



Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Strategic Plan – 2020
Implementation Status Report

February 9, 2021

Carmel • Clay
Parks & Recreation
NATIONAL GOLD MEDAL WINNER
AND ACCREDITED AGENCY



STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN – IMPLEMENTATION STATUS REPORT (2020)

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.

1.1 KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1.1.1 ENHANCE PARK AND RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES WITHIN THE COMMUNITY:

- Expand trails, river access, and environmental education along the White River Regional Corridor
 - Complete a regional river corridor site plan
 - 2020 – Continued participation by Executive Director in White River Vision Plan, which will include expansion of White River Greenway
 - Ensure cohesion with the White River Vision Plan/Identify partners on both sides of the River
 - 2020 – Continued discussions with Conner Prairie for expansion of the White River Greenway from current northern terminus of trail to 146th Street.
 - 2020 – Entered into an agreement with Clay Township for development of a pedestrian bridge across the White River Greenway as part of the Clay Township Impact Program. This project will ultimately connect the Carmel and Fishers trail networks in involves collaboration between CCPR, Clay Township, City of Carmel, Conner Prairie, Hamilton County Parks & Recreation, and the City of Fishers.
 - Develop a dedicated funding strategy for development of the corridor
 - Develop view sheds along trails for users to enjoy the White River and include picnic areas
 - 2020 – At end of 2019, CCPR secured approximately 13.55 acres of property along Hazel Dell Parkway which will serve as a future trailhead along the White River Corridor; homestead on the property was demolished in 2020 and has been restored to a natural state
 - 2020 – Focus of River Heritage Park development will be accessible trails and view sheds along the White River
 - Elevate the brand of all trails throughout the City through enhanced marketing strategies
 - 2020 – As new parks and upgrades to existing parks are being made, CCPR diligently works to educate public on amenities available and how changes positively impact the community via website and social media platforms
 - Work with the City of Carmel to make trail connectivity a priority (10-minute walk to a park)
 - 2020 – Flowing Well Park added two additional access points for foot traffic into park, one from 116th St. and one from Gray Road
 - 2020 – Added restrooms to Carey Grove and Flowing Well Parks which will significantly increases the amount of time a patron can spend in the park, also increasing the viability of visitors to walk to the park (don't have to drive in case someone has to use the restroom)
 - 2020 – Township approved new pedestrian bridge over White River which will connect City of Carmel and Fishers
 - Develop loop trails to tie into existing neighborhood parks
 - Explore opportunities for trail amenities (watercraft access, off-trail fitness, overlook areas, etc.)
 - 2020 – Focus of River Heritage Park development will be accessible trails, view sheds and overlook areas along the White River
 - 2020 – Added shuffleboards, spray plaza, table tennis, bocce ball, seating and shade areas along the Monon Greenway from Elm Street to Walnut Street
- Facilitate implementation of a West Regional Corridor centered on West Park
 - Complete evaluation of the need for additional indoor recreation space at West Park
 - Design/construct amenities to make West Park a Regional Destination Park

- 2020 — Construction currently underway and anticipated to finish in the fall of 2021
 - Establish a west-side steering committee to assist with partnership opportunities for land acquisition
 - 2020 — Purchase approximately 26.91 acres, now known as Bear Creek Park, at 14330 Shelborne Road, Carmel, Indiana, fulfilling the goal of acquiring much needed new parkland in northwest Carmel as established in both the 2020-2024 Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan and 2020-2025 Zone Improvement Plan.
 - Explore partnership opportunities that can assist with completing park development
 - Acquire and develop a community or neighborhood park in the northwest corner of Carmel
 - 2020 — Purchase approximately 26.91 acres, now known as Bear Creek Park, at 14330 Shelborne Road, Carmel, Indiana, fulfilling the goal of acquiring much needed new parkland in northwest Carmel as established in both the 2020-2024 Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan and 2020-2025 Zone Improvement Plan.
 - 2020 — CCPR anticipates issuing requests for proposals in early-2021 to select a consultant to facilitate the preparation of a park master plan, which will guide the future development of the new park
- Develop a signature environmental education facility
 - Develop a feasibility study and business plan for a nature center
 - Seek partnerships to help develop and manage the program site if applicable
- Establish a neighborhood park strategy, recognizing the role of HOAs
 - Coordinate with developers on new neighborhood park development per re-defined park classifications
 - Sign neighborhood parks accordingly
 - Identify HOA properties and recreational amenities available
 - 2020 — Work nearing completion on GIS capture of HOA properties which will help CCPR better understand community amenities available and its impact on future needs
- Seek innovative solutions to serve identified underserved or unserved populations
 - Identify underserved or unserved populations in Carmel, Indiana and Clay Township
 - Evaluate the programs that are currently being provided to underserved or unserved populations by CCPR
 - Evaluate and map the programs that are currently being provided for underserved or unserved populations by other local organizations
 - Develop individualized goals for CCPR programming staff to encourage the research, identification, planning, and execution of innovative programs geared towards the identified underserved or unserved populations
 - Utilize compiled data to formulate program offerings to meet the unmet needs of these populations throughout our Program Areas and Categories
 - Expand upon current successful partnerships to reach underserved or unserved populations
 - 2020 — Continued partnership with Carmel Marathon which allows Adaptive participants the ability to compete/participate in the annual Carmel 5K; Continued partnership with Carmel Health & Living Community to implement educational programs for seniors
 - Create new partnerships with identified local organizations to fill current and future gaps in service for underserved or unserved populations
 - 2020 — Texas Roadhouse: providing healthy dinners for Adaptive Participants, a priority for many individuals with developmental disabilities; Gordon Holmes/Tom Blessing/Mary Wallace: Educational programs for participants and their families ranging from financial planning to nutrition
 - Continue to develop and evaluate internal reporting of populations served through CCPR programs and partnerships
 - 2020 — Updated program survey which will allow for better capture of data from participants and better position CCPR to develop new programs and seek out additional partners
- Explore opportunities to provide community gardens as part of land-use strategies

1.1.2 PROVIDE EXCEPTIONAL CUSTOMER EXPERIENCES:

- Reimagine existing parks through effective planning and appropriate updates
 - Update existing park master plans (Hazel Landing, Inlow, Carey Grove, Cherry Tree, Flowing Well, Meadowlark, and River Heritage)
 - 2020 – The Clay Township Impact Program (CTIP) provided CCPR with funds to enhance and update Carey Grove, Flowing Well, West, Meadowlark, Inlow, and River Heritage Parks. Improvements will be made to the following amenities, which varies by park: playgrounds, splashpads, restrooms, bank stabilization, bridges, trails, parking lots, shelters, fishing piers, pickleball courts (new addition)
 - Incorporate consistent design principles for all new parks and the update of existing parks
 - Develop a mini business plan for parks and facilities to ensure site will achieve outcomes desired
 - Continue to upgrade playgrounds in existing parks
 - 2020 – CTIP funds provided to CCPR will allow for playground/splashpad updates at Carey Grove, West, Meadowlark, and Inlow Parks
 - Analyze community demographics to ensure park design meets needs of those it intends to serve
 - 2020 – Community input meetings were held to obtain feedback on park improvements at Carey Grove, Flowing Well, and West Parks; Feedback incorporated into final park design
- Create nature preserve experiences throughout the park system
 - Seek a partnership with a not-for-profit to help preserve natural areas along the trails with resource plans
 - Develop an interpretive plan for natural areas in the parks through updated interpretive signage
 - 2020 – Interpretive signage added to Founders Park in Spring 2020 utilizing Rain on Main funds
 - 2020 – Flowing Well interpretive signs are in final stages of production and will be installed in 2021 utilizing CTIP funds
 - 2020 – Prairie Meadow signage will be implemented in 2021 utilizing Rain on Main funds
 - 2020 – Meadowlark Park interpretive signage was received as an add-alternate in bids received, evaluating to determine if CTIP funds will be sufficient to cover expense
 - Develop educational content that helps locate and identify key natural resources in CCPR specific parks
 - 2020 – Park Conversations magazine, created in 2019, continues to provide the community with educational content pertinent to CCPR parks and natural resources
 - 2020 – Volunteer Stewardship projects focused on targeted education on fostering sustainable habitats within CCPR properties
 - 2020 – My Park Series which highlights key natural resources and history of CCPR specific parks was created in 2019. Plans to expand upon the program were delayed in 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic but will be re-initiated in 2021
 - 2020 – Wildflower Walks will be expanded upon in 2021
 - 2020 – Stewardship focused web presence in development with PNR/Marketing planned for Spring 2021 rollout (educational components are a key focus of each stewardship park activity)
 - Seek National Audubon recognition for habitat and native plant preservation and integration of the park system
 - Develop resource management plans for those parks that are preservation designated
 - 2020 – Converted approximately 8 acres of turf/grass to native prairie at Steckley Property
- Provide a diverse selection of facilities and amenities to accommodate indoor and outdoor recreational pursuits
 - Consider developing more health-related amenities in parks (loop trails, art, cultural, outdoor fitness equipment)
 - 2020 – Outdoor cardio equipment was incorporated into park design at Carey Grove Park
 - Consider adding additional assets consistent with park master plans in underserved areas
 - Develop age segment, facility and program experiences matrix for each park to determine who is being served and who is not

- Balance and expand program and volunteer opportunities throughout the community
 - Create continuous coordination between Recreation, ESE, and Parks divisions to better utilize existing resources and collaborate between divisions to ensure a balance of program offerings is being maintained throughout the Department
 - Identify populations/demographics in Carmel, Indiana and Clay Township by geographical area
 - Construct targeted surveys to determine needs/wants by geographical area
 - Ensure that under-utilized parks are represented in program proposal each season
 - Utilize compiled data to formulate program offerings based on the needs/wants of each geographical community
 - Ensure a balance of Summer Camp Series opportunities by offering diverse programs at multiple locations throughout the Carmel/Clay community
 - Collaborate with CCPR Marketing team to create specialized marketing plans to reach new participants and promote programming at locations outside of the Monon Community Center and Central Park
 - 2020 — Annual recreation survey sent towards latter end of 2020 aimed to begin initial information gathering of data that will be used to assist CCPR in reaching new participants
 - Evaluate current local and nation-wide trends, challenges, and critical health and wellness issues
 - Develop targeted surveys to Monon Community Center members that will help identify wants/needs regarding new and current fitness and wellness offerings
 - 2020 Survey Results:
 - Member Satisfaction — 86% of members surveyed responded with a 4 or 5 star rating
 - Highest Rated Amenities — 1. Fitness Equipment Provided, 2. Group Fitness Offerings, 3. Value of Facility for the Money, 4. Investments made to Equipment and Facility
 - Utilize compiled data to develop innovated and effective fitness and wellness program offerings for all age groups focusing specifically on at-risk populations
 - Ensure fitness and wellness components are integrated into the Extended School Enrichment programs through supplemental enrichment offerings focuses on the needs and current trends surrounding youth demographics
 - Continue to develop volunteers in all aspects of the system through recruitment, training and replacement
 - 2020 — 46 volunteer programs; 1,288 hours (programs/hours impacted by Covid-19 pandemic)
 - Teach and train staff on how to work with volunteers to maximize their performance
 - Develop a strong recognition program for volunteers in the system
 - 2020 — Event held in January at Monon Community Center, recognized the accumulative annual contributions from 2019; CCPR recognized its top 20 contributors with an awards banquet and door prizes for all in attendance
- Continue reinvestments in revenue facilities by adding or replacing amenities
 - Add an additional waterslide to The Waterpark
 - Continue to evaluate need to update fitness equipment on a five-year cycle
 - 2020 — Cybex/Strength Circuit was replaced in first quarter of year, which concluded CCPRs previous five-year replacement cycle; 2021 will resume assessment of needs and implementation of new five-year plan
 - Develop an equipment lifecycle replacement program
- Use Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to drive data-driven decisions regarding services and operations
 - Identify maintenance standards for each park maintained by CCPR
 - Continuously evaluate staff, equipment, and resources needed to achieve community expectations
 - 2020 — Approved 2021 budget begins to ramp up field staff and key management position with PNR, while additional supervisory and technical staff will be requested in subsequent years to effectively manage CCPR resources
 - Continuously manage to maintenance standards and track the unit of cost to achieve the standard

- Evaluate annually the amenities that need to be update in existing parks
 - 2020 — CTIP assisted CCPR in expediting replacement of playgrounds, parking lots, and other infrastructure that had reached end of life.
 - 2020 — CCPR utilizes regular re-occurring park inspections to address operating and capital replacements as needed

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

- Develop long-term funding plan and implement Lifecycle Asset Management Plan
 - Maintain and update the Asset Management Plan as new assets are incorporated to the system and items are updated
 - Track capital costs to ensure the dollars allocated in the Asset Management Plan are consistent
 - Update amenities as they reach their end of life
 - 2020 — CTIP assisted CCPR in expediting replacement of playgrounds, parking lots, and other infrastructure that had reached end of life.
 - Establish a dedicated funding source for capital improvements in all parks
- Continue and expand conservation management practices throughout park system
 - Demonstrate the cost benefit of urban conservation management with elected officials
- Partner with public, private, and non-profit sectors to satisfy community needs for facilities with high construction and/or operating costs
 - Continue to partner with local agencies on joint development of properties
 - Develop feasibility studies and business plans for all new recreation facilities begin considered
- Expand environmental education and park stewardship programming to increase appreciation for natural resources
 - Develop program offerings and opportunities designed around the intent for the Department to gain tangible benefits as a result of the skills obtained by participants
 - 2020 — Continued implementation of Citizen Science and Adopt a Park programs involving water quality assessments, bird monitoring, native and invasive plant monitoring, and park stewardship projects such as planting native trees and shrubs at sites that had invasive species (honeysuckle, etc.) removed
 - Develop program offerings and opportunity coordination between divisions to create a reciprocal feed of participants between skill-based instruction (fee-based) and application-based instruction (park system benefit)
 - 2020 — Junior Ranger program developed in 2020 but due to Covid-19 pandemic will not be rolled out until 2021.
 - Strengthen the infrastructure for informal/unstructured, yet educational, opportunities throughout the CCPR park system
 - 2020 — Added tangible educational resources to field staff vehicles for impromptu opportunities to engage visitors when available
 - 2020 — Interpretive signage added to Founders Park in Spring 2020 utilizing Rain on Main funds
 - 2020 — Flowing Well interpretive signs are in final stages of production and will be installed in 2021 utilizing CTIP funds
 - 2020 — Utilized social platforms to assist with community education on random environmental related topics and nature specific events including native trees, plants, winter solstice, migratory birds, clean water act, world soils day, America Recycles day, etc.
- Achieve 100% cost recovery for Recreation & Facilities Division and Extended School Enrichment Division
 - Tracking of true costs of service needs to continue to be updated annually
 - Continue to seek outside funding of taxes and user fees
- Examine internal and external communication efforts regarding financial operations of system

- Update the Marketing Plan to educate new residents on available parks and programs provided by CCPR
- Develop a cost benefit assessment of the use of advertising for programs and the ROI
- Ensure employees understand the cost-recovery goals and the reasoning
- Complete a long-term financial plan for the system and share with all employees
- Update or develop business plans for revenue facilities and programs
 - Update business plans to evaluate all aspects of the site to maximize revenues and keep costs in check
 - Continue to market the Monon Community Center as a premiere signature facility in the Midwest
- Identify and pursue opportunities to expand earned-income and other funding sources
 - Establish a new dedicated funding source
 - Continue to seek new earned income opportunities
 - Explore a park bond issue or other financing resources
 - Consider a new position to develop earned income opportunities
 - Seek additional opportunities through grants and sponsorships
 - Track unit costs and pricing alternatives for achieving cost-recovery goals
 - Seek to develop a corporate partner to provide funding mechanism for fee waivers offered by the department

1.2 “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 CCPR to accomplish. Successfully implementing these objectives will ensure CCPR remains responsive to the identified needs of the community and positions itself 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
 - River multiuse trail and working with partners to establish a regional system
- West Regional Corridor
 - West Park development and working with partners (e.g., Dads Club, Schools, County, etc.)
 - Northwest side park
- 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
 - White River Corridor
 - West Park redevelopment
 - Flowing Well
 - Environmental education and park stewardship programming

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