Oak Brook Park District

A National Gold Medal Agency

Strategic Plan

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Years

2025-2029

Updated November, 2026



Strategic Plan 2025-2029

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Strategic Planning Input and Review Schedule

August 15, 2023
Leadership Team Strategic Planning Workshop

August 29, 2023
Board of Commissioners Strategic Planning Workshop

November 16, 2023
All Staff Strategic Planning Workshop

October -November, 2024
Oak Brook Resident Survey

April 21, 2025 Regular Board Meeting
Strategic Plan Approved

November 17, 2025
Strategic Plan Update

Mission:

It is the mission of the Oak Brook Park District to provide the ***very best*** in **park** and **recreational opportunities**, **facilities**, and **open lands** for **our community**.

Vision: To provide a diverse, inclusive and holistic range of opportunities designed to keep the community happy, fit and active.

Introduction to the Oak Brook Park District

The Oak Brook Park District was founded in 1962 and serves a community of about 8,000 residents, and 20,000 corporate residents, and employs between 200-225 employees at any given time. The governing body of the District is composed of five park commissioners, elected for staggered 6-year terms. The Board appoints an Executive Director to oversee daily administrative functions of the District.

The District owns and maintains five parks and 173.4 acres of land in the Village of Oak Brook. Facilities operated by the District include the Family Recreation Center, which includes the Fitness Center, Indoor Aquatic Center, and outdoor Splash Island, as well as the Tennis Center and Central Park West. After over 60 years the parks, programs, and facilities of the Oak Brook Park District have become uniquely connected with the identity of Oak Brook. Over time, individual lives have also been enhanced through the District's mission to help its residents to be happy, fit, and active. A strong mission and core values have sustained an organizational culture focused on fiscal responsibility, communication, environmental stewardship, and accessibility.

MISSION

VISION

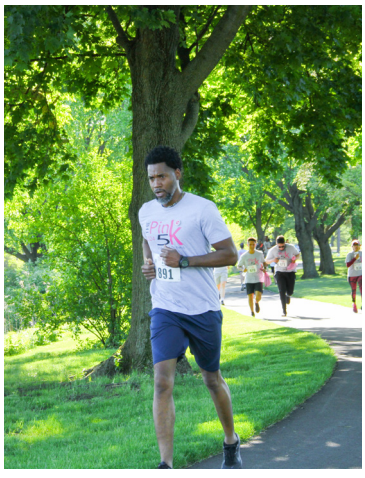
STRATEGIC INITIATIVES & CORE VALUES

- Holistic Wellness
- Environmental Stewardship
- Inclusion
- Teamwork
- Community Engagement
- Open Communication

GOALS

- Reassess and re-brand Central Park West's identity with a focus on enhancing the customers' experience and the District's fiscal responsibility.
- Create a Needs Assessment Plan for the redevelopment, expansion, and maintenance of facilities at the Central Park Campus.
- Expand the use of technology to engage our customers, increase fun and keep them safe.
- Form partnerships with neighboring park districts to offer new and strong opportunities for our communities.
- Be regarded as one of the most inclusive park districts in the state where everyone is welcome and feels a sense of belonging.
- Develop strategies to improve our staff recruitment and retention.
- Strengthen and/or Re-Invent our Special Recreation Association experience and provider.
- Be the Best Park District We Can Be.
- Maintain and promote a delivery of sustainability initiatives.
- Utilize internal and external community resources to expand, develop, and implement inclusive recreational opportunites.









PROCESS

The Board of Commissioners and Staff are guided by the Oak Brook Park District's mission to provide the very best in park and recreational opportunities, facilities, and open lands for our community.

The Oak Brook Park District's Strategic Planning process focuses on developing a tactical and adaptive working plan linking our mission, vision, and core values, with strategic initiatives. This will ensure the operational goals for the next five years fall within the parameters of our Master Vision.

2023 Strategic Planning Workshop

In March, 2023 the District hired Carole Sente Consulting, LLC to be the Park District's guide on the next five years of planning. The Leadership team then met with Carole on August 15, 2023 to discuss possible strategic initiatives. On August 29, 2023 the Oak Brook Park District Board of Park Commissioners held a planning workshop to discuss the strategic plans for the District with Park District staff. Staff also had a workshop on November 16, 2023 at the annual Teambuilding meeting. The workshops reviewed the accomplishments completed under the previous strategic plan identified strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges within the District, and identified strategic initiatives and projects to accomplish in the next five years.

Review

The Oak Brook Park District Department Head Team reviews the progress of Strategic Plan initiatives every six months during All-Staff and department head meetings. The Strategic Plan progress is presented semiannually at monthly board meetings.

Staff Involvement

To ensure the success and realization of strategic initiatives, staff on every level contributes to an accurate assessment of the Oak Brook Park District's operational strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges.

Board Involvement

Elected board members participate in the Strategic Planning workshop to develop goals designed to help make the Oak Brook Community the very best.

Community Involvement

Through regular facility surveys, program evaluations, focus groups, and client engagement, the Oak Brook Park District actively solicits and incorporates formal as well as informal resident, participant, member, and community input throughout the strategic planning process.

SWOC Analysis

Strengths

- Forward-thinking DEI initiatives including our Inclusive Universal Playground and family locker room.
- Large central campus with a variety of activities (central hub of Oak Brook).
- The things we specialize in, we do well (tennis, basketball, preschool, aquatics, summer camps) for the community.
- Strong leadership coupled with staff collaboration and dedication.
- Professional development and continuous staff training including our approach to risk management and safety (we exceed PDRMA requirements).
- Creative use and maximization of our financial resources.
- Connected trail corridors (especially south and east).
- Ability to host tournaments for a variety of sports.
- Awards and achievements as we continue to meet and exceed industry standards.
- Cleanliness and upkeep of the parks and facilities.
- Customer retention and community engagement.
- Work/life balance for employees.
- Great value in membership opportunities for community.
- Loyal customer base, particularly seniors and participants in activities in which we specialize.

Strategic initiatives capitalize on our strengths to further our mission and vision.

Weaknesses

- Quality and quantity of Special Recreation Association initiatives.
- Lack of identity at the Central Park West facility.
- Aging facilities and equipment.
- Connection across Ginger Creek.
- Lack of space to develop. Limited indoor court spaces.
- Lack of bus transportation for programming.
- Siloing between the Tennis Center and Family Recreation Center (programming and activities).
- Limited cultural arts programming.
- Membership is not evenly spread out across age demographics.
- Social media engagement.
- Limited activities for teens and young adults age 16-23+.

Strategic initiatives address areas of needed improvement for the community.

SWOC Analysis

Opportunities

- More inclusive play/programs and facilities.
- Expansion and redevelopment of recreation space(i.e. pickleball expansion at Central Park and additional turf fields.)
- Cross-promotion and piggy-backing of programs during activities and events to generate additional fees.
- Desire for an improved and collaborative relationship with the Village at the Board level.
- Selective events and programs that appeal to a broader cultural and age audience (Farmers Market, Cultural Food Fest).
- Expand the use of technology internally and externally including social media.
- Expansion of Programming such as Ginger Creek (fishing derby, paddle boarding classes, etc), teen, and pickelball.
- Expand programming for 55+ Active Adult population.
- Grow percentage of resident usage of amenities and programming.
- Increase corporate memberships.
- Expand winter/seasonal program opportunities (may include considering new/expanded capital project).
- Seek creative ways to attract and communicate program offerings to residents and patrons living outside of Park District boundaries.
- Additional outdoor tournaments (pickleball, soccer, softball, cricket, lacrosse, flag football) including use of Central Park West.
- Reaching additional markets (veterans, active duty, and out-of-district customers).
- Membership campaign focused on a "Premier" membership for full campus.
- Alternative funding through partnerships/sponsors, and local, state, and federal grants.
- Concessions sales at events.
- Partnering with the Oak Brook Reserve.
- Promote alternative transportation using the trail system. Consider bike charging/repair stations, electric golf carts, scooters.

Strategic initiatives evaluate opportunities in order to increase service delivery and financial sucess.

Challenges

- Managing and meeting customer expectations. Trying to deliver a “country club” or “high-end” customer experience with limited resources.
- Staffing – all levels including support staff and part-time (particularly with specialized needs: coaches, personal trainers, etc.).
- Employee retention/replacement and succession planning.
- Desire for an improved and collaborative relationship with the Village (Board Level).
- Ensuring our programs/special events have a stand-out factor to draw broader participation away from their local park district offerings.
- Effectively determine our programs’ lifespan and when to sunset
- Competition of State and federal funding.
- Over-use of athletic fields.
- Investing in and maintaining capital projects.
- Inflation; increased cost of commodities.
- Building a stronger community acceptance of DEI and a shared sense of belonging.
- Exploring different ways to market programs in a changing technology landscape.
- Small district boundaries and population.
- Adequate and accessible parking.
- Need for better Special Recreation Association support and partnership as a resource.
- Inability to meet community demand for programming= lost revenue/connection to customers due to waitlists.
- Resident perception that non-resident participation is too high and may negatively impact them.

Strategic initiatives work to prevent service and revenue interruptions and mitigate risks.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES *& IMPLEMENTATION*

Complete by November, 2029

- Holistic Wellness
- Environmental Stewardship
- Community Engagement
- Inclusion
- Teamwork
- Open Communication

Goal, Initiatives & Objectives	Lead/Department & Updates
Reassess and re-brand Central Park West's identity with a focus on enhancing the customers' experience and the District's fiscal responsibility.	
• Create opportunities for a "tournament hub" as well as Park District special events, activities, and programming on the weekends.	Facilities, Recreation
• Explore opportunities for establishing a Special Recreation Association on weekdays.	Facilities, Recreation - COMPLETED
Create a Needs Assessment Plan for the redevelopment, expansion, and maintenance of facilities at the Central Park Campus.	
• Reposition the outdoor tennis courts.	Parks, Tennnis - IN PROGRESS
• Add pickleball courts and parking.	Parks, Recreation
• Consider lighting some outdoor courts.	Parks
• Implement an overhang storage space on the east side of the Family Recreation Center facility.	Facilities, Parks, Maintenance
• Create additional programmable multi-purpose space in Studio D storage.	Facilities, Recreation
• Re-purpose ball field #4 into a dual turf space for baseball, softball, and lacrosse.	Parks
• Input a turf field at the Central Park North Athletic Field's field #2.	Parks
• Proceed with the Ginger Creek Bridge Project.	Parks - IN PROGRESS
• Update the 10-year capital improvement plan annually.	Leadership Team - COMPLETED
Expand the use of technology to engage our customers, increase fun and keep them safe.	
• High-quality virtual tours, kiosks, web forms, and memberships.	IT/Facilities - IN PROGRESS
• Establish a dashboard system to access the current use patterns of each facility.	IT
Form partnerships with neighboring park districts to offer new and strong opportunities for our communities.	
• Explore a "bike sharing" transportation loop connecting the Oak Brook Park District with the Downers Grove and Elmhurst Park Districts. Explore partnerships with other interested local governmental entities.	Marketing, Recreation

Goal	Objectives	Lead/Department & Updates
Be regarded as one of the most inclusive park districts where everyone is welcome and feels a sense of belonging.		
	• Implement renovations such as eliminating wood-chipped playgrounds and replace them with inclusive surfacing.	Parks
	• Dedicate more time to the ADA transition plan and complete 70% of the plan by 2029.	Parks, Facilities, Maintenance - IN PROGRESS
	• Review District inclusivity during Capital Improvement Plan while maximizing special recreation funding	Leadership Team - IN PROGRESS
	• Implement inclusive and adaptive programming (tennis, Tai Kwon Do, aquatic, dance, pottery).	Recreation, Tennis, Aquatics - IN PROGRESS
	• Provide some programming with our staff via training and when beneficial with a consultant/partner.	Admin, HR
Develop strategies to improve our staff recruitment and retention.		
	• Explore "employee-centric" policies (Family Care Leave Policy).	HR
	• Expand full and part-time staff teambuilding opportunities. Develop a calendar of activities on a regular basis.	Leadership Team - IN PROGRESS
	• Excel in our Professional Development offerings. 1. Include opportunities in the Orientation Passport and intentionally communicate opportunities to staff. 2. Create and implement an inclusive part-time on-boarding experience. (Part-time staff to visit all facilities.)	Leadership Team - IN PROGRESS
	• Revamp and improve work and break spaces.	Facilities - COMPLETED
Strengthen and/or Re-Invent our Special Recreation Association experience and provider.		
	• Explore dedicated weekday space at Central Park West.	Facilities - IN PROGRESS
	• Balance between independent activities and inclusion.	Recreation
	• Serve community better with more positive and meaningful experience.	Marketing, Recreation - IN PROGRESS
Be the Best Park District We Can Be.		
	• Prioritize cultural and historical components of the Oak Brook community when planning for programs, resource allocation and acquisition, and documentation at the District.	Leadership Team - IN PROGRESS
	• Continually exhibit the highest degree of fiscal excellence and financial accountability to our residents and community.	Finance - IN PROGRESS
	• Maintain State and National Accreditations including GFOA, CAPRA, Distinguished Agency, Gold Medal, etc. which add rigor, process and discipline to how we deliver our services.	Leadership Team - COMPLETED

Goal	Objectives	Lead/Department & Updates
Maintain and promote a delivery of sustainability initiatives.		
	• Increase the use of organic bio-solid turf fertilizer as an alternative to granular products.	Parks-IN PROGRESS
	• Develop social media content focused on ecological and sustainability topics.	Marketing-IN PROGRESS
	• Create additional native plant habitats in parks.	Parks-IN PROGRESS
	• Begin phasing out gas-powered landscaping tools/equipment to battery powered alternatives.	Parks-IN PROGRESS
	• Transition some custodial cleaning supplies to "green" alternatives.	Facilities, Parks
	• Purchase battery-powered utility vehicle for Parks Department. Transition some custodial cleaning supplies to "green" alternatives.	Parks
	• Reduce the use of paper: More online forms and paperless meetings.	Admin-COMPLETED
	• Investigate installation of a commercial dishwasher in aquatics kitchen and use reusable dishware and utensils.	Facilities-COMPLETED
	• Re-evaluate the options for installing solar panels at the Family Recreation Center.	Leadership Team - COMPLETED
	• Continue seeking alternative funding for trees and plants.	Parks-COMPLETED
Utilize internal and external community resources to expand, develop, & implement inclusive recreational opportunites.		
	• Develop educational programs focused on nature and utilize Ginger Creek for nature-based programming.	Parks, Recreation
	• Diverse programming: teens, dance, theater, culinary.	Recreation-IN PROGRESS
	• Implement inclusive and adaptive programming (tennis, Tai Kwon Do, aquatic, dance, pottery).	Recreation, Aquatic IN PROGRESS
	• Expand use of expert-level contracted instructors for unique programs.	Recreation, Aquatic - IN PROGRESS
	• Better utilize existing campus/resources for small-scale tournaments: Sand volleyball, Frisbee golf, basketball, pickleball.	Parks, Recreation - IN PROGRESS
	• Optimize Tennis Center court space to allow additional participant capacity.	Tennis-IN PROGRESS
	• Explore options to expand financial assistance for our residents.	Marketing
	• Connect with community organizations to utilize open facilities and spaces during off peak and non-programmed hours.	Marketing, Facilities - IN PROGRESS
	• Grow the District's foundation to increase the District's revenue and assist in funding capital projects.	Marketing - IN PROGRESS