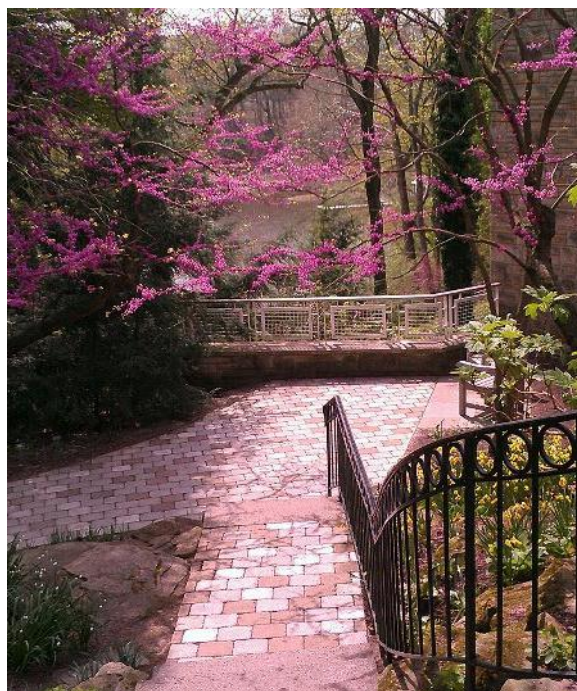




January 2013

Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Strategic Master Plan



Acknowledgements

On August 8, 2011, the Board of Park Commissioners voted to undertake the development of a 10-year strategic plan for Mill Creek MetroParks. This plan was created by Pros Consulting to improve the overall effectiveness of the MetroParks and encourage staff to become more responsive to community needs. The MetroParks will use this plan to prioritize the use of staff and resources and help guide future activities and budget decisions. The plan includes action strategies that will help Mill Creek MetroParks meet its vision, goals and objectives for the next ten years.

Development of the strategic plan for Mill Creek MetroParks was made possible through the dedicated efforts of many people. Nine focus groups were convened in December 2011 and two open houses were held in January of 2012, at which people took the opportunity to speak about their hope and vision for what the MetroParks could be. One-on-one meetings were also conducted with community leaders to incorporate their input into the plan.

Members of the Mill Creek MetroParks Board of Park Commissioners, MetroParks staff, community supporters, Friends of Fellows Riverside Gardens and many others attended these meetings, reviewed the plan, and gave valuable and insightful input every step of the way. Many thanks are due to the following:

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Friends of Fellows Riverside Gardens Board of Directors

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CHAPTER ONE - EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Mill Creek MetroParks is a metropolitan park district comprising over 4400 acres of land, and is Ohio's oldest township park district. Visitors and residents enjoy recreational opportunities, scenic vistas, visits to historic sites, free public gardens and much more. Mill Creek Park was established in 1891 by Volney Rogers, a visionary who believed that land itself could improve the lives of Youngstown citizens by providing a healthful alternative to the rapidly industrializing city. Mill Creek Park was converted to a metropolitan park district in 1989 through a vote by the residents of Mahoning County. It was included on the National Register of Historic Places in 2005. Today, Mill Creek MetroParks Board, staff and volunteers value the importance of preserving open space while providing meaningful experiences, educational and recreational opportunities and facilities of regional significance to residents and visitors alike.

Mill Creek MetroParks sought a Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Strategic Master Plan to guide decision-making for the development and management of parks, trails, recreation and open space opportunities for the next ten years. The goal of this Strategic Master Plan is to establish a clear vision for the MetroParks that will guide its focus and energies toward the future to meet the community's expectations for a valued public asset.



1.2 GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND OBJECTIVES OF THE PLAN

The Strategic Master Plan has been developed under the following guiding principles and objectives:

- Sustainably grow the best practices and quality services of Mill Creek MetroParks that allow the MetroParks to operate in a proactive manner
- Serve the park, open space, recreational and educational needs of residents of Mahoning County and the region.
- Position the MetroParks as a regional destination
- Create partnerships and funding opportunities in both the public and private sectors through a vibrant Mill Creek Park Foundation
- Update the infrastructure of the MetroParks to serve the needs of Mahoning County and surrounding areas for the next 50 years in a financially sustainable manner
- Leave a positive parks and recreation legacy for current and future generations

1.3 PROJECT PROCESS

The process utilized by the Consulting Team on the Strategic Master Plan included the following components to deliver a living document for Mill Creek MetroParks:

- Community and Stakeholder Input
 - Key leadership interviews
 - Focus groups
 - Public forums
 - Statistically-valid community survey
 - Demographic and recreation trends analysis
 - Community Values Model
- General Parks and Facilities Development Plan
 - Prioritized Facility Needs Analysis
 - Park and Facility Development Plan
- Operational and Programming Plan
 - Recreational program assessment
 - Operational and staffing analysis
 - Financial analysis
 - Funding and revenue strategies
- Strategic Action Plan
 - Policy development
 - Development of vision, mission, goals and objectives
 - Implementation plan
 - Production and plan briefings

1.4 VISION

The following vision presents how Mill Creek MetroParks desires to be viewed in the future:

“Mill Creek MetroParks will be the leader in Mahoning County in providing places of inspiration and enjoyment in parks, recreation, open space and educational services that enrich and fulfill the quality of life of our present and future generations in a fiscally responsible manner.”

1.5 MISSION

The following is the mission for Mill Creek MetroParks regarding how they will implement the vision:

“The mission of Mill Creek MetroParks is to provide park, recreational, and open space facilities of regional significance. In fulfilling this mission our objectives are:

- To be responsive to community needs
- To be environmentally sound

- To be adaptable
- To be economically responsible

1.6 COMMUNITY VALUES MODEL

The Consultant Team synthesized findings from the comprehensive public input process to develop a framework for guiding the development of recommendations and strategies for Mill Creek MetroParks. The *Community Values Model* features recommended strategies that are aligned with five major categories of best practices: Community Expectations, Standards, Program/Services, Business Practices and Community Outreach and Partnerships.

This strategy matrix is a building block for recommendations in the strategic master plan process and represents the prevailing messages the consultant team and staff collected from stakeholder and public input. The Community Values Model should be evaluated and refined by the political and economic circumstances the MetroParks operate in and used to validate the vision and mission of the parks and recreation function.

The first element in the Community Values Model is to determine the public's expectations.

Community Value 1: Community Expectations	
Maintain and enhance parks, trails and recreational facilities to promote community interaction, healthy lifestyles and safety.	
Strategy	Enhance the quality of maintenance and care at current park sites, facilities and amenities of the MetroParks where needed.
Strategy	Provide parks, trails and recreational facilities that reflect the ability to serve a diverse public.
Strategy	Upgrade parks, trails and recreational facilities to meet the needs of current users and to support infrastructure improvements to keep parks as positive public assets.
Strategy	Continue to enhance safety and security in parks, trails and recreational facilities to encourage positive use of community amenities by adding improved signage and lighting as safety elements.
Strategy	Pursue responsible new improvements of the parks, trails and recreational facilities in areas of the County with greatest growth to meet unmet residents' needs.
Strategy	Leverage a variety of resources to support capital and operational needs of the MetroParks including seeking a second levy for capital improvements from taxpayers of the county.
Strategy	Develop a MetroParks-wide trail system through the County to link communities into other county parks systems where appropriate.
Strategy	Maintain what the MetroParks owns as it applies to parks, trails, special use parks to support positive use and increased higher property values for residents of the county.

The second element is to address the standards Mill Creek MetroParks will manage toward in the future.

Community Value 2: Standards	
Update and utilize standards for acquisition, development, design, operations and maintenance of parks, trails and recreational/educational facilities.	
Strategy	Utilize consistent land acquisition criteria and design standards for new park development and trails.
Strategy	Utilize consistent design standards in park and facility development for landscaping, amenities and infrastructure to increase efficiency of daily operations.
Strategy	Establish management standards and parameters for partnerships within both the public, non-profit and private sectors to augment the capital and operational resources of MetroParks.
Strategy	Enhance communications in marketing and promotions of the MetroParks parks, trails and recreational programs and facilities to improve community awareness of programs, services and facilities, as well as to diversify usage of amenities and expand public feedback opportunities.
Strategy	Maintain consistent and updated asset management standards for extending the lifecycle of assets and amenities through an effective maintenance endowment fund and a consistent funding source.
Strategy	Develop a strategy to seek local, state and national recognition as a best practices organization and consider pursuing NRPA Accreditation.
Strategy	Maintain compliance with all existing and applicable laws and regulations.
Strategy	Tie program standards to facility standards as it applies to parks, recreation facilities and amenities to maximize their value and usage.
Strategy	Design parks and recreation facilities to produce revenue to offset operational costs where appropriate.

The third element of the Community Values Model is to determine the programs and services that are most important for Mill Creek MetroParks.

Community Value 3: Programs and Services	
Provide balance and consistency in delivery of programs and services by meeting the needs of the diverse residents of the County.	
Strategy	Enhance support of recreational programs and other service providers that utilize MetroParks parks and recreational sites and facilities to sustain and potentially expand community participation.
Strategy	Develop a classification of service approach for programs with cost of service data to determine what level of subsidy each program or facility is getting from the general fund versus what level of cost recovery it should receive.
Strategy	Develop an interpretive signage program that appropriately interprets the significance of the natural, cultural and historical resources of parks and landscapes within the MetroParks parks and facilities.
Strategy	Develop a stronger marketing budget that focuses on informational and inspirational marketing to increase usage of parks, recreation facilities and programs, as well as supports cost recovery goals of the MetroParks.
Strategy	Evaluate programs on where they are in their lifecycle and make adjustments each year to maximize the value, participation and cost efficiency of services provided.

The fourth element of the Community Values Model is how Mill Creek MetroParks will manage financially.

Community Value 4: Business Practices	
Manage parks, trails and recreational facilities and programs that support the financial goals and policies of the MetroParks.	
Strategy	Establish alternative funding policies and procedures that support capital and operating expenses to enhance the financial sustainability of the MetroParks.
Strategy	Maximize the capability of new and existing technology to enhance business practices throughout the MetroParks.
Strategy	Develop a comprehensive cost recovery plan for programs, services and facilities that appropriately balances public funding support with earned revenues and also balances affordability and entrepreneurialism in the programs and services of the MetroParks. Develop business plans for key facilities and attractions every other year.
Strategy	Continue to seek out business and non-profit partners to support the operational and capital costs of the MetroParks as it applies to programs, Mill Creek Golf Course, MetroParks Farm, Ford Nature Center, Fellows Riverside Gardens and other attractions in the MetroParks.
Strategy	Develop ongoing cost of service assessments of direct and indirect costs associated with providing parks, recreation facilities and program services. Develop costs of service for planning and administrative tasks to determine the best way to provide the service.

The final element of the Community Values Model is to describe how Mill Creek MetroParks will address Community Outreach and Partnerships for the future.

Community Value 5: Community Outreach and Partnerships	
Maximize resources through mutually acceptable partnerships that leverage parks, trails and recreational facility development and program opportunities.	
Strategy	Develop a formalized ongoing community outreach strategy to expand awareness of parks and recreation services offered to the community.
Strategy	Develop sustainable partnerships with established non-profit organizations to leverage private sector funding to support select capital projects and programs.
Strategy	Review and update terms of agreements with existing partners utilizing MetroParks parks and facilities for public or private events that demonstrate as much shared equity as possible.
Strategy	Play an active role in the network of park, trail and recreational services and opportunities available to residents, organizations and businesses in the County and neighboring counties.
Strategy	Develop an overall program plan for recreational services in the MetroParks regarding who is providing the service and how much of the market each party provides. Then, determine the gaps the MetroParks should provide services to for the future.
Strategy	Develop an ongoing community input process via focus groups and in-house online surveys to gauge public input.

1.7 CONCLUSION

Mill Creek MetroParks has a long history of providing quality parks, open space, educational and recreational facilities, and experiences in Mahoning County. Mill Creek MetroParks has not developed a Strategic Master Plan for the system in over twenty (20) years. This Strategic Master Plan has many recommendations for the MetroParks staff and Board to accomplish over the next ten years, most of which are desired by the community. Implementation of these recommendations will require strong leadership at all levels of the organization and a willingness to manage effectively as it applies to the many parks, recreation and educational facilities and programs.

Mill Creek MetroParks is a good park system; however, it can improve on management and maintenance of the parks, as well as delivery of educational and recreation services. The MetroParks will need continued community support from the voters in the approval of its upcoming levy renewal in 2014 and additional support for needed capital improvements to maintain the parks as a valuable public asset.

The culture inside the organization needs to focus on “first, what is right for MetroParks” versus “what is right for individuals and the departments they represent.” The organizational culture must be more adaptable and willing to change to maximize efficiency and leverage resources. It will take a collective effort of everyone inside the organization and strong leadership to implement this Strategic Master Plan.

The Mahoning County community appreciates the MetroParks and views it as a valuable public asset with continued investment over the last one-hundred-twenty-two years. Mill Creek MetroParks is an economic tool for attracting people to live and work in Mahoning County. To carry on this legacy, infrastructure improvements are needed to maintain the MetroParks. The recommendations outlined in this Strategic Master Plan will help advance the MetroParks to become a “best practice” agency. This will require time, money, leadership, energy and commitment to implement these recommendations, but it is achievable. Let the progression begin!



CHAPTER TWO - COMMUNITY INPUT

There was extensive public input and participation in the Mill Creek MetroParks *Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Strategic Master Plan* process from October 2011 to February 2012. More than fifteen leadership interviews and stakeholder focus groups were conducted, as well as three community forums that served as the foundation for this Strategic Master Plan. Over four hundred residents participated in these various public meetings. In addition to the leadership interviews, focus groups and public meetings, the public input process included a community-wide needs assessment survey of residents throughout the County. These public input processes served as the driving force for development of the Strategic Master Plan and the recommendations that are outlined in the plan.

2.1 INPUT OPPORTUNITIES

The qualitative data collected included multiple leadership interviews, focus groups and community meetings. A summary of the public input opportunities is provided below:

- Fifteen leadership interviews and focus groups were conducted to be representative, but not exhaustive of interests affecting the MetroParks. These meeting sessions included:
 - Local elected officials
 - Administration and leadership of the MetroParks
 - Users and non-users of the MetroParks
 - Parks, recreation and trail user groups
 - Business and community leaders
 - Community-wide survey
- Three community meetings were conducted in order to capture representative interests, needs and priorities of residents through an open forum. The meetings were organized and promoted locally and held on:
 - January 9, 10 and 11, 2012

The quantitative input included the following:

- A community-wide mail survey was conducted by Youngstown State University, which gathered users and non-users input to help establish priorities for the future development and improvements of parks, trails and recreation facilities in the MetroParks. Over five hundred seventy-four-surveys were completed which provided a 14.3% return by County residents and a 95% level of confidence +/- 4.9%.

2.2 GENERAL FINDINGS

2.2.1 GENERAL IMPRESSION OF MILL CREEK METROPARKS

Mill Creek MetroParks is seen as a unique resource for residents and businesses throughout Mahoning County, Ohio. The MetroParks is safe, clean and is perceived as the gem of Youngstown, Ohio. Mill Creek MetroParks offers a number of outstanding programs, amenities and events throughout the year. There is a balance of developed and undeveloped land throughout the area. Visitors and residents enjoy the rich history of the park land and the variety of amenities offered.

2.2.2 VISION FOR MILL CREEK METROPARKS OVER THE NEXT TEN YEARS

Residents would like to see Mill Creek MetroParks continue to grow and improve on existing programs and amenities available. Additional walking and bike trails need to be added and extended throughout the MetroParks that can be connected to the city of Youngstown and other city and township park facilities in the County. Residents would also like to see lighting and safe call boxes added to the park and trail system to increase safety for users of the trails. A dog park is desired, as well as programs that are family-based. With the rich history of the MetroParks, the MetroParks needs to utilize the parks sites more efficiently by developing updated site master plans for the MetroParks to encourage greater use by residents.

2.2.3 SPECIFIC NEEDS OF RESIDENTS

Specific needs that should be provided by the MetroParks include increased access to nature areas and more connectivity from the MetroParks to the city of Youngstown via trails. Easy access to and from the parks and updated restrooms need to be addressed for users. Residents would like to see devices on the roads to slow traffic and help with the safety of pedestrians and bicyclists and animals. Many residents would like to see later hours and additional special events throughout the year to encourage more people to use the MetroParks.

2.2.4 IMPROVEMENTS TO THE METROPARKS

Improvements that should be made to help better meet the community's parks and recreation needs include increasing special events to help make citizens aware of the MetroParks' attributes. Adding a bike rental facility to help users travel around and enjoy the MetroParks will attract more users-and provide easier access. Restoration of the Lily Pond will add to the great activities already available to patrons. Basic maintenance improvements should be implemented for existing infrastructure and the trails system. Residents also expressed interest in programs that promote wellness and fitness among children, as well as senior activities. Improved water quality issues should be addressed.

2.2.5 CHALLENGES OF THE METROPARKS

Challenges that need to be met by Mill Creek MetroParks are acquiring additional land to accommodate users in the County, as well as connecting trails to other communities and areas of the County that are not served by the MetroParks. Other feedback included the need to increase marketing to help draw families and users to the MetroParks. Increasing the sense of security for users and providing them with a safe and secure place of recreation are priorities.

2.2.6 SUPPORT FOR INCREASING FEES OR TAXES TO COVER CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

The participants feel that the local community would support increased fees and/or taxes to cover capital improvements as long as it is used on the community's wants or needs. Increased fees should be implemented in moderation, and a strategic plan should outline the costs and benefits to be experienced by users.

2.2.7 PRIORITIES FOR OPERATIONS AND SERVICES FOR THE NEXT 5-10 YEARS

The participants believe Mill Creek MetroParks should focus on building stronger partnerships, increasing efforts to involve children and improving the connectivity to and from the parks. The MetroParks should add additional marketing and special events to emphasize/educate its attributes and its rich history. Maintenance and aesthetic improvements should be made to the MetroParks, as well. Land should continue to be acquired to further efforts made in accommodating users in underserved areas of the County.

2.3 SURVEY RESULTS

Mill Creek MetroParks conducted a community-wide survey from February through March of 2012 to help establish priorities for the future development of parks, trails and recreation facilities, as well as programs and services of the MetroParks. The survey was designed to obtain statistically-valid results from households of Mahoning County and was administered by a combination of mail and phone.

The Consultant Team worked extensively with MetroParks staff and officials in the development of the survey questionnaire. This work allowed the survey to be tailored to issues of strategic importance in effectively planning the future system. Youngstown State University mailed surveys to a random sample of 4,000 households including those both in and outside the City of Youngstown.

The goal was to obtain a total of 400 surveys, and this was exceeded with a total of 574 surveys having been completed. The results of the random sample have a 95% level of confidence with a precision of at least $\pm 4.9\%$.

2.3.1 NUMBER OF PEOPLE IN HOUSEHOLD

Over 36% of respondents had two members in their household, while 24.6% have one member in their household (Figure 1).

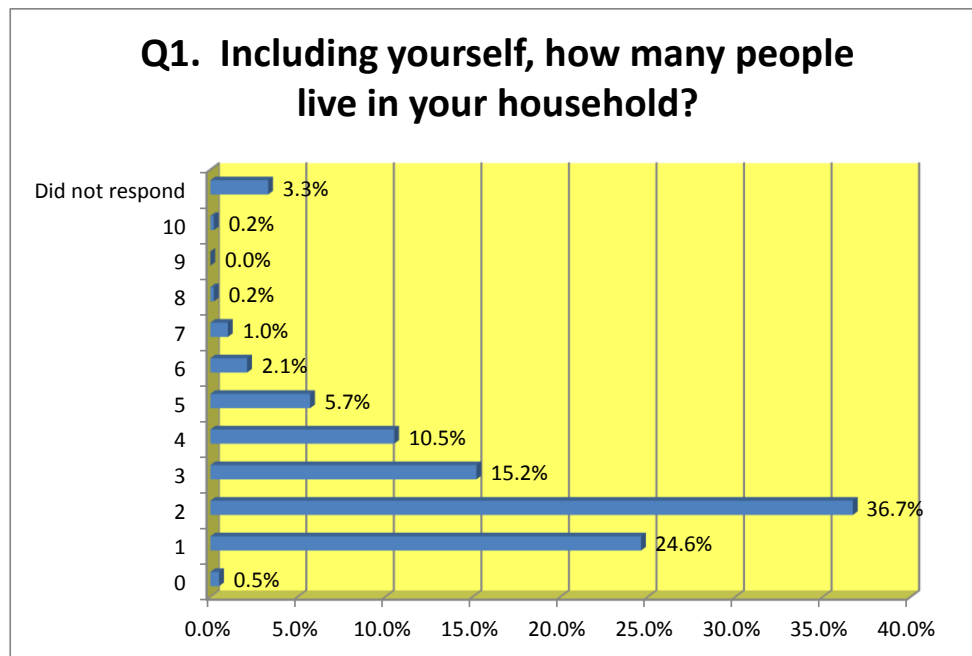


Figure 1 - Number of People in Household

2.3.2 VISITED PARKS OR FACILITIES OVER THE PAST YEAR

Over 77% of surveyors have visited Mill Creek Park during the past year (**Figure 2**). Over 90% of respondents have not been to Sebring Woods, Cranberry Run Headwaters, Buckeye Horse Park, McGuffey Wildlife Preserve, Vickers Nature Preserve and Sawmill Creek Preserve during the past year.

Q2. Have you or members of your household visited any of the following Mill Creek Park MetroParks parks or facilities during the past year?		
Have you visited....	Yes	No
Mill Creek Park	77.5%	22.5%
Fellows Riverside Gardens	72.8%	27.2%
Davis Education & Visitor Center	44.4%	55.6%
Wick Recreation Area	34.0%	66.0%
Judge Morley Performing Arts Pavilion	30.0%	70.0%
Par 3 Golf Course	20.0%	80.0%
Sled Hill	26.5%	73.5%
Mill Creek Golf Course	21.4%	78.6%
Ford Nature Center	27.9%	72.1%
Lily Pond	49.5%	50.5%
Volney Rogers Field	19.3%	80.7%
Scholl Recreation Area	13.2%	86.8%
Lower Bears Den Picnic Area	32.6%	67.4%
Rental Pavilions/Cabins	23.2%	76.8%
Hike/Bike Trails (East Golf, East Cohasset)	40.8%	59.2%
Lakes (Newport, Glacier, Cohasset)	49.1%	50.9%
Yellow Creek Park	25.8%	74.2%
MetroParks Farm	25.8%	74.2%
Mill Creek Wildlife Sanctuary	13.6%	86.4%
Mill Creek Preserve	10.8%	89.2%
Vickers Nature Preserve	5.9%	94.1%
Buckeye Horse Park	3.8%	96.2%
Sawmill Creek Preserve	6.6%	93.4%
McGuffey Wildlife Preserve	4.0%	96.0%
MetroParks Bikeway	25.3%	74.7%
Sebring Woods	2.4%	97.6%
Cranberry Run Headwaters	2.8%	97.2%

Figure 2 - Visited Parks or Facilities Over the Past 10 Years

2.3.3 CONDITION OF MILL CREEK METROPARKS PARKS AND/OR FACILITIES

Over 95% rated the condition of the parks and/or facilities as either excellent or good.

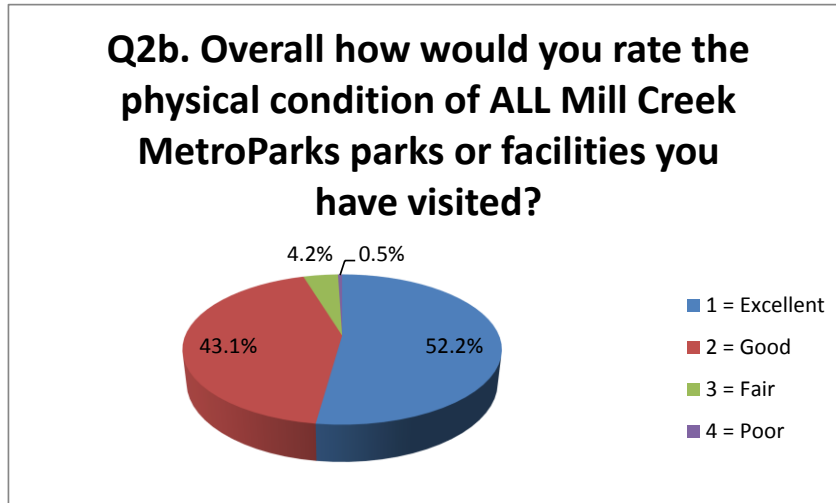


Figure 3 - Condition of Mill Creek MetroParks Parks and/or Facilities

2.3.4 PARTICIPATION IN RECREATION PROGRAMS DURING THE PAST TWELVE MONTHS

About 28% of households have participated in programs offered by Mill Creek MetroParks during the past twelve months. This is lower than national averages that are around 29% and best practice rates around 45% or higher.

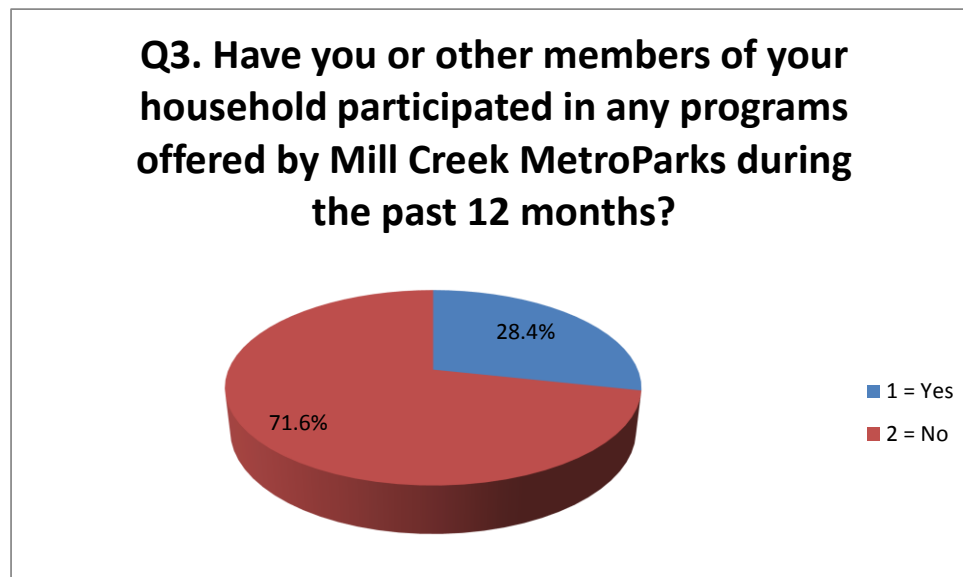


Figure 4 - Participation in Recreation Programs During the Past 12 Months

2.3.5 OVERALL QUALITY OF RECREATION PROGRAMS

Of the 28% of households that have participated in programs offered by Mill Creek MetroParks during the past twelve months, 98.2% rated the overall quality of the programs as either excellent (63%) or good (35.2%). In addition, 1.8% of households rated the programs as fair, and no respondents rated the programs as poor. This is a positive comparison to national averages of less than 80% rating overall quality as excellent or good.

Q3a. How would you rate the overall quality of programs in which you and members of your household participated?	
How would you rate the programs	Percent
Excellent	63.0%
Good	35.2%
Fair	1.8%
Poor	0.0%
Total	100.0%

Figure 5 - Overall Quality of Recreation Programs

2.3.6 REASONS HOUSEHOLDS USE PARKS, RECREATION FACILITIES OR PROGRAMS OFFERED

The top three reasons why households use parks, recreation facilities or programs offered by Mill Creek MetroParks are enjoyment of outdoors (76.1%), close to our home/residence (68.8%) and facilities are well maintained (57.3%)

Q4. Please CHECK ALL the reasons that you and members of your household USE parks, recreation facilities, or programs offered by Mill Creek MetroParks.	
Reasons why you use Mill Creek MetroParks	Percent
Enjoyment of the outdoors	76.1%
Close to our home/residence	68.8%
Facilities are well maintained	57.3%
Safety of parks and facilities	46.5%
Improved physical fitness and health	39.4%
Program or facility offered	36.2%
Facility operating hours are convenient	32.9%
Fees are affordable	32.8%
Facilities have the right amenities	29.6%
Good customer service by staff	28.0%
Programs are interesting	23.2%
Quality of programs	18.8%
Quality of instructors	12.7%
Registration for programs is easy	12.2%
Availability of parking	1.6%

Figure 6 - Reasons Households Use Parks, Recreation Facilities, or Programs Offered

2.3.7 SUFFICIENT PARKS AND OPEN SPACE AREAS

Over 66% of households feel that there are sufficient parks and open space areas within Mahoning County, while 22.2% are not sure.

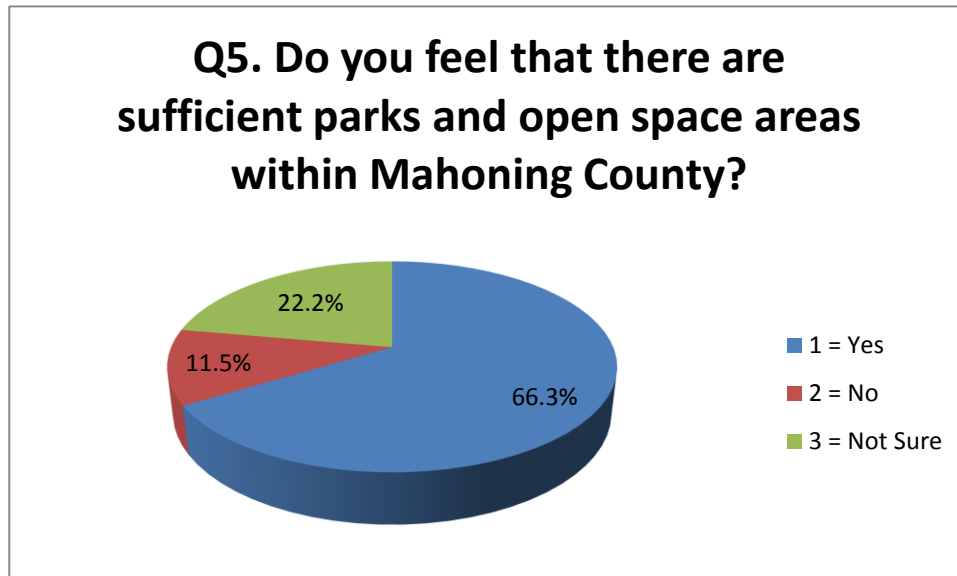


Figure 7 - Sufficient Parks and Open Space Areas

2.3.8 WAYS RESPONDENTS LEARN ABOUT MILL CREEK METROPARKS PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES

The top three ways households learn about Mill Creek MetroParks programs and activities are newspaper articles (59.1%), friends and neighbors (53.5%) and newspaper advertisements (41.1%). The least effective way to learn about programs and activities offered is through the MetroParks email bulletin (4.4%).

Q6. Please CHECK ALL the ways you learn about Mill Creek MetroParks programs and activities	
Learn about programs & activities	Percent
Newspaper articles	59.1%
Friends and neighbors	53.5%
Newspapers advertisements	41.1%
Monthly calendar of events	33.4%
Flyers/posters at parks/recreation facilities	29.4%
Radio	26.3%
Cable access television	17.9%
MetroParks website	16.9%
MetroParks Newsletter	12.4%
Flyers distributed at school	7.7%
Conversations with MetroParks staff	7.3%
MetroParks e-mail bulletin	4.4%

Figure 8 - Ways Respondents Learn About Programs and Facilities

2.3.9 IMPORTANCE OF USING STREAMS AND CREEKS

Approximately 73% of households believe it is very important to use the extensive streams and creeks that exist within Mahoning County to provide environmental protection.

Q7. An extensive system of streams and creeks exists within Mahoning County. Mill Creek MetroParks prioritizes protection of properties with streams, creeks, floodplains, wetlands, and other sensitive ecosystems. Please indicate how important you think it would be to use these properties to also provide the follow:

How important	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important	Not Sure
Public accessibility	48.8%	31.2%	9.8%	8.2%
Environmental protection (storm water management & water quality)	72.8%	15.9%	2.1%	5.9%

Figure 9 - Importance of Using Streams and Creeks

2.3.10 HOW SUPPORTIVE RESPONDENTS WOULD BE FOR THE FOLLOWING TYPES OF FACILITIES

Households would most likely support an outdoor ice rink (44.6%), followed by a new nature center (39.5%).

Q8. Please indicate how important supportive you would be of the following types of facilities:

How supportive	Very Supportive	Somewhat Supportive	Not Supportive	Not Sure
New nature center	39.5%	33.1%	12.4%	10.8%
New visitor center in Mill Creek Park	34.0%	35.7%	14.8%	10.6%
Outdoor ice rink	44.6%	27.5%	13.2%	10.3%

Figure 10 - How Supportive Respondents Would be For Facilities

2.3.11 SERVICE MOST WILLING TO FUND WITH COUNTY TAX DOLLARS

35.5% of households would be most willing to fund an outdoor ice rink followed by 30.5% for a new nature center using their County tax dollars.

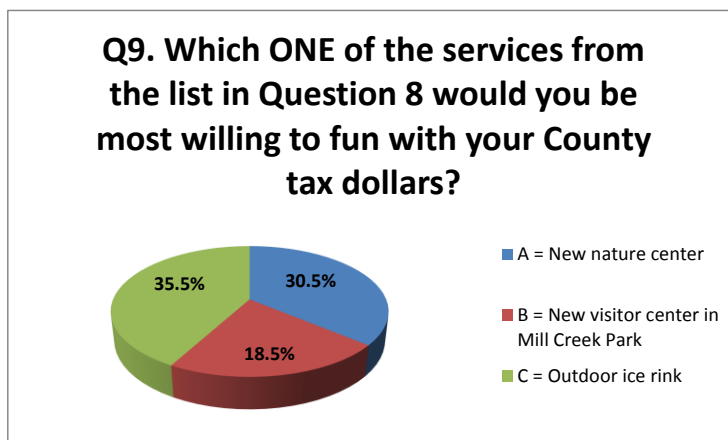


Figure 11 - Service Most Willing to Fund with County Tax Dollars

2.3.12 NEED FOR RECREATION AND PARK FACILITIES

The top three needs for parks, open space and recreation facilities are walking and biking trails (70.7%), park shelters/pavilions and picnic areas (57.5%) and nature center and nature trails (56.8%).

Additionally, 50% of respondents said an off-leash dog park would meet their need by 25% or less.

Q10. Please indicate if YOU or any member of your household has a need for each of the parks, open space, and recreation facilities listed below.						
If YES, please rate the parks, open space, and recreation facilities of this type in Mill Creek MetroParks on a scale 5 to 1.						
5 - 100% met; 4 - 75% met; 3 - 50% met; 2 - 25% met; 1 - 0% met						
	Yes	5	4	3	2	1
Regional Parks (100+ acres)	48.8%	57.5%	29.5%	10.2%	1.0%	1.8%
Large community parks (40 acres)	46.9%	50.6%	32.0%	13.2%	2.3%	1.9%
Small (2 -10 acres) neighborhood parks	47.4%	38.8%	27.4%	20.4%	8.8%	4.6%
Off-leash dog park	25.4%	21.3%	11.8%	16.9%	13.2%	36.8%
Golf course	31.3%	61.7%	25.2%	9.2%	1.1%	2.8%
Outdoor amphitheater	52.1%	42.3%	31.6%	15.6%	5.6%	4.9%
Boating	34.7%	35.2%	26.5%	28.2%	7.4%	2.7%
Youth/teen soccer field	24.9%	34.2%	24.6%	25.3%	11.6%	4.3%
Youth/teen baseball & softball fields	30.3%	42.2%	24.8%	22.8%	6.0%	4.2%
Youth/teen football fields	24.2%	36.8%	27.8%	22.6%	7.6%	5.2%
Agricultural/farm facility	31.7%	38.3%	30.5%	21.8%	5.3%	4.1%
Adult soccer field	9.9%	22.3%	29.6%	24.1%	9.2%	14.8%
Outdoor spray/water ground	38.7%	28.1%	18.3%	25.6%	16.9%	11.1%
Outdoor tennis courts	23.5%	37.6%	29.6%	23.2%	3.2%	6.4%
Outdoor basketball courts	23.2%	31.7%	28.5%	26.8%	6.5%	6.5%
Playground equipment & play areas	40.8%	39.8%	29.5%	20.3%	7.2%	3.2%
Mountain bicycle trails	26.3%	37.6%	25.6%	19.0%	7.8%	10.0%
Walking and biking trails	70.7%	56.2%	27.2%	11.1%	3.9%	1.6%
Nature center and nature trails	56.8%	47.5%	33.7%	14.6%	2.9%	1.3%
Parks shelters/pavilions & picnic areas	57.5%	50.7%	35.1%	11.3%	2.2%	0.7%
Community vegetable gardens	22.5%	33.3%	17.9%	27.4%	12.8%	8.6%
Indoor shelters/cabins	36.4%	45.7%	27.9%	17.3%	7.1%	2.0%
Indoor fitness & exercise facilities	30.1%	24.0%	13.5%	23.3%	20.2%	19.0%
Skateboard park	12.4%	19.1%	17.4%	22.2%	12.7%	28.6%
Disc golf course	10.1%	30.4%	23.2%	19.6%	12.5%	14.3%
Sledding area	42.2%	42.5%	31.4%	18.0%	5.1%	3.0%
Equestrian facility	12.2%	26.5%	14.0%	20.3%	14.1%	25.1%
Botanical gardens	45.1%	51.4%	21.2%	15.6%	6.9%	4.9%

Figure 12 - Need for Recreation and Park Facilities

2.3.13 MOST IMPORTANT FACILITIES

The most important facilities to respondents are walking and biking trails (22.2%).

Q11. Which FOUR of the facilities from the list in Question 10 are most important to your household?	
Below are the top five in each ranking	
Most important to your household	Percent
Most Important	
Walking & biking trails	22.2%
Regional parks (100+ acres)	9.6%
Golf course	6.3%
Off-leash dog park	4.2%
Outdoor amphitheater	4.2%
Second Most Important	
Nature centers & nature trails	11.8%
Walking & biking trails	11.7%
Park shelters/pavilions for picnic areas	5.1%
Outdoor amphitheater	4.9%
Golf course	4.7%
Third Most Important	
Walking & biking trails	9.1%
Playground equipment & play areas	5.9%
Botanical gardens	5.7%
Park shelters/pavilions for picnic areas	5.6%
Nature centers & nature trails	4.7%
Fourth Most Important	
Nature centers & nature trails	7.1%
Park shelters/pavilions for picnic areas	7.1%
Walking & biking trails	7.0%
Botanical gardens	6.1%
Indoor shelters/cabins	3.7%

Figure 13 - Most Important Facilities

2.3.14 NEED FOR RECREATION OR EDUCATION PROGRAMS

The top three needs for recreation or education programs are walking, bicycling (63.4%), family recreation – outdoor adventure (52.6%) and special events/festivals (50.5%).

Q12. Please indicate if YOU or any member of your households have a need for each of the recreation or education programs listed below.						
If answered YES, the respondents were asked to rate the recreation program at Mill Creek MetroParks						
5 - 100% met; 4 - 75% met; 3 - 50% met; 2 - 25% met; 1 - 0% met						
	Yes	5	4	3	2	1
Agriculture	16.6%	28.5%	27.3%	27.3%	11.3%	5.6%
Nature education	34.1%	34.2%	31.6%	22.5%	8.0%	3.7%
Pre-school	11.7%	34.0%	27.4%	22.5%	6.4%	9.7%
Youth/teen outdoor	22.0%	27.2%	28.8%	29.7%	10.1%	4.2%
Adult fitness and wellness	44.1%	18.9%	26.7%	34.7%	11.1%	8.6%
Youth/teen art, dance, performing arts	16.4%	19.8%	19.8%	27.9%	21.0%	11.5%
Gardening	33.8%	31.8%	29.4%	22.8%	11.7%	4.4%
Horticulture/plant	25.8%	33.3%	29.6%	20.0%	10.3%	6.7%
Tennis lessons, clinics, and leagues	11.5%	19.7%	10.7%	34.0%	14.2%	21.4%
Adult performing arts	19.2%	27.7%	19.2%	28.7%	15.9%	8.5%
Adult competitive running	9.9%	32.0%	22.0%	30.0%	10.0%	6.0%
Senior	26.5%	30.3%	19.8%	32.5%	7.9%	9.5%
Golf leagues	13.4%	37.2%	25.7%	30.0%	2.8%	4.3%
Golf lessons	16.4%	25.0%	22.6%	35.7%	12.0%	4.7%
Special events/festivals	50.5%	27.2%	30.0%	27.6%	10.5%	4.7%
History education	31.2%	26.8%	27.4%	28.0%	10.4%	7.4%
Walking bicycling	63.4%	51.0%	29.3%	14.2%	3.0%	2.5%
Family recreation - outdoor adventure	52.6%	39.4%	28.3%	21.8%	7.2%	3.3%

Figure 14 - Need for Recreation or Education Programs

2.3.15 PROGRAMS MOST IMPORTANT

Senior Programs are most important (40%) followed by walking, bicycling as the most important programs to the respondents (24.6%).

Q13. Which FOUR of the programs from the list in Question 12 are most important to your household?	
Most important to your household	Percent
Most important	
Walking, bicycling	24.6%
Adult fitness & wellness	7.7%
Family recreation - outdoor adventure	6.3%
Special events/festivals	6.1%
Senior	40.0%
Second Most Important	
Family recreation - outdoor adventure	13.2%
Special events/festivals	10.5%
Walking, bicycling	9.8%
Adult fitness & wellness	6.4%
Gardening	3.8%
Third Most Important	
Special events/festivals	9.9%
Walking, bicycling	9.9%
Family recreation - outdoor adventure	5.9%
Adult fitness & wellness	4.5%
Nature education	4.0%
Fourth Most Important	
Family recreation - outdoor adventure	9.1%
Walking, bicycling	5.9%
Special events/festivals	5.2%
Nature education	4.0%
Adult fitness & wellness	3.5%

Figure 15 - Most Important Programs

2.3.16 PROGRAMS MOST OFTEN PARTICIPATED IN

The most commonly participated in program is walking, bicycling (30.7%).

Q14. Which FOUR of the programs from the list in Question 12 do you currently participate in MOST OFTEN at Mill Creek MetroParks facilities?	
Which do you currently participate in?	Percent
Most Important	
Walking, bicycling	30.7%
Family recreation - outdoor adventure	7.5%
Special events/festivals	5.1%
Nature education	2.3%
Adult fitness & wellness	2.1%
Golf leagues	2.1%
Second Most Important	
Family recreation - outdoor adventure	13.4%
Walking, bicycling	9.8%
Special events/festivals	9.1%
Adult fitness & wellness	3.3%
Gardening	2.8%
Third Most Important	
Special events/festivals	7.8%
Family recreation - outdoor adventure	4.7%
Nature education	4.4%
Walking, bicycling	3.5%
Gardening	2.6%
History education	2.6%
Fourth Most Important	
Family recreation - outdoor adventure	4.7%
Special events/festivals	3.5%
Nature education	2.6%
History education	1.9%
Adult fitness & wellness	1.7%

Figure 16 - Programs Participated In Most Often

2.3.17 ORGANIZATIONS USED FOR INDOOR & OUTDOOR RECREATION & SPORTS ACTIVITIES

The organizations that the highest percentages of households have utilized for indoor and outdoor recreation activities are city parks and recreation facilities (48.8%), township parks and recreation facilities (45.5%) and State of Ohio Parks (30%).

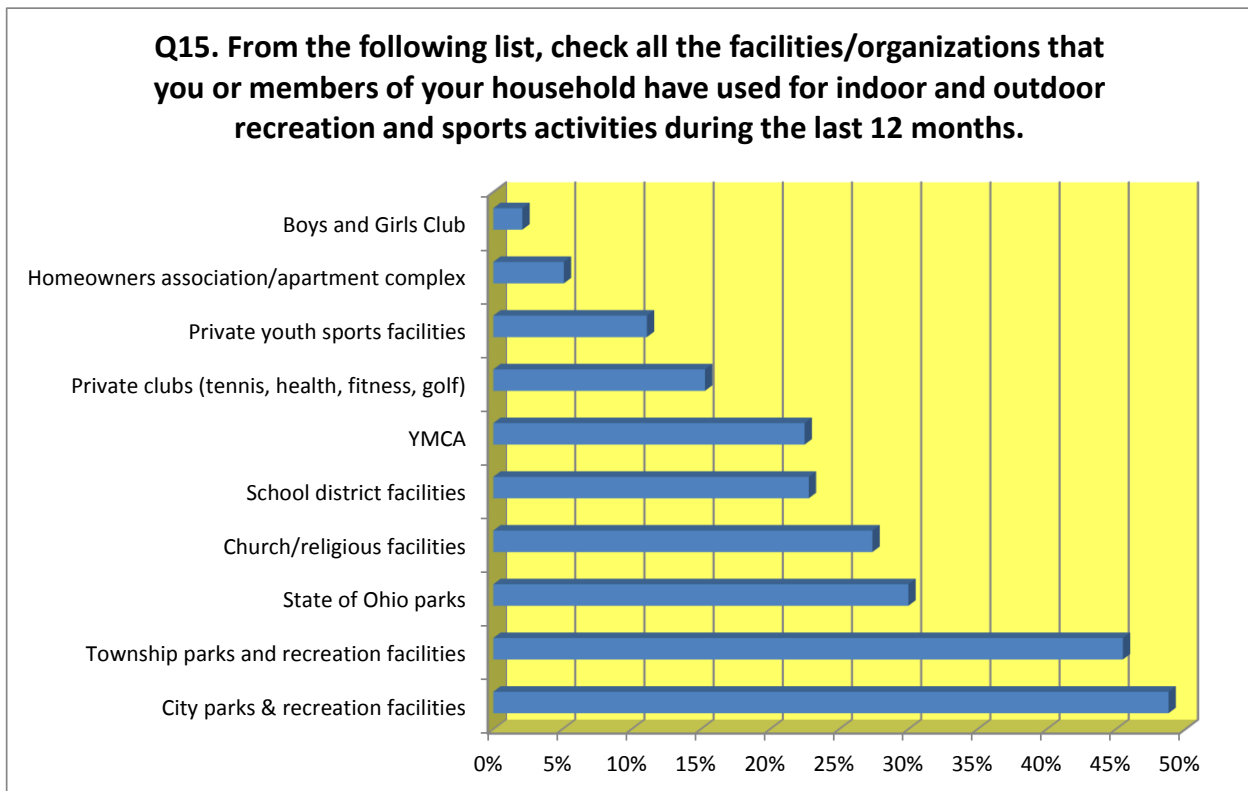


Figure 17 - Organizations Used for Indoor & Outdoor Recreation and Sport Activities

2.3.18 IMPROVING PARKS, RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE SYSTEMS IN MAHONING COUNTY

The top three actions most supported by respondents in improving parks, recreation and open space systems in Mahoning County are renovate/repair older parks, buildings, and recreation facilities (48.6%), develop new walking/biking trails and connect existing trails (46.7%) and upgrade existing roads in Mill Creek Park (41.3%).

Q16. The following are actions that Mill Creek MetroParks could take to improve the parks, recreation, and open space system in Mahoning County. Please indicate how supportive you would be of each action.					
4 - very supportive; 3 - somewhat supportive; 2 - not supportive; 1 - not sure; N/A - did not respond					
Which actions do you support	4	3	2	1	N/A
Purchase land to preserve open space & green space	34.8%	24.9%	13.2%	17.9%	9.2%
Purchase land for connecting trails in the county and to existing parks	38.3%	27.4%	10.8%	13.7%	9.8%
Use river corridors and preserved ecosystems to develop trails and other recreational facilities	35.9%	30.5%	10.4%	13.1%	9.9%
Renovate/repair older parks building and recreation facilities	48.6%	27.2%	6.2%	9.1%	8.9%
Upgrade existing roads in Mill Creek Park	41.3%	30.8%	9.9%	8.1%	9.9%
Operate existing community parks throughout the county	31.0%	28.0%	15.5%	13.7%	11.8%
Develop new walking/biking trails and connect existing trails	46.7%	25.4%	9.6%	8.5%	9.8%
Develop new playgrounds	31.0%	28.2%	16.9%	12.6%	11.3%
Develop new nature center	26.5%	27.0%	19.9%	14.8%	11.8%
Develop a special events park to host festivals and concerts	37.8%	23.7%	16.7%	12.4%	9.4%
Develop new nature trails	36.2%	26.1%	13.6%	12.9%	11.2%
Develop new outdoor spray parks	24.2%	22.8%	25.8%	14.8%	12.4%
Develop new off-leash dog parks	21.4%	20.0%	27.2%	20.0%	11.4%
Develop outdoor ice skating opportunities/areas	33.3%	23.7%	17.9%	14.1%	11.0%
Develop more picnic facilities	25.1%	32.7%	18.5%	12.0%	11.7%
Improve the MetroParks Farm buildings and facilities	22.1%	31.5%	19.0%	15.7%	11.7%

Figure 18 - Support for Improving Parks, Recreation and Open Space

2.3.19 ACTIONS MOST WILLING TO FUND WITH COUNTY TAX DOLLARS

The purchase of land to preserve open space and green space (11%) was the number one action respondents would be most willing to fund with their County tax dollars, followed then by renovate/repair older park buildings & recreation facilities (10.3%).

Q17. Which FOUR of the actions from the list in Question 16 would you be most willing to fund with your County tax dollars?	
Which actions would you be willing to fund	Percent
Most Important	
Purchase land to preserve open space & green space	11.0%
Renovate/repair older park buildings & recreation facilities	10.3%
Develop new walking/biking trails & connect existing trails	9.4%
Purchase land for connecting trails in the county & to existing parks	5.6%
Develop outdoor ice skating opportunities/areas	4.9%
Second Most Important	
Upgrade existing roads in Mill Creek Park	8.5%
Purchase land to preserve open space & green space	8.4%
Develop new walking/biking trails & connect existing trails	7.5%
Renovate/repair older park buildings & recreation facilities	7.3%
Develop a special events park to host festivals & concerts	5.9%
Third Most Important	
Develop new walking/biking trails & connect existing trails	9.1%
Develop a special events park to host festivals & concerts	6.8%
Use river corridors & preserved ecosystems to develop trails & other recreational facilities	6.3%
Develop outdoor skating opportunities/areas	6.1%
Renovate/repair older park buildings & recreation facilities	5.2%
Upgrade existing roads in Mill Creek Park	5.2%
Fourth Most Important	
Develop more picnic areas	6.1%
Develop a special events park to host festivals & concerts	5.9%
Renovate/repair older park buildings & recreation facilities	5.6%
Develop new walking/biking trails & connect existing trails	5.1%
Develop new nature trails	4.4%

Figure 19 - Actions Most Willing to Fund with County Tax Dollars

2.3.20 VOTING FOR A LEVY RENEWAL REFERENDUM

Of the respondents, 48.7% would vote in favor of a levy renewal referendum that would be held to continue the acquisition, improvement and development of the types of parks, trails, open space and recreation facilities that are most important to the respondent. Those that would vote and might vote in favor of a levy renewal accounted for 72.9%, which is extremely positive. Only 7.5% of the respondents would vote against the levy renewal referendum.

Q18. If a levy renewal referendum was held to continue the acquisition, improvement, and development of the types of parks, trails, open space, and recreation facilities that are most important to you and members of your household, how would you vote in the election?	
How would you vote on a renewal	Percent
Vote in favor	48.7%
Might vote in favor	24.2%
Not sure	13.9%
Vote against	7.5%
Did not respond	5.7%
Total	100.0%

Figure 20 - Voting for a Levy Renewal Referendum

2.3.21 HOW SUPPORTIVE OF CREATING A SECOND LEVY

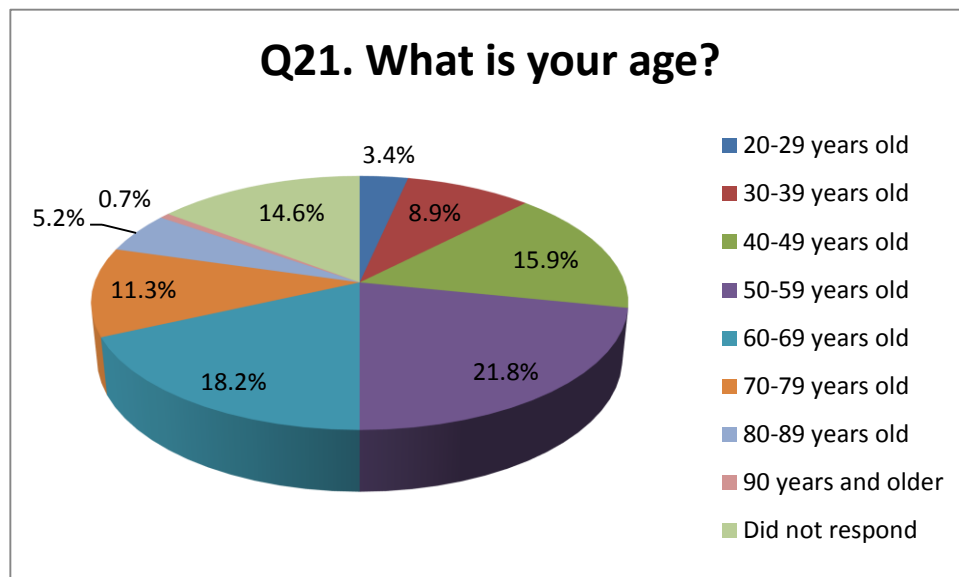
Of the respondents, 27.2% would be supportive in creating a second levy dedicated to funding only capital improvements to the parks, recreation and preserving open space in Mahoning County. Additionally, 27.1% of the respondents said they might vote in favor, which is encouraging with only 14.5% voting against it.

Q19. How supportive would you be of creating a second levy dedicated to funding only capital improvements to the parks, recreation, and preserved open space in Mahoning County?	
How would you vote on a second levy	Percent
Vote in favor	27.2%
Might vote in favor	27.1%
Not sure	25.6%
Vote against	14.5%
Did not respond	5.6%
Total	100.0%

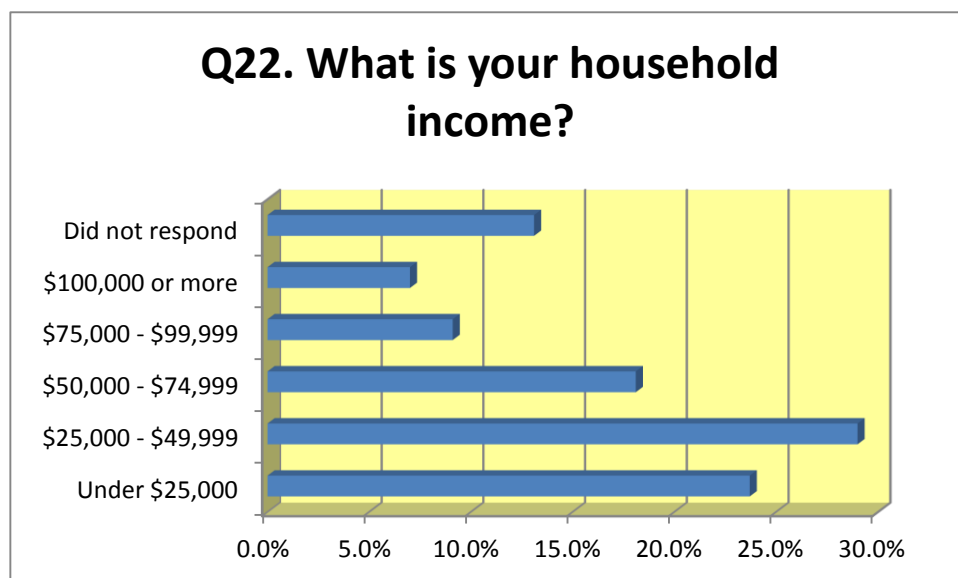
Figure 21 - Support for Second Levy

2.3.22 SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS

2.3.22.1 AGE



2.3.22.2 INCOME



2.3.22.3 RACE/ETHNICITY

Q23. Which of the following best describes your race/ethnicity?		
Race/ethnicity	Number	Percent
African American/Black	68	11.8%
Asian/Indian	0	0.0%
White/Caucasian	457	79.6%
Hispanic/Latino	7	1.3%
Native American	4	0.7%
Asian/Pacific Islander	2	0.3%
Did not respond	36	6.3%
Total	574	100.0%

2.3.22.4 RESIDENCE

Q24. Which of the following BEST describes your home?		
Your Home	Number	Percent
Single Family	482	84.0%
Apartment or condominiums	62	10.8%
High rise building (4 stories or more)	0	0.0%
Other	9	1.6%
Did not respond	21	3.6%
Total	574	100.0%

2.3.22.5 YEARS LIVED IN MAHONING COUNTY

Q25. How long have you lived in Mahoning County?		
How long have you lived in the County	Number	Percent
Under 3 years	20	3.4%
4 - 5 years	15	2.6%
6 - 7 years	9	1.7%
8 - 9 years	11	1.9%
10 - 12 years	8	1.4%
13 - 15 years	15	2.6%
16 - 19 years	8	1.4%
20 - 29 years	52	9.1%
30 - 39 years	60	10.4%
40 - 49 years	89	15.5%
50 - 59 years	114	19.8%
60 or more years	141	24.6%
Did not respond	32	5.6%
Total	574	100.0%

2.3.22.6 GENDER

Q26. What is your gender?		
Gender	Number	Percent
Male	245	42.7%
Female	309	53.8%
Did not respond	20	3.5%
Total	574	100.0%

CHAPTER THREE - PARK AND FACILITIES DEVELOPMENT

3.1 PRIORITIZED PARK AND FACILITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

This *Prioritized Needs Summary* encapsulates the park and program priorities for Mill Creek MetroParks from which specific tactics are developed. These needs were identified by the Consultant Team based upon industry best practices and our experience in the field and were derived from the findings of the following previous analyses:

- Site and facility assessments
- Extensive public input and statistically-valid survey
- Interviews with leadership and staff of Mill Creek MetroParks
- Focus groups with key stakeholders, user groups, and community leadership
- Demographics and trends analysis

Each need has been assigned a priority level as primary or secondary to support future project sequencing, investment of public resources, and meeting community expectations. **The priority assignment for each need is not a measure of importance.**

Rather, these recommended priorities are a result of analyses to create and maintain an appropriate balance of focus for the operations the next ten years. Needs indicated as a primary priority should be considered to be addressed in one to five years, and secondary needs are recommended to be addressed over the next six to ten years.



3.1.1 PRIORITIZED FACILITY NEEDS

Needs indicated as a primary priority should be considered to be addressed in one to five years, and secondary needs are recommended to be addressed over the next six to ten years.

Ranking	Park / Facility Needs	Recommended Priority Assignment
Phase 1	Update existing infrastructure needs in Mill Creek Park, which includes picnic shelters, restrooms, lighting, signage, water access points and the Lily Pond. Update older buildings in the MetroParks, improve roads, and water control management	Primary (1-5 Years)
	Update existing trail system and continue to add trails throughout the county to connect with other county trail networks	Primary (1-5 Years)
	Develop a special events park for the MetroParks to promote and host events/festivals	Primary (1-5 Years)
	Use river corridors and preserve ecosystems to develop trails and other recreation facilities	Primary (1-5 Years)
	Investigate outdoor ice-skating opportunities.	Primary (1-3 Years)
	Develop new playgrounds in the MetroParks	Primary (1-5 Years)
Phase 2	Update or build a new Nature Center/Visitor Center in Mill Creek Park	Secondary (6-10 Years)
	Develop more picnic facilities	Secondary (6-10 Years)
	Improve the MetroParks Farm buildings and facilities	Secondary (6-10 Years)
	Develop outdoor spray parks	Secondary (6-10 Years)
	Develop off leash dog parks	Secondary (6-10 Years)

3.1.2 PRIORITIZED PROGRAM NEEDS

Needs indicated as a primary priority should be considered to be addressed in one to five years, and secondary needs are recommended to be addressed over the next six to ten years.

Ranking	Program Needs	Recommended Priority Assignment
Phase 1	Develop programs that promote walking and bicycling	Primary (1-5 Years)
	Develop and implement family recreation activities and outdoor programs	Primary (1-5 Years)
	Develop more special events/festivals	Primary (1-5 Years)
	Incorporate adult fitness and wellness into parks and other related activities	Primary (1-5 Years)
	Increase nature education programs throughout the MetroParks	Primary (1-5 Years)
Phase 2	Increase opportunities for more history education programs	Secondary (6-10 Years)
	Add more gardening and horticulture programs throughout the MetroParks	Secondary (6-10 Years)
	Develop senior programs in nature education, farm programs, outdoor recreation, golf, walking and bicycling, special events, gardening and horticulture programs	Secondary (6-10 Years)
	Develop outdoor recreation and outdoor adventure programs for people of all ages, especially those 16-40 years of age	Secondary (6-10 Years)
	Develop more farm-related programs for people of all ages	Secondary (6-10 Years)
	Develop and implement additional Golf leagues and programs	Secondary (6-10 Years)

3.2 PARK AND FACILITIES RECOMMENDATIONS

The Consulting Team recommends that the MetroParks staff develop a prioritized Park and Facility Improvement Plan that is intended to reduce current backlogs while taking into consideration the future development of new parkland, facilities and other amenities, as well as needed capital improvements. A Facilities Development Plan will be created that will phase in the improvements over three, five and ten years, depending on their rank in the prioritized plan.

Capital improvements could include the following:

- Trail additions and improvements
- Infrastructure improvements
- Golf improvements
- Road improvements
- Land acquisition needs
- Historic facility improvements
- Farm improvements
- Nature Center development
- Fellows Riverside Gardens improvements
- Develop an outdoor ice skating opportunity
- Updating the Lily Pond area
- Dog park
- Horse Park improvements
- Park site amenity improvements
- Signage in parks
- Internal capital needs



CHAPTER FOUR - OPERATIONAL AND PROGRAMMING PLAN

The following recommendations were developed through data assessment of the various departments within the MetroParks, on-site staff meetings, on-site tours of parks and buildings and input from the community obtained through focus groups, key leadership meetings and the community-wide survey. The intent of this information and the recommendations that follow, center on helping Mill Creek MetroParks become a best practice agency in all aspects of the work that is performed and to achieve financial sustainability.

4.1 OPERATIONAL AND PROGRAMMING RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1.1 FELLOWS RIVERSIDE GARDENS RECOMMENDATIONS

- Create a business plan for Fellows Riverside Gardens that will define the core services within the complex, including implementation tactics, to manage and operate services in order to maximize efficiency and revenue
- Better coordination of fundraising between Friends of Fellows Riverside Gardens and the Mill Creek Park Foundation is required to clarify the roles of each group and properly inform the community, businesses and funding agencies
- Enhance the program plan for Fellows Riverside Gardens into other areas of the MetroParks and County to increase awareness and attention to the quality of the services provided at Fellows Riverside Gardens



- Extend the operational and leadership management of Fellows Riverside Gardens Horticulture Director and staff throughout the MetroParks especially in quality control, program development, maintenance management, business acumen and volunteer support
- Develop cost recovery goals for each cost center at Fellows Riverside Gardens
- Tie Fellows Riverside Gardens Marketing Plan to the MetroParks Marketing Plan
- Continue to cultivate the successful volunteer support at Fellows Riverside Gardens and create opportunities for Fellows Riverside Gardens volunteers to be used throughout the MetroParks
- Connect Fellows Riverside Gardens staff with other staff within the MetroParks as it applies to program management, marketing, fundraising, development of program standards, pricing of services and other quality elements they perform
- Develop a staffing succession plan for Fellows Riverside Gardens to retain the knowledge base that exists with current staff in place
- Establish Performance Measures for Fellows Riverside Gardens that are both internal and external in order to become more of an outcome driven facility based on a business management approach to managing the site and the programs provided
- Continue to upgrade Fellows Riverside Gardens and build into the Strategic Plan a priority list of possible capital improvements to enhance revenue, reduce cost and provide more programs for the community to enjoy
- Develop a cost of service model for Fellows Riverside Gardens for each type of service and task provided to determine cost recovery levels
- Create a replacement reserve fund at Fellows Riverside Gardens for needed improvements and equipment
- Establish what should be the next core service provided at Fellows Riverside Gardens
- Utilize part-time staff to perform outreach programs in other parts of the community to raise awareness and appreciation of what Fellows Riverside Gardens provides
- Enhance the efforts to communicate programs and events at Fellows Riverside Gardens through staff meetings with the Director and other Department Heads

4.1.2 METROPARKS POLICE RECOMMENDATIONS

- Develop a balance between law enforcement and interpretation with a clear philosophy developed on how to manage toward a set of performance outcomes
- Utilize volunteer MetroParks Police or Rangers to assist Police on less skilled job tasks. This will allow full-time Police to be used for the important skill/job demands and training in a more meaningful manner
- Consider a reserve program in a more formalized process
- The Department has to take an approach that follows “MetroParks first” and “Police Department second” when managing their work
- Upgrade technology for Police to operate in a more efficient manner

- MetroParks Police and the Park Planning Departments should work together on a signage plan for the MetroParks to improve way-finding in the parks for visitors
- Establish at least three internal performance measures and three external performance measures for the Police Department
- Make trail safety management a priority as part of the Police work
- Identify and establish the core services for the Police Department
- Provide the Executive Director monthly work plans with anticipated outcomes to be accomplished
- Establish five or six key programs for the Police to manage and coordinate with the Recreation Department to increase the community's appreciation and awareness of what the Police provide to users of the MetroParks
- Pinpoint GPS location posts throughout the MetroParks so users are able to locate where they are in the Park and how to exit the Park
- Update the operational standards for the MetroParks Police Department
- Develop CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) Standards with the MetroParks Planning Department and apply to upgraded and new parks
- Establish a lifecycle replacement schedule for Police vehicles

4.1.3 PARK PLANNING RECOMMENDATIONS

- Trail enhancements should be a primary priority; upgrade a percentage of the total trail system annually
- Project schedules need to be clearly communicated monthly with a timeline and budget update to the Executive Director and staff involved in the projects
- Establish capital improvement criteria to determine the cost benefit of each improvement made in the parks
- Improve technology within the Department as it applies to an integrated network with GIS and financial capabilities for cost benefit analysis
- Identify dedicated funding sources for capital improvements
- Establish the asset value of the MetroParks less land value to determine the proper level of capital improvement needs
- A lifecycle management plan is needed to determine where all assets are in their lifecycle, as well as aid in the development of a capital improvements schedule
- Determine what historic elements of the MetroParks will be made a priority for improvements
- Develop quarterly work plans with the Executive Director and include outcomes to be achieved each quarter
- The Department needs to match capital needs with program needs of the MetroParks, which will help the MetroParks improve revenue capability and sustainability

- Determine the cost of each capital project and include the staff time. This will define the true cost of each project to plan and develop the improvement
- Establish design principles within the Department to make more improvements that have wider age segment appeal and can generate more operational revenue for the MetroParks.
- Develop performance indicators for the Department such as: cost per project against budget, timelines met, cost overruns per total project costs, square foot cost for development, per acre development cost, grant dollars received against total capital dollars on a yearly basis
- Develop a natural resource management plan for the system
- Identify and utilize a land acquisition criteria throughout the MetroParks to acquire the right type of land for the right purpose to achieve the right outcome
- Create a signage plan for the MetroParks and coordinate with the Police on placement and size of signs to optimize effectiveness. Signage improvements should include GPS locators
- Develop a maintenance management plan to properly articulate the maintenance standards desired, frequency rates desired and the time to perform toward a desired maintenance standard outcome, including equipment and staff costs



4.1.4 RECREATION AND EDUCATION SERVICES RECOMMENDATIONS

- Clearly establish the core essential, important and value added services for the Recreation Department and manage toward each service for the future
- Create a clear pricing philosophy and a cost recovery goal for each program and facility, as well as seek Board of Park Commissioners approval for the pricing policy
- Complete a cost of service assessment for current recreation programs and education services to determine cost recovery levels against classification standards desired
- Develop program standards for all recreation and education services provided
- Prioritize and update data management in the MetroParks including adding an online registration system for programs, reservations, permits and general services
- Establish the market definition to determine how much of the market each core program controls in the region, how much price elasticity is in the market and the total size of the market to determine the gaps in the market to provide services towards
- Create new programs utilizing the results of the citizen survey
- Establish staffing qualifications for all positions and training requirements needed, as well as determine a timeline for staff to implement their training work into daily operations
- Make earned income development a priority
- Improve marketing and communication between Departments especially the Farm, Nature Center and other related services
- Utilize social networks (Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, etc.) to build a stronger program participant base
- Increase the use of technology, especially for program registration



- Cross promote Farm and Nature Education programs to encourage users to visit and sign up for programs at both sites
- Establish performance measures for the Department; at least three should focus on efficiency and three should focus on revenue development for the Department
- Increase and widen the age segment appeal in programs offered to the community
- Establish new program policies for pricing, earned income development, partnerships and volunteerism
- Coordinate volunteer development with the Volunteer Committee
- Create weekly or monthly work plans for all recreation related staff, including the Recreation Manager, with outcomes to be achieved
- Enhance the organizational structure of the Recreation Department with more program staff to activate the public's use of the parks, the Nature Center, Farm and services developed
- Create business plans for the Nature Center, Farm and key core program services to maximize efficiency and revenue capability
- Complete performance reviews for staff between the Department manager and staff with measurable outcomes to be achieved
- Track the lifecycle management of programs; at least 20% of the programs should be new each year
- Currently, core programs include: special events, nature education, farm education, golf, summer camps, historical, and outdoor recreation. Potential new core programs could include: health and wellness, edge sports, family programs, 18-35 year old programs, and volunteer development.
- Create opportunities to do more park-related activities at the MetroParks Farm versus solely farm-related programs to increase visitation and revenue capability of site.



4.1.5 MARKETING RECOMMENDATIONS

- Develop a Marketing/Business Plan for the MetroParks that includes:
 - Image plan
 - Communications plan
 - Pricing plan
 - Research plan and data management
 - Fundraising strategy
 - Graphics
 - Social media
 - Updated logo and branding strategy
 - Levy strategy
 - Website redesign and management
 - Program guide strategy
 - Benchmarking other levy strategies other agencies have used
- Create a Fundraising Plan for Mill Creek MetroParks that includes the Fellows Riverside Gardens
- Develop a Style Handbook for all marketing material
- Define one logo and brand for the MetroParks
- Update and clearly articulate the vision and mission for the MetroParks in all publications and media information
- Establish a community input database for survey results, focus group meetings, program assessments, on-site surveys, etc. and teach/train staff on how to interpret the information
- Enhance the signage program in conjunction with the MetroParks Planning and Police Departments
- Preserve a balance between informational marketing and inspirational marketing
- Use the Mill Creek MetroParks story-video as part of the Levy Campaign
- Incorporate volunteers in the Marketing Department and develop a volunteers section within the Marketing Department
- Track data on programs, capacity management, age segments served and users of the parks
- Establish performance measures for the Marketing Department
- Work with the Finance Department to develop an earned income strategy that will include guidance regarding how to engage the Mill Creek Park Foundation to raise more money
- Establish a strategy for grant development

- Enhance the relationship between the Recreation & Education Department and Marketing. Marketing needs to take a more defined role in the development of programs, use of data, how to effectively price services and how to track the market changes that are occurring.
- Develop a levy campaign message
- Utilize the crosstabs of the statistically-valid survey to build the MetroParks' message
- Incorporate and increase use of social networks as part of the overall marketing strategy
- Establish a cost recovery goal for each program and facility



4.1.6 GOLF COURSE RECOMMENDATIONS

- Update the Master Plan that was completed in 1996 to include a cost-benefit assessment on the drainage area
- Develop a capital improvement plan and a dedicated capital plan
- Create a business plan for each line of business Wick Recreation Area and Mill Creek Golf Course
- Develop performance indicators to include: playable days, players, rounds, retention, programs, outings, and concessions per player spending
- Create a program plan for the Mill Creek Golf Course
- Establish maintenance standards for the Mill Creek Golf Course and Wick Recreation Area
- Develop a cost of service for the golf courses
- Develop written standards for everything including the management of carts, clubhouse, maintenance, programs, outings, concessions, driving range and leagues
- Design consistent logos for the golf course that are branded with the MetroParks
- Develop an equipment replacement fund at \$75,000 a year
- Develop a business strategy to turn 20% of the 60% of players who play nine holes only into eighteen hole players via incentives, outings, programs
- Incorporate user feedback methods into the program process
- Seek additional outings at the golf course to support 25% of the overall play
- Enhance marketing at the golf course to increase play of women, eighteen hole players, outings and young people between the ages of 18-35 years of age
- Correct the water issues at the Golf Course
- Utilize the Recreation and Education Services Department to help develop more programs for people of all ages on the golf course
- Seek out additional hotel partnerships to go with current Holiday Inn and Hampton Inn partners
- Develop signature golf events to give users something to look forward to and participate in each year
- Establish differential pricing at the Golf Course to promote more play and wider age group of users
- Outsource elements of operations where appropriate by utilizing a cost of service analysis
- Enhance the directional road signage to the Golf Course , especially along Ohio State Route 11
- Implement a branding strategy that is consistent with the MetroParks for the Golf Course
- Establish a driving range league to increase participation
- Use Sports Management interns from Youngstown State University to help in managing and developing marketing strategies for the golf course to increase play

- Improve the landscaping on the golf courses to make it more aesthetically pleasing, increasing desire to play
- Drainage on some sand traps needs to be improved
- Consider getting an Audubon certification for the golf courses



4.1.7 ADMINISTRATION RECOMMENDATIONS

- Implement Human Resources and Technology positions if budget permits
- Update job descriptions for staff that are doing work outside of their existing job descriptions
- Create a policy and procedures manual
- Create an asset management plan
- Develop a succession plan for staff
- Study the current salaries for positions in the organization and determine where pay levels are below value
- Establish the true cost to maintain the MetroParks by developing a cost of service program

- Utilize online reservations and registration to make program enrollment more accessible
- Redesign the organization into a functional model and populate the model with staff hours required to achieve each function based on a set of standards and expectations
- Create a technology plan for the MetroParks with a funding strategy
- Establish a financial plan to grow earned income with financial principles and the cost for employee legacy requirements
- Implement design principles for all MetroParks improvements that evaluate the operational costs and determine where the money will come from to operate the improvement made to keep MetroParks operating in a sustainable manner
- Utilize a cost of service plan and tie to unit costs for maintenance programs, and facilities
- Create business plans for the MetroParks Farm, core recreation programs, Golf Course, Nature Center, Yellow Creek Park and the Buckeye Horse Park
- Establish financial performance measures to move the MetroParks from an “effort-based culture” to an “outcome-based culture”
- Purchasing Cards should be considered to reduce the amount of time it takes to get purchase order approved
- Establish a capital improvement fund and a dedicated funding source
- Develop a classification of services for recreation programs and MetroParks services outlining how to manage each program to a set of financial outcomes
- Continue to invest in staff development and training, especially in business management practices
- Create a volunteer manual and provide more volunteer development and training
- Broaden the current pricing strategies used by the MetroParks
- Update the Employee Handbook
- Create more consistency in the application methods of policies through effective training
- Archival issues, historical records and retention files need to be managed in a more consistent/efficient manner

4.2 ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

The following Organizational Chart depicts the proposed new staffing structure for Mill Creek MetroParks. A Community Engagement Department was created to bring the departments with external focus –Marketing and Development, Recreation and Education, Fellows Riverside Gardens and Golf--under one functional area. These departments will work closely together raising funds, obtaining sponsorships and developing a coordinated marketing plan. Facilities management and Forestry have been moved to the Operations Department to enhance the overall efficiency of the MetroParks. This alignment will allow improved coordination of effort while taking advantage of an increased number of staff members to perform the duties MetroParks-wide.

The new organizational chart depicts the staff chart to implement the Strategic Master Plan.



CHAPTER FIVE - FINANCIAL AND COST OF SERVICE ANALYSIS

This section of the report presents the financial assessment of Mill Creek MetroParks as a part of the comprehensive parks and recreation strategic master planning process. As a key element of the Plan, PROS Consulting reviewed available information to assess the financial situation of the Mill Creek MetroParks. The revenues, expenditures and capital funds were critically analyzed to identify trends and assess the Mill Creek MetroParks' financial integrity. The cost recovery for facilities, programs and services at major functional levels has been analyzed to assess the cost of service readiness.

5.1 FINANCIAL ANALYSIS

5.1.1 DATA REVIEWED

The PROS Team reviewed the detailed cost and activity information prepared by Mill Creek MetroParks staff. The financial statements and operations reports for fiscal years ending 2006 through 2011 were analyzed to assess the financial situation and stability of Mill Creek MetroParks. The following is a list of the cost and activity data reviewed by PROS:

- MetroParks Budget Reports for years ending 2006 through 2011
- MetroParks Annual Reports for years ending 2006 through 2010

5.1.2 FINANCIAL STRENGTHS

Mill Creek MetroParks has maintained adequate General Fund cash balances for each year shown in **Figure 22**. A strong cash balance provides flexibility with respect to managing programs, maintaining assets and meeting the changing needs of the MetroParks. The General Fund cash balances increased between fiscal years 2006 and 2011. The fiscal year 2011 cash balance is 40% of annual General Fund expenditures and is 13% more than the 2006 cash balance. PROS recommends a range of cash and investments between sixty and ninety days to cover unexpected revenue drops, unusual and emergency expenditures. The MetroParks had ninety-nine days of cash in 2006 and one hundred forty-five days of cash at the end of 2011. The MetroParks should continue to maintain sufficient cash reserves.

	Actual 2006	Actual 2007	Actual 2008	Actual 2009	Actual 2010	Actual 2011
Unencumbered Cash Balance	\$2,616,557.90	\$2,481,628.66	\$2,630,719.88	\$2,471,577.61	\$4,771,145.64	\$3,972,354.34
Annual Expenditures	\$9,559,742.71	\$10,588,564.19	\$9,833,578.34	\$9,841,534.16	\$9,896,775.56	\$9,947,267.05
Cash to Expenditures	27%	23%	27%	25%	48%	40%

Figure 22 - Cash Balances

The MetroParks has no debt which is a great situation for a large agency, as this is uncommon.

5.1.3 OPERATING REVENUE

The revenues for fiscal years ending 2006 through 2011 are shown in **Figure 23**. Over the period, the total revenues decreased by 11% due to the decrease in grant revenues. Property tax revenues increased by 0.7%. Activity revenues decreased by 12% over the five year period.

Revenue	Actual 2006	Actual 2007	Actual 2008	Actual 2009	Actual 2010	Actual 2011
General Property Tax	\$ 6,804,420.14	\$ 6,930,795.72	\$ 6,886,063.99	\$ 6,891,928.14	\$ 6,942,951.62	\$ 6,759,907.06
Other Taxes	29,519.64	18,366.19	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Local Government Fund	547,336.72	550,950.73	657,098.03	569,983.92	563,355.55	573,233.08
Local Govt. Rev. Asst. Fund	120,120.40	120,120.40	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Park District Activities	2,155,666.14	2,682,096.67	2,470,169.93	2,103,051.74	2,026,818.73	1,891,067.59
Fellows Trust Fund	21,411.63	22,098.55	20,318.90	13,722.71	14,087.35	18,243.63
ODOT	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	63,920.50	44,936.71
Gas Royalties	348,535.58	353,484.15	382,267.52	286,701.48	270,175.44	161,490.73
Replacement Reserve Interest	64,407.15	52,943.37	29,140.43	23,132.14	8,789.80	4,292.70
WRSSP Grant	0.00	0.00	1,604,021.00	156,965.76	130,405.44	17,082.80
State of Ohio Law Enforcement	0.00	0.00	4,000.00	3,120.00	580.00	0.00
SWIF Grant	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	9,827.57
FEMA-Large Projects	0.00	0.00	107,552.33	0.00	0.00	0.00
Clean Ohio Grant	758,084.25	0.00	0.00	0.00	137,516.50	0.00
Bikeway-Phase III	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	25,082.69	4,909.22
Golf Course Donations	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	10,860.22
Mill Creek Park Foundation	254,000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	90,287.80	90,850.00
F.H.W.A. Grants	43,964.30	338,044.75	289,086.92	32,159.59	41,233.61	0.00
Transfers From Other Funds	9,283.73	158,369.79	91,798.64	0.00	55,588.52	64,103.00
Advances From Other Funds	7,000.00	196,248.11	218,248.11	130,405.44	205,379.24	339,211.52
Total Revenues	\$ 11,163,749.68	\$ 11,423,518.43	\$ 12,759,765.80	\$ 10,211,170.92	\$ 10,576,172.79	\$ 9,990,015.83
Annual Change		2%	12%	-20%	4%	-6%
Cummulative Change		2%	14%	-9%	-5%	-11%

Figure 23 - Total Revenue

The General Fund revenues are shown in **Figure 24**.

Revenue	Actual 2006	Actual 2007	Actual 2008	Actual 2009	Actual 2010	Actual 2011
General Property Tax	\$6,804,420.14	\$6,930,795.72	\$6,886,063.99	\$6,891,928.14	\$6,942,951.62	\$6,759,907.06
Other Taxes	29,519.64	18,366.19	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Local Government Fund	547,336.72	550,950.73	657,098.03	569,983.92	563,355.55	573,233.08
Local Govt. Rev. Asst. Fund	120,120.40	120,120.40	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Park District Activities	2,155,666.14	2,682,096.67	2,470,169.93	2,103,051.74	2,172,237.23	2,075,094.65
Fellows Trust Fund	21,411.63	22,098.55	20,318.90	13,722.71	14,087.35	18,243.63
ODOT	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	44,936.71
Mill Creek Park Foundation	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	90,850.00
Transfers From Other Funds	9,283.73	12,372.27	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Total Revenues	\$9,687,758.40	\$ 10,336,800.53	\$ 10,033,650.85	\$ 9,578,686.51	\$ 9,692,631.75	\$9,562,265.13
Annual Change		7%	-3%	-5%	1%	-1%
Cummulative Change		7%	4%	-1%	0%	-1%

Figure 24 - General Fund Revenues

The General Fund revenues increased in years 2007 and 2008, but decreased through the year ending 2011 to slightly less than the 2006 year revenues.

Figure 25 shows the percentage of General fund revenues by category. The Activities revenues made up 22.3 % of the total revenues in 2006 and 21.7% in 2011. The Tax Revenues were 70.5% of the total in 2006 and have increased to 70.7% in 2011. The revenue trend lines are relatively consistent over the five year period.

Revenue	Actual 2006	Actual 2007	Actual 2008	Actual 2009	Actual 2010	Actual 2011
Taxes	70.5%	67.2%	68.6%	72.0%	71.6%	70.7%
State Funds	6.9%	6.5%	6.5%	6.0%	5.8%	6.0%
Park District Activities	22.3%	25.9%	24.6%	22.0%	22.4%	21.7%
Fellows Trust Fund	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%	0.2%
ODOT	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.5%
Mill Creek Park Foundation	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.0%
Transfers From Other Funds	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Total Revenues	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Figure 25 - Percent of General Fund Revenues by Category

The flat General Fund revenues shown in the **Figure 24** indicate that the revenues have not kept up with the low inflation levels experienced on the five year period. The MetroParks should consider reviewing fees and charges to cover the increased operating costs.

5.1.4 OPERATING EXPENDITURES

The operating expenditures for fiscal years ending 2006 through 2011 have increased by 4% from \$9,608,299.51 in 2006 to \$9,186,248.23 in 2011. **Figure 26** shows the historical expenses from fiscal ending 2005 through 2011.

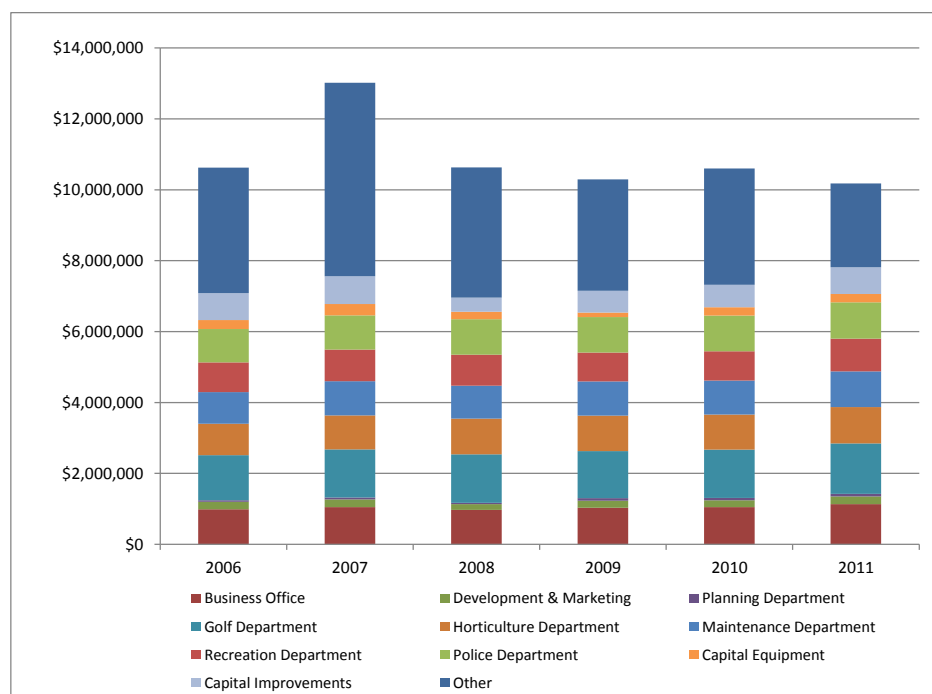


Figure 26 - Expenditures

5.1.5 CAPITAL EXPENDITURES

The investments in capital improvements compared to total expenditures shown in **Figure 27** have increased from 6.8% to 7.6% over the five year period primarily. This is a reflection of the MetroParks' ability to develop, maintain and renew fixed assets.

	Actual 2006	Actual 2007	Actual 2008	Actual 2009	Actual 2010	Actual 2011
Total Expenditures	\$11,163,749.68	\$11,423,518.43	\$12,759,765.80	\$10,211,170.92	\$10,576,172.79	\$9,990,015.83
Capital Improvements	\$763,689.58	\$781,691.41	\$401,768.42	\$610,683.52	\$631,266.04	\$755,680.00
Capital Improvements as a Percent of Total Expenditures	6.8%	6.8%	3.1%	6.0%	6.0%	7.6%

Figure 27 - Capital Improvements to Total Expenditures

The capital equipment purchases compared to General Fund expenditures have decreased by approximately 7% from 2.7% to 2.4% over the five year period primarily. This is a reflection of the MetroParks' ability to maintain and replace equipment inventory.

	Actual 2006	Actual 2007	Actual 2008	Actual 2009	Actual 2010	Actual 2011
General Fund Expenditures	\$9,559,742.71	\$10,588,564.19	\$9,833,578.34	\$9,841,534.16	\$9,896,775.56	\$9,947,267.05
Capital Equipment Purchases	\$253,962.66	\$322,290.77	\$206,741.27	\$125,400.99	\$234,985.04	\$235,500.00
Capital Improvements as a Percent of Total Expenditures	2.7%	3.0%	2.1%	1.3%	2.4%	2.4%

Figure 28 - Capital Equipment Purchases to General Fund Expenditures



5.1.6 REVENUES AND EXPENDITURE TRENDS

The total revenues and expenditures have decreased over the five year period primarily due to decreases in grant funds as shown in **Figure 29**. The other revenues have been constant or slightly decreased over the period. The General Fund revenues and expenditures have decreased; however, the revenues have decreased faster than the expenditures as shown in **Figure 30**. The gap in General Fund revenues and expenditures shows an increased reliance on external funding; such as grants and donations.

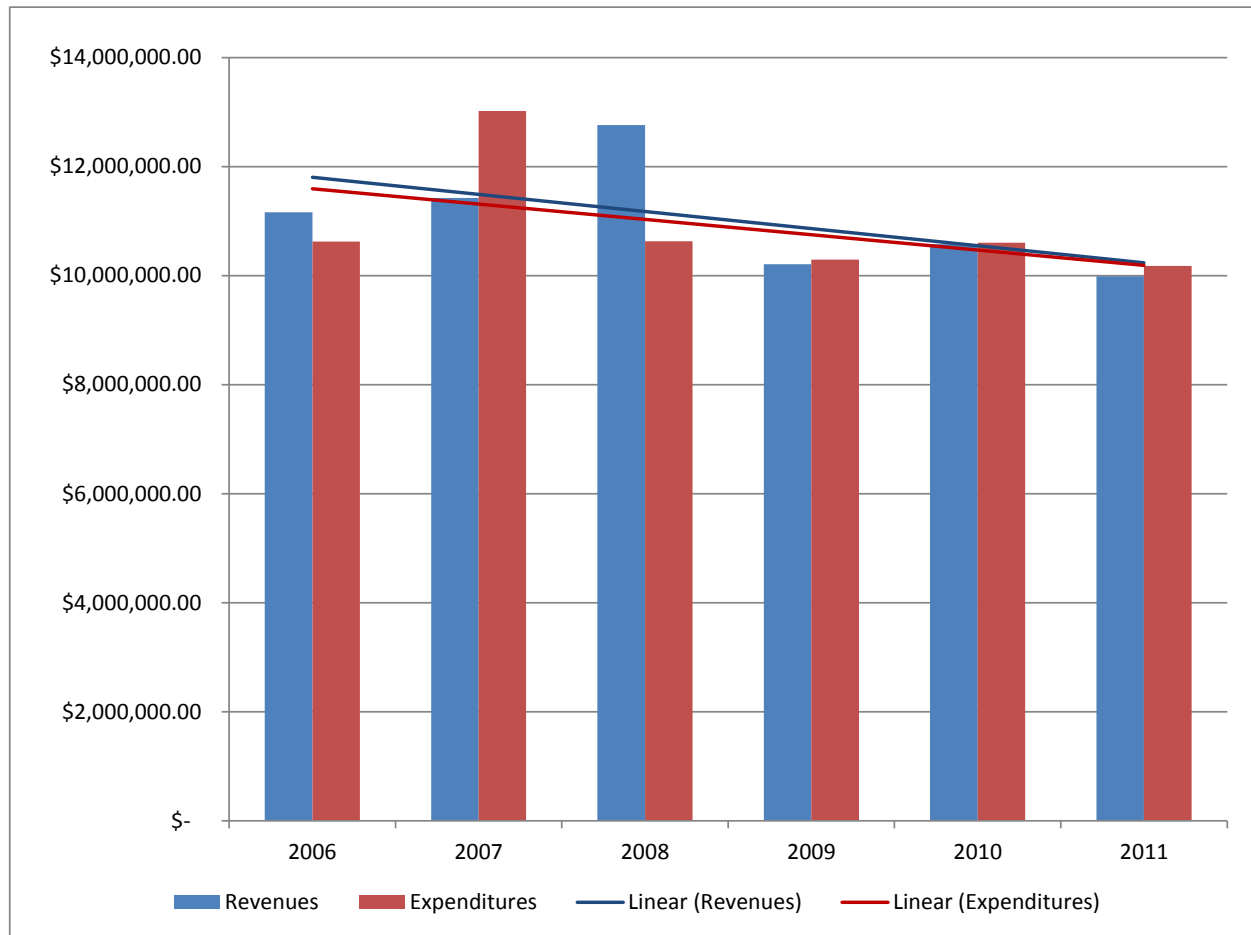


Figure 29 - Total Revenues and Expenses

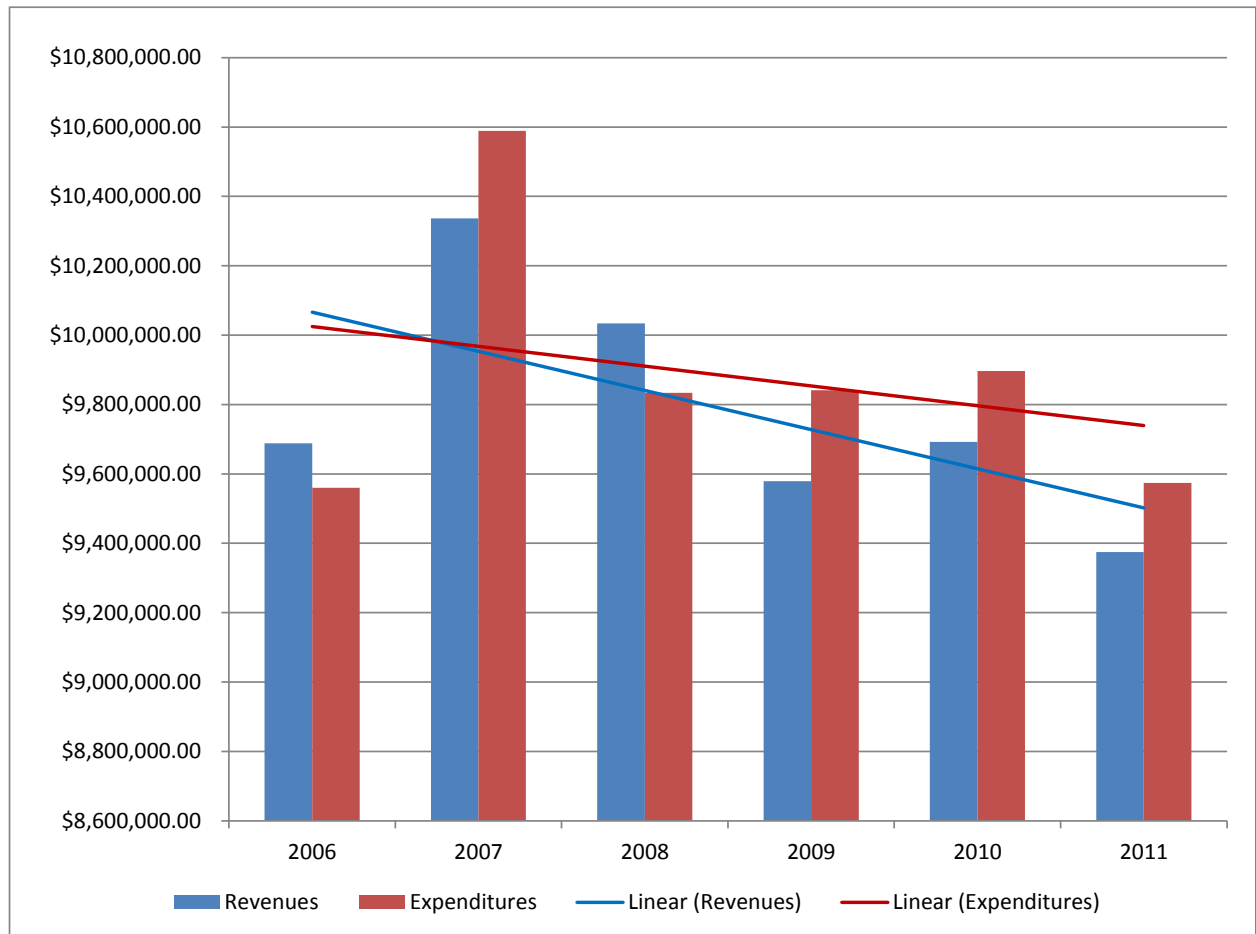


Figure 30 - General Fund Revenues and Expenditures

5.1.7 PROPERTY TAX REVENUES

Between years ending 2006 and 2010, the Taxable Property Values decreased by 4% or approximately 1% per year as shown in **Figure 31**. Mill Creek MetroParks only receives additional tax revenues from construction. Without the new construction General Fund tax revenue would have decreased by 6.25%.

Year	Population	Estimated True Values of Taxable Property	Total New Construction	Base Taxable Property
2010	238,823	\$11,530,858,978	\$41,904,320	\$11,194,756,118
2009	240,420	11,627,495,700	60,344,190	11,333,297,160
2008	240,420	11,944,657,509	82,438,090	11,710,803,159
2007	240,420	12,037,011,940	84,182,190	11,885,595,680
2006	251,026	12,006,904,758	67,234,070	11,939,670,688

Figure 31 - Property Tax Values

In some areas of the U.S., the mortgage markets are experiencing significant difficulty with respect to interest rates and foreclosures. These issues have resulted in flat or decreased property values, which result in flat or decreased property tax revenues.

5.2 COST RECOVERY ANALYSIS

The industry best practices are 35 - 40% for cost recovery from revenues other than taxes for park districts. Non-Taxes Revenues, which exclude revenues from property taxes and state sale tax allocations, have decreased by 27% since 2006. **Figure 32** shows that the Mill Creek MetroParks' cost recovery from non-tax revenues is 34% to 26% of the total expenses.

	Actual 2006	Actual 2007	Actual 2008	Actual 2009	Actual 2010	Actual 2011
Non-Tax Revenues	3,662,352.78	3,803,285.39	5,216,603.78	2,749,258.86	3,069,865.62	2,656,875.69
Expenditures	\$ 10,625,951.75	\$ 13,017,749.90	\$ 10,628,698.77	\$ 10,292,346.50	\$ 10,602,148.77	\$ 10,177,428.23
Revenues Over (Under) Expenditures	\$ (6,963,598.97)	\$ (9,214,464.51)	\$ (5,412,094.99)	\$ (7,543,087.64)	\$ (7,532,283.15)	\$ (7,520,552.54)
Cost Recovery	34%	29%	49%	27%	29%	26%

Figure 32 - Cost Recovery from Non-Tax Revenues

A summary of the cost recovery by selected groups is shown in **Figure 33**. The MetroParks demonstrated a healthy cost recovery at the Mill Creek Golf Course and Fellows Riverside Gardens. Other operations are lower than PROS anticipated cost recovery.

Operation	Years Ending:						PROS Anticipated Cost Recovery
	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	
Mill Creek Golf Course with Capital Investment	92%	84%	88%	103%	96%	69%	
Mill Creek Golf Course without Capital Investment	100%	96%	93%	106%	107%	94%	100%
Par 3 Golf Course	69%	65%	59%	79%	71%	55%	100%
Wick Recreation Area	14%	17%	13%	14%	13%	10%	Various
Fellows Riverside Gardens	52%	47%	41%	49%	48%	57%	50 to 70%
Cabins	47%	56%	63%	60%	65%	60%	80 to 100%
Boating	27%	26%	33%	34%	34%	30%	50 to 80%
Pavilions	67%	64%	55%	60%	57%	54%	80 to 100%
Farm	19%	18%	26%	28%	27%	27%	50 to 70%
Yellow Creek	24%	22%	17%	25%	27%	20%	Various

Figure 33 - Summary of Cost Recovery from Selected Operations

5.2.1 MILL CREEK GOLF COURSE OPERATIONS

The revenues and expenditures for the Mill Creek Golf Course for fiscal years ending 2006 through 2011 are illustrated below in **Figure 34**. The cost recovery is shown for operating and maintenance costs, as well as total costs, which include capital expenditures. The overall trend for these facilities shows that cost recovery is approximately 100% over the study period for operating and maintenance expenditures. The total cost recovery has been between 69% and 103% over the study period. The analysis shows a sharp decrease in total cost recovery for 2011, due to the capital improvements underway at the course. The driving range and new program area should more than recover the investment over the next five years. The course had total cost recovery near or over 100% for fiscal years ending 2009 and 2010. The operation and maintenance costs have been more than covered by revenues for year ending 2006, 2009, and 2010.

The economy had a major negative impact on golf operations for the fiscal year ending 2011 with 7.7% decrease in revenues. The investment (or subsidy) per round of golf varies for each year, but is consistently under \$1 per round for operation and maintenance costs. With capital costs, the investment per round is under \$2.50 for all years except 2010. The large capital investment in 2010 increased the investment per round to \$5.14; however, this investment will result in increased future revenues for the course.

Mill Creek Golf Course	Actual 2006	Actual 2007	Actual 2008	Actual 2009	Actual 2010	Actual 2011
Revenues	\$ 991,666.56	1,013,933.97	981,531.06	1,079,287.91	1,107,037.99	1,021,507.29
Expenditures						
O&M Expenditures	\$ 992,537.55	\$ 1,053,524.93	\$ 1,049,910.07	\$ 1,018,022.82	\$ 1,038,599.60	\$ 1,090,000.00
Capital Equipment	47,907.52	47,921.88	51,992.17	0.00	64,061.63	72,000.00
Capital Improvements	33,126.37	106,455.64	8,434.00	29,850.47	51,614.29	314,200.00
Total	\$ 1,073,571.44	\$ 1,207,902.45	\$ 1,110,336.24	\$ 1,047,873.29	\$ 1,154,275.52	\$ 1,476,200.00
Revenues Over (Under) Expenditures	\$ (81,904.88)	\$ (193,968.48)	\$ (128,805.18)	\$ 31,414.62	\$ (47,237.53)	\$ (454,692.71)
Cost Recovery	92%	84%	88%	103%	96%	69%
Cost Recovery Without Capital Costs	100%	96%	93%	106%	107%	94%
Rounds	84,246	86,541	83,157	90,536	86,263	88,557
Investment Per Round	\$ 0.97	\$ 2.24	\$ 1.55	\$ (0.35)	\$ 0.55	\$ 5.13
Investment Per Round Without Capital Costs	\$ 0.01	\$ 0.46	\$ 0.82	\$ (0.68)	\$ (0.79)	\$ 0.77

Figure 34 - Mill Creek Golf Course Cost of Service

5.2.2 PAR 3 GOLF COURSE OPERATIONS

The revenues and expenditures for the Par 3 Golf Course for fiscal years ending 2006 through 2011 are illustrated below in **Figure 35**. The cost recovery is shown for total costs of operations. The total cost recovery has been between 79% and 55% over the study period. The analysis shows a sharp decrease in total cost recovery for 2011 due to a significant decline in revenues.

The economy had a major negative impact on golf operations for the fiscal year ending 2011 with 19.7% decrease in revenues. The investment (or subsidy) per round of golf is under \$3 per round for total costs. The golf courses should generally recover 100% of their direct costs. Opportunities for increased programming should be explored to improve the cost recovery.

Par 3 Golf Course	Actual 2006	Actual 2007	Actual 2008	Actual 2009	Actual 2010	Actual 2011
Revenues	\$ 105,385.39	109,281.44	104,994.96	126,875.46	112,897.36	90,662.31
Expenditures						
O&M Expenditures	\$ 153,200.40	\$ 168,195.56	\$ 176,857.79	\$ 159,981.30	\$ 159,133.80	\$ 166,000.00
Revenues Over (Under) Expenditures	\$ (47,815.01)	\$ (58,914.12)	\$ (71,862.83)	\$ (33,105.84)	\$ (46,236.44)	\$ (75,337.69)
Cost Recovery	69%	65%	59%	79%	71%	55%
Rounds	27,903	26,740	27,807	32,774	25,412	26,269
Investment Per Round	\$ 1.71	\$ 2.20	\$ 2.58	\$ 1.01	\$ 1.82	\$ 2.87

Figure 35 - Par 3 Golf Course Cost of Service

5.2.3 WICK RECREATION AREA

The revenues and expenditures for the Wick Recreation Area for fiscal years ending 2006 through 2011 are illustrated below in **Figure 36**. The cost recovery is shown for total costs of operations. The total cost recovery has been between 14% and 10% over the study period. The investment (or subsidy) per visitor is between \$5.30 and \$8.13. MetroParks should review the pricing strategies to achieve between 80% to 100% cost recovery of the private rentals and 40% to 60% for staffed programmed recreation.

Wick Recreation Area	Actual 2006	Actual 2007	Actual 2008	Actual 2009	Actual 2010	Actual 2011
Revenues	\$ 18,290.83	\$ 23,764.97	\$ 18,717.00	\$ 21,243.53	\$ 20,474.50	\$ 16,967.16
Expenditures	127,764.28	136,279.67	139,912.31	150,103.95	160,665.77	165,500.00
Total Revenues Over (Under) Expenditures	\$ (109,473.45)	\$ (112,514.70)	\$ (121,195.31)	\$ (128,860.42)	\$ (140,191.27)	\$ (148,532.84)
Cost Recovery (Percent)	14%	17%	13%	14%	13%	10%
Units of Service (Visitor)	17,388	21,218	18,003	19,485	17,836	18,274
Investment Per Rental	\$ 6.30	\$ 5.30	\$ 6.73	\$ 6.61	\$ 7.86	\$ 8.13

Figure 36 - Wick Recreation Area Cost of Service

5.2.4 FELLOWS RIVERSIDE GARDENS

The revenues and expenditures for Fellows Riverside Gardens for fiscal years ending 2006 through 2011 are illustrated below in **Figure 37**. The cost recovery is shown for total costs of operations. The total cost recovery has been between 48% and 57% over the study period. The investment (or subsidy) per visitor is between \$22 and \$87. The cost recovery improved significantly in 2011 to within anticipated cost recovery. Program facilities generally recover 50% to 70% of their costs. While Fellows Riverside Gardens is within this cost recovery range, opportunities exist to improve the cost recovery through additional programs and increased volunteer hours.

Fellows Gardens	Actual 2006	Actual 2007	Actual 2008	Actual 2009	Actual 2010	Actual 2011
Revenues	\$ 134,994.23	\$ 140,282.78	\$ 137,895.13	\$ 156,834.97	\$ 150,468.12	\$ 187,400.98
Expenditures	257,505.62	299,435.57	332,341.13	317,474.84	314,737.08	328,000.00
Total Revenues Over (Under) Expenditures	\$ (122,511.39)	\$ (159,152.79)	\$ (194,446.00)	\$ (160,639.87)	\$ (164,268.96)	\$ (140,599.02)
Cost Recovery (Percent)	52%	47%	41%	49%	48%	57%
Units of Service (Visitor)	5,456	3,646	3,049	2,064	1,900	1,800
Investment Per Rental	\$ 22.45	\$ 43.65	\$ 63.77	\$ 77.83	\$ 86.46	\$ 78.11

Figure 37 - Fellows Riverside Gardens Cost of Service

5.2.5 CABINS

The revenues and expenditures for cabins for fiscal years ending 2006 through 2011 are illustrated below in **Figure 38**. The cost recovery is shown for total costs of operations. The total cost recovery has been between 47% and 65% over the study period. The investment (or subsidy) per rental is between \$32 and \$63. Facilities generally recover 80% to 100% of their costs. The MetroParks should consider adjusting the pricing strategy for these facilities to maintain the condition of the facilities. The use of these facilities is private and exclusive; the users should cover the most of the costs.

Cabins	Actual 2006	Actual 2007	Actual 2008	Actual 2009	Actual 2010	Actual 2011
Revenues	\$ 23,999.45	\$ 25,978.75	\$ 25,748.96	\$ 26,733.75	\$ 28,738.50	\$ 31,741.25
Expenditures	50,611.01	46,137.63	40,651.13	44,355.09	44,474.44	52,700.00
Total Revenues Over (Under) Expenditures	\$ (26,611.56)	\$ (20,158.88)	\$ (14,902.17)	\$ (17,621.34)	\$ (15,735.94)	\$ (20,958.75)
Cost Recovery (Percent)	47%	56%	63%	60%	65%	60%
Units of Service (Rental)	420	402	415	466	493	536
Investment Per Rental	\$ 63.36	\$ 50.15	\$ 35.91	\$ 37.81	\$ 31.92	\$ 39.10

Figure 38 - Cabins Cost of Service

5.2.6 BOATING

The revenues and expenditures for boating for fiscal years ending 2006 through 2011 are illustrated below in **Figure 39**. The cost recovery is shown for total costs of operations. The total cost recovery has been between 26% and 34% over the study period. The investment (or subsidy) per rental is between \$8.70 and \$12.77. Recreation programs generally recover 50% to 80% of their costs. The MetroParks should consider adjusting the pricing for the boat rental operations to sustain the quality of the program.

Boating	Actual 2006	Actual 2007	Actual 2008	Actual 2009	Actual 2010	Actual 2011
Revenues	\$ 8,856.50	\$ 10,496.25	\$ 12,785.25	\$ 13,090.75	\$ 13,403.25	\$ 13,581.41
Expenditures	33,221.65	40,715.06	38,670.33	38,431.94	38,880.16	45,250.00
Total Revenues Over (Under) Expenditures	\$ (24,365.15)	\$ (30,218.81)	\$ (25,885.08)	\$ (25,341.19)	\$ (25,476.91)	\$ (31,668.59)
Cost Recovery (Percent)	27%	26%	33%	34%	34%	30%
Units of Service (Rental)	1,975	2,417	1,922	2,913	2,093	2,480
Investment Per Rental	\$ 12.34	\$ 12.50	\$ 13.47	\$ 8.70	\$ 12.17	\$ 12.77

Figure 39 - Boating Cost of Service

5.2.7 PAVILIONS

The revenues and expenditures for pavilion operations for fiscal years ending 2006 through 2011 are illustrated below in **Figure 40**. The cost recovery is shown for total costs of operations. The total cost recovery has been between 54% and 67% over the study period. The investment (or subsidy) per rental is between \$97 and \$166. Facilities generally recover 80% to 100% of their costs. The MetroParks should consider adjusting the pricing to lessen the amount of subsidy for maintenance and operations of the facilities. The use of these facilities is private and exclusive; the users should cover the most of the costs.

Pavilion	Actual 2006	Actual 2007	Actual 2008	Actual 2009	Actual 2010	Actual 2011
Revenues	\$ 55,900.54	\$ 57,605.82	\$ 53,119.50	\$ 60,249.25	\$ 56,898.50	\$ 60,093.25
Expenditures	83,638.60	89,952.25	95,821.17	99,989.95	99,589.65	111,100.00
Total Revenues Over (Under) Expenditures	\$ (27,738.06)	\$ (32,346.43)	\$ (42,701.67)	\$ (39,740.70)	\$ (42,691.15)	\$ (51,006.75)
Cost Recovery (Percent)	67%	64%	55%	60%	57%	54%
Units of Service (Rental)	285	269	257	326	319	363
Investment Per Rental	\$ 97.33	\$ 120.25	\$ 166.15	\$ 121.90	\$ 133.83	\$ 140.51

Figure 40 - Pavilion Cost of Service

5.2.8 METROPARKS FARM

The revenues and expenditures for the MetroParks Farm operations for fiscal years ending 2006 through 2011 are illustrated below in **Figure 41**. The cost recovery is shown for total costs of operations. The total cost recovery has been between 18% and 28% over the study period. The investment (or subsidy) per rental is between \$3.94 and \$6.01. Program facilities generally recover 50% to 70% of their costs. MetroParks should consider adjusting pricing for facility rentals and recreation classes to improve the cost recovery and provide funds to continued quality operations. The financial position could be improved through additional fee programs and improved volunteer opportunities.

Farm	Actual 2006	Actual 2007	Actual 2008	Actual 2009	Actual 2010	Actual 2011
Revenues	\$ 30,619.50	\$ 31,642.91	\$ 44,518.92	\$ 45,429.57	\$ 45,370.91	\$ 47,664.23
Expenditures	163,935.22	174,076.63	169,209.26	164,892.63	171,020.56	176,000.00
Total Revenues Over (Under) Expenditures	\$ (133,315.72)	\$ (142,433.72)	\$ (124,690.34)	\$ (119,463.06)	\$ (125,649.65)	\$ (128,335.77)
Cost Recovery (Percent)	19%	18%	26%	28%	27%	27%
Units of Service (Vistor)	22,193	27,937	27,937	30,353	28,257	29,169
Investment Per Rental	\$ 6.01	\$ 5.10	\$ 4.46	\$ 3.94	\$ 4.45	\$ 4.40

Figure 41 - Mill Creek MetroParks Farm Cost of Service

5.2.9 YELLOW CREEK PARK

The revenues and expenditures for the Yellow Creek Park operations for fiscal years ending 2006 through 2011 are illustrated below in **Figure 42**. The cost recovery is shown for total costs of operations. The total cost recovery has been between 17% and 25% over the study period. Yellow Creek Park provides many different types of recreation opportunities including trails, recreation courts facility rentals, and picnic facilities. MetroParks should review the pricing strategies to achieve between 80% to 100% cost recovery of the private rentals and 40% to 60% for staffed programmed recreation.

Yellow Creek	Actual 2006	Actual 2007	Actual 2008	Actual 2009	Actual 2010	Actual 2011
Revenues	\$ 16,078.00	\$ 17,883.50	\$ 15,218.50	\$ 17,588.50	\$ 18,669.50	\$ 17,168.00
Expenditures	65,838.53	80,121.37	91,051.94	70,469.25	69,538.32	84,000.00
Total Revenues Over (Under) Expenditures	\$ (49,760.53)	\$ (62,237.87)	\$ (75,833.44)	\$ (52,880.75)	\$ (50,868.82)	\$ (66,832.00)
Cost Recovery (Percent)	24%	22%	17%	25%	27%	20%
Units of Service (Rentals)	114	127	129	145	157	172
Investment Per Rental	\$ 436.50	\$ 490.06	\$ 587.86	\$ 364.69	\$ 324.01	\$ 388.56

Figure 42 - Yellow Creek Cost of Service

5.3 FINANCIAL AND COST RECOVERY SUMMARY

Mill Creek MetroParks is in a sound financial position with respect to operating revenues and expenditures, fund balance and investments in capital projects. The use of operating revenues for capital renewal and replacements demonstrated that Mill Creek MetroParks is willing to maintain the MetroParks asset to the maximum potential life.

The total revenues are consistently in excess of the operating expenditures, which indicate sound financial planning with respect to financial strength. The trend analysis in **Figure 43** shows that there is a gap between the operating revenues and expenditures, which should be corrected over the next two years. Preventative action can prohibit the cutback in quality and quantity of MetroParks programs and operations.

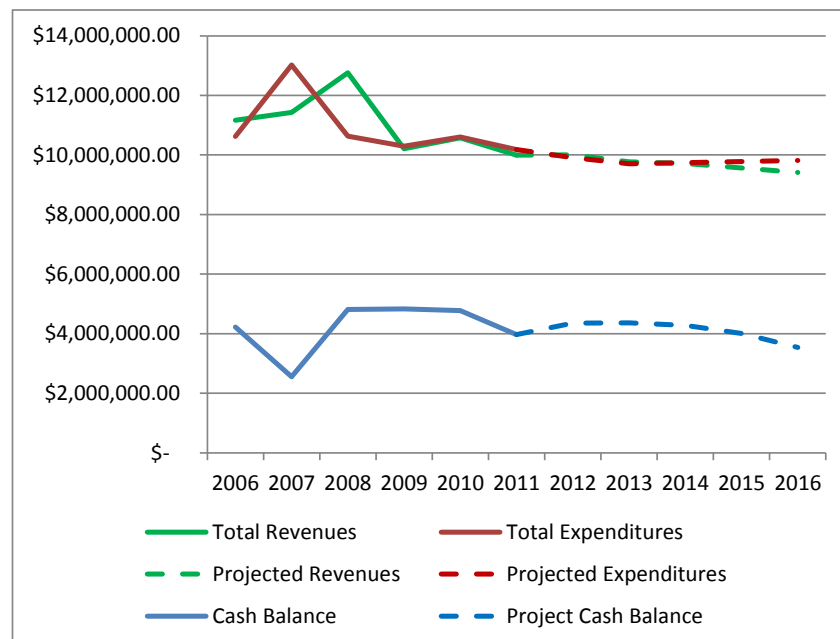


Figure 43 - Revenue, Expenditure, and Cash Balance Trend

Taxable Property Values may continue to decline for the short term, and careful planning will be required until national economy is stable. To maintain the strength of the MetroParks, PROS recommends:

- Establishment of policies to manage the overall financial planning of the MetroParks
- Annual review schedules of charges regarding programs and services for compliance with pricing policies
- Immediate planning and implementation of levy election processes

5.3.1 ECONOMIC CLIMATE

The recent significant economic changes have negatively impacted Mill Creek MetroParks' revenues. The local government fund allocations have decreased to approximately 50% of their historic amount and may possibly be eliminated by the state in future years. The potential decreases in revenues will require MetroParks to adjust pricing in order for operations and programming to continuously remain sustainable.

5.3.2 LEVY RENEWAL

Mill Creek MetroParks' levy is up for renewal in 2014. In the next twelve months, Mill Creek MetroParks needs to communicate with the electorate regarding MetroParks services and facilities to increase the community's understanding of the agency and its operations. The MetroParks should soon begin looking for an independent group outside of the agency operations to support the upcoming levy. Mill Creek MetroParks is not financially sustainable without the county levy.



CHAPTER SIX - POLICY DEVELOPMENT

Financial policies can help Mill Creek MetroParks manage limited funds and develop new sources for financial assistance. Typical financial policies include:

- Pricing Policies
- Sponsorship Policy
- Partnership Policy
- Volunteer Policy

6.1 PRICING POLICIES

Mill Creek MetroParks does not have a written and adopted pricing policy to guide the establishment of fees and charges. A Pricing Policy provides a philosophical framework for setting fees and charges, defining cost categories and presenting the guidelines for subsidies. A policy provides a basis for pricing new programs and services.

6.1.1 FEES AND CHARGES GUIDELINES

The Guidelines should include age segment, exclusive use, contractual and special event pricing classifications. A pricing guideline should consider the following elements:

- Cost Recovery Goal Pricing
- Level of Exclusivity Pricing
- Age Segment Pricing
- Incentive Pricing
- Group Discounting and Packaging
- Primetime
- Non-primetime

Guidelines should include incentive pricing for programs that provide significant social benefits, group discounts and primetime / non-primetime classifications to its guidelines. Incentive pricing may also be used for new programs and services to test the program content and adequacy of the facilities. Cost recovery guides also help programmers in developing program content, number of sessions, as well as materials and supplies that may be included in the program fee.

6.1.2 PRICING POLICY PHILOSOPHY

A pricing policy provides Mill Creek MetroParks with consistent guidelines in pricing services and programs. This allows users to better understand the philosophy behind pricing a service. Furthermore, the level of service and benefits that the users receive is translated into a price that is based on a set subsidy level, or on the level of individual consumption or exclusivity that is involved outside of what a general taxpayer receives.

Cost-of-service documentation with adopted pricing policies provides the MetroParks with the tools to adjust the pricing of programs and services as operation and maintenance costs increase against a fixed tax revenue stream.

The objectives of pricing user fees are four fold:

- Equity
- Revenue production
- Efficiency
- Redistribution of income

Equity means that those who benefit from the service should pay for it; those who benefit the most should pay the most. The type of service will directly determine the cost recovery or pricing strategy to be used in pricing the park and recreation services. Public agencies offer three kinds of services:

- Public services normally have no user fee associated with their consumption. The cost for providing these services is borne from the general tax base.
- Merit services can be priced using either a partial overhead pricing strategy or a variable cost pricing strategy. Partial overhead pricing strategies recover all direct operating costs and some determined portion of fixed costs. The portion of fixed costs not covered by the price established represents the tax subsidy. Whatever the level of tax subsidy the MetroParks needs to effectively communicate the level of tax subsidy being provided by the MetroParks.
- Private parks and recreation services occur when only the user benefits, meaning most parks and recreation agencies are pricing services using a full cost recovery strategy. The price of this particular service is intended to recover all fixed and variable costs associated with the service.

Revenue production means that user fees from parks and recreation programs and activities will assist in the overall operation of the MetroParks budget. Revenue production gives the MetroParks the needed cash flow for projects not accounted for in that year's budget. It gives flexibility in providing services not normally provided through tax dollars. An example is evident in the situation of promotional dollars for programs and services; revenue production gives the MetroParks in-kind dollars for grant matches and the ability to enhance facilities.

Revenue production helps offset tax dollars spent on a specific program that, over time, has lost enthusiasm from the public, but demands more tax dollars to maintain expenses associated with a market that is losing support. An example is tennis and nature education programs; revenue dollars paid by individuals would place value on the experience that the individual is obtaining from the services provided by the MetroParks, which develops a deeper commitment to the programs that they help support.

Efficiency is maintained by the MetroParks utilizing revenue dollars because expenditures are not made unless necessary revenues are available. Priorities in management of park lands, resources and activities are clearly defined because the services provided are made priorities by direct user dollars that are associated with the activities that the public desires. Cost tracking of dollars spent for each activity is documented. Pricing can achieve six positive results:

- Reduce congestion and overcrowding
- Indicate clientele demand and support
- Increase positive consumer attitudes
- Provide encouragement to the private sector (resulting in competition and reallocation of our resources when necessary)

- Provide incentives to achieve societal goals
- Ensure stronger accountability on the agency staff and management

Redistribution of income means that the dollars associated with each activity it came from is to pay for direct costs and future improvements associated with the activity. For example, golfers pay fees for maintenance and capital improvements associated with the activity they choose to participate in.

Communication with citizens and MetroParks users is an important component of pricing with respect to quality and quantity. From the community input, the MetroParks will be able to plan to meet the needs of the community and, with adopted pricing policies, establish appropriate pricing for the levels of services desired.

PROS recommends that any program subsidy be communicated to the program participants to demonstrate the investment that the MetroParks is making in the community through the facilities and programs. This communication should include the cost of operating the program and facilities, even if the costs are not being recovered by fees and charges.

6.1.3 SCHOLARSHIP POLICY

Scholarship programs serve a very important purpose in terms of creating equity and fairness of offerings in the MetroParks. They ensure greater accessibility to all cross-sections of the community and help build a society that values the underprivileged while seeking to better the lives of others. Additionally, by having set dollar amounts, these programs offer the scholarship recipient a choice in the type of programs that they want to participate in, be it a number of individual classes or just extended camps.

To ensure the effective implementation of such a policy, it is important to have adequate representation from the required agencies including MetroParks staff (manager and field staff involved in the implementation of the policy) and the legislative liaisons involved in weighing in on the workings of the policy. The field staff must evaluate the effectiveness of the policy on a consistent basis to ensure it serves its purpose and that the eligibility criterion is fair.

Sample scholarship eligibility criteria used to identify potential recipients includes, but is not limited to:

- Youth (0-18 years)
- Seniors (PROS recommends setting the minimum age limit for this at 65 years and over)
- Submit/show proof of County residency (driver's license, utility bill, etc.)
- Submit/show proof of restricted income, which is determined by one of the pre-existing local, state and/or federal level programs
- Complete and submit scholarship application form
- Applicant must be a parent or legal guardian of recipient if under age 18 years

6.2 SPONSORSHIP POLICY

The goal of this sponsorship policy is to provide guidelines for the MetroParks to gain support from external financial resources. It will establish procedures to coordinate efforts to seek sponsorships with the corporate community, business partners and non-profit partners to enhance parks and recreations services and facilities in the MetroParks. It is designed to ensure that all marketing of sponsorships support the MetroParks' goals for services to the community and remain responsive to the public's

needs and values. This Sponsorship Policy will recognize that corporate and business sponsorships provide an effective means of generating new revenues and alternative resources to support the MetroParks' facilities and programs. The policy will ensure that the corporate, business or non-profit sponsorships will not result in any loss of MetroParks' jurisdiction or authority.

6.2.1 ISSUES ADDRESSED

- The institution of the Sponsorship Policy will establish guidelines and principles to maintain flexibility in developing mutually beneficial relationships between the MetroParks and corporate, business and non-profit sectors.
- The recognition for sponsorships must be evaluated to ensure the MetroParks is not faced with undue commercialism and is consistent with the scale of each sponsor's contribution.
- There will be restrictions on sponsors whose industries and products do not support the goals of the MetroParks on the services provided to the community and to remain responsive to the public's needs and values.

6.2.2 EXPECTED OUTCOMES AND BENEFITS

- Revenue is expected to be acquired from sources to enhance the MetroParks programs and facilities.
- Sponsorship is a way of contributing to the community while promoting the sponsor's business and brand awareness.
- A number of events, programs and amenities may take place in the community because of the sponsor's financial contribution.
- Sponsors will get a "return on sponsorship." The sponsor looks forward to the MetroParks and greater community becoming familiar with the sponsor and/or its services and becomes a customer through the partnership with the MetroParks.
- Sponsorships help to raise the awareness of the MetroParks' programs and services and maintain its image in the community.
- Events, programs, facilities and maintenance of properties and park areas will be affordable to the community because of the financial contributions that sponsors can provide to the MetroParks.

6.2.3 GUIDING PROCEDURE FOR IMPLEMENTATION AND MANAGEMENT

- The MetroParks will develop a sponsorship package at the beginning of each year that includes all events, fundraisers and other opportunities listing sponsorship levels and benefits of each.
- The MetroParks will publish its sponsorship opportunities on its website at the beginning of each calendar year.
- MetroParks will seek sponsors directly via a proposal request by staff.

6.2.4 SPONSORSHIP PRICING POLICY PROCEDURES

Once the proposals have been submitted, the staff will evaluate these proposals as outlined:

- Set objectives, baselines and articulate measurable objectives to be achieved with the sponsorship dollars.
- Know the sponsorship costs (direct/indirect) and level of cost recovery as it applies to the MetroParks.
- Create a measurement plan, determine what will be measured and what measures will be used to demonstrate the effectiveness of the sponsorship.
- Implement the measurement plan—visibility, communications and visitor behavior.
- Calculate “return on sponsorship”—analyze, communicate and revise, as needed.
- Meet with the sponsor to review the final contract and expectations with timelines to be completed.
- All promotional pieces developed by the sponsor for their involvement with the MetroParks must be approved in advance before they go public

6.2.5 EVALUATION OF THE SPONSORSHIP

Once the sponsorship effort has been completed staff will meet with the sponsor to review the results and discuss changes that need to occur if appropriate. A decision will be made regarding the support of the next sponsorship effort.

6.3 PARTNERSHIP POLICY

6.3.1 PURPOSE

This policy is designed to guide the process for the MetroParks in its desire to partner with private, non-profit, or other governmental entities for the development, design, construction and/or operation of proposed partnered recreational facilities and/or programs that may occur on MetroParks owned or leased property.

The MetroParks would like to identify for-profit, non-profit and governmental entities that are interested in proposing to collaborate with the MetroParks to develop recreational facilities and/or programs. A major component in exploring any potential partnership will be to identify additional collaborating partners that may help provide a synergistic working relationship in terms of resources, community contributions, knowledge and political sensitivity. These partnerships should be mutually beneficial for all proposing partners including the citizens of the county.

6.3.1.1 ISSUES ADDRESSED

Mill Creek MetroParks has developed partnerships over many years that have helped support the management of facilities and program services, while also providing educational and recreational opportunities for the citizens of the county. The recommended policy will promote fairness and equity within the existing and future partnerships while helping staff to take precautionary measures against what may cause conflicts internally and externally. Certain partnership principles must be adopted by the MetroParks for existing and future partnerships to work effectively. These partnership principles are as follows:

- All partnerships will require an upfront presentation to the appropriate MetroParks staff that describes the reason for creation of the partnership and establish an outcome that benefits each partner's involvement.
- All partnerships will require a working agreement with measurable outcomes that hold each partner accountable to the outcomes desired and their relationship with each other. The partnership will be evaluated on an annual basis with reports to the MetroParks Executive Director on the outcomes of the partnership and how equitable the partnership remains.
- All partnerships will track direct and indirect costs associated with the partnership investment to demonstrate the level of equity each partner is investing.
- Each partner will not treat one another as if in a client-to-client relationship, but will create a partnership culture that focuses on planning together annually or as appropriate, communicating weekly or monthly on how the partnership is functioning and annually reporting to each other's staff or owners on how well the partnership is working and the results of their efforts.
- Full disclosure by both partners to each other will be made available if/when issues arise.
- Annually informing each other's staff on the respective partner's values, yearly goals, and work plans so both are current with the finances, staffing, capital costs, political elements, or changes in operating philosophies that may affect the partnership.

6.3.1.2 EXPECTED OUTCOMES AND BENEFITS

- Increased visibility
- Increase in services and programs
- Tax dollars spent on services are maximized through collaboration
- Public believes in and supports the role of the MetroParks partnerships
- Promotes a positive image
- Public involvement enriches their understanding of the MetroParks
- An engaged public enhances current and future development of programs and facilities
- Provide alternatives for manpower, recreation sites, financial resources, supplies, materials, and other aspects for a more comprehensive system
- Shared vision and goals
- Allow for the opportunity to make a vision a reality
- Reach more people, provide more services, reduce expenditures and generate more revenue
- Eliminates duplication of efforts, strengthen communities and achieve greater outcomes

6.3.1.3 GUIDING PROCEDURES

Public/Public Partnerships

The policy for public/public partnerships is with the MetroParks is based on previous and current collaborations with cities, townships, schools and other municipal services in the area. Principles on the development, sharing and/or operating parks and recreation facilities and programs are as follows:

- Each partner will meet with the Board of Park Commissioners and staff annually to plan and share activity-based costs and equity invested by each partner in the partnership.
- Partners will establish measurable outcomes and work through key issues for each partner to focus on in the coming year in order to meet desired outcomes.
- Each partner will work to meet a balance of 50% equity for each agreed-to partnership and track investment costs accordingly.
- Each partner will assign a liaison to serve each partnership agency for communication and planning purposes.
- Measurable outcomes will be reviewed quarterly and shared with each partner, making adjustments as needed.
- Each partner will act as an agent for the other partner, thinking collectively as one, not two separate agencies, for purposes of the agreement.
- Each partner will meet with the other partner's respective director or owner annually to share results of the partnership agreement.
- A working partnership agreement will be developed and monitored together on a quarterly or as-needed basis.
- If conflicts arise between partners, the Director or President of the Board of Park Commissioners along with the other public agency's highest ranking officer will meet to resolve the partnership issue. It should be resolved at the highest level or the partnership will be dissolved.
- No exchange of money between partners will be made until the end of the determined partnership year. A running credit will be established that can be settled at the end of the planning year with one check or will be carried over to the following year as a credit with adjustments made to the working agreement to meet the 50% equity level desired.

Public/Non-Profit Partnerships

The partnership policy for public/non-profit partnerships with the MetroParks and the non-profit community of service providers is seen in associations working together in the development and management of facilities and programs within the MetroParks. These principles are as follows:

- The non-profit partner, agency or group involved with the MetroParks must first recognize that they are in a partnership with the MetroParks to provide a public service or product; conversely, the MetroParks must manage the partnership in the best interest of the community as a whole, not in the best interest of the non-profit agency.
- The partnership working agreement will be year-to-year and evaluated based on the outcomes determined by the partnership agencies or groups during the planning process at the start of the partnership year. At the planning workshop, each partner will share their needs for the partnership and desired outcomes. Each partner will outline their level of investment in the partnership as it applies to money, people, time, equipment and the amount of capital investment they will make in the partnership for the coming year.
- Each partner will focus on meeting a balance of 50% equity or as negotiated and agreed upon as established in the planning session with the MetroParks. Each partner will demonstrate to the

other the method each will use to track costs, how it will be reported on a monthly basis and any revenue earned.

- Each partner will appoint a liaison to serve each partnering agency for communication purposes.
- Measurable outcomes will be reviewed quarterly and shared with each partner with adjustments made, as needed.
- Each partner will act as an agent for the other partner to think collectively as one, not two separate agencies. Items, such as financial information, will be shared if requested by either partner when requested to support a better understanding of the resources available to the partnership.
- Each partner will meet the other's respective Board on a yearly basis to share results of the partnership agreement.
- If conflicts should arise during the partnership year, Mill Creek MetroParks' Executive Director and the highest-ranking officer of the non-profit agency will meet to resolve the issue.
- It should be resolved at this level, or the partnership will be dissolved. No other course of action will be allowed by either partner.
- Financial payments by the non-profit agency will be made monthly to the MetroParks as outlined in the working agreement to meet the 50% equity level of the partnership.

Public/Private Partnerships

The policy for public/private partnerships is relevant to the MetroParks and includes businesses, private groups, private associations or individuals who desires to make a profit from use of MetroParks facilities or programs. It would also be evident if the business, group, association or individual wishes to develop a facility on park property to provide a service on MetroParks owned property, or who has a contract with the MetroParks to provide a task or service on MetroParks owned facilities. The partnership principles are as follows:

- Upon entering into an agreement with a private business, group, association or individual, the Board of Park Commissioners and staff must recognize that they must allow that entity to make a profit.
- In developing a public/private partnership, the Board of Park Commissioners and staff, as well as the private partner, will enjoy a designated fee from the contracting agency or a designated fee plus a percentage of gross dollars less sales tax on a monthly, quarterly or yearly basis, as outlined in the contract agreement.
- In developing a public/private partnership, the Board of Park Commissioners and staff, as well as contracted partners, will establish a set of measurable outcomes to be achieved. A tracking method of those outcomes will be established and monitored by staff and the Board. The outcomes will include standards of quality, financial reports, customer satisfaction, payments to the MetroParks and overall coordination with the MetroParks for the services rendered.
- Depending on the level of investment made by the private contractor, the partnership agreement can be limited to months, a year or multiple years.
- The private contractor will annually provide a working management plan to be followed to ensure the outcomes desired by the Board of Park Commissioners and staff, as well as to

achieve the goals of the partnership set out in the partnership recital. The work management plan can and will be negotiated, if necessary. Monitoring of the work management plan will be the responsibility of both partners. The Board and staff must allow the contractor to operate freely in their best interest as long as the outcomes are achieved.

- Mill Creek MetroParks has the right to advertise for private contracted partnership services or negotiate on an individual basis with a bid process based on the professional level of the service to be provided.
- If conflicts arise between both partners, Mill Creek MetroParks' Executive Director and the highest ranked officer from the other partnership will try to resolve the issue before going to each partner's legal councils. If a resolution cannot be achieved, the partnership shall be dissolved.

6.4 VOLUNTEER POLICY

6.4.1 PURPOSE

The purpose of the Volunteer Program is to offer opportunities for residents, organizations and friends of the MetroParks to volunteer their skills and time through meaningful work that advances the ongoing programs.

The purpose of the proposed Volunteer Policies is to support the Volunteer Program with guidance, structure and direction for staff and volunteers in the areas of:

- Rights and responsibilities of individual volunteers
- Staff planning and volunteer training for meaningful work
- Personnel practices affecting volunteers

The MetroParks may recommend guidelines and procedures that further support the Volunteer Program. Examples of possible guidelines and procedures are given at the end of this policy document. The MetroParks may also develop a Volunteer Manual or Handbook to be provided to each volunteer.

Volunteer recruitment and retention must be addressed through creative procedures, which are of the utmost importance. Such procedures will be developed by staff, based on consultation with experienced volunteer coordinators in other similar organizations.

6.4.2 ISSUES ADDRESSED

The adoption of volunteer policies will address the following issues:

- Indicate the importance of the Volunteer Program and individual volunteers within the MetroParks
- Bring increased structure and predictability into the management of volunteers
- Require improved planning for volunteer activities and training for volunteers within the ongoing programs of the MetroParks
- Avoid misunderstandings and mistakes regarding volunteer personnel practices, especially with an increasing number of volunteers
- Development of advocacy to support MetroParks' role and focus in the delivery of service

6.4.3 EXPECTED BENEFITS AND OUTCOMES

- A commitment by the MetroParks to its Volunteer Program will yield increased volunteer accomplishments of necessary parks and recreation projects for which funding are not available.
- A business-like approach to volunteer management will increase volunteer participation and satisfaction.
- Communication of adopted volunteer personnel policies will assure volunteers receive fair treatment while performing tasks.
- Well-planned volunteer projects, combined with the necessary volunteer training, will generate increased motivation and greater contribution of time and skills.
- Park advocacy among volunteers will increase as a natural outcome of the volunteer experience.
- Stewardship volunteers will gain understanding and experience useful in communicating and demonstrating the importance of land stewardship to others in the community.

6.4.4 VOLUNTEER PROGRAM POLICIES

These policies are organized within the following sections:

- Rights and Responsibilities of Individual Volunteers
- Volunteer Training and Safety
- Personnel Practices Affecting Volunteers

6.4.5 EXAMPLES OF VOLUNTEER PROGRAM GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES

Our goals are to provide volunteers with:

- Meaningful service to the community
- Assignment to a supportive, respectful work team
- Exchange of ideas with professionals in the field
- Understanding of agency operations
- The MetroParks seeks to match volunteers with the type of work that most interests the individual volunteer.
- The MetroParks must strive to provide each volunteer with a well-rounded, “hands on” experience that includes meaningful and rewarding work.
- Volunteers are encouraged to develop their skills while serving with the MetroParks and to assume additional responsibilities.
- The MetroParks and the volunteer may maintain appropriate records of volunteer experience that would assist the volunteer in future career opportunities.

6.4.6 VOLUNTEER JOBS AVAILABLE IN THE METROPARKS

The following volunteer jobs are available in the MetroParks. Job descriptions will be made available when a volunteer registers for a job with the MetroParks. Three levels of volunteer jobs will be made available to a volunteer. These include:

- Short term Volunteers who work a single event, program or daily project
- Operational Volunteers who support staff on a weekly basis up to ten hours a week
- Advocate Volunteers who work year round in a host of jobs up to forty hours a week



CHAPTER SEVEN - IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

7.1 VISION

The following vision presents how Mill Creek MetroParks desires to be viewed in the future:

“Mill Creek MetroParks will be the community leader in Mahoning County for providing places of inspiration and enjoyment in parks, recreation and educational services that enriches and fulfills the quality of life of our present and future generations in a fiscally responsible manner.”

7.2 MISSION

The following is the mission for Mill Creek MetroParks regarding how they will implement the vision:

“The mission of Mill Creek MetroParks is to provide park, recreational, and open space facilities of regional significance. In fulfilling this mission our objectives are:

- To be responsive to community needs
- To be environmentally sound
- To be adaptable
- To be economically responsible

7.3 COMMUNITY VISION FOR FELLOWS RIVERSIDE GARDENS

“Our vision for Fellows Riverside Gardens is to be the premier public garden attraction in the region.”

7.3.1 GOAL

Fellows Riverside Gardens will provide the Mahoning County community the highest level collection of quality plants, gardens and educational services that creates community pride as a valued public asset while connecting people with plants.

7.3.1.1 STRATEGIES AND TACTICS

- Create a business plan for Fellows Riverside Gardens that will define the core services within the complex to manage and operate services that maximize efficiency and revenue
 - Determine each core service within the complex and define what level of cost recovery each service provides to the operating budget; develop a cost of service model for Fellows Riverside Gardens for each service and task provided and implement it as part of the Business Plan
 - Determine where existing programs are in their lifecycle and what programs can be added to keep Fellows Riverside Gardens viable and productive
 - Determine the next core service for the Fellows Riverside Gardens complex
 - Determine the optimum staffing requirements that incorporates the most qualified person for the job to receive the correct pay when working toward the desired outcome
- Better coordination of fundraising between the Friends of Fellows Riverside Gardens and the Mill Creek Park Foundation is required so the roles of each group are clear to eliminate competition for community resources

- Meet with the Mill Creek Park Foundation Board and Friends of Fellows Riverside Gardens to discuss fundraising strategies for each group and to coordinate contacts and strategies on personal and business levels between both groups
- Develop a gift giving strategy for the Friends of Fellows Riverside Gardens for the next five years
- Develop a coordinated campaign between both groups so as to not duplicate efforts, but complement and report to each other how the partnership is functioning
- Enhance the program plan for Fellows Riverside Gardens into other areas of the MetroParks and County to increase awareness and attention to the quality of the services provided
 - Work closely with the Recreation Department in determining where Fellows Riverside Gardens programs could be developed in an outreach manner at other regional parks or educational facilities to grow the awareness and audience of the value that Fellows Riverside Gardens provides to the region
 - Enhance the efforts to communicate programs and events at Fellows Riverside Gardens through staff meetings with the Executive Director and other Department Heads
 - Determine target audiences, what age segments are involved or missing and what area of the County visitors are coming from to develop a comprehensive program plan to serve areas of the County not served by the services provided by Fellows Riverside Gardens
 - Utilize part-time staff to perform outreach education programs in other parts of the County
 - Seek partners who can help promote and finance outreach programs in underserved areas of the County that need the services provided by Fellows Riverside Gardens; develop a consistent pricing approach to program services between the Recreation Department and Fellows Riverside Gardens
- Extend the operational and leadership management of the Horticulture Director and staff throughout the MetroParks, especially in quality control, program development, maintenance management, business and volunteer support
 - Develop a management guide with the Executive Director and the Horticulture Director on key management principles that can be applied to other elements of Mill Creek MetroParks that include the Farm, Nature Center, Golf Course and Regional Parks to grow the business management elements performed at Fellow Riverside Gardens across the MetroParks; areas of focus should include:
 - Program management
 - Marketing
 - Fundraising
 - Development of program standards
 - Pricing of services
 - Customer service

- Performance measures
 - Create a Management Training program for staff interested in furthering their profession on how to improve their management skills to maximize the value of the facilities owned and operated by the MetroParks
 - Develop performance measures to demonstrate effective management for staff to follow and incorporate into their daily operations, which include internal and external measures
- Develop a Marketing Plan for Fellows Riverside Gardens and tie it to the MetroParks' overall Marketing Plan for consistency and branding purposes
 - Work jointly with the Marketing Department to establish a MetroParks Marketing Plan with a mini Marketing Plan for Fellows Riverside Gardens
 - Determine key branding messages that are tied to programs and special events held at Fellows Riverside Gardens
 - Develop a marketing budget for Fellows Riverside Gardens with a goal of \$7 return on investment from programs, membership sales and special events for every \$1 spent
- Continue to cultivate the successful volunteer program at Fellows Riverside Gardens and work jointly with other staff in the MetroParks to develop a volunteer MetroParks - wide program that is consistent in celebrating the role of volunteers in MetroParks
 - Develop a volunteer manual for the MetroParks and Fellows Riverside Gardens
 - Develop a Recruitment and Training program for the MetroParks and Fellows Riverside Gardens that is consistent across the agency
 - Track volunteer hours and performance with time to be used as in-kind support for grants



- Develop a staffing succession plan for Fellows Riverside Gardens to retain knowledge with existing staff
 - Establish which positions need to be evaluated for succession planning
 - Determine what elements of those positions that need to be captured in video and in planning work for the future
 - Determine how staff will be evaluated for future positions that could be offered to existing staff and what training requirements are needed to have a smooth transition when key personal retire
- Continue to upgrade Fellows Riverside Gardens and develop a priority list of capital improvements
 - Determine the asset lifecycle of each element of Fellows Riverside Gardens and determine a replacement schedule
 - Determine the lifecycle of the horticulture plants in the gardens and a plant replacement schedule
 - Determine a return on investment for each capital improvement and prioritize within the MetroParks' overall capital improvement needs
 - Determine a funding source for capital improvements including the establishment of a Maintenance Endowment Reserve Fund and a future Capital Campaign

7.4 COMMUNITY VISION FOR PARK POLICE

“Our vision for the MetroParks Police is to provide users and visitors with a safe environment to enjoy their recreation and leisure pursuits that increase their sense of safety so they can appreciate and value the time they spend in Mill Creek MetroParks.”

7.4.1 GOAL

Teach users and visitors how to enjoy Mill Creek MetroParks through positive enforcement of MetroParks rules and regulations.

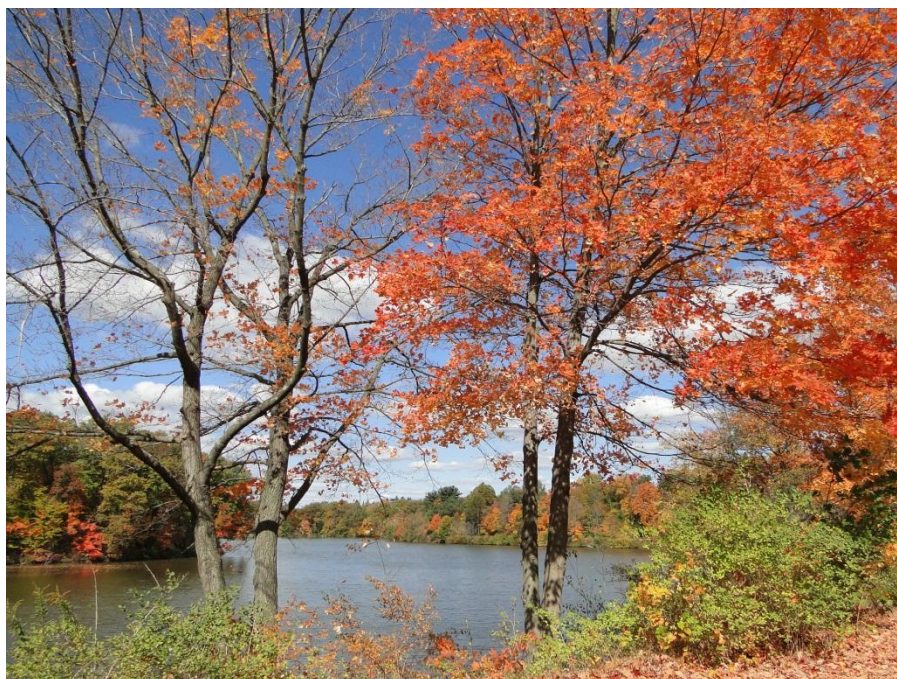
7.4.1.1 STRATEGIES AND TACTICS

- Develop a balance between law enforcement and interpretation with a clear philosophy developed on how to manage toward a set of outcomes
 - Work with the Executive Director and the Board of Park Commissioners on developing the law enforcement philosophy and establish performance indicators that demonstrate that that philosophy is in place and working
 - Determine how much time will be committed to law enforcement and interpretation with each staff person in the MetroParks Police Department
 - Develop a training program for interpretation to equal the level received in law enforcement

- Utilize Volunteer Park Police or Rangers to assist MetroParks Police with easier job tasks; this will allow the full-time MetroParks Police to use their important skill/job demands and training in a more meaningful manner
 - Establish a MetroParks Police/Ranger volunteer auxiliary to assist the MetroParks Police in their work; hire a part-time person to train in both MetroParks Police and MetroParks interpretation work
 - Establish volunteer MetroParks Police/Ranger job descriptions for tasks that will be assigned to them; work with the rest of the MetroParks staff on the kinds of duties that they would like the park volunteer police to provide for them
 - Track hours and reward volunteers for their efforts publically and in front of the Board of Park Commissioners
- The MetroParks Police need to approach their work from a “MetroParks first” and “Police Department second” when developing their work plans for the Department
 - Determine with the Executive Director what is most important and prioritize their work plans to reflect that importance
 - Demonstrate and communicate this management philosophy in staff meetings and in development of weekly work plans
 - The MetroParks Police will be an ambassador to inform users of available MetroParks services and programs to enhance the user experience
- Upgrade technology for the MetroParks Police
 - Determine the most effective technology that is needed for the MetroParks Police and demonstrate the cost benefit to acquire it through the budget process or through the Mill Creek Park Foundation; develop a technology plan for the Department in coordination with the rest of MetroParks
 - Train staff on the new technology and demonstrate the results of the technology on daily management practices
 - Determine if the MetroParks can acquire second-hand refurbished technology systems from the provider at a cost savings rate
- The MetroParks Police and the Planning Department need to work together on a new signage plan for the MetroParks
 - The MetroParks Police will establish the location of every safety sign in the MetroParks and the message, as well as provide this information to the Planning Department
 - Make sure all signs are proactive versus negative and seek municipal judge support to enforce the rules and regulations of the sign in a citation or ticket
 - Determine park locations for GPS signs so users of the park can utilize GPS if needed to navigate the MetroParks

- Establish at least three internal performance measures and three external performance measures for the MetroParks Police Department
 - The internal performance measures will focus on staff productivity, efficiency of use of vehicles and equipment and how to financially manage the Department
 - The external performance measures will focus on customer service levels obtained from officer contact with the community, how well they use volunteers in supporting their work needs and, lastly, how well they partner with other safety agencies and with the other departments on outreach programs
 - Post results of work on a quarterly basis
- Work with the Planning Department in making trail safety a priority
 - Work closely with the Planning Department in determining where trail improvements need to be made to allow users to feel safe on the trails
 - Inform users where trails may be less safe and direct them to other areas of the MetroParks
 - Mark trails by level of difficulty and safety, as well as by trail name
- Establish the core services for the-MetroParks Police Department and develop a management strategy for each core service area regarding what needs to be accomplished
 - With the Executive Director, determine the core services of the MetroParks Police Department that could include:
 - Park road enforcement
 - Park vandalism investigation
 - Park interpretation
 - Trail monitoring
 - Signage management
 - Visitor safety
 - Event management
 - Develop a management plan for each core service area and establish standards on how to manage the service beyond what is required from a law enforcement perspective
 - Train staff on each core service standard, the expectation and track and communicate results
- Provide the Executive Director monthly work plans with anticipated outcomes to be accomplished
 - The Chief of Park Police will provide monthly work plans that focus on key outcomes to be achieved over the month and how well the MetroParks Police achieved their results from the previous month's work
 - Work plans should incorporate addressing recommendations outlined in the Strategic Master Plan

- Performance measure indicators should be provided every three months as part of the reporting process
- Establish five or six key programs for the MetroParks Police Department to manage and coordinate with the Recreation Department
 - Work jointly with the Recreation Department on interpretive programs that can be incorporated into the system as part of MetroParks Police duties; these programs need to be coordinated and planned with the Marketing Department
 - Programs should focus on youth and young adults providing guidance regarding safe and effective use of the park
 - One of the programs should incorporate a MetroParks Police special event
- Develop CPTED Standards with the Planning Department and apply it to MetroParks Maintenance staff duties on existing parks and park upgrades
 - Determine what CPTED Standards are acceptable for parks in the MetroParks
 - Determine the appropriate manner to implement these standards into park maintenance practices
 - Track crime results in parks due to the design and maintenance changes
- Establish a lifecycle replacement schedule for MetroParks Police vehicles and a dedicated funding source
 - Determine the lifecycle schedule the MetroParks can afford and determine a funding program to achieve it
 - Budget and replace as scheduled per Board of Park Commissioners approval
 - Determine efficiency opportunities that can be established for MetroParks vehicles



7.5 COMMUNITY VISION FOR PARK PLANNING

“Our vision for the Planning Department is to provide planning services that enhances the user experience, provides long term efficiency in park design to offset park maintenance costs, and creates operational revenue to support capital and operational budgets.”

7.5.1 GOAL

Update one Park Master Plan on a yearly basis that addresses design efficiency, enhances user experience and increases operating revenue where appropriate.

7.5.1.1 STRATEGIES AND TACTICS

- Trail enhancement needs to be made a priority; upgrade a percentage of trails annually
 - Establish which trails need to be updated for safety and user needs in the MetroParks and prioritize these trails
 - Develop a trail committee made up of the Planning Department, Recreation Department, MetroParks Police, and Park Maintenance to work jointly on new trail locations, needed improvements, prioritize how capital money should be spent and establish maintenance standards for trails
 - Determine funding options that are available via grants, operating taxes or capital improvement tax levy
 - Incorporate key desires from the trail survey completed by Youngstown State University, determine the cost and how to fund those user needs
 - Work with the Executive Director to have an enhanced trail development crew to move trail development and management to a higher level of priority
- Identify a dedicated funding source for trail enhancements
 - Work with the Executive Director on establishing a dedicated funding source that can be applied to trails
 - Seek new revenue sources outside of grants to fund trails
 - Find new matching money for trail grants via a Greenways and Trails Foundation
- Project schedules need to be clearly communicated quarterly with a timeline and budget update
 - Capital improvements outlined for implementation need to have a schedule that is updated on a monthly basis
 - True costs associated with planning need to be added to the total cost of the project
 - Maintenance costs for new or updated improvements need to be established before the project begins so operational budgets are secure to support the improvement
 - Determine the most cost effective way to implement capital improvements

- Establish capital improvement criteria to determine the cost benefit of each improvement
 - Work with the Executive Director to determine a capital improvement cost benefit criteria for each improvement in the MetroParks
 - Rank the improvements desired and develop and report on the results using the criteria
 - Restructure priorities on capital improvements based on the results of the criteria and implement based on the level of money available
- Improve technology within the Department
 - Determine what technology is needed for the Department and develop a priority plan for acquisition, including a cost benefit approach for each purchase
 - Identify the technology maintenance staff require to support their needs in the field
 - Develop a training program for each staff person using the data in the Department and teach other departments on how to read and use the data collected
 - Update existing hardware within the Department to support software needs of the Department and the MetroParks
- Establish the asset value of the MetroParks less land value to determine the proper level of capital improvement needed for budgeting purposes
 - Determine existing asset value of the MetroParks and where each asset is in its lifecycle
 - Determine what level of investment the MetroParks is making to protect these assets and how underfunded the MetroParks is in meeting at least 3% of the asset value
 - Determine funding requirements needed on a yearly basis to support the assets for the MetroParks for the future, including all maintenance costs
- Develop a capital improvements schedule Executive Director
 - Meet with the Executive Director and outline the capital improvement plan based on lifecycle and funding options
 - Develop an Asset Management Plan
 - Seek outside funding sources to support the future capital improvement needs of the MetroParks
 - Create design principles to create revenue opportunities for the MetroParks to offset operational costs; the goal is to match program needs with capital needs where appropriate
- Determine the historic elements of the MetroParks that need to be protected and repaired
 - Determine elements of the MetroParks that are historic and need to protected and invested in for the future
 - Seek community support for investing in the historic infrastructure of the MetroParks in the form of a separate capital levy
 - Prioritize the improvements and build a regional campaign with key funders in the community to invest in the improvements needed

- Develop quarterly work plans with the Executive Director and include outcomes to be achieved for planning and park maintenance
 - Work plans should be focused on planning and maintenance efforts and how well these efforts are being accomplished
 - Performance outcomes should be stated that were achieved for planning and maintenance
 - Timelines need to be updated on a quarterly basis
- Develop a Natural Resource Plan
 - Inventory all natural areas and provide an assessment of the quality of the resource within the MetroParks
 - Determine areas that need to be enhanced and determine the approach to improve the quality of the resource and the money needed to make the improvements
 - Seek volunteers to improve the areas and document the results of the changes that occurred for each site
- Develop new amenities to attract young professionals to live in the area; utilize the citizen survey results in determining what these amenity needs are and prioritize them within the MetroParks
 - Evaluate cross tabs within the survey and review focus group and public input to determine what young adults desire in the MetroParks in the way of amenities
 - With the Recreation Department, determine locations providing the best opportunity for amenities that may include a dog park, disc golf course, mountain biking area, zip line canopy course, ultimate disc area or other recreational amenities
 - Continue to survey young adults and study the trends in the market for amenities most desired
- Develop performance indicators for the Planning Department such as: cost per project against budget, timelines met, cost overrun, square foot cost, per acre development cost, grant dollars received, cost per acre to maintain a park, a mile of trail, a park amenity or square foot of space
 - Develop a cost of service model for the Department to track costs
 - Insert all costs, direct and indirect, into the model and determine unit costs to operate and maintain the MetroParks
 - Develop efficiency changes or revenue opportunities to offset the costs
- Identify and utilize a land acquisition criteria throughout the MetroParks for obtaining land
 - Evaluate current land acquisition policy and determine best practices in the country for acquiring park land
 - Determine areas of Mahoning County that are underserved by the MetroParks and the types of amenities missing in the area
 - Determine linkages and connection opportunities for trails and parks in the MetroParks

- Improve signage in the MetroParks that include GPS locators
 - Work jointly with the MetroParks Police and the Recreation Department to determine the most efficient locations for GPS posts in the MetroParks
 - Number and sign accordingly and provide updated maps that include road names, GPS posts and trail names
 - Develop a GPS App for the MetroParks and allow users to access the App
- Develop a maintenance management plan to properly articulate the standards needed and the time to perform toward a desired standard, including equipment costs
 - Determine each task and frequency performed in the MetroParks; document the current standard and desired standard to be achieved
 - Match equipment needs with work crews to achieve the most efficient operations possible
- Evaluate the opportunity to put all park maintenance in one department
 - Determine the value of a park maintenance department within the MetroParks
 - Evaluate the pros and cons of a move and the changes required, including financial implications
 - Determine the total maintenance requirements and the cost to service the entire MetroParks



7.6 COMMUNITY VISION FOR RECREATION AND EDUCATION SERVICES

“Our vision for Recreation and Education Services is to provide opportunities for people of all ages to learn of about nature, agriculture, the environment, plants, gardening and wellness through various recreation programs provided by all sections within the Department.”

7.6.1 GOAL

The goal for Recreation and Education Services is to be considered a learning organization through effective and relevant programs that inspire users to learn more about the resources MetroParks provides to the community and benefits they can gain from those learning programs and services.

7.6.1.1 STRATEGIES AND TACTICS

- Clearly establish the core essential, important and value added services for the Recreation and Education Department and how each service will be managed in the future
 - Work with staff to determine the criteria for core essential, important and value added services
 - Determine the changes that need to be made in each service to meet the classification based on the public and private value of the service
 - Price services accordingly based on classification and the level of public and private value each service provides
- Create a clear pricing philosophy and a cost recovery goal by program and facility
 - Determine the true cost, both direct and indirect, to provide the service and the current level of tax subsidy received
 - Based on its level of cost recovery, determine the level it should be and present to the Board of Park Commissioners a pricing policy to address any changes needed or desired
 - Develop a timeline for when the service should be changed to meet the value desired and determine the cost changes or pricing changes to support the level of service
 - Create a communication plan for the users of the MetroParks to convey any changes to the program or the price based on the new classification system
- Develop program standards for all desired programs
 - All educational and recreational programs need to have program standards on program delivery for each age segment in the MetroParks
 - Determine the current standards in place and make changes to all educational and recreation programs to institutionalize these standards into daily operations to provide consistency across the MetroParks
 - Develop performance measures for these standards via post evaluations, trailer calls and user surveys to determine how well the standard is being met in the MetroParks
 - Determine the amount of programs that should be provided for each attraction in the MetroParks to support a user base to help offset the cost of the facility

- Prioritize and update data on all programs provided and develop a user base to market toward across the MetroParks
 - Evaluate the current data that is kept by each education or program area in the MetroParks
 - Determine the steps to integrate this data into one data base
 - Determine the type of registration permit system needed in the future to support program and educational services that can track information in one location
 - Cross market education and recreation programs and services with other services provided in the MetroParks, such as services at Fellows Riverside Gardens
- Establish the market definition to determine how much of the market each program area controls in the region, how much price elasticity is in the market and the total size of the market
 - Determine regional service providers in agriculture, nature education, outdoor recreation, horticulture programs, wellness and fitness, golf services and outdoor recreation
 - Evaluate the value of the programs provided elsewhere and the level of fees charged for similar services
 - Evaluate the benefits of each program provided by the MetroParks and how to communicate these benefits to the public
 - Determine the age segments in the market that are currently not served by the MetroParks and how to capture this underserved market
- Create new programs utilizing the results of the citizen survey
 - Determine the core programs based on the citizen survey completed as part of the Strategic Master Plan process
 - Break out programs by age segment and other service providers of programs in the market place
 - Develop a program plan for all attractions in the MetroParks
- Establish staffing qualifications for all positions
 - Update all educational and recreational job descriptions to reflect the need in the position for the future
 - Train staff on lacking educational elements to help staff achieve success in the areas they are responsible for to maximize the productivity and talent in the MetroParks
 - Recruit part-time and seasonal staff to fill program needs at various educational and recreational facilities in the MetroParks

- Make earned income development a priority
 - Evaluate all earned income opportunities in the MetroParks that could be created to help offset operational costs
 - Determine implementation of the earned income opportunities within the MetroParks
 - Seek approval of the Board of Park Commissioners of an Earned Income Policy and assign staff to each funding option that could be developed to help offset operational costs
- Improve marketing and communication between educational and recreational programs in the MetroParks
 - Coordinate on social networks to build a stronger program base
 - Increase the use of technology in program registration to cross promote other services provided by the MetroParks, especially for Farm and Nature Education Programs
 - Develop quarterly or yearly themes to build on for educational and recreational services provided
- Establish performance measures for the Recreation Department
 - Determine three performance measures that focus on efficiency, such as level of capacity, staff productivity and cost per experience
 - Determine three performance measures the focus on revenue development, such as how close to revenue targets each program or educational service is to the goal, what new earned income opportunities have been created to help offset operational costs or the amount of volunteer hours used to support staffing needs
 - Track and report how well each performance indicator is achieving on a quarterly basis
- Establish new program policies for pricing, earned income development, sponsorships, partnerships and volunteerism
 - Develop or update these policies and seek approval of the Board of Park Commissioners
 - Implement the policies over a two year period
 - Communicate the policies effectively within the system to the users, partners and volunteers
- Coordinate volunteer development with Fellows Riverside Gardens staff for consistency
 - Work with the part-time volunteer coordinator in developing a volunteer manual
 - Work with the volunteer coordinator in developing job descriptions for volunteers who work in the recreation and education areas of the MetroParks
 - Track volunteer hours to be used as in-kind support for grant application

- Create weekly or monthly work plans for the Recreation Manager and staff within the Recreation Department
 - Develop work plans that are outcome driven for all staff within the Department
 - Evaluate on a monthly and quarterly basis how well the work plans were completed and the outcomes achieved
 - Report to the Executive Director and the Board of Park Commissioners the results of the work completed
- Enhance the organizational structure of the Recreation Department
 - Evaluate the functionality and workload requirements of the Department and make changes as needed
 - Determine how to match programs with facilities to achieve the highest level of use for the value of the asset
 - Utilize part-time or seasonal staff to achieve the outcomes desired
- Create business plans for the Nature Center, Farm and key program areas
 - Prioritize the programs and facilities in need of a business plan to achieve the outcomes desired
 - Train staff on the elements of the business plan and how to manage toward it
 - Demonstrate the results of the outcomes achieved from the business planning efforts
 - Track the lifecycle management of programs within the business plan process and at least 20% of the programs should be new each year
 - Develop business plans for core programs to include special events, nature education, Farm, summer camps, outdoor recreation programs, and historical programs; also, consider adding new core programs in health and wellness, edge sports, family Programs, eighteen to thirty-five year old programs, and volunteer development
- Complete performance reviews for staff in the Recreation Department and establish measurable outcomes to be achieved in the upcoming year
 - All staff, including full-time, part-time and seasonal staff, should have a yearly evaluation at minimum
 - Determine expectations and outcomes desired from each position and document the results

7.7 COMMUNITY VISION FOR MARKETING

“Our vision for the Marketing Department is to enhance the opportunities and build awareness within Mahoning County for the programs, services and MetroParks-related opportunities available to maximize their use, revenue capability and appreciation in the community.”

7.7.1 GOAL

To support the parks, facilities, programs and services through effective marketing and communication efforts that builds awareness, appreciation and financial support for the MetroParks now and the future.

7.7.1.1 STRATEGIES AND TACTICS

- Develop a Marketing/Business Plan for the MetroParks that includes: Image plan, Communications plan, Pricing plan, Research planning, Fundraising, Graphics, Social Media, Branding, Levy strategy, Program guide and Benchmarking, as well as other levy strategies other agencies have used
 - Work with each Department and the Executive Director in creating the Marketing/Business Plan that incorporates their needs in the document and establishes measurable outcomes to be achieved
 - Develop a funding mechanism to implement the Marketing Plan and set measureable outcomes to be achieved from its implementation efforts
 - Incorporate best practices principles in marketing and communication using all appropriate media outlets, training staff in marketing principles, implementation of those principles and incorporating a comprehensive approach to support parks, facilities and programs within the MetroParks
- Create a Fundraising Plan for the MetroParks that includes the Friends of Fellows Riverside Gardens
 - Develop a fundraising plan and matrix on the elements the MetroParks needs outside funding as it applies to capital improvements and program services
 - Identify past donors and their level of giving, as well as how to continue to seek their financial gifts to the MetroParks
 - Identity new donors by researching their past giving and develop a case plan to approach them for giving to the MetroParks
 - Establish a strategy for accessing grants for Marketing efforts
 - Capture contact information of MetroParks users at all events and programs to develop a comprehensive fundraising database for solicitation.
- Develop a Style Handbook for all marketing material
 - Work with staff on the development of a style handbook and train staff how to use it in developing communication documents for the facilities, programs and services
 - Update the Style Handbook every three years to keep the Mill Creek MetroParks image fresh

- Seek public input on marketing and communication efforts and ways they would like to see changes to the Department's marketing output
- Define one logo and brand for the MetroParks
 - Determine which logo will be used for Mill Creek MetroParks and change out the old logo where it is still present
 - Develop a brand for the MetroParks and key attractions within the MetroParks to strengthen awareness of the attraction, i.e. Fellows Riverside Gardens, Mill Creek Golf Course, MetroParks Farm, Ford Nature Center and Mill Creek Park
 - Develop a brand campaign and seek Board of Commissioners approval of the campaign
 - Articulate the Vision and Mission of the MetroParks as part of the marketing and branding plan
 - Establish internal communication guidelines and standards so all communication is conducted in a professional and consistent manner.
 - Establish consistency in the manner phones are answered
 - Create a policy for handling email communications – signature lines, out of office standards, etc.
- Establish a community input results database for survey results, focus group meetings, program assessments, on-site surveys and public meetings to draw on issues, service needs and opportunities to improve meeting public needs
 - Establish a network location for accessing the information
 - Discuss results with staff and determine areas for improvement
 - Track and resurvey every three years on how well MetroParks is meeting the community's needs
- Create an annual MetroParks-wide promotion that is interactive and designed to draw new visitors into the MetroParks
 - Determine what users think are the best locations in the parks for various experiences that could include: best location for seeing a sunrise or sunset, best running trail, best special event the MetroParks offers, best natural walking trail, best place to see a water fall, best playground in the MetroParks, best golf hole, best place to view nature, etc.
 - Promote this event in the program guide and in local publications and measure the impact on visitation
 - Develop an annual campaign of the "Best of Mill Creek MetroParks"
- Enhance the Signage Program throughout the MetroParks
 - Work jointly with the Planning, MetroParks Police and the Recreation Departments to improve way-finding signs in the parks
 - Develop a consistent entrance sign for all parks in the MetroParks
 - Develop a color scheme that attracts attention to the sign

- Create a balance between informational marketing and inspirational marketing
 - Determine what informational marketing and inspirational marketing are through existing publications
 - Determine the types of inspirational marketing that can be developed
 - Launch a campaign to support efforts to inspire use of parks, facilities and programs offered by the MetroParks and evaluate how users felt about the inspirational marketing campaign
 - Use the cross tabs from the citizen survey to build the MetroParks' message
 - Incorporate all social networks to promote the MetroParks' message
- Develop a Mill Creek MetroParks story video as part of the levy campaign
 - Develop a six to seven minute Mill Creek Park story video to build consistency in the message to voters of the attributes MetroParks provides to the community
 - Hire outside professional help to develop the video and create a levy campaign message
 - Seek outside funding to support the development
- Utilize volunteers in the Marketing Department
 - Determine volunteer opportunities that can help the Marketing Department achieve its goals and outcomes
 - Develop job descriptions and training programs for the volunteer work needed
 - Recruit volunteers to help in managing social networks, intercept surveys, tracking data on users, etc.
- Utilize technology in online reservations and track the impacts of users in programs, facilities, parks and services used
 - Track data on programs, capacity management of programs and facilities, age segments served, users of the parks and programs, areas of the County being served
 - Work with Administration to develop and manage an online reservation program working that focus on communication policies.
- Enhance the relationship between the Marketing and Recreation Departments to achieve higher levels of participation
 - The Marketing Department should take a defined role in the development of programs
 - Work with the Recreation staff on market research and customer focused program needs
 - Develop a communication plan to bring additional people to the parks and to gain more program participation
 - Establish a cost recovery goal for each program and facility within the Recreation Department

7.8 COMMUNITY VISION FOR GOLF

“Our vision for Mill Creek Golf Course is to be the best public golf course in the region and to achieve financial sustainability through maximizing the value and productivity of each cost center on the golf course.”

7.8.1 GOAL

Meet the financial goals desired by the Board of Commissioners for the Mill Creek Golf Course and increase the value and use by players through effective programs and services provided.

7.8.1.1 STRATEGIES AND TACTICS

- Update the Master Plan that was completed in 1996 and include a cost-benefit assessment on the drainage area
 - Prioritize the capital improvements most needed to increase playability of the golf course, as well as seek a dedicated funding source to support those improvements
 - Track the cost benefit of each improvement for the Executive Director and Board of Commissioners so they will continue to invest in the site
 - Track the satisfaction of players on those improvements
- Create a business plan for each line of business under golf
 - Determine the core services for each area and develop a program strategy to enhance those services in the business plan
 - Develop a cost of service approach for each element of the Golf Course
 - Develop performance measures and indicators for the golf business plan that includes playable days, number of players, type or rounds played, retention of users, programs provided, number of outings and concession per player spending at a minimum
 - Establish maintenance standards for the Mill Creek Golf Course
- Establish management standards for the golf operations at both golf courses
 - Determine maintenance standards for both golf courses and track how well those standards are being met
 - Create elements of Audubon Certification on the golf courses
 - Determine clubhouse standards for carts, pro shop, concessions, programs and outings
 - Enhance the landscaping on the golf courses and use volunteers to maintain
 - Track customer satisfaction with those standards on how well they are met and appreciated
 - Use Sports Management interns to work in the clubhouse to provide fresh energy and ideas about increasing play on the golf courses
 - Establish golf ready programs on both golf courses

- Develop a marketing plan for the golf courses and the Wick Recreation area
 - Design consistent logos and messages for each golf course
 - Develop an effective program plan for both golf course and recruitment program for outings, clinics and tournaments
 - Develop differential pricing strategies for the Golf Course to increase play in non-prime times
 - Incorporate user feedback methods into all elements of the Golf Courses
 - Incorporate the Recreation Department strategies in programming the Wick Golf Course
 - Develop additional hotel partnerships to go along with Holiday Inn and Hampton Inn the Mill Creek Golf Course
 - Enhance directional signage to the golf courses
- Establish new programs for the golf courses
 - Develop a driving range league for Mill Creek Golf Course
 - Create additional female programming opportunities at both golf courses
 - Create more family oriented events in non-prime times at both golf courses

7.9 COMMUNITY VISION FOR ADMINISTRATION

“Our vision for Administration is to manage Mill Creek MetroParks in a consistent and best practices approach to maximize the productivity of all staff, facilities, parks, programs and services.”

7.9.1 GOAL

Outcomes are achieved through effective management of all administrative components for the MetroParks in all Departments.

7.9.1.1 STRATEGIES AND TACTICS

- Add contracted Human Resources and Technology positions
 - Update job descriptions for all positions within MetroParks
 - Develop an updated salary plan for MetroParks based on the updated job descriptions and the accountability/responsibility of the position
 - Update the Policy and Procedures Manual for MetroParks
 - Update all personnel policies for MetroParks
 - Inform staff in a timely and consistent manner on human resource issues
 - Develop a succession plan for MetroParks
 - Develop a technology plan for MetroParks and train staff on how to utilize technology to become more efficient

- Implement the functional organizational management model
 - Implement the reorganization to achieve maximum efficiency
 - Implement the organizational changes over a three to five year period
 - Update the Employee Handbook
 - Invest in staff development and training
- Establish a long term financial plan for the MetroParks to increase earned income
 - Establish financial principles to manage the MetroParks by in the future
 - Incorporate new funding sources to support capital and operational income
 - Determine long term employee legacy costs for existing staff
- Utilize business management principles and accounting principles for each core service and attraction in the MetroParks
 - Work with staff on developing business plans and cost of service plans for major core services and attractions
 - Track performance measures and cost of services with staff
 - Support the Executive Director on becoming an outcome based organization through effective outcome tracking
- Establish a capital improvement fund for the MetroParks
 - Determine the capital improvements needed
 - Investigate available funding options and create a strategy to implement those funding options
 - Work with the Planning and Development Departments regarding access to available funding sources



CHAPTER EIGHT - CONCLUSION

In 1891, Volney Rogers came upon a pristine gorge filled with hemlock trees, breathtaking vistas and magnificent falls, and dreamed of creating a place that would improve the lives of the citizens of Youngstown by providing a healthful alternative to the rapidly industrializing city. He wanted to share this amazing discovery and preserve it for the future.

As stewards of the legacy of Volney Rogers, the Board of Parks Commissioners and staff of Mill Creek MetroParks came together to create a strategic master plan that would ensure these parklands would continue to prosper and grow, and become an important part of the revitalization of our community.

Midway through the course of planning, the MetroParks experienced a leadership change, with Dennis Miller taking over the role of Executive Director on September 28, 2012. This change delayed the process somewhat while the plan was re-examined and modified, and a new, functional organizational chart was created. The strategic plan is now complete, and was approved by the MetroParks board in January of 2013. We are now ready to move forward with its implementation.

The plan calls for an updated and integrated marketing plan, and this is one of the first recommendations that will be carried out. As early as the first quarter of 2013, an internal communications plan, new logo and identity and branding strategy will be created and used MetroParks-wide. Development of sponsorships, partnerships, and a comprehensive fundraising strategy will be achieved through the expansion of the Mill Creek Park Foundation, so we may now leverage scarce public dollars and assets for the benefit of the community. These approaches will blend seamlessly into a levy campaign early in 2014.

The Mill Creek MetroParks staff and Board of Park Commissioners are excited to begin putting these key strategies into practice. We look forward to working with community partners, citizens and stakeholders to preserve the legacy of Volney Rogers for generations to come.

