

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

2024 - 2028



VERNON HILLS PARK DISTRICT

vhparkdistrict.org

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What We Do

OUR MISSION

Conserving nature, supporting wellness, and inspiring leisure for all.



AAPRA/NRPA National Gold Medal Grand Plaque Recipient 2021



IAPD/IPRA Distinguished Accredited Agency Status every year since 2006



PARKS

- Vernon Hills Park District encompasses 427 acres, 21 developed parks, and 25 playgrounds

FACILITIES

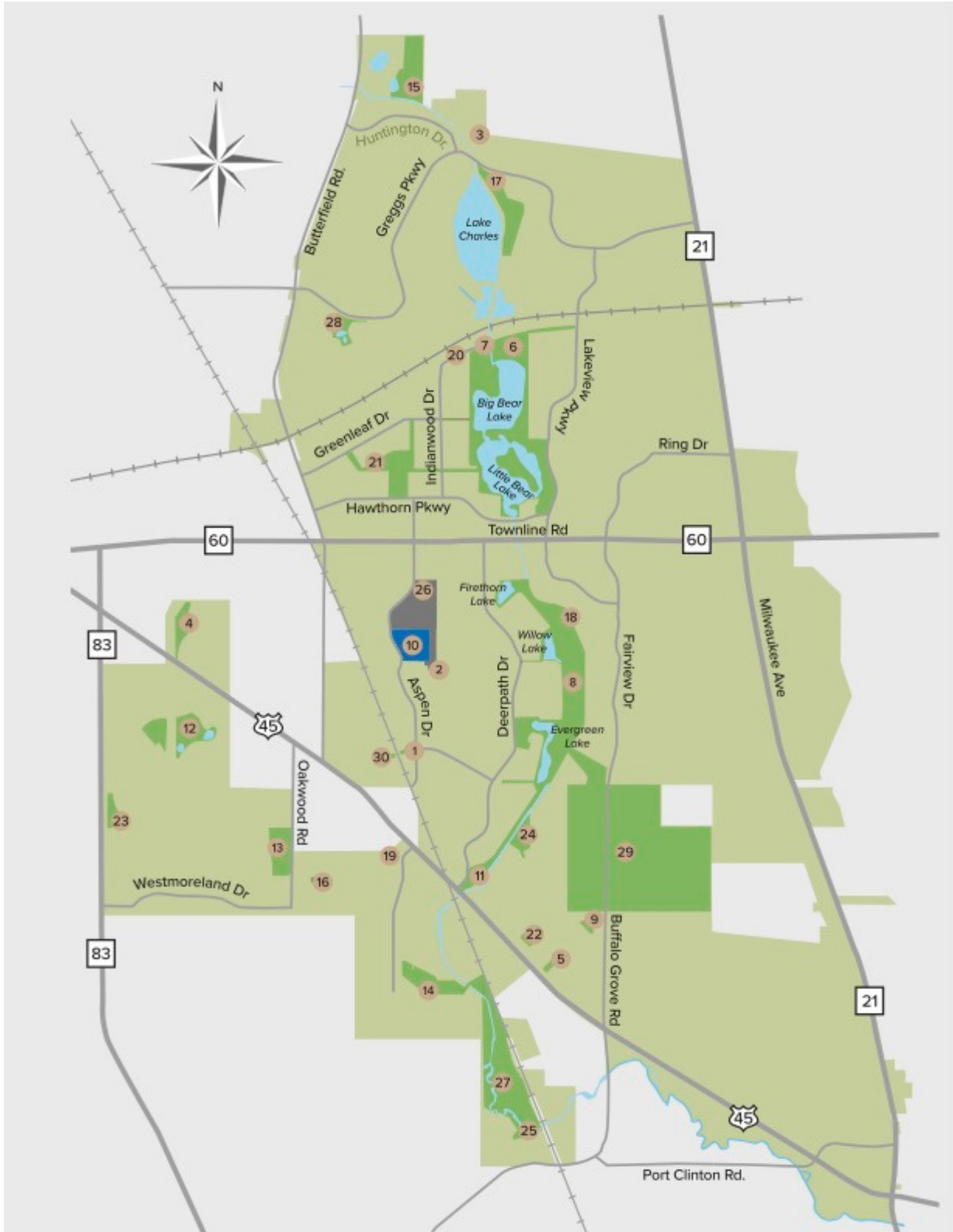
- Sullivan Community Center
- Lakeview Fitness
- Turtle Creek Waterpark
- Century Park Pavilion

PROGRAMS

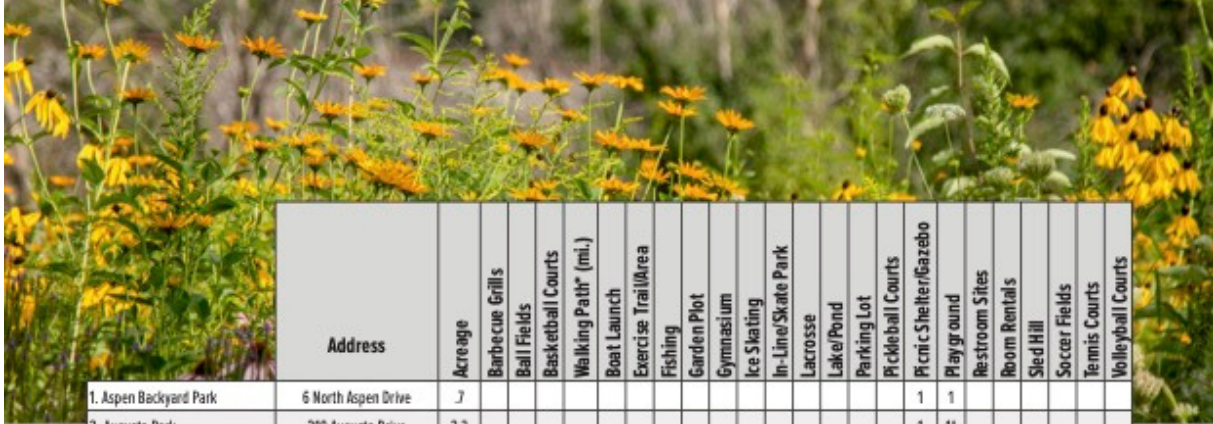
The following list includes the District's program classifications. More information about detailed offerings can be found at vhparkdistrict.org.

- Athletics for youth and adults
- Aquatics
- Camps
- Community garden
- Dance
- Drop-in programs
- Early childhood classes, childcare, and preschool
- Fitness
- School-age programs
- Special events
- Variety classes for youth and adults

OUR PARKS AND FACILITIES



OUR PARKS AND FACILITIES



	Address	Acres	Barbecue Grills	Ball Fields	Basketball Courts	Walking Path* (mi.)	Boat Launch	Exercise Trail/Area	Fishing	Garden Plot	Gymnasium	Ice Skating	In-Line/Skate Park	Lacrosse	Lake/Pond	Parking Lot	Pickleball Courts	Picnic Shelter/Gazebo	Playground	Restroom Sites	Room Rentals	Sled Hill	Soccer Fields	Tennis Courts	Volleyball Courts
1. Aspen Backyard Park	6 North Aspen Drive	.7																1	1						
2. Augusta Park	210 Augusta Drive	2.3																1	1*						
3. Beaver Creek Park	2087 Beaver Creek Drive	.97																							
4. Carriage Green Park	540 Grosse Pointe Circle	8				.28												1	1						
5. Central Park	520 Central Park Place	1.5																1							
6. Century Park	1002 Lakeview Parkway	116	4	3		2.7*	•	•	•	1					2	3		11	2	2					
7. Century Park Pavilion	1401 Indianwood Drive	NA			1					1	1					1				•	•			1	
8. Deerpath Park	299 Onwentsia Road	70	1	3	1	1.5*		•						2	3	2	6	4	2*	3			1	4	1
9. Donnelley Park	359 Donnelley Place	1.6																1	1						
10. Turtle Creek Waterpark	635 N. Aspen Drive																								
11. Kelli Garvanian Park	215 S. Deerpath Drive	5.5		1															1*						
12. Grosse Pointe Park	900 Grosse Pointe Blvd.	.16		3	1	1.5		•						2	2		1	3*	1					2	
13. Hartmann Park/Pavilion	292 Oakwood Road	9.9	4	3		.25	•		1		•				2		2	1*	1	1				2	
14. Hawthorn Club Park	160 Sheffield Drive	10		1	1	.4											1	1*							
15. Hawthorn Melody Park	2221 Hazeltine Drive	.16	2	1	1	.5*										1		1	1*	1			1		1
16. Kiddie Korral Park	300 Greenbriar Lane	.4																	1						
17. Lake Charles Park	11 E. Greggs Parkway	69	1			.5	•								1	1		3	1						
18. Lakeview Fitness	700 Lakeview Parkway	9														1			1						
19. Laschen Park	294 Evergreen Drive	1.3															2							2	
20. Park Maintenance Facility	1400 Indianwood Drive																								
21. Cynthia Peterson Park	200 Hawthorn Parkway	16.25	3	1	1	.6												1	1*	1				4	1
22. Ranney Park	137 Ranney Avenue	1.4																	1						
23. Royal Oak Park	70 Royal Oak Drive	5.3																							
24. Stone Fence Farm Park	224 Stone Fence Rd	3.7		1															1						
25. Sugar Creek Park	1081 Creek View Drive	13.6																	1	1					
26. Sullivan Community Center	635 N. Aspen Drive	30								•	•				1			1		4					
27. Sullivan Woods		48				.9																			
28. Torrey Pines Park	520 Torrey Pines Way	4.78																	1	1*					
29. Vernon Hills Athletic Complex	15 S. Fairway Drive**	37.5		6											1	2		1		1			7		
30. Westwood Park	300 Sullivan Drive	.5																	1	1					

The Park District has intergovernmental agreements with the Village of Vernon Hills, Hawthorn School District 73, Glacier Ice Arena, and Lifesport Athletic Club to provide additional amenities in ice skating, tennis, basketball, and soccer.

*Indicates lighted path
 *ADA Inclusion swing
 **Village owned

Our Accomplishments

Demonstrating our commitment to deliver top-notch resources to our community, the Vernon Hills Park District continually enhances our park offerings and invests in our facilities,

PARKS

In 2023, the Vernon Hills Park District upgraded residents' outdoor experiences, including:

- Replacing the age 2-5 year old playground at Deerpath Park's Warrington Playground
- Replacing the age 2-5 year old playground at Grosse Pointe Park
- Adding an age 2-5 year old playground at Westwood Park
- Restoring the overflow pond at Lake Charles Park

FACILITIES & RECREATION

Recent improvements include:

- Launching the rebranding of the Turtle Creek Waterpark from the Family Aquatic Center and breaking ground on new sprayground
- Resurfacing the parking lots in Century Park and Lakeview Fitness and installing new roofs at Turtle Creek Waterpark
- Collaborating on the Seavey Ditch Project with the Village of Vernon Hills and Lake County Stormwater Commission
- Increasing our adult education programs and offerings



FINANCIAL HEALTH

The District continues to be a prudent steward of its resources, offering top-tier parks and recreation opportunities while having the lowest tax rate of all 18 Lake County Park Districts:

- Providing \$31,500 in financial assistance to 42 families through the Family Scholarship Fund
- Receiving a \$566,000 OSLAD grant for Hartmann Park
- Saving \$5,000 annually from our solar rooftops, which is enough savings to power approximately 14 average-sized homes
- Receiving the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting from the Government Finance Officer's Association for its Annual Comprehensive Financial Report for our 29th consecutive year
- Collaborating with local organizations through more than 50 substantive intergovernmental agreements, saving millions of dollars for local taxpayers
- Maintaining a healthy reserve fund balance for the past two decades, aligning with best financial practices

Planning Process

During 2023, the District launched a new comprehensive planning process, designed to be deeply anchored in community input, data, and feedback to inform our future decision-making.

COMMUNITY-BASED

SURVEY

- The District conducted a community-wide, 45-question survey to 8,000 households, garnering responses from 983 residents and exceeding survey baseline expectations.
- Surveys were distributed online, in-person, and via email and social media, as well as highlighted in a postcard reminder.

LISTENING SESSIONS

- In the fall of 2023, the District facilitated a series of in-person listening sessions with residents, members of the Board of Park Commissioners, District staff, and leaders of community organizations.
- Participants discussed emerging community trends that will impact the District, opportunities facing the District, as well as how residents' use of the District may evolve in the future.

STAFF INPUT

- In the fall of 2023, District staff participated in an in-person planning retreat, working in small and large groups.
- Staff reflected on the community feedback received during the planning process and identified several themes and priority areas.



THEMES

Through this participatory planning process, we collected input on the following themes:

- Current patterns of participation with existing parks, programs, and facilities;
- Attitudes toward and preferences for the District's marketing and publicity methods; and
- Satisfaction with current services and operations, as well as trends and feedback that should inform future services and operations.

Strategic Plan 2024 - 2028

1

Champion issues related to environmental sustainability.

Outcome: The Vernon Hills community will look to the Park District as a leader on issues related to environmental sustainability and conservation.

Strategies:

- Develop a community-based environmental and sustainability commission as it relates to the District's mission, convening residents, businesses, schools, and community organization stakeholders.
- Further the Park District's expertise as a steward of open land and public green spaces.
- Identify and pursue methods to increase staff capacity to oversee this work.
- Develop and implement marketing strategies to share progress with the public.

2

Be the community's first choice destination for outdoor and recreational activities.

Outcome: The Vernon Hills Park District will provide parks, facilities, programs, resources, and services that are responsive to community demand.

Strategies:

- Expand and deepen untapped programming for active adults.
- Increase cultural programming, with guidance from community members.
- Develop outdoor education and nature programs.
- Expand informal programming that provides opportunity for social and community connectedness.
- Develop a structured volunteer program.
- Explore the feasibility of a dog park.
- Increase passive opportunities for engaging with the Park District, such as providing interpretative signage.

3

Implement a comprehensive fundraising strategy that increases financial support for the Park District's mission.

Outcome: The Vernon Hills Park District will secure funding that supports the long-term sustainability of its resources, programs, and services.

Strategies:

- Evaluate the effectiveness of current revenue generation through programs and services and increase participation.
- Pursue ways to increase revenue from community events.
- Explore and pursue alternative revenue generation, such as interest income and investment income.
- Increase support received through sponsorships and grants.

4

Increase community engagement and awareness of the Park District's parks, facilities, programs, resources, and services.

Outcome: Residents and local organizations will be aware of and supportive of the Park District's value to the community.

Strategies:

- Expand the involvement and impact of community advocates.
- Launch a focused and engaged Park Advisory Committee.
- Increase opportunities for community engagement, such as park chats, table talks with Park Commissioners, and event committees.
- Improve the functionality of the Park District website.
- Increase staff visibility in the community through social media and other engagement opportunities.

5

Foster a supportive and inclusive workplace culture that enables staff to thrive.

Outcome: The Vernon Hills Park District will attract and retain high-quality staff who feel appreciated and valued.

Strategies:

- Invest in staff by providing the training, development, and tools they need to succeed.
- Conduct job task analysis to identify efficiencies and opportunities for growth.
- Identify and pursue ways to attract more staff candidates who reflect the diversity of the community the Park District serves.
- Establish regular engagement practices with part-time staff, such as stay interviews and surveys.
- Build a pipeline of future full-time staff and park commissioners.
- Identify and pursue ways to encourage staff wellness.

Upcoming Projects

Appendices to this report include a Park Master Plan and a Facility & Recreation Plan. This information details the following planned improvements, to our parks and facilities, totaling \$3.7 million through 2028.

PARK MASTER PLAN

Our projects during this comprehensive plan will include the following:

Master Planning

These parks will undergo a master planning process, during which all functions and amenities within the park will be evaluated and addressed:

- Grosse Pointe Park
- Lake Charles Park

New Playgrounds

- Augusta Park
- Carriage Green Park
- Peterson Park
- Torrey Pines Park

Recreational Improvements

- Century Park and Peterson Park basketball courts renovation
- Century Park shoreline restoration and bridge repair
- Century Park outdoor exercise stations

Park Infrastructure Improvements

- Pathway improvements in Deerpath and Hawthorn Melody Parks
- Lighting improvements in Century Park, Deerpath Park, and Peterson Park
- Asphalt repairs in Aspen Backyard Park, Carriage Green Park, Hawthorn Club Park, Hawthorn Melody Park, and Stone Fence Park

FACILITY & RECREATION IMPROVEMENT PLAN


The District holds a strong commitment to maintaining our current assets at high standards. Our projects during this comprehensive plan include the following:

- Completion of the Turtle Creek Waterpark sprayground
 - Turtle Creek Waterpark lazy river and waterslide upgrades
 - Lakeview Fitness and Sullivan Center new roofs and mechanical rooftop replacements
 - Lakeview Fitness equipment upgrades
 - Sullivan Center outdoor shade structure
 - Shelter bathroom renovations at Warrington, Peterson, and Century Parks
 - Completing a district-wide MEP (Mechanical, Electrical, and Plumbing) report
-



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