EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Evanston is dedicated to creating the most livable city in America. The Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department (PRCS) plays a critical role in creating opportunities to improve the overall quality of life for residents. Our department encompasses 76 parks, 50 playgrounds, 12 facilities, 6 beaches, an ice rink, 5 community gardens and 300 acres of land all within our 7.8 square mile radius.

Our most recent Strategic Plan included six primary components: needs assessment, open space and park standards, policy framework, inventory of existing resources, park improvements and costs and implementation plan. A needs assessment and community input meetings were conducted to shape priorities.

Through reorganization efforts in 2013, the department expanded priorities to include community services in addition to parks and recreation while sharing park maintenance responsibilities with Public Works. A new Community Services division was created to address the changing needs of the community and to focus resources on expanding services to underserved communities.

Due to the ongoing updating of the strategic plan, the Parks and Recreation Board and City staff have developed a work plan to identify and prioritize needs. Using our mission as a framework, the work plan established four goal areas and overall objectives.

Our Mission:
The City of Evanston’s Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department is committed to enhancing the quality of life of all citizens by providing collaborative opportunities for our community to grow, learn, create and play.

Park and Recreation Board Purpose:
To provide for, maintain, supervise and direct all playground and recreation activities for the City of Evanston (Code: Title 7-9) (86-0-93).
Goal 1: Maintain and renovate existing parks and facilities

1.1) Maintain existing parks and facilities
   City staff and residents are able to notify 311 of necessary park maintenance issues or safety hazards by calling or submitting online service requests which are then assigned and tracked for accountability.

   In 2016, the City underwent an open space scorecard process to measure the quality of infrastructure and maintenance. A community survey was conducted as well as an inspection of open spaces and results were presented and adopted by the City Council. This tool will be used to prioritize our capital investments for 2017 and beyond.

1.2) Renovate existing parks on a regularly scheduled basis
   The Parks and Recreation Board and city staff worked together to develop and implement a CIP Plan. Work is currently underway on some projects and timelines have been established for upcoming projects.

   Utilizing the parks scorecard the department is working to update its existing CIP plan to incorporate the results which reflects the communities’ desires to prioritize improvements.

1.3) Robert Crown Community Center Renovation Project
   The City has committed $53 million to this project along with $2.5 million from the Evanston Public Library. As of March 2019, an additional $12 million has been raised by the Friends of Robert Crown, a nonprofit 501c3 organization. Construction began in July of 2018 with an anticipated completion of December 2019.

Goal 2: Pursue Usage Agreements with School District 65, District 202 and Ridgeville Park District on Indoor/Outdoor Field and Facility Space

2.1) Form adhoc committee with district 65, 202 and Ridgeville Park District to discuss how we can share indoor/outdoor field and facility space

2.2) Meet with stakeholders, including affiliate groups, for their input and needs

2.3) Establish a joint usage agreements
   To address the above objectives collectively, the Parks and Recreation Board and City staff have engaged area school districts and park districts to identify the needs of the community and ways to proactively address facility space and field limitations. Regular meetings are currently occurring to coordinate efforts to maximize usage and conversations will continue to identify ways to work together.
Goal 3: Work with the community to address undeserved populations to improve programming for all citizens.

3.1) Youth outreach

The Mayor’s Summer Youth Employment Program has plans to serve over 600 youth this coming summer through established partnerships with local businesses and major corporations, such as Target and Home Depot to provide employment opportunities that will expose young people to a positive workforce environment.

Staff is seeking partnerships and grant opportunities to assist in workforce development and to create better programming opportunities for youth.

3.2) Assess all department program offerings

The department staff assesses program offerings on a consistent basis. Program coordinators meet quarterly to evaluate the current procedure for scheduling programs and to discuss how we can work collaboratively to ensure we are impacting the community most effectively.

3.3) Senior Services Initiatives

The department offers a variety of senior services programs to include subsidized transportation, Ombudsman program, congregate meal sites as well as recreation programs at the Levy Senior Center. The department also partners with Mather, Council for Jewish Elderly (CJE) and the Levy Senior Center foundation to provide additional programming opportunities for our community.

Goal 4: Apply for the Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA) accreditation for excellence in operation and service.

4.1) Update the PRCS Strategic Plan

4.2) Review and update all operational policies and procedures

4.3) Ensure all policies and procedures are practiced.

The Department will utilize the recently adopted Parks Scorecard as a basis to update its existing Strategic Master Plan. The Scorecard was a great first step to identify the pressing needs of our system that needs to be improved as a capital improvement. The next step is to formalize a strategic plan to implement these needs. This process will include reviewing and updating existing policies and procedures that are practiced throughout the department. We want to ensure the department is practicing the best practices accepted in our industry.