

Executive Summary of the Homewood-Flossmoor Park District Master Plan

Summary update February 2018

This summary is intended to be a companion piece to the Master Plan

Master Plan Summary

The Homewood-Flossmoor Park District has an excellent reputation in the community with its long standing commitment to providing exceptional services. Good balance exists among the parks, facilities, and program inventory as each of these elements is well represented in the service delivery process. The inventory of park acreage is close to ideal, the amount of indoor space exceeds what is typically found in communities the size of Homewood and Flossmoor, and the program mix offers wide variety. Residents are overwhelmingly satisfied with the quality of maintenance and programs. Implementing the elements of the Master Plan will continue to strengthen the legacy already developed by the District.

One of the greatest challenges facing the District will be its ability to maintain its infrastructure. Because of the extensive array of indoor space, the District will need to identify funding avenues in order to continuously maintain the facilities and parks. An additional challenge is the District's continued ability to adapt services to a changing community demographic, as residents age and become more ethnically diverse.

Ultimately, the District desires to continue on its path toward providing excellent recreation opportunities. As a result, efforts will be made to improve internal systems such as marketing, branding and technology support. A commitment to forward thinking, innovation and creativity in the program mix, and knowledge of what residents are truly interested in will develop the framework for continued organizational success and a good return on investment of resources used by the District.

Master Plan Major Goals

Major goals identified in the most recent Master Plan include:

- Parks Theme: Safe, Clean, Green and Pristine
 - Sustain Quality Maintenance Practices
 - Commitment to Ongoing Park Amenity Replacement
- Recreation Theme: Responsive to Community Needs
 - Grow and Retrench Programs According to Needs
 - Strengthen Program Development and Delivery Processes
 - Continuous Improvement and Evaluation of Services
- Facility Theme: Upgrade and Sustain
 - Development Plan for Infrastructure Improvements
 - Master Plan Facility Needs
- Organizational Theme: Strengthening Key Systems
 - Develop an Overall Marketing Approach
 - Leverage Technology for Efficiency and Service Improvements
 - Develop Brand and Sub-Brand Awareness

Master Plan Progress on Goals

To begin the implementation process, all full-time employees and Board members received copies of the Master Plan as well as the goals indicated in the plan. Sub-goals (not listed above) were assigned an urgency status as short-term (ST), mid-term (MID), long-term (LT) or continuous (CON). Short-term and continuous goals were delegated to responsible staff in order to be met within the first year, with mid and long term goals scheduled to be completed according to their urgency. The following chart is an excerpt from the most recent status report, from February of 2018.

2018 Master Plan Goals Status Report (excerpt)

Goal:

Sustain Quality Maintenance Practices		Status
CON	Continue the District's commitment to sustainable practices	Complete/ongoing

Commitment to Ongoing Park Amenity Replacement		Status
CON	Dedicate a schedule and funding for park amenity replacements, including playground renovations	Complete/ongoing

Grow and Retrench Programs According to Needs		Status
ST	Develop an ongoing process to identify possible program retrenchment utilizing a decision matrix method that outlines criteria for program offerings and results in a quantified score for programs	Complete
ST	Create a process to improve outreach to minority populations	Ongoing
MID	Add to the programming repertoire including fitness and wellness, adult lifelong learning classes, outdoor recreation for teens and green programs	Complete/ongoing
MID	Review opportunities for corporate/government partner fitness and wellness activities for their employees	Complete/ongoing

Strengthen Program Development and Delivery Processes		Status
LT	Develop a customer loyalty program	In progress
CON	In the program lifecycle distribution, grow introductory and growth programs to 50-60% of the total program offerings	Complete/ongoing

Continuous Improvement and Evaluation of Services		Status
ST	Create a system-wide customer satisfaction measurement system	Complete
MID	Analyze the program capacity rate (percentage of participants to maximum number of spaces per class)	Complete
LT	Review the primary areas for program participation barriers (fees, time of programs offered, not having the program or facility offered)	Ongoing

Development Plan for Infrastructure Improvements		Status
ST	Renovate Dolphin rental facility	Complete

Master Plan Facility Needs		Status
ST	In the short term, continue ongoing repairs to facilities	Complete
MID	Develop a funding plan for major improvements and renovations	Complete
LT	Research facility renovation ideas for major facilities, including Irwin Center, Racquet & Fitness Center, Ice Arena, Skate Park and Lions Pool	Ongoing

Develop an Overall Marketing Approach		Status
ST	Develop a department-wide marketing plan	Complete
ST	Revise revenue and pricing policy	Complete
ST	Review the non-resident fee policy and determine whether or not more flexibility would enhance program revenue	Complete
MID	Develop brief business plans for major facilities	Complete
MID	Develop an internal process to continuously identify trends in the marketplace for recreation programs	Ongoing
CON	Complete a similar provider review every two to three years	Complete/ongoing

Leverage Technology for Efficiency and Service Improvements		Status
CON	Evaluate District communication efforts in social media, Web and program guide	Complete/ongoing

Develop Brand and Sub-Brand Awareness		Status
MID	Develop an external communication plan, outlining consistent look in District messages	Complete
MID	Develop identifiable sub-brands for major facilities and programs	Complete

Progress (continued)

In 2015 the Racquet & Fitness Club hired an outside consultant to examine all departments and make recommendations on how to improve processes and implement best practices. Several major changes were made impacting key areas within the Club. A new sales position was created and filled, focusing on increasing memberships. Club membership purchases have increased every month. In 2017 a new, nationally recognized, Tennis Director was hired and improvements are being realized in that department as well, with a renewed energy and interest in the game of tennis.

The H-F Ice Arena had shown a steady decline in net income over a period of about ten years. In 2011 a new manager was hired with the goal of reversing this trend. Results were seen at the end of fiscal year 2013 with a break-even year. Fiscal years ending in 2014 (\$150,910), 2015 (\$124,002), and 2016 (\$28,263) all showed a positive change to Net Position. In 2017 the Ice Arena showed a downturn and experienced a decrease in Net Position in the amount of \$55,790. Changes have been made, including outsourcing the Concession Stand to our golf course restaurant, saving an anticipated \$8,000, and sharing positions with the Recreation Department to save an additional \$60,000. In addition, increased promotions and social media presence have already produced revenue increases over the prior year.

In January of 2012 the District had to evict long time leasee of the golf course restaurant. The large facility was causing a financial drain because the tenant had not been paying rent. Because of the short notice, the District did not have time to find another restaurant and had to take over management of the restaurant. A food and beverage manager was hired and renovations made to the space. Since that year, the restaurant has become a profitable venture for the District. Services have also expanded to provide catering options to users of all District facilities, including the new Clubhouse at Dolphin Lake that host private rentals on weekends with anywhere from three to six events each weekend, often catered by the District restaurant. In 2016 outdoor pool and in 2017 ice arena concessions were transferred to the restaurant and the district saw immediate positive results.

Future Plans

Each year Master Plan initiatives are reviewed to determine if priorities have changed. Weekly staff meetings regularly include strategic discussions relating to goal accomplishment. Those items that remain pertinent to the District are considered for the upcoming budget. Modifications of the Master Plan are discussed when the items are no longer important or when budget does not allow for completion.

In 2014 the District refunded bonds to recognize interest savings and added new money to the issue for the explicit purpose of maintaining infrastructure items necessary at the many facilities. The new money was also earmarked for renovation of an old facility and park at Dolphin Lake. The Clubhouse at Dolphin Lake opened in October of 2015 and the park opened in the spring of 2016. Remaining projects with the dedicated money include roofs at Coyote Run Golf Course, H-F Ice Arena and the Racquet & Fitness Club (RFC). Also included in the project list are a handicapped ramp into the tennis courts at the RFC, sidewalk and HVAC repairs at the Irwin Community Center, park lights at Flossmoor Park, tuckpointing and other various repairs and replacements.

Consultants have been hired to review the mechanical infrastructure at the H-F Ice Arena that was built in 1974. In light of recent environmental regulations, the entire system, currently fueled by R-22, needs to be replaced with a system that handles a safer cooling agent. The cost of a complete physical and mechanical overhaul will exceed \$2.5 million. The District is currently researching options for funding this project.

With several key retirements in 2016, a minor staff reorganization took place. The addition of a dedicated HR professional has helped insure that the best people are in place to keep the district poised to maintain the excellent reputation in the community and continue to provide exceptional services.

Finally, the last five years have seen a significant decrease in property value (16.2%) and corresponding reductions in tax revenue. Staff will continue to look for ways to sustain District programs, facilities and services at the same high standards as in the past. Several key staff members have attended NRPA's Revenue School and other educational opportunities, keeping a keen eye for tools that allow us to see fee-based programs succeed without over burdening participants.