



Carmel • Clay
Parks & Recreation

2020-2024 Parks and Recreation Master Plan
Executive Summary

September 2019



Live
play
CARMEL



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank the many citizens, staff and community groups who provided extensive community input for the development of this Parks and Recreation Master Plan. The efforts of this community will continue to ensure the success of Carmel Clay Parks & Recreation.

Project Staff

Michael W. Klitzing, CPRE, Director of Parks and Recreation

Kurtis Baumgartner, CPRE, Assistant Director of Parks and Recreation

Mark Westermeier, CPRP, Former Director of Parks and Recreation (retired)

Park Board

Richard F. Taylor III, President

James L. Engledow, Vice President

Jenn Kristunas, Treasurer

Nick Plopper, Secretary

Lin Zheng

James D. Garretson

Joshua A. Kirsh

Linus Rude

Dr. Jessica Beer

Planning Team



In Association with:

SmithGroup

Williams Architects

ETC Institute

Baker Tilly Municipal Advisors

CHAPTER ONE — EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Carmel Clay Parks & Recreation (“CCPR”) has a legacy of providing high-quality parks and services to the community. Building upon the agency’s commitment to the quality of life in Carmel, the Parks and Recreation Master Plan details current and future needs of the community.

CCPR manages and maintains more than 534 park acres and numerous recreation facilities, including the Monon Community Center and The Waterpark. In addition, CCPR partners with Carmel Clay Schools to manage Extended School Enrichment (ESE), a before and after-school care program for K-6 students located at all 11 Carmel elementary schools. The Summer Camp Series is a component of ESE that offers 12 different summer camps accommodating children ages 5-15.

CCPR has consistently been recognized as one of the best parks and recreation agencies in the United States winning the 2014 National Gold Medal Award for Excellence in Park and Recreation Management. CCPR is one of only 169 park and recreation systems in the United States accredited through the Commission for Accreditation of Parks and Recreation Agencies, demonstrating compliance with national best practices. Other recent National Recreation and Park Association national awards include: 2018 National Distinguished Professional Award, 2016 Excellence in Inclusion Award and the 2015 Barb King National Environmental Stewardship Award. Also, in 2018, the Department took the lead in Indiana with the number of certified recreation professionals: 2 Certified Park & Recreation Executives and 16 Certified Park and Recreation Professionals.

As an accredited agency, CCPR serves the recreation, fitness, and nature needs of the community, manages and develops existing spaces and resources, and creates a sustainable future for parks and recreation programs through a financially viable and environmentally conscious parks system.

The Carmel Clay Parks and Recreation Master Plan sought community input to identify their visions and expectations for the future of the park and recreation system. Community input was received via focus groups, key stakeholder interviews, public forums, a statistically-valid needs analysis survey, a community online open survey, and a multi-lingual crowd-sourcing website www.liveplaycarmel.com. The information gathered from the community engagement process was combined with technical research to produce the final Master Plan.

This plan establishes recommendations to achieve the vision the community has for the park and recreation system without sacrificing the value of the park assets and amenities or reducing the level of experiences and services available to users. An integral component of this master plan is a Life-Cycle Asset Management Plan that evaluates the condition of existing park infrastructure and forecasts the capital budget necessary to replace facilities, providing continued delivery of park services for the community.



1.2 MASTER PLAN GOALS

This plan identifies the current and future needs of the community, updates level of service standards, assesses CCPR’s financial strength, and provides an action plan with a 5-year strategic implementation of goals and objectives. The Parks and Recreation Master Plan represents CCPR’s continued commitment to providing a quality park and recreation system for the City of Carmel.

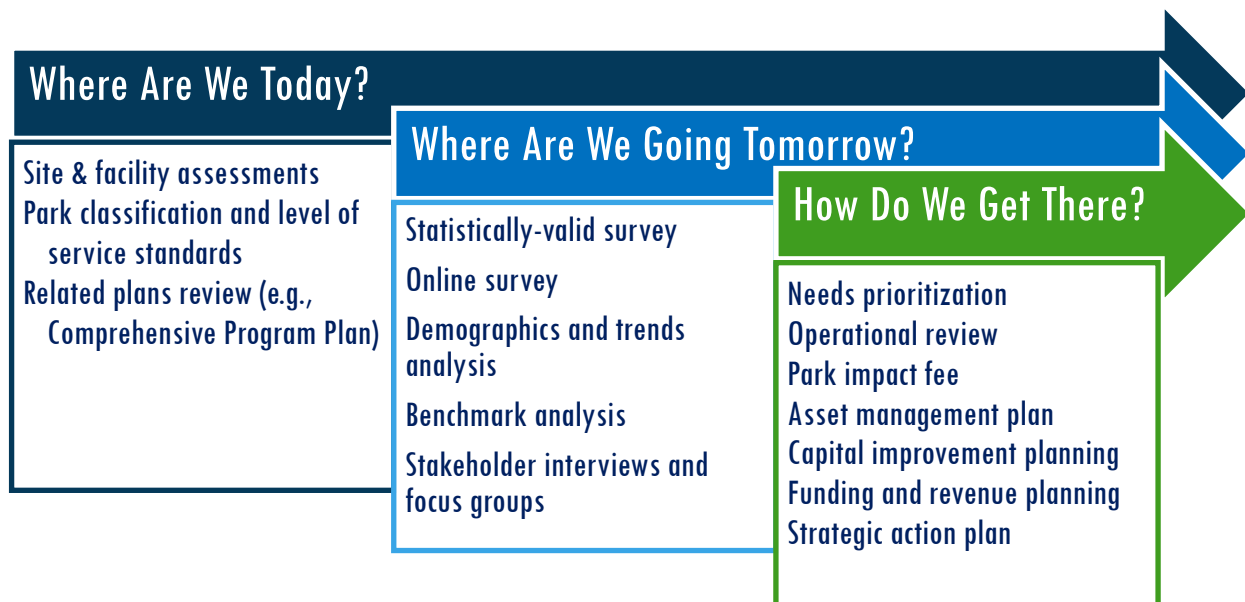
This version of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan will address changes to the vibrant community since the last plan was adopted in 2015. Population growth, changing demographics, evolving recreation trends, development of new parks and facilities, and the success of thousands of programs have increased and modified the demand for parks and recreation services in the community. As a result, these changes have created the need for new strategies to manage the park and recreation system for the next five years.

The goals of the Master Plan include:

- Engage the community, leadership and stakeholders through innovative public input to build a shared vision for parks, recreation, facilities and greenways in Carmel for the next five years.
- Utilize a wide variety of data sources and best practices to predict trends and patterns of use and how to address unmet needs in the City of Carmel.
- Determine unique Level of Service Standards to develop appropriate actions regarding parks, recreation, facilities, and greenways that reflect CCPR’s strong commitment in providing high quality recreational activities for the community.
- Shape financial and operational preparedness through innovative and “next” practices to achieve the strategic objectives and recommended actions.
- Develop a dynamic and realistic action plan that creates a road map to ensure long-term success and financial sustainability for CCPR’s parks, recreation, facilities, and greenways, as well as action steps to support the family-oriented community and businesses that call Carmel home.

1.3 PROJECT PROCESS

The Master Plan followed a process of data collection, public input, on-the-ground study, assessment of existing conditions, market research, and open dialogue with local leadership and key stakeholders. The project process followed a planning path, as illustrated below:

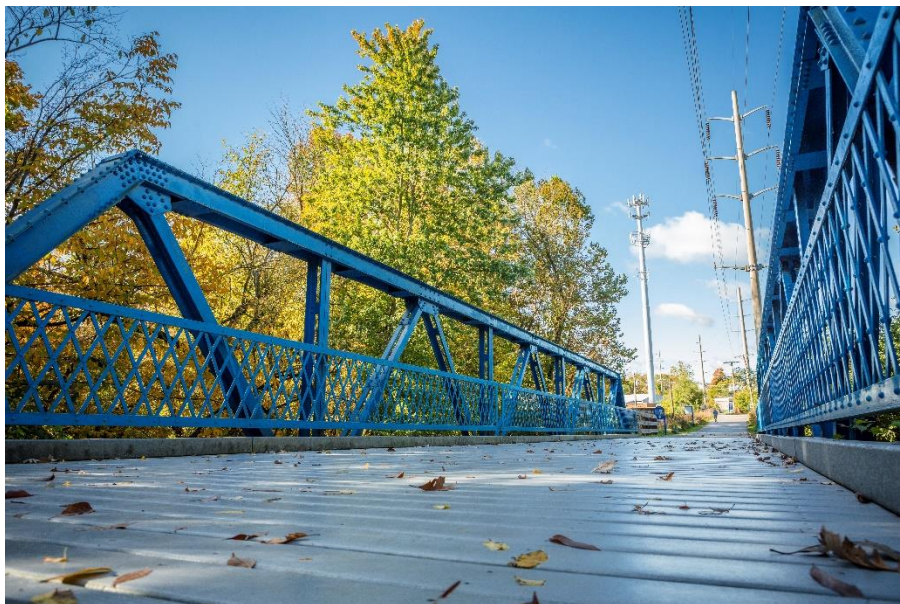
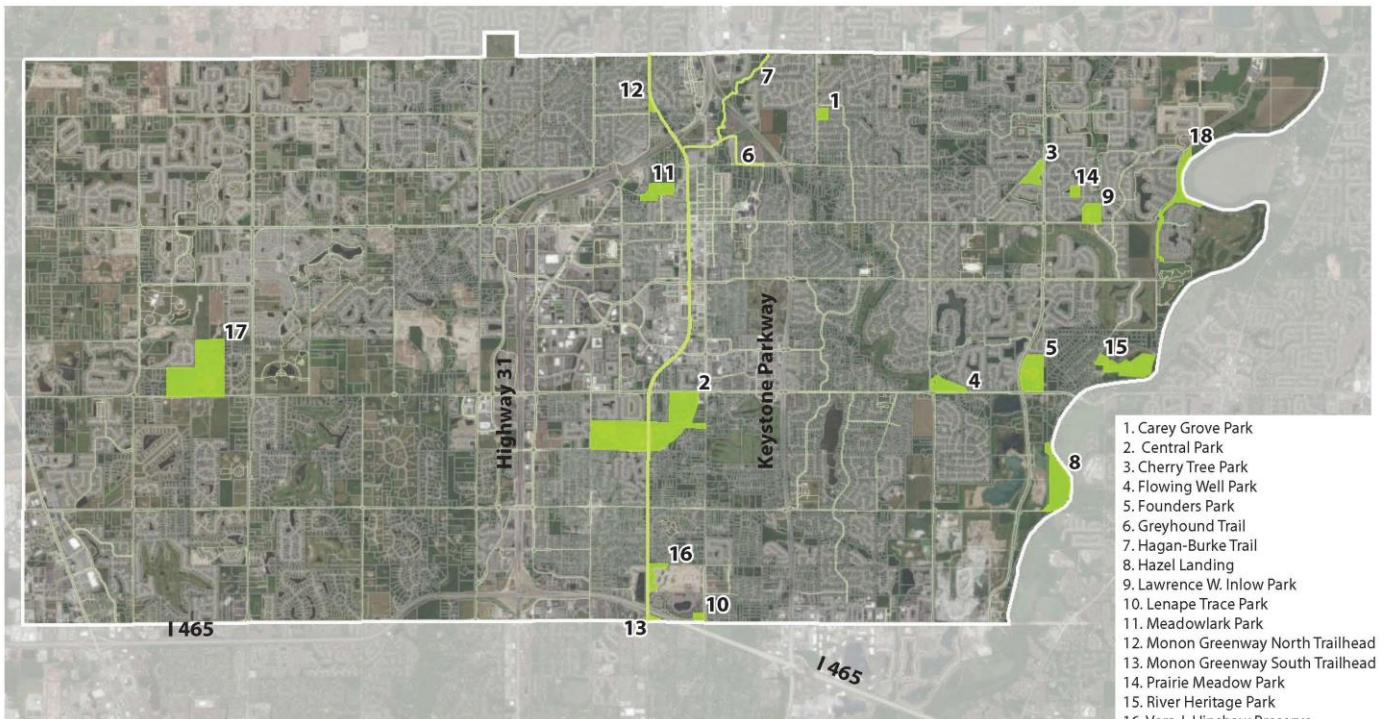


1.4 CURRENT PARKS MAP & DEFINITION OF PLANNING AREA

The planning area for this Master Plan includes all areas within the boundaries of the City of Carmel. While this plan recognizes that the actual service areas of some CCPR parks, facilities, and programs may extend beyond the defined boundaries of the planning area, the primary purpose of this plan is to first and foremost identify and address the park and recreation needs of Carmel residents. The following map depicts the planning area (highlighted) and location of CCPR parks and greenways.

CARMEL CLAY PARKS

PARK LOCATION MAP



1.5 PARK BOARD

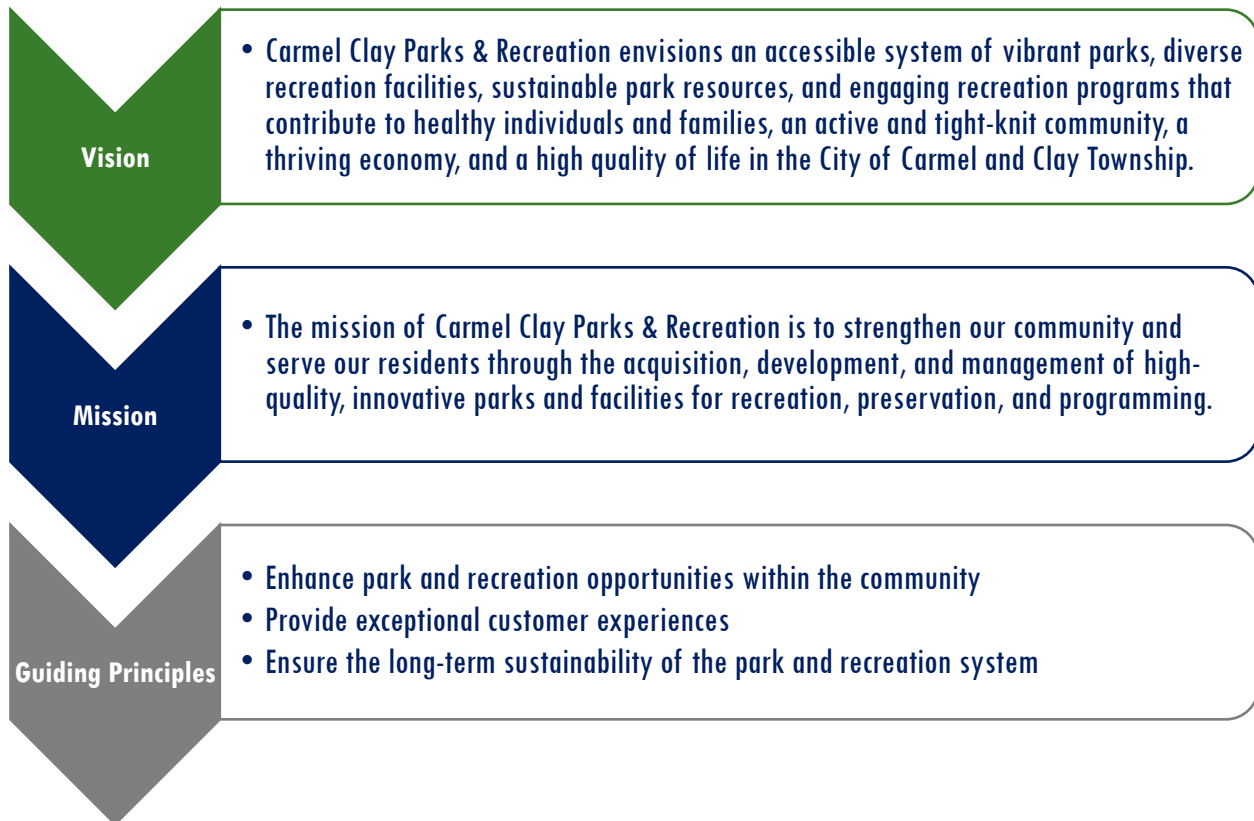
The Park Board was originally established in August 1991 through an Interlocal Cooperation Agreement between the City of Carmel and Clay Township, last amended February 2005. A distinct political subdivision under Indiana law, the Park Board serves as the policy-setting body and fiduciary guardian for CCPR, through which it acquires, preserves, and maintains open lands and parks and provides quality recreation programs.

The Park Board is comprised of nine appointed members based on their interest in and knowledge of parks and recreation. The Mayor and Township Trustee each appoint four members to staggered, four-year terms. The Carmel Clay School Board self-appoints one of its members to a one-year term. Current Park Board members include the following individuals:

- Richard F. Taylor III, President
- James L. Engledow, Vice President
- Jenn Kristunas, Treasurer
- Nick Plopper, Secretary
- Dr. Jessica Beer
- James D. Garretson
- Joshua A. Kirsh
- Linus Rude
- Lin Zheng

1.6 VISION, MISSION, AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The following outlines the foundational framework for CCPR including vision, mission and guiding principles:



1.7 STATEMENT ON ACCESSIBILITY

Carmel Clay Parks & Recreation (CCPR) makes a good-faith effort to ensure all patrons, and the community at-large, are knowledgeable of the resources and opportunities available to them, which support full and active participation within CCPR's parks, facilities, and programs.

CCPR believes every individual has the right to participate in activities and programs that support their physical, mental, social and emotional wellness, and therefore contribute to enhancing their overall quality of life. Based on this belief, and CCPR's vision and mission, we are committed to the provision of services for individuals of all ages, skills and ability levels. This is achieved by incorporating universal design for all new parks and facilities, identifying and removing barriers in order to serve individual and community needs, as well as to provide quality programs and services accessible to all; such as our many recreational, leisure and education-based programs, volunteer opportunities and interactive public events.

This commitment to accessibility is further illustrated through the Department's employment of two full-time Inclusion Supervisors. Both positions are held by Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialists. Through their specialized educational training, the Inclusion Supervisors are uniquely qualified to review requests for accommodation and prescribe reasonable modifications in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

In addition, CCPR is dedicated to non-discrimination in the provision of programs, services and activities to the public.

CCPR will continue to incorporate all consumer feedback, current research and practice knowledge in order to continue meeting and exceeding customer/community satisfaction and to protect and promote access for all for generations to come.



1.8 KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on community feedback, stakeholder input, technical analysis, and the priority rankings outlined within this Master Plan, the following key recommendations were developed to enhance the park and recreation system and position it to best serve the current and future needs of the community:

1.8.1 ENHANCE PARK AND RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES WITHIN THE COMMUNITY:

- Expand trails, river access, and environmental education along the White River Regional Corridor
- Facilitate implementation of a West Regional Corridor centered on West Park
- Develop a signature environmental education facility
- Establish a neighborhood park strategy, recognizing the role of HOAs
- Seek innovative solutions to serve identified underserved or unserved populations
- Explore opportunities to provide community gardens as part of land-use strategies

1.8.2 PROVIDE EXCEPTIONAL CUSTOMER EXPERIENCES:

- Reimagine existing parks through effective planning and appropriate updates
- Create nature preserve experiences throughout the park system
- Provide a diverse selection of facilities and amenities to accommodate indoor and outdoor recreational pursuits
- Balance and expand program opportunities throughout the community
- Continue reinvestments in revenue facilities by adding or replacing amenities
- Use Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to drive data-driven decisions regarding services and operations

1.8.3 ENSURE THE LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY OF THE PARK AND RECREATION SYSTEM:

- Develop long-term funding plan and implement Lifecycle Asset Management Plan
- Continue and expand conservation management practices throughout park system
- Partner with public, private, and non-profit sectors to satisfy community needs for facilities with high construction and/or operating costs
- Expand environmental education and park stewardship programming to increase appreciation for natural resources
- Achieve 100% cost recovery for Recreation & Facilities Division and Extended School Enrichment Division
- Examine internal and external communication efforts regarding financial operations of system
- Update or develop business plans for revenue facilities and programs
- Identify and pursue opportunities to expand earned-income and other funding sources

1.9 “FOURWARD” FOCUS

While CCPR should strive to achieve all recommendations outlined within this Master Plan, the following represent the top priorities for the next five years. Achievement of these will require the sustained effort and support of the community, elected officials, Park Board members, and the CCPR to accomplish. Successfully implementing these objectives will ensure CCPR remains responsive to the identified needs of the community and positions to remain one of the best managed park and recreation systems in the country. The following outlines the key recommendations:

- Carmel White River Regional Corridor
 - Expand the White River Greenway through equitable partnerships, increasing connections to nearby attractions and trail networks to establish a regional system
- West Regional Corridor
 - Continue development of West Park consistent with the 2016 West Park Master Plan
 - Purchase and develop a new park in northwest Carmel
 - Work with partners (e.g. Carmel Clay Schools, University High School, Hamilton County Parks, Carmel Dads’ Club, etc.) to connect existing resources into a more integrated regional system
- Reimagine Existing Parks
 - Develop new master plans for Carey Grove, Cherry Tree, Flowing Well, Hazel Landing, Meadowlark, and River Heritage Parks
 - Make a significant improvement within each existing park
- Celebrate Nature
 - Embrace and develop the White River Corridor as the community’s most significant natural resource
 - Enhance the environmental focus of West Park, using it as an anchor to a natural corridor on the west side of Carmel
 - Revitalize Flowing Well Park, honoring its role as the park system’s original nature preserve
 - Expand opportunities for environmental education and park stewardship programming throughout the community

1.10 CONCLUSION

CCPR is widely respected as a best-practice agency in the country for maintaining a consistent standard of excellence and level of service for residents of Carmel and visitors to the city. This Master Plan is designed to support CCPR in continuing to provide innovative and well-balanced facilities and programs in the community as the city grows and evolves.

Evident is the pride the community has in CCPR and the quality of the parks as maintenance was a key theme in the public engagement, as well as accessibility to an abundance of different park experiences. The Monon Community Center, The Waterpark, and Monon Greenway are tremendous assets to the community and there is a sense of pride in the quality of these facilities. CCPR also provides a wealth of programs, such as Extended School Enrichment (ESE) and the many programs offered at the Monon Community Center that reach a multitude of age segments and diverse interests represented in the community.

Moving forward, additional actions are required to retain the high-quality system CCPR operates, which is to stay ahead of the park infrastructure and asset needs that CCPR owns and manages. Improving the existing recreation amenities and trails, as well as continuing to add new amenities that the community desires will ensure CCPR is a community of choice for residents of Carmel.

CCPR is well-positioned to build upon its legacy over the next five years of providing vibrant parks, diverse recreation facilities, sustainable park resources, and engaging recreation programs that contribute to a high quality of life in the City of Carmel.

