



# Lindenhurst Park District

## 2021-22 Strategic Planning and Goal Development



NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

**Center for  
Governmental Studies**

*Outreach, Engagement and Regional Development*





# Table of Contents

<u>Executive Summary</u> .....	1
<u>Strategic Goals</u> .....	1
<u>Strategic Priorities</u> .....	2
<u>Introduction</u> .....	3
<u>Pre-Workshop: Taking Stock, Stakeholder Engagement Process</u> .....	4
<u>Lindenhurst Park District Master Plan</u> .....	4
<u>Community Survey</u> .....	5
<u>Focus Groups</u> .....	6
<u>Outline of Leadership Exercises and Discussion Sessions</u> .....	7
<u>Introduction Exercise — Icebreaker</u> .....	7
<u>Visioning Exercise — Visioning for the Future</u> .....	8
<u>Environmental Scanning Surrender or Lead</u> .....	9
<u>Environmental Scanning — Internal and External S.W.O.C. Analysis</u> .....	10
<u>Nominal Group Goal Identification</u> .....	11
<u>Strategic Priority Areas</u> .....	13
<u>Conclusion</u> .....	14
<u>Appendix A: Lindenhurst Park District Master Plan — Top Ten Priority/Theme Area</u> .....	15
<u>Theme #1 — Aging Infrastructure</u> .....	15
<u>Theme #2 — Maintenance Standards and Care</u> .....	16
<u>Theme #3 — Debt Service - Capital Spending</u> .....	17
<u>Theme #4 — Indoor Programing Space</u> .....	18
<u>Theme #5 — Staffing Levels &amp; Office Space</u> .....	19
<u>Theme #6 — Intergovernmental Cooperation</u> .....	20
<u>Theme #7 — Community Engagement</u> .....	21
<u>Theme #8 Capital Plan Prioritization</u> .....	22
<u>Theme #9 — Levels of Service and Visioning</u> .....	23
<u>Theme #10 — Recreation Programming</u> .....	24
<u>Appendix B: Community Survey Results — Summary of Responses</u> .....	25
<u>Key Findings</u> .....	25
<u>Appendix C: Focus Group Results — Methodology and Summary Responses</u> .....	27
<u>Overall Themes</u> .....	28

# Executive Summary

Strategic planning is a preferred approach to guiding an organization's future rather than making decisions issue by issue. The Lindenhurst Park District ("the District") engaged the Center for Governmental Studies (CGS) at Northern Illinois University (NIU) to assist with its 2021-22 strategic planning process. This process included broad stakeholder feedback and culminated in a strategic planning leadership workshop. Prior to the workshop, three focus groups were conducted virtually with the Frontline Staff, Program Users, and Intergovernmental/Civic Partners to gather input on the District's future vision and goals. In addition, a statistically significant community survey and a demographic analysis were also conducted prior to the workshop to gain additional stakeholder input. Lastly, the District undertook a Park District Master Planning initiative to coincide with the strategic planning efforts ensuring the goals and priorities aligned with the infrastructure needs.

With the focus groups, community survey, demographic analysis, and Master Plan results as a starting point for discussions, the strategic planning workshop provided a positive atmosphere for Board and senior staff members to collaboratively review and develop their vision for the District's future. As part of the 2021 process, workshop participants developed strategic goals focused on both the short- and long-term success of the organization.

## Strategic Goals

The culmination of the strategic planning workshop was goal development. After the goals were developed and discussed, the participants were asked to classify each goal according to a matrix model of time and complexity. The goals were classified as short- or long-term and as complex or routine. In total, the group developed eight short-term routine goals, nine short-term complex goals, two long-term routine goals, and eight long-term complex goals and they are shared next.

### Short-Term Routine

- Establish a playground equipment improvement/replacement program.
- Continue to evaluate staffing levels to meet the demand of park district.
- Prioritize spending across the park district (programming, staff, equipment, etc.).
- Increase creative programming which could include collaboration with other organizations.
- Increase active adult and intergenerational programming.
- Implement a leadership/mentoring program for tweens/teens.
- Increase full-time parks/facility staff.
- Develop employee guidelines and expectations for continuing education and professional growth.

### Short-Term Complex

- Evaluate registration and financial software to increase efficiency and ease of use for park district patrons and staff.
- Update website features to be more user-friendly including improving mobile device applications, live chat features, etc.
- Continue/increase utilization of school district facilities and expand collaboration where it is mutually beneficial.
- Explore the need to divest land and land usage by converting playgrounds into passive areas.
- Plan for community center expansion. Office, multipurpose, dance/fitness and storage.
- Plan for programming of community center expansion.
- Restructure job descriptions, staff responsibilities and organizational chart to align with growth and district goals.
- Establish annual goals for each department that will be assigned, evaluated and reviewed quarterly.
- Apply for and secure an OSLAD grant for redevelopment of Lewis Park.

### Long-Term Routine

- Explore how the park district can become more self-sustaining including user fee models and the need for other non-property tax increases.
- Evaluate and implement new communication, registration, and financial software (integrated).

### Long-Term Complex

- Build and/or partner with another local government agency for a maintenance garage.
- Explore investment opportunities while maintaining financial stability.
- Incorporate fiscal forecasting and modeling into programming, budgeting, and priorities.
- Create a capital improvement plan for the park district.
- Implement playground maintenance plan.
- Pursue, plan and apply for distinguished accreditation.
- Explore the need for a referendum and pursue if needed.
- Implement playground/park updating/maintaining replacement plan.

## Strategic Priorities

Ultimately, five key strategic priority areas were identified as an outcome of the process highlighting activities and initiatives that the Park District should focus on in both the short- and long-term. The strategic priority areas identified as a part of the planning process [in no particular order] are long-term capital planning and implementation, financial planning and sustainability, community engagement and collaboration, organizational development and advancement, and diverse and engaging programming.

### Strategic Priority Areas

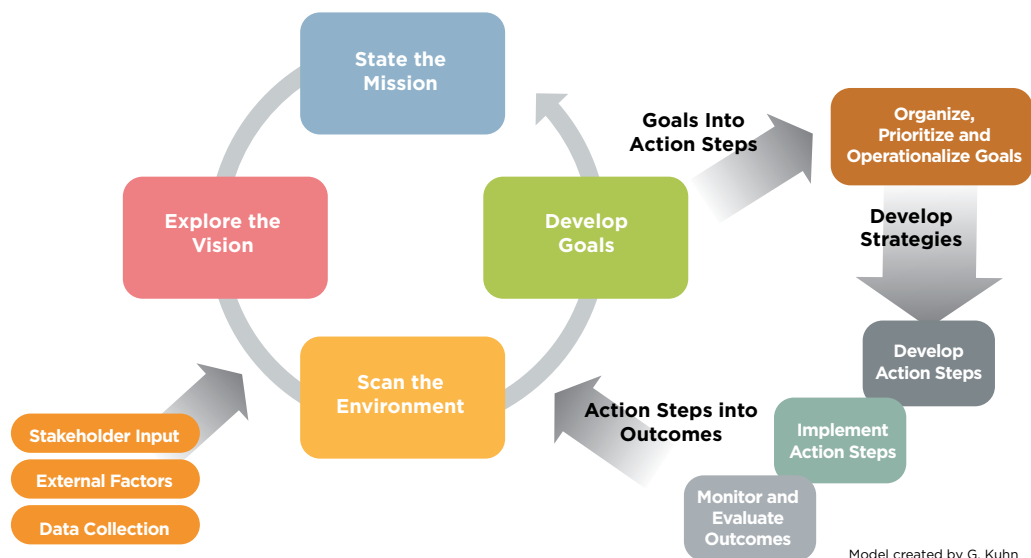


# Introduction

As an organization, the Lindenhurst Park District recognizes the value of formalized strategic planning and goal setting in serving its diverse and progressive community. The Park District Board and senior staff gathered in 2021 to discuss a future vision for the Park District and establish new goals. The 2021 workshop provided a positive atmosphere to methodically, strategically, determine where the Park District wants to go as an organization, which will serve the community well into the coming years (Figure 1).

Keep in mind that the judicious use of the Park District's limited resources (including financial resources and professional staff time) will be the key to good results. These high standards can place a strain on the organization, as excellence requires adequate staff time, expertise and resources. In the end, sensible policies and quality implementation equate to tough choices in setting priorities and allocating resources. Only a limited number of goals and objectives can be managed and implemented effectively at any given time. In a very realistic sense, clear and stable priorities must be maintained if the Park District desires to stretch its resources as far as they can go.

**Figure 1. Strategic Planning Model\***



Model created by G. Kuhn

*\*Model generally represents the steps that are taken for this type of initiative.*



# Pre-Workshop:

## Taking Stock, Stakeholder Engagement Process

Stakeholder engagement is an important pre-workshop component designed to help ground the environmental scanning portion of the process. Listening is vital to planning and these steps help the organization “take stock” and understand current District policies and operational perspectives, perceptions, and preferences. Between January and September 2021, a statistically significant community survey, and Park District Master Plan, and three stakeholder focus groups were conducted.

### Lindenhurst Park District Master Plan

The consultant team conducted a comprehensive process to develop a list of strategic themes based on the initiation, assessment, analysis, deliberation and identification of the District’s current operations and recommendations to create a future vision to better serve the community.

#### The process completed involved the following components:

- Community-wide Needs Assessment Survey and compilation of results.
- Interviews with Park Board, Executive Director, and key staff.
- Focus group discussions with community members, staff, affiliate groups and governmental partners.
- Levels of Service (LOS) identification, assessment, and benchmarking of current inventory towards best practice state standards via the Illinois Park and Recreation Distinguished Accreditation Program.
- Identification, assessment and recommendations towards a Capital Development, Capital Improvement and Repair and Replacement Program to address current infrastructure needs as well as potential additional capital assets to consider in future planning efforts.
- Performed on-site park and facilities tour to develop comprehensive park/facility profiles for current site assessments, maintenance needs, and future improvements.

The following ten themes have been identified as the guiding principles for the District to consider when devising future direction and related decision-making for future strategic planning initiatives. Each theme listed also identifies strategic opportunities, approaches and best practices, and recommendations to expand, enhance, improve, and change where needed the delivery of park, facility, open space and recreational services to the residents and other active users of the Park District. The results were shared with the Board and senior staff at the workshop. Please see [Appendix A](#) for a full description of each theme including recommendations and opportunities.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| • <b>Theme #1</b> — Aging Infrastructure            | • <b>Theme #6</b> — Intergovernmental Cooperation   |
| • <b>Theme #2</b> — Maintenance Standards and Care  | • <b>Theme #7</b> — Community Engagement            |
| • <b>Theme #3</b> — Debt Service - Capital Spending | • <b>Theme #8</b> — Capital Plan Prioritization     |
| • <b>Theme #4</b> — Indoor Programming Space        | • <b>Theme #9</b> — Levels of Service and Visioning |
| • <b>Theme #5</b> — Staffing Levels & Office Space  | • <b>Theme #10</b> — Recreation Programming         |

## Community Survey

The purpose of the survey was to gather user opinions about the Lindenhurst Park District's value to the community, satisfaction and future use of programs, parks, and facilities, and priorities for the future development of parks and recreation. The Center for Governmental Studies (CGS) worked closely with the Park District staff throughout the project. The survey had 28 questions and covered the following topics:

- Use of the Park District
- Satisfaction with the Park District
- Value of the Park District
- Future direction of the Park District
- Sources of information about the Park District

A random sample of households in Lindenhurst was provided by the Marketing Systems Group, a survey sampling firm. The sample included names, mailing addresses, telephone numbers, and email addresses. A random sample of users of the Park District who reside in other communities was selected from a list provided by the Park District. An email invitation to participate in the survey was sent on March 30, 2021 and up to six reminder emails were sent to nonresponding households. In addition, a mail questionnaire was sent to those households that did not complete the survey online. The survey closed on June 15, 2021 with a total of 502 completed surveys.

A summary of the survey results can be found in [Appendix B](#), and a few findings, some of which reinforce the focus group results (discussed next), are highlighted below:

- Overall, the Park District is doing a good job of serving residents and respondents perceive the Park District to be valuable to their community and household.
- The majority of respondents indicate that their household is likely to use the Park District during the next 12 months.
- Most respondents would select the Park District as their first choice for early development, youth, teen, adult, and active adult programs.
- Additional adult programs to enhance membership.
- Lake Villa residents would like to pay the same as Lindenhurst residents, which could be an opportunity to explore expanding or other non-resident options.
- The Park District should consider the feasibility of investing funds in to improve or maintain Millennium Park.
- There is support for investing in land and divesting land as needed.
- The Park District does a good job of communicating with residents with only 8.5% of respondents reporting they do not receive information about the Park District.

## Focus Groups

In June 2021, three focus groups were conducted virtually with the District's Frontline Staff, Program Users, and Intergovernmental/Civic Partners. The focus group sessions and community survey were designed to serve as primers for the strategic planning process. The information presented next in summation was shared at the workshop and added *exploratory and thematic information* for the Board and senior staff to consider. As a result of the environmental scanning exercises, the facilitators identified five overarching themes from the focus group sessions [in no particular order]. The themes represent important topic areas that the District leadership were asked to consider as they went through the workshop exercises and developed short- and long-term goals. Please see [Appendix C](#) for a full summary of all focus groups and survey questions and aggregated responses.





# Outline of Leadership Exercises and Discussion Sessions

The format for all of the discussion sessions used in the planning effort employed approaches that were highly participative and interactive. The process utilized a group discussion approach called ‘*Nominal Group Technique*’ where participants are assured equal opportunities to speak and share opinions by the facilitator. During the sessions, individuals had the opportunity to generate and share their ideas, as well as participate in group activities, allowing them to weigh alternatives and refine their thinking through dialogue. As ideas were shared and debated, the group worked steadily toward a consensus regarding organizational values, purpose, future directions, and priorities.

## Introduction Exercise — Icebreaker

After introductions, each participant engaged in an icebreaker activity answering the question, “How would you describe the Park District to a stranger in 10 words or less?” This was a brainstorming exercise and any and all ideas about the Park District were encouraged and shared. No evaluative or judgmental debate was permitted during this session. Below is a summary of those answers.

### Opening Exercise/Icebreaker: How would you describe the Park District to a stranger in 10 words or less?

Description
Independent entity that provides recreational services to our community.
Small park district in a small town; family-oriented.
Small town feel with potential growth in staffing and programming.
Greenspace, preschool, athletics – meaningful connections within the community for ages 1-100.
Inviting, clean, welcoming, caring, helpful staff.
Small community with great special events that draws from many communities.
Offer wide range of programming for all ages.
One of the youngest park districts in Illinois that does the most with the least.
Small park district with a lot of opportunities and a lot of parks (19 parks)!
Growing with lots of potential.
Small community, small park district and we do a lot with what we have.
Good relations with other governmental units, diverse programming, well-maintained parks.
Small community with a lot of parks that exploded overtime with playground in almost every pocket.
Lindenhurst Park District – best value assets for the community with limited resources.

## Visioning Exercise — Visioning for the Future

Next each participant engaged in a visioning question, “If you left the District tomorrow, and didn’t return for 10-15 years, what do you think you’ll see, or what do you hope you’ll see, when you return?”

Visions
Expanded facilities and the place the community thinks of for what they want to do.
Interactive programs, facilities, communication virtual reality, Board with information.
Instant live information – kiosks.
Giant community space for all ages – grandparents and grandchildren – same space.
Incorporating/merging services with Lake Villa and Lindenhurst Park District could evaluate full merger or Intergovernmental Agreement.
Workout circuit outdoors in our beautiful parks.
Expanded community center, greater presence on Grand Avenue, standalone senior center, reopening Lake Forest fitness center, redo concert area in Engle Park.
More cooperation between government agencies, e.g., school district.
New maintenance facility for the park district – enough for fleet indoor storage, etc.
An accredited/gold medal agency “want to be the competition, not the competitor”.
All playgrounds would be updated with new equipment.
Government consolidation to ensure efficiency and best use of tax dollar.
More senior programs/programming.
Improved security including updated technology.
More support for our services and community supported by a referendum.
Funding to take care of what we have.
Well-maintained park infrastructure – all taken care of routinely as part of capital improvements and Master Plan suggestions.

## Environmental Scanning — Surrender or Lead

Participants were introduced to a leadership exercise entitled “Surrender or Lead.” The premise is that sub-groups of the participants work to develop responses to some simple, but extremely effective and thought-provoking questions. Participants were broken up into three working groups and asked to respond to a series of structured questions designed to initiate discussion and reveal perspectives, challenges, and frustrations of the participants as a whole. The participants’ responses were recorded on flipchart paper and discussed. The responses provided by each group are recorded below. **Bolded** and underlined sections are key phrases that groups provided in response to the open questions.

### Team A

1. We want to **expand**, but **we don’t currently have the money**.
2. The two most important things to focus on are **programming** and **community events** because **they will build support within community**.
3. If it weren’t for **lack of money**, we would **expand facilities**.
4. We need to finally **prioritize**.
5. **New/updated playgrounds** will have the biggest impact on the District in the coming 2-3 years.

### Team B

1. We want to **grow**, but **are limited by resources**.
2. The two most important things to focus on are **infrastructure** and **marketing/community relations** because **we need community support**.
3. **A.** If it weren’t for **improved government cooperation**, we would **have a less favorable public image**.  
**B.** If it weren’t for **our limited sources of revenue**, we would **have better benefits, great training opportunities and better community outreach**.
4. We need to finally **“bite the bullet” in order to spend money to make money**.
5. **Community Center expansion** will have the biggest impact on the District in the coming 2-3 years.

### Team C

1. We want to **expand programming and levels of service**, but **limited by space and resources**.
2. The two most important things to focus on are **maintaining financial stability** and **increasing levels of service**, because **it will continue to gain community engagement and support**.
3. If it weren’t for **challenging, assessing and recognizing our present**, we would **not be able to have a plan for growth in the future**.
4. We need to finally **purposefully and intentionally move forward**.
5. **Competition, collaboration and staff** will have the biggest impact on the District in the coming 2-3 years.



## Environmental Scanning

### Internal and External S.W.O.C. Analysis

The next step of the strategic planning process involved reviewing and accounting for the internal and external factors present in the environment that can potentially influence the success of the Park District, both negatively and positively. Given the exploratory statements and challenges raised in the Surrender or Lead exercise, participants were then asked to identify what constraints and practical difficulties are likely to be encountered that will make it difficult to achieve the desired future state. These elements included both internal and external factors, conditions, trends, regulations, agencies, resources, etc. Furthermore, participants were asked to identify the organization's strengths and weaknesses. In what areas does the Park District regularly excel, and in what areas are there difficulties or shortcomings in terms of expertise, resources, training, etc.? What opportunities are on the horizon that can be used to the Park District's advantage? Conversely, what trends or challenges lie ahead that would be obstacles or hindrances?

#### S.W.O.C. EXERCISE (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Challenges)

##### Internal

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff</li> <li>• Customer service reputation</li> <li>• Organizational culture</li> <li>• Mixed experience levels of staff</li> <li>• Highly respected preschool program</li> <li>• Special events offered</li> <li>• Indoor track</li> <li>• Many playgrounds in different locations</li> <li>• Supportive Park District Board</li> <li>• Efficient and effective use of limited resources</li> <li>• Come a long way as a District in relatively short amount of time</li> <li>• Computerized sign board to communicate with community and visitors</li> <li>• Resilience as a District</li> <li>• Land assets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of staff/turnover</li> <li>• Many playgrounds to maintain on limited budget</li> <li>• Technology changes and costs</li> <li>• Indoor space and facilities need to be expanded</li> <li>• Workout equipment needing to be replaced and updated</li> <li>• Lack of funding</li> <li>• Manual systems</li> <li>• Green initiatives could be improved</li> <li>• Public understanding of local finances</li> <li>• Website/Online registration can be improved</li> </ul>

##### External

OPPORTUNITIES	CHALLENGES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continued education for staff</li> <li>• Expand software use and options</li> <li>• Increase online usage (paperless)</li> <li>• Be creative with space we have</li> <li>• Need for more special events</li> <li>• Funding — new/increased revenue streams</li> <li>• Green initiatives</li> <li>• Collaboration with other local governments partners</li> <li>• Number of grants available for parks</li> <li>• Volunteer program — could be service hours for students, too</li> <li>• New programming — enhancing adults/teens</li> <li>• Seek out more donations/funding options</li> <li>• Additional opportunities with new residents and non-residents users</li> <li>• Enhance website — phone-friendly — registration software</li> <li>• Senior programming/dedicated space</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of parks to take care of</li> <li>• Lack of indoor programming space</li> <li>• Lack of office space</li> <li>• Competitive local private/public programs</li> <li>• Lake Forest fitness center opened</li> <li>• Funding limitations</li> <li>• Perception of high taxes and allocation to the park district</li> <li>• Pending recession</li> <li>• Pandemic</li> <li>• Non-resident users drop               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Other options, local places, near them open/add</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Universal Pre-Kindergarten</li> <li>• State of mandates</li> <li>• Rising costs — products, staff, building materials</li> </ul>

## Nominal Group Goal Identification

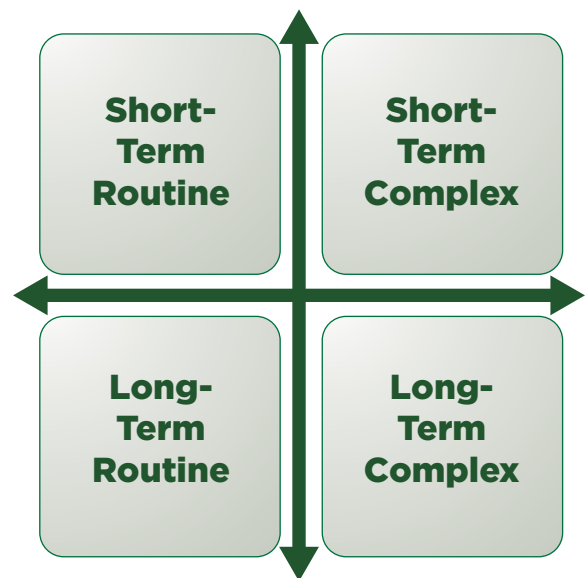
This extensive discussion session provided the forum for the collaborative establishment of strategic goals and objectives necessary to achieve the future vision of the Park District. With the preceding sessions serving as a sound foundation for goal setting, the final session was a healthy group discussion of goals and/or strategies needed to achieve the future visions as expressed by the group. To begin the process, participants were assigned groups and allotted time to highlight the three or four most important policy and program goals that they think the Park District should accomplish in both the short- and long-term. Goals could be highly specific or general. **Short-term goals** were those goals that could or should be completed or substantially underway within a one-to three-year timeframe. **Long-term goals** were those goals that could or should be completed or substantially underway within a three- to eight-year timeframe.

### Open Group Discussion and Consolidation of Goals

This final phase of the discussion served as the forum for the Park District Board members and staff to discuss, evaluate, and debate the ideas and goals offered by each participant in the previous sessions. Participants were asked to give their opinions, evaluations, and judgments of the worthiness and value of different policy objectives.

**Classification.** At the end of the open discussion, participants were asked to classify each goal according to a matrix model of time and complexity. Agreed criteria were used to classify a goal as short- or long-term and as complex or routine (Figure 2). **Complex goals** were goals that required extraordinary resources, specialists, funding, or the agreement of outside organizations or agencies. **Routine goals**, although not necessarily simple, were goals that could be accomplished upon unilateral decision of the Board and within present budget streams or with minor revenue enhancements or reallocations. In total, the group developed eight short-term routine goals, nine short-term complex goals, two long-term routine goals, and eight long-term complex goals.

**Figure 2. Goal Time & Complexity Matrix**  
Developed by Professor G. Gabris



### **Short-Term Routine**

- Establish a playground equipment improvement/replacement program.
- Continue to evaluate staffing levels to meet the demand of park district.
- Prioritize spending across the park district (programming, staff, equipment, etc.).
- Increase creative programming which could include collaboration with other organizations.
- Increase active adult and intergenerational programming.
- Implement a leadership/mentoring program for tweens/teens.
- Increase full-time parks/facility staff.
- Develop employee guidelines and expectations for continuing education and professional growth.

### **Short-Term Complex**

- Evaluate registration and financial software to increase efficiency and ease of use for park district patrons and staff.
- Update website features to be more user-friendly including improving mobile device applications, live chat features, etc.
- Continue/increase utilization of school district facilities and expand collaboration where it is mutually beneficial.
- Explore the need to divest land and land usage by converting playgrounds into passive areas.
- Plan for community center expansion. Office, multipurpose, dance/fitness and storage.
- Plan for programming of community center expansion.
- Restructure job descriptions, staff responsibilities and organizational chart to align with growth and district goals.
- Establish annual goals for each department that will be assigned, evaluated and reviewed quarterly.
- Apply for and secure an OSLAD grant for redevelopment of Lewis Park.

### **Long-Term Routine**

- Explore how the park district can become more self-sustaining including user fee models and the need for other non-property tax increases.
- Evaluate and implement new communication, registration, and financial software (integrated).

### **Long-Term Complex**

- Build and/or partner with another local government agency for a maintenance garage.
- Explore investment opportunities while maintaining financial stability.
- Incorporate fiscal forecasting and modeling into programming, budgeting, and priorities.
- Create a capital improvement plan for the park district.
- Implement playground maintenance plan.
- Pursue, plan and apply for distinguished accreditation.
- Explore the need for a referendum and pursue if needed.
- Implement playground/park updating/maintaining replacement plan.



# Strategic Priority Areas

Ultimately, five key strategic priority areas were identified as an outcome of the process highlighting activities and initiatives that the Park District should focus on, in both the short- and long-term. The strategic priority areas identified during the the planning process [in no particular order] are long-term capital planning and implementation, financial planning and sustainability, community engagement and collaboration, organizational development and advancement and diverse and engaging programming.

## Strategic Priority Areas



# Conclusion

This report's value will be realized if it is used as an active working guide to both the Park District's leadership team and staff as the issues explored during the strategic planning process are pursued. It is designed to capture the content of the discussions and to assist the organization in developing action plans in a follow-up session for appropriate committees, departments, and elected officers.

The next step is for the Park District's senior staff to review the results, fine-tune these goals and objectives in their action-planning session, and report back to the Park District Board (and/or appropriate committees) on how and when they will be most efficiently and effectively addressed.

What is apparent from the exchange of ideas and dialogue during the discussion sessions and the strategic planning workshop is that the organization is fortunate to have progressive leadership and a management team. The challenges of progress can be summarized below:

*“The art of progress is to preserve order amid change,  
and change amid order...”*

— A.N. Whitehead

We wish you well with the ambitious years that lie ahead.

# Appendix A:

## Lindenhurst Park District Master Plan — Top Ten Priority/Theme Area

### Theme #1 — Aging Infrastructure

#### General Description:

The Park District finds itself at a crossroads between the need to repair and replace current aging infrastructure with its current financial platform with very limited options for debt service issuance and capital spending dollars. The on-site park and facility tours assessment indicates the pressing need for repair and replacement of parking lots, path systems, hard court surfaces, shelter and structure roofs and supports, concrete pads, pier and sea walls among several other assets estimated in the millions of dollars.

#### Aligned Strategic Process Components:

- Park and Facility On-Site Tours
- Focus Group Discussions

#### Observations and Deliberations:

- Parking lots at Millennium, Mallard Ridge, Engle Memorial.
- Path systems at John Janega, Millennium.
- Tennis courts at Lewis, Mallard Ridge, and Sedgewood Cove.
- Basketball courts at Lewis, Heritage Trails.
- Skate park and In-line Skating surfacing at Engle Memorial.
- Shelter and gazebo roofing at Linden's Landing, Mallard Ridge.
- Shelter pads at Linden's Landing, Millennium.
- Playground surfacing and tot equipment at Elmwood Tot Lot and John Jenega Memorial.
- Pier and sea walls at Linden's Landing.

#### Opportunities and Recommendations:

- Use current and updated asset inventory directory and begin to develop and populate a 10-year capital repair and replacement program per the instructions and best practices illustrated in the capital planning section of this final report.
- Research, identify and confirm the standard instrument(s) that will be used for the capital plan with regard to life cycle and anticipated expectancy of current assets.
- Research with financial advisor and bond counsel potential short-term borrowing and other funding sources to address the critical and prioritized capital improvement projects over the next 5 years.
- Identify, prioritize, and populate a short-term capital infrastructure plan of the top ten (10) projects and assemble cost estimates and create an implementation schedule accordingly.



## Theme #2 — Maintenance Standards and Care

### General Description:

Overall, the parks are safe and functional, but an overlying maintenance mode and care is deficient to best practices. The recreation center was well taken care of with presence of routine and best practices in general upkeep and preventative maintenance measures undertaken. Park sites were observed with overgrown landscaping, weeds and overgrowth in landscape beds and park sign surrounds. In addition, many trees need pruning and shaping, and mowing frequency needs to be increased in season as most parks were either unkempt or had grass clipping rows sitting on top of the turf. In addition, hard surface parking lots, paths and play surfaces need a crack filling and sealcoat protocol in majority of park sites. Playground surfaces also need attention for raking, leveling, and replenishing especially underneath swing bays.

### Aligned Strategic Process Components:

- Park and facility on-site tours
- Focus group identification and discussion

### Observations and Deliberations:

- Hard surface cracking, peeling, general deterioration – some sites to hazard levels.
- Swing bay surfacing compromised – needs leveling and replenishing – fall zone safety issue.
- Lack of mowing in athletic and general turf areas.
- Mowed turf with rows of grass clippings as result of less frequent mowing – aesthetics and quality of turf with dead grass.
- Edging and weeding of landscape beds and surrounds.
- Overgrown landscaping and trees throughout park system.

### Opportunities and Recommendations:

- Develop a standard protocol for modes and frequency of park site general maintenance and specialty site upkeep for each site owned, operated and/or maintained.
- Research and set forth weekly man hour estimate per site to meet above mentioned mode and frequency and secure ample in-house staff or contractual services to meet the expectations of necessary maintenance hours per site to meet expected mode and frequency standards.
- Explore partnerships with intergovernmental agencies for shared staff and equipment agreements to meet required standards.
- Explore community-based organizations and groups via gardening club, homeowner association, Friends of the Parks, or other volunteer outlets to adopt a park site to perform routine and simple maintenance work not requiring special skills or equipment.

## Theme #3 — Debt Service - Capital Spending

### General Description:

The debt service portfolio of the current financial picture for the Park District is limited for the majority of the five-year expectancy for this master plan. Interviews and discussion with district administration have indicated a stop gap between visionary capital spending and also the crossroads previously identified with the aging infrastructure. The District's debt service was restructured back in 2017. Due to past practices and structure of the district debt service at that time, professional bond counsel handled the restructuring but informed District officials that any additional and future debt service via bond issuance will not be possible for the next 8-10 years. Thus, the earliest any significant borrowing can be considered is 2025.

### Aligned Strategic Process Components:

- Staff interviews
- Park and facility on-site tours

### Observations and Deliberations:

- Since 2017, the District has only spent for capital improvements, repair and replacement, and equipment through the annual operating budget process and funded to the level within the financial constraints of the EAV and tax levy growth.
- The lack of significant capital spending has placed a burden on maintaining the current assets and infrastructure thus placing more strain and potential long-term costs as well as keeping up with the standard of care in maintaining the inventory of assets.
- Initial information indicates the ability to generate \$1.5 million in short-term borrowing mechanisms. Other sources such as grants would be beyond this funding level.

### Opportunities and Recommendations:

- Identify key prioritized capital infrastructure projects that can be initiated and completed within the next 3-5 years and provide value to the district and its delivery of services to the community.
- Explore short-term borrowing options and mechanisms to aid in funding these infrastructure projects and equipment beyond the tax levy or operational budget levels or surpluses.
- Research and explore alternative funding mechanisms through various grants, partnerships, and fundraising.

## Theme #4 — Indoor Programming Space

### General Description:

Overall, the District is in need for additional and repurposed indoor space to meet the program and related services for the community. Indoor space is deficient in square footage as well as being designed for multi-purpose use and flexibility in what and when programming can be offered. Due to current capital spending limitations, additional indoor space should be explored via partnerships, community outreach efforts and lease arrangements of conducive private or other non-for-profit buildings.

### Aligned Strategic Process Components:

- Focus Group Discussions
- Community Needs Assessment Survey
- Staff Workshop/Discussions
- Facility On-Site Tour

### Observations and Deliberations:

- Preschool program is popular and a revenue source for District. However, space needed to operate dominates recreation center square footage and preschools are basically dedicated space with very limited ability to host other programs in the space.
- Focus groups identified expanded or repurposed space for health, wellness, fitness, and workout spaces.
- Focus groups stated to explore merging with Lake Villa area and other surrounding communities with potential partnerships in programming or reciprocal agreements to expand programming space and opportunities.

### Opportunities and Recommendations:

- Short term — repurpose current space for better access of preschool room to playground.
- Short term — analysis of current program portfolio with survey results, focus groups and registration data to ensure alignment of demand for programming with premium space.
- Short term — identify programming gaps, duplications, and potential partnerships within the community to ensure most effective scheduling and use of current space and also potential use of other conducive indoor programming space via leases, revenue sharing models and win-win agreements.
- Short term — identify high demand programs and those that get canceled often to ensure solid capacity of current space to assist in revenue generation and limit opportunity cost from canceled programming.
- Long term — expansion and/or renovation options.
- Partnership exploration for potential additional space with adjacent communities.

## Theme #5 — Staffing Levels & Office Space

### General Description:

The ratio of full-time staff vs. per acre is currently deficient and while the District has entered into contractual outsourcing for mowing, the scope and frequency of mowing, weeding, trimming, pruning, and surfacing work is below industry standards. Park tour observations verified this with long turf, grass clippings rowed within turf, weeds, overgrown and unmanaged landscaping. Focus group discussions also mentioned substandard maintenance concerns. This is a direct correlation to the level of staffing as compared to the scope and frequency scheduling staff (whether employee or contractual) required to properly perform these routine park maintenance tasks.

### Aligned Strategic Process Components:

- Focus group discussions
- Park on-site tours

### Observations and Deliberations:

- Routine and standard of care and maintenance mode and related standards within parks is deficient. This is a direct correlation to the levels of staff dedicated to maintaining sites, equipment, and infrastructure. Only one full-time employee for 19 park sites and all amenities.
- Both full-time park and facility maintenance staff share a small space that also serves as a storage room and information technology server and data equipment limiting a productive work environment on top of shortage of staff levels.
- Three full-time recreation department staff share a small office space adjacent to the lower-level gymnasium again producing a limited work environment to be productive.
- Many key staff work in a shared space with little to no privacy, which makes it difficult to discuss sensitive and private conversations.
- While office space does not have a direct correlation to revenue generation, it is a necessary asset to secure so the staff that plan and direct revenue generating programs and services have an effective and conducive workspace to organize, plan and execute their jobs that assist in generating revenue for the district.

### Opportunities and Recommendations:

- District should develop and adopt a park maintenance standard mode and frequency in all needed tasks and conduct an inventory of each park site to identify which modes and frequencies are appropriate to effectively perform and complete routine maintenance tasks accordingly.
- Based on this standard and commitment, develop staff hour estimations aligned with each task per park site to determine the number of staff hours necessary to schedule and deploy staff to perform.
- After such development and assignment, consider the need to hire additional park maintenance staff and secure necessary equipment to perform tasks or allocate additional funding with outsourcing such work and develop a formal agreement with expected standard of care, mode and frequency for each site contractor is responsible.
- Repurpose and design renovation of current office space and preschool room to provide access of third preschool room to outdoor playground and centralize and provide additional office space in current preschool room.
- Long term, if and when expansion of recreation center is explored, design a centralized office space with support workroom space and office walls and doors for privacy and focus of staff.

## Theme #6 — Intergovernmental Cooperation

### General Description:

Generally, the Park District has good and positive relationships with its local government partners. These relationships have yielded benefits and value indirectly over the years in various capacities. The District should use this master plan and desired outcomes as a catalyst to revisit, refocus and initiate potential beneficial partnership opportunities that will yield enhanced or expanded opportunities in path and trail system and connectivity, park maintenance, indoor programming space and alternate revenue streams or cost sharing expenses.

### Aligned Strategic Process Components:

- Focus groups
- Park and facility on-site tours
- Needs assessment survey results
- Staff interviews and interactions

### Observations and Deliberations:

- Commonality with Village and Forest Preserve District to formalize and promote the work previously completed in 2008 with bike, walk and trail study. Park tours identified many sites to expand trails and especially key connectivity points.
- Focus groups and park tours indicated more opportunity to collaborate with school district in use of sites during evening, weekend, and summertime periods. One school site allows teachers to operate a direct competition to the district summer day camp program.
- Park tour and staff interviews indicated a vision to inquire and work with Village Public Works on a maintenance facility expansion at Engle Memorial to permit a garage bay or two for park district maintenance staff, equipment, and storage accessed via Engle Memorial Park and adjacent dead end drive currently on-site.
- Focus groups indicated desire to reach out to Lake Villa area and other adjacent communities for shared interests, resources, and benefits – aligned missions.
- Staff interviews also indicated a desire to curtail graffiti and poor conduct in parks where precious resources are being used to clean or repair current infrastructure in lieu of expanded or new amenities.

### Opportunities and Recommendations:

- Initiate combined effort with Village and Forest Preserve to formalize, update, expand commitments, master mapping, and promote a walk and bike Lindenhurst platform.
- Engage school district elected officials and staff to develop and enter into a formal intergovernmental agreement for shared use of sites and other opportunities to create more terms, conditions, expectations, and value for indoor programming needs, as well as branding an image to taxpayers about coordinating efforts to have full capacity of school sites that were built and supported by tax dollar receipts.
- Explore and initiate with Village elected officials and staff about longer-term expansion to current public works facility for potential expansion for needed park district maintenance space, potential intergovernmental agreement either specific to this opportunity and/or overall cooperation in maintenance of public spaces.



- Explore, engage, and initiate intergovernmental agreements with other adjacent park districts or municipalities for joint programming to create more demand and opportunity, and/or reciprocal agreements for specialty pursuits such as golf, pools, or events.
- Explore and engage Police Department to enter into a formal intergovernmental agreement to enforce park conduct ordinances and be a potential partner in a Park Watch Program with property owners and community groups and potentially defer negative activity in the parks.
- Based on results of various initiatives, consider joint grant applications with intergovernmental partners where deemed beneficial for all involved. Many grant programs rank applications very favorably when the project is supported and has a larger reach for a community need.

## Theme #7 — Community Engagement

### General Description:

The needs assessment survey and focus groups are a great community engagement strategy but what will be critical is that these individuals see or hear that their time, ideas, and feedback were heard and within reason and under budgetary constraints some components will be initiated. Further community engagement should also be explored as part of the strategic master plan implementation strategy to address some of the areas identified as needing improvement and use the time, talents, and skills of community members to assist in the District's mission. Furthermore, with an identified need for long-term capital spending, a prolonged and committed community engagement program can assist the District to position itself favorably with the community if and when it needs to ask the taxpayers for a large bond issuance or rate increase per a back door or full referendum campaign.

### Aligned Strategic Process Components:

- Focus Groups
- Needs Assessment Survey
- Staff Interviews/Interactions

### Observations and Deliberations:

- Need to identify various individuals and groups that can assist in meeting higher maintenance standards in park sites.
- Approaches and philosophy of community outreach and benefit in the long run to showing to community a commitment to a continual improvement effort to enhance, expand and align parks, facilities, and opportunities to identified needs and interests.
- Need for building "community equity" and a proven record over time of caring for infrastructure and community needs so a future financial ask of the residents and user groups has an improved chance of support.

**Opportunities and Recommendations:**

- Initiate a formal volunteer program to utilize human “sweat equity and skills” in various components lacking the funding, staffing or time to meet industry or desired standards and outcomes.
- Use “A Friends of the Parks” platform to engage various groups and/or an Adopt a Park Program using homeowner associations, philanthropic organizations, private sector businesses for giving back to the community and team building opportunities while assisting in maintenance of parks or a gardening club for landscaping help.
- Initiate a design contest and neighborhood park open house model for any playground replacement or park site renovation to provide residents with the ability to be aware of park district plans and provide feedback. Hopefully they will take pride and ownership of park site and report hazards or negative activity in a park they helped renovate. Beginning aspects of a formal Park Watch Program.
- Consider a fundraising platform through a local park foundation structure for potential donation, estates, sponsorships, grants, and private sector investments to aide in the financial commitment level to bring infrastructure up-to-date.

**Theme #8 — Capital Plan Prioritization****General Description:**

District bond counsel and financial advisor vendors have indicated that due to past bond performance, debt service practices and restructuring of borrowing the ability to access long-term and significant debt service within the municipal market is limited at best until 2025. Financial stability was indicated in both focus groups and needs assessment survey results. Thus, focus for most of the duration of this strategic master plan shall be focused on a “Top 10” Park Equity Program where only the critical and prioritized capital infrastructure projects be scheduled, funded, and completed over the course of the next 3-5 years. Staff along with consultant, due to observations and discussions with park on-site tours, have identified these equity projects and are listed within the Capital Plan section of this final report (Exhibit I). Initial indications and research indicate the potential for \$1.5 million to fund this short-term capital plan. Longer term bricks and mortar projects such as expansion of the recreation center or other buildings/structures may be funded once the District has access and feasible means to enter into long-term bond issue or rate increase for capital improvement and development projects.

**Aligned Strategic Process Components:**

- Park and Facility On-Site Tours
- Focus Groups
- Staff Interviews and Interactions
- Financial Advisor and Bond Counsel Advisement

**Observations and Deliberations:**

- The significant gap between the identified capital infrastructures needs and related cost vs. the district’s access to capital spending dollars.
- Expert analysis and advice as to if and when longer term and significant borrowing by the District is accessible and feasible.
- Consensus with staff that short term capital spending during majority of the duration of this plan with prioritized projects should be pursued and moreover use this time to build “community equity” for long-term future projects and funding mechanisms.

**Opportunities and Recommendations:**

- Develop, approve, and fund the identified short-term capital spending plan as prescribed in the “Top 10” Park Equity Program and its list of prioritized infrastructure projects.
- Use the time during this strategic plan schedule to take actions to build “community equity” and also work with bond counsel and financial advisors to ensure what actions, steps and approaches should be done over the next several years to position for a long-term significant borrowing mechanism.
- Explore alternate revenue sources and grant opportunities aligned with the list of the short-term capital spending plan over the next 3-5 years.

**Theme #9 — Levels of Service and Visioning****General Description:**

An entire section of the report is dedicated to an analysis and benchmarking to the level of service provided currently by the Park District as compared to the standards and best practices within the Illinois Distinguished Accreditation Program. Each level of service category, whether acres of park property or park amenity, is measured by a per capita established benchmarking level. In addition, the section provides an opportunity for visioning and consideration for future projects with purpose. While the levels of service benchmarking should not be used solely as planning considerations for future park and facility improvement and development, it can provide justification for grant funding or support rationale by the community or identified partners. In addition, if these components and benchmarking results also align with what was provided in the community-wide needs assessment and/or focus groups, it can be a solid foundation of criteria to use and consider for future funded projects.

**Aligned Strategic Process Components:**

- Levels of Service standards towards accreditation status and analysis of current inventory of the park district.
- Analysis of current inventory to per capita accredited standards to identify level of surplus or deficiency in park acres or amenities.
- Park and facility on-site tours.
- Focus groups and feedback.
- Needs Assessment survey results.

**Observations and Deliberations:**

- Overall, the District meets the per capita standards in acres by park site classification.
- Several park amenity per capita standards are deficient and allows consideration if and when future park site improvement or development opportunities presents itself.
- Based on benchmarking results visioning for potential consideration of projects can be used to close or eliminate a standard deficiency identified in the analysis.

**Opportunities and Recommendations:**

- Use this benchmarking, analysis, and visioning as a component to develop a long-term capital improvement and development plan.
- Use criteria and analysis to share with grant applications, potential partners, and community to justify future improvement and development initiatives as well as assist in securing alternate revenue sources besides bond issuance and/or surplus operating dollars.
- Use as an instrument and key component over next 3-5 years to assist in building suggested “community equity”.

**Theme #10 — Recreation Programming****General Description:**

This theme for most districts is the number one non-tax support revenue source for the District’s budget and overall financial stability. Financial stability and future funding have been identified in many aspects of this strategic planning process and related feedback. This area is also typically one of the most influential and direct correlation to customer and resident awareness and active use of the system. The “community equity” recommendation also is largely influenced by the ability to offer aligned, quality, safe, and positive experienced opportunities. These mainly become a word of mouth and imaging factor which also enhances the need for this to be a main focus and theme of the strategic plan. There is currently a deficiency in indoor recreation space, and this has a direct correlation to what, how much and what revenue can be generated by programming fees and charges.

**Aligned Strategic Process Components:**

- Needs Assessment Survey Results
- Focus Groups
- Staff Interviews and Interactions
- Facility On-Site Tour

**Observations and Deliberations:**

- Focus group discussions stated need to implement additional programming for early teens ages 9-12 as well as senior/active adult segments.
- Focus groups also identified need for more youth and adult programming in the focus areas of arts, both static and performing as well as music.
- Staff interviews and interactions stated a deficiency in available multi-purpose indoor space and functioning to meet programming needs.

**Opportunities and Recommendations:**

- Research and explore other park district successful models for identified age group and interest programming and also potential partners in a revenue sharing agreement.
- Consider re-design of current indoor space inventory to allow for more multi-purpose facility use and scheduling for programming.
- Complete program portfolio analysis to ensure program offerings are best aligned with identified needs and interests of active users to generate increased demand thus increased revenue generation.
- Complete analysis and set forth programming goals for high and low performing programs to eliminate or close the gap of opportunity costs related to program cancellations.
- Consider a study of capacity of indoor space inventory to ensure the best master scheduling of precious indoor space and eliminate and/or reduce idle time in various program space.

# Appendix B:

## Community Survey Results — Summary of Responses

The Lindenhurst Park District commissioned the Center for Governmental Studies (CGS) at Northern Illinois University to conduct a survey of residents to gather their opinions about the Park District's value to the community, their future use of programs, parks and facilities, and priorities for the future development of parks and recreation facilities. A multi-mode survey (online, mail, telephone reminder calls) was administered to a random sample of Lindenhurst households and a random sample of Park District users residing in other communities. The findings of the survey will be used for strategic planning. A total of 502 completed surveys were received.

### Key Findings

#### Future Use of the Lindenhurst Park District

- Seven out of ten (72.0%) respondents indicate that their household is likely to use the Lindenhurst Park District facilities, programs, or services during the next 12 months, with 40.7% indicating their household is very likely.
- More than four-fifths (83.7%) of respondents are aware of Millennium Park and more than three-fifths (61.2%) indicate their household would be very likely to use. Approximately three-fifths of respondents are aware of the Thomas J. Lippert Community Center (64.8%) and Mallard Ridge Park (59.8%), while less than one-half of respondent would be very likely to use the Community Center (47.0%) and Mallard Ridge Park (27.6%).
- The majority (83.5%) of respondents say that their household would be very likely to participate during the next 12 months in one or more of the Lindenhurst Park District activities asked about in the survey. One-fourth or more of respondents report that someone in their household would be very likely to participate in youth athletics (37.6%), special events (33.5%), active adult activities (28.5%), and fitness activities (24.9%) during the next 12 months. 65.8% of respondents who have children in their household under the age of 18 indicate their household would be very likely to participate in youth athletics during the next 12 months. 57.7% of respondents aged 50 or greater report their household would be very likely to participate in active adult activities during the next 12 months.
- The respondents were asked which factors would increase their household's use of the Lindenhurst Park District parks, facilities, or programs in the future. More than one-half (53.4%) of respondents state that if there was better communication of offerings that it would increase their use of the Lindenhurst Park District. More than one-third (35.9%) of respondents say more convenient program times would increase their use of the Lindenhurst Park District.
- The majority of respondents report that the Lindenhurst Park District would be their household's first choice for early childhood programs (63.6%), youth programs (67.7%), teen programs (56.1%), adult programs (71.1%), and active adult programs (80.1%).



**Satisfaction with Lindenhurst Park District**

- More than four-fifths of respondents rate each of the parks and facilities asked about in the survey excellent or good.
- More than nine out of ten respondents rate each of the aspects of upkeep of the parks and facilities asked about in the survey excellent or good.
- All the types of programs asked about in the survey are considered excellent or good by at least two-thirds of respondents. Early childhood programs are rated excellent or good by the highest percentage of respondents, while teen and adult programs are rated excellent or good by the lowest percentage of respondents.
- Respondents rated six aspects of the Lindenhurst Park District's customer service, registration process, and communication. The majority of respondents are satisfied with each of the aspects asked about in the survey. The highest rated by far is the customer service received from park district staff (90.5% excellent or good).
- The respondents report their favorite thing about the Park District is the staff and their least favorite thing is the cost, especially those individuals who do not reside in Lindenhurst.

**Value of the Lindenhurst Park District**

- More than four-fifths (86.2%) of the respondents believe the Lindenhurst Park District is valuable to their community, with 62.5% indicating it is very valuable. Compared with 76.1% of the respondents who think the Lindenhurst Park District is valuable to their household, with 36.9% indicating it is very valuable.
- The majority of respondents find each of the types of programs asked about in the survey very or somewhat valuable to their household. More than one-half of respondents rate the early childhood (55.1%) and youth programs very valuable (53.8%). Less than one-fifth (19.0%) of respondents indicate the adult programs are very valuable.

**Future Direction of the Lindenhurst Park District**

- The largest percentage (38.9%) of respondents believe the Lindenhurst Park District should invest funds in to improve/maintain Millennium Park in the next three years. The next largest percentage (20.7%) think the Park District should invest funds in to improve Linden's Landing. A total of 19.1% of respondents believe the Lindenhurst Park District should not invest funds in to improve or maintain any of the facilities and parks asked about in the survey

**Sources of Information about the Lindenhurst Park District**

- The largest percentages of respondents rank the program guide (73.0%) and the Park District website (69.3%) as their top sources of information about the Park District. A total of 8.5% of the respondents report they do not receive information about the Park District.

# Appendix C:

## Focus Group Results — Methodology and Summary Responses

One of the key analytical techniques used for focus group notes is an analyst's search for key phrases, words, or terms that emerged during the focus group sessions. Coding is done by analysts' individual readings of the data, followed by key term searches with the aid of document software. The words and phrases listed below are the results of the study team's analysis of the collected focus group notes. At a glance, the reader can discover what terms were used or referred to most frequently in the feedback notes. Using individual analyst's coding, the researcher identifies terms that recur across groups and across questions. The results are revealing in that, they highlight key topics or issues that should be weighed and considered when proceeding with strategic planning discussions.

The information that follows is a summary of key themes and topics that emerged during the exploratory focus groups/outreach sessions. The focus groups served as a primer for the strategic planning process. The information that is presented in this summation was designed to add exploratory and thematic information for the Board and Senior Leadership Teams to consider during the strategic planning workshop.

The same exploratory focus group discussion questions were asked to each focus group and are listed below:

1. How would you describe the District to a stranger or someone who doesn't live or work here?
2. If you left the District tomorrow, and didn't return for 10-15 years, what do you think you'll see, or what do you hope you'll see, when you return?
3. What do you like best about the District? Related to that, what are the strengths/greatest assets of the District? Opportunities?
4. Can you identify areas or topics in need of attention or improvement? Related to that, what are the weaknesses/greatest needs in the District? Challenges?
5. What are/should be the top priorities for the District over the next 3-5 years?
6. If you could change or initiate one key item or thing about the District, what would it be?

## Overall Themes

The data below were derived from the analysis of the bundled focus group data. Using qualitative analysis techniques such as reviews of phrases, developing sorting categories, and conducting word counts, the following comment themes, topics, and phrases surfaced. An asterisks (\*) beside an item indicates it was mentioned by more than one participant.



### 1. Intergovernmental Collaboration/Regional Collaboration

- Partner with Lake Villa to create a merged Park District to leverage resources, enhance the tax base, and provide more opportunities, etc.
- Explore merging the park district/expand district service area to include Lake Villa to expand programming, opportunities, share resources, expand tax base, etc.
- A joint Lindenhurst/Lake Villa Park District
- Possible investment in spaces at Millburn Middle School for classrooms open to community
- Opportunities (space and/or events) for communities to gather to promote different programs and strengthen relationships and community connectivity
- Intentional collaboration with community partners where the missions align
- Strengthening relationships with community partners (e.g., schools) to share facilities, etc.
- More cooperative relationships with municipalities, strengthening relationships and coordinating resources with intergovernmental organizations (schools, library)
- Proximity of the Lake County forest preserve and the trail system — good opportunity to partner with them and utilize it for programming
- Improve regular communication and collaboration between community partners to explore opportunities, get to know each other better, and leverage resources
- Shift focus from ‘us and them’ to looking at the different community partners from a collective perspective

## 2. Capital Improvements

- More pedestrian connectivity between parks
- Turf baseball fields
- Expanded facility\* including additional gym space, additional classroom spaces for a variety of community outreach classes like cooking, a separate facility/addition for jazzercise classes, etc.
- Parks in top-notch condition including tennis and basketball courts, play equipment, etc.
- Expanded indoor facility with workout areas
- Enhance parking capacity at Mallard Ridge Park
- Building expansion\* to offer more programming and different activities for users and an administration office addition
- Two separate buildings on each side of the town
- Review land parcels and determine prioritization of land use
- Park maintenance garage
- Expand space for staff/administration
- Have more classrooms to have designated rooms for activities that are continuant
- Park maintenance and upkeep for Millennium and Lewis parks (basketball court, double tennis court) — have the most wear and tear
- Wi-Fi in the parks

## 3. Diverse and Engaging Program Offerings

- An outdoor community pool and programs that use the pool
- Expanded arts programs (e.g., cooking, crafts, drama, music, etc.)
- More programs for seniors (e.g., educational offering on Medicare, social security, nutrition) - be a place where seniors can come together
- Expanded sports and fitness programs for all ages (e.g., more exercise machines, organized sports, local sport leagues, enhanced space, outdoor pickle ball courts)
- Host teen nights on the weekends
- Identify programming for the age group between 9-12
- The cost of the facilities should be based on a sliding scale — enhance equity, access, etc.
- Continue to offer the daddy-daughter dance
- Restoring programs that may have been impacted as a result of COVID-19
- Look for something new, bigger, and better
- A kitchen in the main facility — cooking classes for all ages
- Park district owned golf course and pool
- More free programs for community involvement. The more we get “our” name out the more our programs will grow
- Nutrition, fitness, Medicare, social security informational classes/sessions for older/active adults

#### 4. Marketing & Community Outreach

- Develop a plan to promote the park district — open space, fitness amenities, etc.
- Enhance community awareness of the different park district programs and offerings
- Maintain community events and look for ways to expand upon it (e.g., farmers market)
- Get back to more community events to allow the community to gather again and likely more opportunity to get volunteers
- More community involvement and involvement with different organizations

#### 5. Organizational Development and Advancement

- Recruit more quality staff — fill vacancies but also maintain the positive culture
- Lindenhurst is used as a benchmark/best practices and looked at as a leader for other park districts — innovative, at the forefront of what is trending in parks and recreation
- Keeping up with trends with programming and be able to evolve/adapt to meet the changing needs and trends
- Building up our financial stability so we can afford to expand facilities and program offerings\*\*\*
- Continuing to foster the atmosphere of staff comradery and teamwork\*
- Great staff leadership vision — dedicated and vibrant with a strong/positive organizational culture
- The cost of the facilities should be based on a sliding scale - enhance equity, access, etc.

#### Strengths

- Staff is friendly and engaging — especially with the public, they genuinely care and want to help
- A good place to walk and exercise
- A good place for socialization (e.g., staff, regular users are so friendly it feels like family, and you look forward to seeing everyone every day)
- Reasonable costs
- The new online program is very easy to use, especially for signing up for classes
- Great activities for families and children (dance, soccer, 5 star sports, touch a truck, concerts in the park)
- Preschool and educational areas are very high-quality and prepare the kids well for moving on
- Responsiveness and ease of engaging with the park district (e.g., registering, resolving issues, sharing feedback, etc.)
- The summer camps with the option for half sessions this year is great
- Parks and playgrounds — segments for different ages
- Great splash pad
- Teachers are consistent and dedicated — helps build familiarity and continuity between staff and users
- Popular summer camps with good participation — also provides opportunities for leadership and jobs for teens
- Space availability for children to run around, play, etc.
- The Park District works hard to keep up/maintain facilities and equipment
- Engaged/committed users – help out when they can and point things out that need to be addressed and staff does address it
- The number of activities for children between the ages of 2 and 7
- Over 15 parks of all different sizes for people to enjoy, host recreational programs for all ages in multiple locations



- Community-minded
- Progressive — listens to community members and develops programs that fit today's needs, always looking to improve and adapt to current trends
- Professionalism and general warmth of staff — very open and welcoming to the public
- Willing and able to take the lead in community-wide efforts
- Proactive — makes an effort to reach out to community partners/members to make sure programs and activities align with needs
- Safety-minded — constantly going over safety protocols, keeping staff up-to-date on safety requirements, etc.
- Inclusive — ages, race, backgrounds, culture — always looking for programming that includes everyone's interests
- Ability to leverage partnerships to offer more activities and services than they would typically be able to provide as a smaller park district.
- Meld well with Lake County — work together for a better community
- A lot of parks and green spaces throughout the community (people don't have to travel far to get to a playground or open space)
- Variety of events throughout the year for all ages to bring everyone together (e.g., holiday tree lighting, haunted trail, music in the park, fishing derbies, etc.)
- Good mix of resident and non-resident participation
- A perfect place for everyone — especially for families with young kids — can grow with the park district, make lasting friendships, etc.
- Does a great job with community events and community-based programming to bring people in and become more familiar and involved with the park district
- Keep things affordable for everyone, offers a lot of free events, accessible for everyone
- Staff does a good job at building relationships and connections with users of all ages
- Staff does a good job at shifting, coordinating and being flexible with classes, space, etc.
- Succession planning – growing your own

### Challenges

- More facilitates/space capacity to accommodate all of the programs, classes, and bring in additional equipment\*\*
- An actual gym set up with more machines, weights, racks, etc.
- Finding programs for those aged from 9-12\*
- Partner with Lake Villa to help with space expansion and program offerings while offsetting the cost
- The website is not the most user-friendly for finding information about youth programs, specifically dance. Also, when the website is accessed from a phone or mobile device it is very hard to use.
- Offer track and field — possibly rename it to encourage participation
- Add arts/music classes — drawing, watercolors, yoga classes for kids and adults
- Lake Villa residents don't receive any discounts so there is no reason for us to not shop around other park districts (Grayslake, Gurnee, etc.) for programs — help to pull more people into the park district\*
- Spaces in need of upgrading which can hinder people from wanting to use the space (facility and parks)\*
- Impact of COVID-19 – revenue, capital improvements, loss of staff, etc. — making up for lost time
- Offering classes (e.g., robotics class) at other community facilities — school, library

- Address/review overlap — enhance understanding of the different government/community entities roles and how everyone can work together
- Funding for different opportunities, programming, etc.
- Competition — nonprofit, public, and private entities (e.g., camps, before/after options, etc.)
- Rising cost of construction and materials
- Park maintenance and replacement funding
- More programs for pre-teens and teens — high school level\*
- Lack of art related activities/offerings (e.g., cooking for adults, crafts, drawing classes, etc.)
- Stay competitive with staff benefits — to help recruit and retain quality staff and make staff feel appreciated
- Competitive programming pricing — helps with quality staff retention
- Loss of continuity/connection with users as they age — offer programs to keep them involved with the park district