require units of local government to post any elected official vacancy on its website until the vacancy is filled and would require their county clerks to do the same.

EYE ON THE PROFESSION

A CLOSER LOOK AT TRENDS AND ISSUES IN THE PARK AND RECREATION PROFESSION



By Debbie Trueblood, CAE
IPRA Executive Director

IPRA Annual Report

For those who missed the IAPD/IPRA Conference or the IPRA Annual Business Meeting held at conference, I wanted to share with you highlights of the presentations. For commissioners or those who are new to us, IPRA is the association for park and recreation professionals and IAPD is the association for commissioners and the agency as a whole. Jointly we serve the park and recreation community in Illinois and share our joint conference and this joint magazine.

2020 was a challenging year for all of us, but like all of you, our team stayed flexible and adapted to a new way of serving our mission. In fact, we accomplished all of the major goals we set out to do this year, in spite of COVID-19.

We were intentional about how to support our members through the crisis. We shared ideas to help you protect and advance your agency and predictions of what to expect moving forward, so you could better plan.

We shifted all educational programs and events to virtual, many of which were offered free as a member benefit. As a result of the virtual setting, we've seen engagement increase with members in every region of the state. Our Section meetings and events saw a 256% increase in registration and attendance over 2019! Between mid-March through mid-September, our staff and volunteers provided over 90 educational events for over 8,200 attendees. And we shifted our largest event, the conference, to a virtual setting, incorporating virtual versions of everything you enjoy about conference.

In this pivotal moment in our society when issues of social justice rose to the surface for so many, we built upon our experience in advocating for diversity, equity, and inclusion that started when we incorporated what is now called the Diversity Section, 17 years ago, as well as the Diversity Leadership Task Force formed in 2019. Essentially, we put our plans for diversity and inclusion on the fast track, implementing years of our goals all at once.

- For example, our new IPRA Champions for Change Award created to recognize an agency with unique and exemplary practices of increasing access and fostering diversity, equity, and inclusion in their community and organization, was presented to the Skokie Park District.
- Secondly, we hosted a free three-part educational series on issues related to DEI, serving 400-500 attendees at each of the three events.
- Third, through the task force, we began offering Safe Zone Conversations for members on topics of either racism or on LGBTQ+, to give members a way to start important conversations. Often times, the best way to change hearts and minds is to share and learn from each other. The Safe Zone Conversations facilitate that process.

Also, in 2020, we formed the Forest Preserve and Conservation District Task Force to identify ways we can better service forest preserve and conservation district professionals.

In 2021 we will serve our members- both those employed and those who are now between jobs; we are here for you. We are better together!



We worked with our vendor partners to better serve our members' needs.

- We leveraged the new Sourcewell relationship to bring you bulk discounts in purchasing to help your budgets.
- We brought you grant opportunities for playgrounds through PlayCore and their affiliates GameTime and Cunningham Recreation.
- And grant opportunities for fitness courts through the National Fitness Campaign.

IPRA had a challenging year financially, as we all did, and our 2021 will be tougher yet. But IPRA was well positioned to weather this storm and with careful financial strategies and using just 7% of our reserves, we will be able to keep most programs intact, and add new ones to better meet your 2021 needs.

I was proud to support the Illinois Park and Recreation Foundation, who also extended themselves to better serve members in your time of need, including disaster relief grants and increased scholarship opportunities for students and professionals, which is critical in this time of budget cuts.

I want to specifically say thank you to outgoing IPRF Chair Mike Clark. Mike was the chair of IPRF for these last eight years and his leadership is the cornerstone to the success of the foundation. He and the board built it into something that will have a lasting service to members for years to come.

I also want to thank two other members of the IPRF board, John Curran and John Wilson. Not only have they been key to the foundation's development, but they are also completing their time on the Joint Conference and Joint Exhibits Committees after more than three decades of service. Their influence on our exhibit hall has been key to our success. Thank you, John Wilson and John Curran for more than 30 years of service.

To the IPRA staff, like so many professionals, you rose to the occasion this year. By mid-April, with the support of Jarrod Scheunemann, the staff team had developed a new 18-month plan and took immediate action to serve our members' urgent needs. You have my eternal gratitude.

I want to again thank the members of the 2020 Board of Directors. You too have gone above and beyond to support the staff team and I this year. I am so fortunate to serve a board like you.

To IPRA's Outgoing Chair Erin Folk, I can't remember a year that I leaned on a board chair as much as I did this year. We spent many, many hours on the phone and I am so grateful for your guidance and your support.

To our members, if you want to learn more information about our 2020 outcomes, our annual report is available on our website at ILipra.org under the About Us tab, showing all the award winners, financials, committee leaders, etc. from the 2020 year. Award winners announced at the 2021 conference will be listed in the 2021 annual report.

In 2021 we will serve our members- both those employed and those who are now between jobs; we are here for you. We are better together, and we are ready for anything that comes our way, as we Learn, Connect, and Inspire together!

Upcoming Events

Safe Zone Conversations (SZC)

Ongoing
The IPRA Diversity Leadership Task Force is accepting applications to host Safe Zone Conversations (SZC) on the topics of racism, LGBTQ+, and LatinX. Visit below for details, and to submit an application: <https://tinyurl.com/wfvda3cf>

Shifts in Parks and Recreation

May 12 or 20, 2021
Shifts in Parks and Recreation, is presented by Theresa Penbrooke of GreenPlay LLC, and she will discuss the types of essential services communities have come to expect from their park district (food, shelter, education, wellness, and more) and how you and your team can plan to meet those needs and elevate your community impact.

Details online at ILipra.org

Breaking Barriers: History and Future of the Glass Ceiling

June 9 or 17, 2021
Breaking Barriers: History and Future of the Glass Ceiling, is presented by Debbie Trueblood, Executive Director of IPRA, and she is going to discuss the history behind the glass ceiling, share ideas on how you can better recognize barriers, and explain the "how" and "why" of managing without gender bias.

Unplug Illinois Day

July 10, 2021
Join us on Saturday, July 10, 2021, for our 3rd Annual Unplug Illinois Day! Unplug Illinois Day encourages people to get out, unplug, play and engage with one another through experiences at local park and recreation agencies. Whether a person is biking with friends on local trails, playing a sport, taking in a class or simply cooling off at the pool, Illinois is home to thousands of park and recreation facilities that can help people live a happier and healthier life. Details online at UnplugIllinois.org.



Unplug Illinois Day Saturday, July 10, 2021

On Saturday, July 10, 2021, communities across Illinois will celebrate Unplug Illinois Day! People will ditch their electronic devices and 'unplug' to enjoy everything their local park and recreation agencies have to offer.

Unplug Illinois encourages people to get out, unplug, play, and engage with each other through experiences at local park and recreation agencies.

What's your outlet?
unplugillinois.org





By Jason Johnston, Loss Control Specialist, IPARKS

Trends

IN PARKS AND RECREATION

While parks and recreation have always been important to the state of Illinois, the COVID-19 pandemic refocused the attention of the importance of parks and recreation to members of our local communities. Three in five U.S. residents — more than 190 million people — visited a park, trail, public open space or other recreation facility at least once during the first three months of the pandemic, and over half of U.S. residents maintained or increased park, trail and open space usage during those same months.

And, as a result of the pandemic, the future of parks and recreation facilities looks different. A different look means new trends throughout the industry. Parks have already seen changes, which may include the redesign of public gathering spots to focus on social distancing. For indoor spaces, this may include the reconfiguration of existing spaces to handle pedestrian traffic. This article will focus on new trends in the parks and recreation industry regarding playgrounds, technology, and sports facilities.



Playgrounds

Progressive playground design has always focused on ways to increase physical strength and fitness, encourage imagination and play, and strengthen a sense of community belonging. Playground designers continue to find ways to add creativity, adventure, and expanded sensory experiences to make outdoor play even more engaging. Highlighted below are new trends in playgrounds:

Inclusive Playgrounds- Inclusive playgrounds allow children and adults of all abilities to interact and play with each other. New playground equipment and universal designs are providing both challenging and engaging opportunities for visitors to share equally, thus eliminating separate areas for those with special needs.

Natural Landscape- More playground designers are working around the natural environment for play space. Natural play areas tend to incorporate winding pathways, irregular and organic shapes, and natural elements, such as stones, boulders, tree stumps and branches.

Community Health and Wellness- When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, many indoor gyms and fitness centers were forced to close. Their closures forced people to find alternative ways to exercise. Many communities realized the importance of providing outdoor fitness areas and this will likely continue.

Themed Playgrounds- Themed playgrounds, made to look like a circus or spaceship, are another growing trend. Playgrounds with themes such as sports, music, and animals, are a great way to promote creative and imaginative play.

Musical Features- Developers are installing chimes, xylophones, marimbas, bells, drums— even small keyboards— into playgrounds to stimulate motor and cognitive development in children and provide spontaneous outlets for self-expression.



Technology in Parks

Parks are using more technology to engage and inspire park-goers to learn and develop a deeper connection with the outdoors. Highlighted below are new trends in park technology:

Beacon Counters- Beacon counters are simple, relatively inexpensive Bluetooth-enabled devices that attach to a variety of interior and exterior locations. These devices detect a person's presence through their cellphone signal and relay that information to a central location. These devices can attach to light poles, fencing and signs, and can power themselves through photovoltaic cells. Retail stores often use beacons to reach customers through both online personal promotions and in-store usability. However, the parks and recreation industry is also using this technology. Gamification is a fast-growing trend, especially in the world of eLearning. Gamification is the concept of applying game-design elements to non-game contexts. Scavenger hunts, for example, are a great way to incorporate gamification. Scavenger hunt mobile applications ("apps") can be used to collect items marked by beacons throughout parks for points or prizes.

The City of Jacksonville, Florida, is using beacon devices located throughout their parks to allow park-goers to gain points towards their Go365, which is an employee wellness program app. The city also utilizes beacons at their gyms to allow users to get points for their workouts.

Geofencing- Geofencing is a location-based service in which an app or other software uses GPS or RFID (radio-frequency identification) technology to locate people within their areas. This technology can be used to sense when visitors enter parks and communicate to them via opt-in mobile apps.

Hikers, for instance, can utilize geofencing-enabled apps that tell park rangers where they are at any given time, thus allowing park rangers to act quickly in the event of an emergency.

One popular app, Pokémon Go, uses mobile devices with GPS to locate, train, and battle virtual creatures as if they are in the player's real-world location. Parks across the country have welcomed the invasion of these creatures and are using it to attract young families.

Drones- Like them or not, drones are becoming increasingly accepted in parks. There is much for a park to consider if or when it allows drones in their parks. However, drones can offer park staff assistance with public safety and improve security.

Sports Fields

Just as the aesthetic design of homes and apartments change, so do recreation center and sport complex design. Highlighted below are some of the newest trends in sports facilities and complexes:

Seating- New designs to improve comfort and overall experience.

Improved Lighting- New advances in LED capabilities offering longer-lasting bulbs while cutting down on power consumption.

More Connectivity- More Wi-Fi and Bluetooth connectivity for greater engagement with fans.

Retrofit Projects- Often, if a facility is not pulling its financial weight, changes will take place. This may include tennis courts being converted to pickleball courts and pools retrofitted into skate parks.

Rise in Synthetic Turf- Synthetic turf can offer less overall maintenance and expense than natural grass. Artificial turf can be used safely in inclement weather conditions and allows for almost nonstop use if the fields provide lighting. One downside will be the need to replace the turf 10 to 15 years down the road.

Olympic Sports- When a new sport debuts at an Olympic Games, often the sport sees an increase in interest. That interest usually manifests itself into more kids wanting to try that sport. The Tokyo Olympics will include freestyle BMX and skateboarding, which could lead to an increase in participation and demand for these sports facilities.

2020 was a challenging year and proved the importance and resiliency of the parks and recreation industry. The industry, just like the times, is ever changing. Park professionals have both the knowledge and foresight to adapt to new trends. Understanding these trends and being prepared for them can help bring communities together and enhance the park going experience for everyone.



Everyone deserves the opportunity for outdoor play and physical activity. From design to installation, our team of experts can help guide you to creating the perfect play and recreation space for your community.

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By Jim Pacanowski, Director of Parks & Recreation, Burr Ridge Park District



"They're Not Ready To Go Home Yet"

Burr Ridge Park District lies just off Interstate 55, eighteen miles west of Lake Shore Drive. We encompass 5 square miles with a population of around 7,400, even though the Village of Burr Ridge has a population of 11,000. We are heavily residential, our tax rate is one of the lowest in Illinois, we have no in-house parks development or maintenance staff, and doing more with less is the way of life here. Harvester Park is home to some of our very best work.





The crown jewel of our park system occupies 37 of our total 80 acres of park land. A wide variety of amenities and recreational opportunities abound, but it is the central playground that seems to resonate the loudest. With daily attendance figures close to 1,000, an impressive variety of municipalities represented via vehicle stickers and frequent dialogue and interaction with playground visitors, kids and families from local and regional environs evidently consider Harvester Park the "place to be."

Today's playground has been developed over numerous phases spanning the last 20 years, with our most recent renovation completed in 2018. Through all of the experience gained, a design "playbook" of sorts has evolved as a general guide for our projects. The more of these boxes we can check off upon completion, the better the playground.

1. One of a kind amenities: We want at least one element, something to play on or interact with, large or small, that is a product of home grown design and ingenuity and exists nowhere else. We have over a dozen such elements. We find these are the pieces that create the most vivid play experiences and memories.

2. Layers of play: We seek to sequence play and create multiple choices of play paths that lead to secondary and tertiary play outcomes. We want a greater skill level to be executed in order to complete the amenity's premier play challenge. We want them coming back for more, over and over.

3. All ages appeal: Although we may have a primary age focus with a specific amenity, we always strive to engage all ages. We sneak in lots of "hooks and treats" for the adults. If we layer well we can promote all age play on a single common piece of equipment. We create experiences where the child seeks caretaker accompaniment which forces the caretaker to assume a more active role in the experience.

4. Make the experience more than just "play": When the opportunity presents itself, we are always seeking to engage the visitor with interactive experiences in a wide range of disciplines. In the central playground alone, we have incorporated local and national history, agriculture and farming, life in the prairie, hydrology, mechanical engineering, archaeology, anthropology, music and more! This is another key in appealing to all ages.

5. Be a student of play: If time is taken to study and observe, kids will show the designer what is fun, boring, what works, and what does not. This is particularly important in one's own previously completed projects. Each subsequent project can then incorporate improvements and innovations based on observed behavior and not theory. Also, visit and explore as many interesting playgrounds as possible, while they are busy, both locally and when traveling. Great ideas can come from anywhere.

6. Use every square inch of the site: Much space is already being consumed by safety fall zones. Search for any nooks or crannies within the site to create an additional play station, gathering spot or aesthetic highlight. These are the hidden places that offer great opportunities for one of a kind creativity.

7. Solicit Ideas from Others: We are blessed to know quite the cast of characters from different trades and specialties that do not hesitate to offer up crazy ideas for what they think would be cool in a playground. No idea is too crazy! You might be able to pull it off. Creative ideas are never limited to any one person.

8. Remember your childhood: This has been a source of inspiration for a number of our custom applications. What did you like to play? Did you use something designed for one purpose for something else while playing? Did you ever "invent" a special game or activity? If it was fun then, it will be fun now.

9. Select quality stock equipment: Not everything can be custom, at least for us. When selecting commercial equipment, be fussy and discriminating. Buy less high quality and creative equipment rather than more less costly mediocre equipment. Too much good money is spent on equipment that stimulates and engages the user for no more than 15-20 minutes.

10. Remain open to changes in scope: We cannot recall a project that did not end up deviating from the original "final" plan, sometimes rather dramatically. As construction unfolds, paths will emerge and opportunities will arise to embellish in a manner you did not anticipate. We embrace this dynamic. It is almost never too late to develop a good idea that just took some time to arrive.

CASE STUDY - IMPLEMENTING THE PLAYBOOK - MUSIC/HISTORY BARN

Completed in 2018, the barn is perhaps our most complete example of checking most of the boxes upon completion.

THE ARCHITECTURE - The barn needed to appear as if it could have been built around the turn of the century. The structure is 24' wide and 8' deep. There is one closed wall, two half walls and an open front. All support beams are specially sourced Douglas Fir. Veneer for the barn walls is reclaimed Midwest barn wood. The ceiling/ roof is made from corten steel sheeting, which has long turned deep rusty red. A cupola rises from the center to a maximum height of twelve feet. The interior of the ceiling is vaulted to a height of nine feet. A very simple, basic structural design is utilized for support. It looks authentic. Many have commented that "it's the newest oldest looking building they have ever seen."

THE HISTORY - The property is quite historic. Prior to serving as North American headquarters for International Harvester Research and Development, the land had been purchased and settled by the Craigmile brothers who emigrated from Scotland. Their story is told in museum quality detail. Access to first person journal recollections from the late 1800's and original photographs from that same period allowed us

to be historically accurate and relevant. The interpretive program focuses on the rural flight from farm to city and how that population shift was changing the world back in the early 1900's. We had already developed the historical storytelling of the International Harvester days elsewhere in the park and the barn allowed us to go back to the time of original European settlement.

THE ANTIQUES - We acquired antiques and artifacts of farm and prairie living applications from twelve different states and two other countries, over 200 individual pieces. They are displayed on the walls and elevated ceiling. The nasty and dangerous blades and tools are secured up high. Many are displayed and secured at heights inviting touching. Many are accompanied by vintage and original photos of the specific implement in actual use from back in the day and fun stories regarding the implement and ongoing at that time in history. Much of the content features real life experiences from the Craigmiles. The collection is diverse and features several rare pieces. No one resists entering and checking them out.

THE MUSIC - There are over 50 different opportunities to create and/ or enjoy music in the barn.

Antiques

Many of the antiques were selected for the interesting sound or notes that occurred when either shaken, in the case of a bell, or struck with a metal stick. We amassed a vast collection of bells, including our cowbell orchestra section. The pot and pan band, the cast iron brigade, and the big spoon combo all yield different sounds and tones when struck with sticks and mallets secured onto the interior walls. Of particular interest is the 350 lb. Baldwin Steam Locomotive bell in the cupola, which is rung by rotating a 48" wall mounted steel wheel to engage the clapper via pulley.

Instruments

Mixed in with all the antiques are four top quality, outdoor commercial musical instruments procured internationally. Their sound is amazing and upon first view do not appear to be anything but more antiques. Mallets and striking sticks are available and permanently secured. The instruments are great for the novice but also can accommodate higher levels of musical proficiency.

The Drum Set

No kid can resist banging on a drum set and adults are hard pressed also. We developed a milk can drum set

with a beer barrel framed bass drum. Extensive research and trial and error led us to utilizing professional practice drum heads secured to the milk can shell. (Cows and milk cans are big parts of the history.) These drum heads give some great sound, are fairly durable, and are quick and inexpensive to replace. Our set consists of five drums, four cymbals, two cowbells and a bass drum. We have observed eight children at a time playing simultaneously. We have encountered accomplished drummers at the park, and the drum set rocks when a little talent is added. But, they still sound good and are a source of great fun for the novice majority.

The Soundtrack

Five on-demand musical/percussion sound-tracks, professionally mixed to serve as play tutorials in addition to entertainment, are projected down and onto the drummers from mounted speakers under ceiling beams. Any hack can find at least one drum to sort of keep up with part of the recording, so there are many would be musicians of all ages playing along with a variety of music genres. In the author's favorite soundtrack, at least 15-20 kids, some really young, have been observed absolutely jamming to Metallica and Led Zeppelin, which is extremely entertaining.

We are hopeful our best is yet to come. In the Fall of 2021, construction will begin on a custom themed Historic U.S. Route 66 play trail which research tells us is the first and only one of its kind. Replicas of iconic roadside attractions from each of the eight states that the Mother Road passed through will be featured as play stations.

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BRINGING IN THE

View

WHILE ENHANCING THE OLD

The decision to embark on renovating a centrally located 45,000 square foot aquatic facility into a 100,000 square foot multipurpose recreation destination was made with community desire and support to have an all-inclusive, one-stop recreation facility for all ages. A 2017 community survey indicated that senior citizens- a growing populous in Arlington Heights, wanted an indoor warm water pool and an indoor walking track; while families wanted a multipurpose facility that could be used by people of all ages and abilities. Overwhelmingly, residents wanted a one stop shop that was affordable.



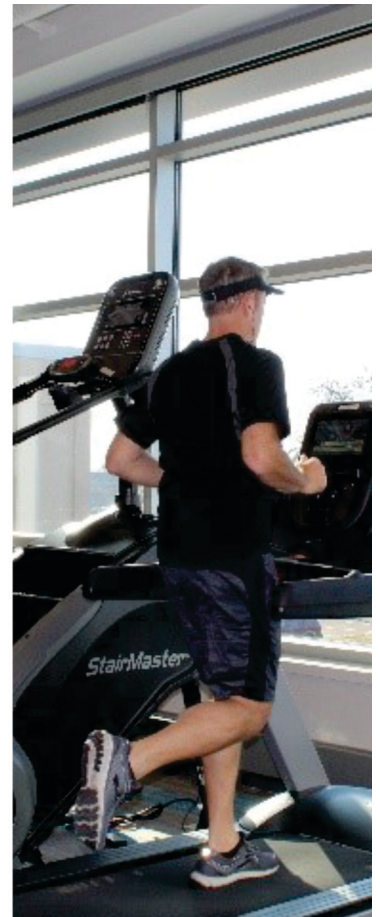
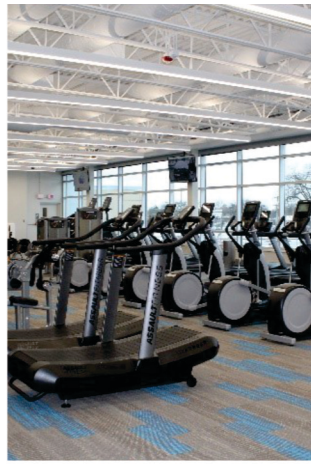
By Benjamin M. Rea, Director of Parks & Planning | Brian E. Meyer, Director of Recreation & Facilities | Sheila E. Cruz, Administrative Assistant

ARLINGTON HEIGHTS PARK DISTRICT

With results in hand, staff determined that renovating and adding-on to the Olympic Indoor Swim Center would be accessible to over 65% of residents who live within a one-mile radius of the facility. This location already had generous open green space that could be used to expand the building footprint and additional parking without compromising green space that this tree lined, family orientated neighborhood had come to enjoy. The goal of the project was to meet the needs of the community by providing new amenities and enhancing the old. Another important goal of the renovation/expansion project was to complete the proposed improvements with a combination of park district fund balance and debt issuance. We are proud to say the project was completed on time and under budget- without raising taxes.

Garnering Public Support

FGM Architects was retained to provide renderings of what the facility could look like- keeping in mind that the renovation exterior must blend with the 50-year-old dark brown brick and mortar, as well as more recent decorative steel elements. Several community meetings were held to introduce facility concept renderings and the public appreciated the blending of new insulated precast concrete, decorative metal and glass panels to the older façade. Interior amenities included a double gymnasium with suspended walking track, a child care room, two fitness studios, concessions, lap/dive pools, an activity pool, a wellness pool, pool locker rooms, a



sundeck, fitness center, fitness center locker rooms, pool party room, and two program rooms. Additionally, a new outdoor playground with a half-court basketball playing surface and expanded parking lot were also designed. The board of commissioners approved the final design concept and the next step was to get approval through the Village of Arlington Heights.

Over a period of weeks and months, the park district presented final designs to the Village of Arlington Heights Design Commission, Planning Commission and the Village Board. One unexpected challenge was the requirement to rename the facility after receiving notification from the U.S. Olympic Committee that the name “Olympic” was trademarked and could not be used. Again, the residents of Arlington Heights were engaged through a community-wide survey to re-name Olympic, and they helped to create the new name of the Arlington Ridge Center (ARC) at Legacy Park. One local middle school even made the renaming an English assignment and encouraged students to research what other park names were used and how best to incorporate their suggestions!

Construction Begins

Corporate Construction Services was contracted to construction manage the project due to their professional experience with park districts and community center

facility development. Together the park district leadership, FGM, and Corporate Construction embarked on the 18-month long project. Twenty-first century goals were incorporated through the use of sustainable construction materials and interior floor, wall, furniture and fixtures. To help conserve energy and cooling costs, a light colored membrane roof was used on the new addition and overlaid on the renovated facility roofs. In addition to installing LED lights throughout the facility, the lights surrounding the indoor track adjust based on the light levels coming in through the large glass windows. Exterior and parking lot lights utilize similar technology to increase light levels when motion is detected and return to a lower light setting to conserve energy and reduce glare to the neighborhood.

Interior colors of blue, green, grey and orange for the new addition were carried throughout the renovated spaces to promote the feeling of one new space. Adding character to the facility is the use of vibrant vinyl wall wraps with inspirational quotes. As a facility with multiple uses, a blend of low slip tile, carpet tiles, walk off carpeting, wood gymnasium flooring, and sports flooring were installed in select locations throughout the facility. Equipment and materials purchased for the project were selected for functionality, safety, longevity, and ease of maintenance.

To achieve ADA compliance and be as economical as possible, staff elected to construct completely new pool locker rooms. The old pool locker rooms were converted into accessible fitness studios. Other ADA improvements include the addition of new secondary access stairs into the existing lap pool. These stairs were cut into the pool wall and allow patrons with accessibility concerns easier entry into the pool. Access to the walking track and fitness center are supported by the passenger elevator in the facility lobby. In the fitness center, ADA compliant pieces of equipment were purchased and the layout maintains accessible aisles.

Build It and They Will Come

The benefit to the community that this new space has brought is evident from the moment you pull in the parking lot and view the newly landscaped detention pond to when you close the locker door at the end of a good workout. The aesthetically pleasing detention basin was a necessary accompaniment to the project, as the facility grew from 45,000 to nearly 100,000 square feet. Sleek designed spaces to wait indoors or simply sit and read a book are

surrounded with positive reasons to keep fit mentally and physically. Wide expanses of glass walls encompass the interior and offer views that cannot be matched anywhere else! The suspended walking track rings two gymnasiums keeping your interest as you watch basketball, volleyball and even pickleball! A design element to provide window openings in the natatorium wall offers a birds-eye view into two of the four pool areas below. The 5,000 square foot fitness center offers views of the naturalized detention space and an open field where soccer and baseball are played. To experience this state of the art leisure and exercise facility one might pay significantly more at a private club, but our fitness package plans are affordable to most residents. Seniors, families, singles and couples can choose to belong to all or just some of what the Arlington Ridge Center has to offer. An aggressive social media campaign along with print and direct mail helped to spread the word, and within the first few months of opening, membership totals surpassed the entire first year goal of 10,000! Clearly, the community desired, required, and obviously admires this new space we affectionately call, The ARC!



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By Brock Stein, Marketing Manager, Plainfield Park District

PLAYGROUND UPGRADES:

An Act of Continuous Process Improvement
in the Plainfield Park District

The day after Christmas 2019 was unusually warm.

Temperatures hovered in the low to mid 50s for most of the week topping out at 57 degrees on Christmas day, dashing any hopes of a white Christmas but good enough to set the second highest temperature on record, a fair trade off for families heading out to holiday gatherings in fall jackets.



IN TOTAL, THE DISTRICT LOOKS AT A COMBINATION OF SIX FACTORS WHEN CONSIDERING WHICH PARKS AND PLAYGROUNDS WILL BE UPDATED IN ANY GIVEN YEAR. IN ADDITION TO AGE, CONDITION, AND WEAR AND TEAR, THE DISTRICT ALSO CONSIDERS HEALTH AND SAFETY CONCERNS RELATED TO THE AGE OF THE EQUIPMENT, AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT ACCESS PLANS, AND INPUT FROM RESIDENTS.

The mercury spiked again the day after, with a record-high of 61 in the Chicagoland area which included Plainfield, Illinois, where residents seized the rare opportunity to play outside on the recently-completed playground at Gregory B. Bott Park, which underwent a half million-dollar update including new multi-age play sets, a Ninja Warrior-style challenge course with a 100-yard dash, and cushioned artificial turf surface.

Completed in the fall, the park and its neighboring challenge course weren't technically ready for their public debut, but that didn't seem to matter to the crush of families who gathered there for some unexpected bonus outdoor play time, a rarity at the start of winter in the Midwest.

Named after longtime executive director Gregory Bott, the playground's renovation came within the same year that the district opened the neighboring Prairie Activity & Recreation Center (PARC), a 40,000 square foot mixed use recreation facility creating a complex that would serve as the Plainfield Park District's first destination community park drawing not just locals but even families from around the suburbs.

Though it was larger than most of the renovations completed during the previous five years of the district's master plan, Bott Park's upgrade was just one among five parks and playgrounds getting an overhaul in 2019 in a continuous playground refresh program that the Plainfield Park District completes each year.

The task of overseeing the upkeep on all 65 of the playgrounds in the district and their eventual replacement falls under the purview of Jennifer Rooks-Lopez, Director of Parks and Planning for the Plainfield Park District.

Rooks-Lopez said that there are several factors that the district looks at when considering the replacement and update of a playground. Those factors include age of the equipment, the condition, and the need it presents in the community.

On average, she said, the district looks to get about 18 years of use out of playground equipment, but that lifespan could be longer or shorter depending on the popularity of the playground and the number of families using the equipment on an annual basis.

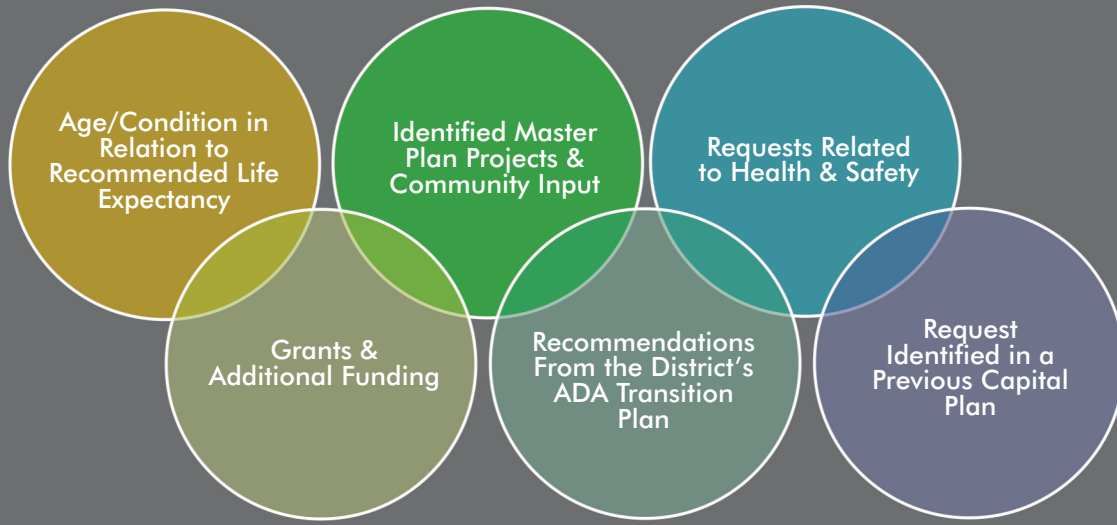
Recognizing that wear and tear on the equipment can serve as the x-factor in the district's calculus for replacement. Underused playgrounds in subdivisions left unfinished after the housing crash in 2007 could have lifespans closer to 25 years.

Elsewhere, high-use playgrounds in neighborhood parks, and community parks, which host more families, could see their replacement timelines pushed closer to the 12 to 15-year mark.

In total, the district looks at a combination of six factors when considering which parks and playgrounds will be updated in any given year. In addition to age, condition, and wear and tear, the district also considers health and safety concerns related to the age of the equipment, Americans with Disabilities Act access plans, and input from residents.

The district tracks those factors through the lens of their 5-year master plan, with park sites constantly undergoing evaluation and jockeying for position within the district's capital plan budget. In an average year, the district replaces and updates park sites and their respective

CAPITAL PROJECT SELECTION



playgrounds at about five locations. That number depends on available funds from a combination of the district's budget and grants from the State of Illinois and even some play equipment manufacturers.

For 2021, there are five parks with playgrounds on the list of those getting renovated with 61 more scheduled for replacement as far out as the year 2042.

30-second site Inspection

Evaluating the condition of all of those park sites and the multitude of equipment at each location falls on the shoulders of the district's Risk Manager, Paul Crisman, whose duties include monthly inspections of each of those 65 playgrounds. Travelling to each site and surveying each location and determining its condition takes about three days out of his week. When he arrives, Crisman performs a 30-second site survey, and with almost 25 years with the district, he's developed a keen eye for even seemingly innocuous clues about a playground's possible condition. A stray tree branch laying on the pathway leading to a bay of swings means he should be on the lookout for damage caused by over rambunctious play.

He's looking for cracks in surfaces, missing parts, even small holes in equipment that could lead to small fingers getting cut or injured. He also will pick up stray trash, broken glass, and check the condition of the play surface mulch at parks and even rakes out under swing sets where it is often kicked out of place.

Crisman travels to each site in a vehicle outfitted with a range of common replacement parts including standard-size nuts, bolts, and even signage allowing for minor

repairs or replacement of missing parts onsite. For damage that can't be repaired immediately, and which may pose a danger, Crisman will block off access to the area, take photos, and then order replacement parts.

In cases of heavy use or vandalism that require a major part to be replaced or high dollar repair, sometimes that will push the park playground to the front of the line.

Man with the Plan

Once those factors for replacement have been met, and the field of four or five parks has been determined for the budget year, the district's project manager, Bob Collins, will begin the process of preparing for the request for proposal process where the district will get a better idea of how far they can stretch their budget dollars.

In preparing the package to send out, Collins said that the district will give landscape contractors and play equipment manufacturers an outline of the scope of the project, which includes a list of the upgrades and an outline of the approximate footprint for the playground being replaced.

Collins takes into consideration advances in ADA access technology that will give a greater range of children the chance to access the play equipment including wheelchair accessible play platforms and swings that offer access for families with different levels of mobility.

The public gets a chance to weigh in on those RFPs that get returned as the district hosts public input meetings and in the age of COVID, Zoom meetings to solicit public reaction and determine the consensus of one design over another. In some cases, public input has resulted in



designs being reconfigured, and equipment options swapped out in favor of a design that will meet the needs and the personality of the neighborhood where the playground will reside.

Over the years, the district has moved to differentiate the look and variety of features of the playgrounds from park to park said Rooks-Lopez steering the uniform appearance of green and tan playsets to reflect a wider variety of colors, designs, and play options. That's meant getting a mix of manufacturers to submit for RFPs but also looking at trends in play and how that has changed over the years.

That's meant that in recent years, more playgrounds with interactive elements that create sounds or sun shades that reflect prisms of light on the play surfaces. It's also resulted in a greater emphasis on creating those play opportunities through updated ADA access like the installation of expression swings on some swing set bays that allow parents to assist special needs children to swing too.

More recent popular trends in outdoor play include networks of netting for more climbing play, artificial turf surfaces, and more outdoor fitness technology options including fitness pods that bring more multi-generational use to the traditional playground areas at parks.

For Plainfield parent Linda Taylor, having new playgrounds like those in her neighborhood and just a few minutes away at Bott Park is a great way to get her 9-year old twins outside for some active play and sunshine. She said that her children were especially excited to see the adjacent challenge course open in the spring. It also saves her time and gas money because she used to drive her children elsewhere to access a challenge course.

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CREATING UNIQUE PLAY & RECREATIONAL SPACES WITH ONE-OF-A-KIND USER EXPERIENCES

BY MICHELE BREAKFIELD,
Director of Marketing, Cunningham Recreation

Parks and playgrounds truly make communities better places to live by providing more ways for people to socialize and stay active. Discover some of the latest design trends in play and recreation spaces to create those one-of-a-kind user experiences.

These interactive spaces provide communities with unique inclusive multigenerational opportunities to play and stay fit together.



INTERACTIVE PLAY

Interactive play combines digital gaming with the real world. Video games and outdoor play come together to create truly inclusive, immersive play experiences that are fun for all ages. Yalp play and sports products seem to be leading the way in this growing trend of interactive play. DJ booths, dance pads, activity zones and sports games are just a few examples of interactive play that leverages digital voices and visual prompts to keep people moving.

- Sona – Dance & Play Arch
- Sutu – Ball Wall
- Memo – Digital Game with both Physical Activity and Educational Learning
- Toro – Multi-purpose Sports Field
- Fono – Outdoor DJ Booth

Because they are electronic, the games can be updated regularly to keep them challenging and fun, even for repeat users! Not to mention, you can track play statistics like how often it is being used and what is popular etc. In addition to its multigenerational appeal, interactive play equipment adds value to spaces because it combines the entertainment value of video games with the physical benefits of outdoor play. These interactive spaces provide communities with unique inclusive multigenerational opportunities to play and stay fit together.

PLAYFUL LANDSCAPES

Playful landscapes can be defined as play spaces that offer a wide range of open-ended play options and allow people to be creative and use their imagination both in design and play.

Playground safety surfacing has taken on a creative twist and added to the playful landscape concept. Utilizing poured-in-place rubber, playground designers craft mounds to change the elevation of play areas. The mounds, which are small hills usually constructed of plastic or resin, covered with poured-in-place rubber, offer unique climbing and play opportunities for children of all ages and abilities. Because poured-in-place rubber is highly customizable with colors and designs, playground mounds have become a popular way to diversify a space's curb appeal. Different color combinations, textures and themes help it stand out and be memorable.

Other types of playground equipment are easily incorporated around the mounds, which make them a blank canvas for designers who want to create adventurous, one-of-a-kind spaces. Additional play elements that create playful landscapes are hillside slides, outdoor musical instruments, bouncers, water and play sculptures or “playful art.”



MULTIGENERATIONAL SPACES

Thanks to emerging trends in multigenerational equipment, age is no longer a barrier to play. GameTime's invention of the Expression Swing®, the first swing that lets children and adults swing together while facing each other, ushered in a wave of equipment that invites adults to play alongside children. Ergonomic, accessible and inclusive fitness equipment makes exercise possible for people of all ages and abilities.

Designers created fitness equipment with customizable features like height or weight that accommodate people with different fitness levels, limited range of motion or those in a mobility device. Outdoor obstacle courses such as the GT Challenge Course revolutionized how communities viewed fitness by creating a destination where the entire family could socialize and get fit together.

ROPE-BASED PLAY & NETS

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Perhaps most notably, nets offer an extraordinary eye-catching appeal. They can be positioned at vertical angles, designed as crawl-through tunnels or crafted into climbable walls or towers. Because of their flexibility, they are a go-to for designers who want to foster imaginative play inside an artistic area that touted the unique shapes, applications and elevations that only nets could provide. This gives designers the ability to embrace the natural landscape and utilize the occasional unusual topography.

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CONFERENCE AWARDS

IAPD

The Illinois Association of Park Districts recognized the shining stars of Illinois parks, recreation, and conservation at the 2021 *Soaring to New Heights Conference*. Congratulations to all our individual and agency winners, and thank you for going above and beyond to keep Illinois park districts, forest preserves, conservation, recreation, and special recreation agencies among the nation's best!

COMMISSIONER OF THE YEAR



James Heberer, Kewanee Park District

MIKE CASSIDY COMMISSIONER COMMUNITY SERVICE



Janet Kilkelly, Waukegan Park District

RISING STAR



Brian Owen, Arlington Heights Park District

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Mike Clark, Palatine Park District

LEGACY OF EXCELLENCE

Bill Clevenger, Decatur Park District
Dan Gible, Sycamore Park District



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David Doerhoefer, Vernon Hills Park District

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John Curran and **John Wilson**, Joint
Conference Committee

CHAIRMAN'S CITATION

Larry Reiner, Buffalo Grove Park District

IPRA

On January 28, 2021, the Illinois Park & Recreation Association (IPRA) honored the following individuals and park and recreation agencies for their commitment and excellent service to parks and recreation in Illinois.



IPRA YOUNG PROFESSIONAL AWARD



Lindsey Robertson,
Arlington Heights Park District

IPRA COMMUNITY IMPACT AWARD



Todd Price,
Glenview Park District

IPRA CHAMPIONS FOR CHANGE AWARD



Skokie Park District

IPRA PROFESSIONAL OF THE YEAR AWARD



Bill Clevenger,
Decatur Park District

IPRA ROBERT ARTZ LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD



Elizabeth Kessler,
McHenry County Conservation District

CHAIRMAN'S AWARD WINNERS

Tracey Crawford, NWSRA

Andrew Dallner, O'Fallon Parks and Recreation

Oralethea Davenport, Maywood Park District

Jeff Fougerousse, Vernon Hills Park District

Tina Ketter, Oregon Park District

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The 2020 IP&R Magazine Photo Contest Awards

Congratulations to all our 2020 Give Us Your Best Shot Photo Contest Winners!

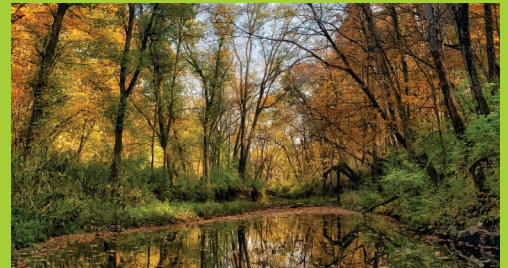
The *Give Us Your Best Shot* photo contest winners were announced at the Soaring to New Heights Virtual Conference.

NATURE/LANDSCAPES

1st Place - Nicolas McCarney, Sycamore Park District | *"Polyphemus Moth"*

2nd Place - Trevor Hogan, Byron Forest Preserve District | *"Howard Coleman Hall
Creek Nature Preserve, October Morning"*

3rd Place - Breanne Hunter, Sterling Park District | *"Spring Snow"*



RECREATION/PEOPLE AT PLAY

1st Place - Lizabett Zawadzki, Gurnee Park District | *"Preschool Experiment"*

2nd Place - Josue Pasillas, Waukegan Park District | *"Girl in the Greenhouse"*

3rd Place - Josh Hendricks, Bloomingdale Park District | *"Art Camp"*



SPORTS

1st Place - Brock Stein, Plainfield Park District | *"Skate Contest"*

2nd Place - Danielle Strohmier, Downers Grove Park District | *"Archer"*

3rd Place - Megan Keating, Skokie Park District | *"Paralympian Travis Dodson"*



WILDLIFE

1st Place - Mark Omi, Park District of Oak Park | *"Swallowtail"*

2nd Place - Irene Flebbe, Forest Preserves of Cook County | *"Great Blue Heron in the Rain"*

3rd Place - Meredith Johnson, Huntley Park District | *"Toad-ally"*



A heartfelt thanks to everyone who submitted a photo in 2020.



PEOPLE & PLACES



Sandwich Park District names new executive director

The Sandwich Park District Board of Commissioners have announced that they have officially named **Bill Novicki, CPRP** as the executive director of the Sandwich Park District.

Novicki is a Certified Park and Recreation Professional (CPRP) and as holds a bachelor's degree in parks and recreation management. Novicki has worked for the Sandwich Park District for the past 15 years, working his way up to the park superintendent position. He has held the interim executive director position for the past year after the resignation of the previous director, Michael McCann.

IPRF awards grants

Recently, the Illinois Park and Recreation Foundation awarded two rounds of Special Assistance Grants (September & December, 2020) to eligible members of the Illinois Park and Recreation Association who had experienced pandemic related hardships. Sixty-six, \$500 grants were awarded to Illinois park and recreation professionals in need, totaling \$34,000 in assistance!

"We hope the worst of the pandemic is behind us, but the Illinois Park and Recreation Foundation is dedicated to support Illinois park and recreation professionals when and where they need help the most. We are extremely grateful that the Foundation's Trustees and our fellow colleagues have given so generously to support their coworkers, friends, and park and recreation family during this challenging time!" -Jarrod Scheunemann, Vice Chair, Illinois Park and Recreation Foundation

The Illinois Park and Recreation Foundation is considering a third round of pandemic assistance grants in 2021. Without your generous support, it will not be possible. Please consider donating to the Special Assistance and Disaster Relief Fund at www.ilprf.org today.

Waukegan History Museum Recognized with Two Awards

The Waukegan History Museum was recognized with two Awards of Excellence by the Illinois Association of Museums (IAM) at the IAM Annual Conference. The Awards of Excellence honored the Waukegan History Museum's History Education Outreach Program and COVID-19 Response. An Award of Excellence recognizes work of excellent quality and that uses available resources well, is creative, and meets professional standards.

The Waukegan History Museum is operated by the Waukegan Park District and Waukegan Historical Society, and is the repository for all of Waukegan's rich history.

The History Education Outreach Program evolved in 2008 with approximately 90 programs a year, reaching over 2,300 students in Waukegan Public Schools. In 2011, the program expanded with walking tours of Downtown Waukegan. The walking tours served as a capstone for the students, seeing sites and locations that they learned about throughout the academic year. Since 2017, the program has grown to approximately 240 programs a year, reaching over 8,600 students in the school district.

Due to the pandemic, the Waukegan History Museum moved the History Education Outreach Program to a virtual platform, substantially changing how information is shared with the public. Many of the initial programs were featured on Facebook and in remote presentations to classrooms. Eventually, the Waukegan History Museum Companion App was created to host all the digital history information. The app was developed to offer self-guided walking tours to students and the public as a response to the ongoing pandemic. Additionally, with the cancellation of the annual Oakwood Cemetery Walk, staff created videos to highlight certain aspects of the cemetery's history, which are featured on the app.

PEOPLE & PLACES

In Memorium



Jim Buschbach

Illinois Parks and Recreation magazine expresses our condolences to the family of Jim Buschbach, who passed away on February 3, 2021.

Jim had served as an Oak Lawn Park District Commissioner since 2017. He was also a founding member and the first chairman of the Oak Lawn Parks Foundation

that began in 1991, and he continued to serve as a Parks Foundation Trustee.

Jim was a huge parks and recreation advocate. You would most likely find him in the early morning at the park district's Racquet, Fitness, & Gymnastics Center playing tennis with his friends a couple of days a week. He loved to see patrons enjoying themselves at the parks, special events, and programs.



Phyllis I. Cossarek

Illinois Parks and Recreation magazine extends our condolences to the family of Phyllis Cossarek, who passed away on January 24, 2021.

She served a twenty-year tenure as a commissioner of the the

Wilmette Park District. Phyllis was recognized as the 1998 Illinois Association of Park Districts Commissioner of the Year and was elected IAPD President in 1995. She also held Trustee positions for the National Recreation and Park Association and The Wilmette Foundation.

Phyllis was named to Governor Edgar's Commission on Community Service, formed to reach 1 million at-risk youth by year 2000. Phyllis kept active as a golfer, curler, tennis and paddle tennis player and avid gardener.

Want to Read More?

Keep up with the latest milestones, new hires, promotions and award winners in the Illinois park and recreation industry online. Visit our website, www.ILparks.org, select IP&R Magazine and then People and Places.

Want to submit news from your agency for People & Places?

E-mail information and jpegs to wutterback@ILparks.org.
Jpegs should be 300 dpi at about 2 inches tall.

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