

EFFICIENCY REPORT FOR THE OAKBROOK TERRACE PARK DISTRICT

**APPROVED BY THE PARK DISTRICT'S
COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT EFFICIENCY
ON MAY 21, 2024**



I. Purpose

The Oakbrook Terrace Park District (“Park District”) formed its Committee on Local Government Efficiency on May 23, 2023, to study efficiencies and report recommendations regarding those efficiencies and increased accountability pursuant to 50 ILCS 70/1, *et seq.* (the “Committee”).

II. Committee Membership

The Committee consisted of the following individuals:

Roger Sweitzer, Park Board President

Bradley Berkshire, Park Board Commissioner

Susan Lugo, Park Board Commissioner

Vicki Rispens, Park Board Commissioner

Michael Joy, Park Board Commissioner

Dan Flanagan, Resident Member

Jessica Lindeen, Resident Member

Shannon Elsey, Executive Director

III. Committee Meetings

The Committee met as follows:

Meeting Date	Meeting Time and Place
January 23, 2024	6:00pm, Heritage Center Board Room
March 19, 2024	6:00pm, Heritage Center Board Room
May 21, 2024	6:00pm, Heritage Center Board Room

Minutes of these meetings are available on the Park District's website or upon request at the Park District's administrative office.

IV. General Overview of Governing Statutes, Ordinances, Rules, Procedures, Powers, Jurisdiction

The Park District was established by a referendum initiated and approved by the voters of the Park District in 1963. All Illinois park districts, including the Park District, are governed by the Park District Code, 70 ILCS 1205/1 *et seq.*

Having a separate and distinct taxing body for parks, recreation, and conservation within the local community, which operates apart from general purpose governments, is extremely beneficial to the community for many reasons, as detailed further in this report.

- **Elected, non-partisan, non-compensated board.** The Park District is governed by a board of five commissioners. Commissioners must reside within the boundaries of the park district and are elected at the Consolidated Election in odd-numbered years. Pursuant to state law, commissioners are non-partisan and serve without compensation.
- **Accessible and focused representation.** Having a dedicated board to oversee these essential facilities, programs, and services provides the community with increased access to their elected representatives and allows those elected representatives to remain focused solely on those facilities, programs, and services. This is contrasted with general purpose governments where elected representatives are responsible for broad oversight on a wide range of issues. This special purpose benefit is particularly advantageous when it comes to budget and finance oversight.
- **Increased transparency.** Having a dedicated unit of local government to provide park and recreation services also improves the relationship between the park district and its residents because of the transparency and openness related to the board and park district operations. Having detailed agenda and action items allows taxpayers to be better informed about the inner workings of their local government. When individual units of government are responsible for providing specified services like park districts, transparency is increased because action items and budget procedures are more detailed. Additionally, these items and budgetary decisions are subject to more scrutiny by locally elected officials than is the case with larger, multi-purpose governments with a multitude of departments.
- **Protection of revenues.** Because the Park District is a separate unit of local government, the revenues it generates can only be used for park district purposes. This assurance is contrasted with general purpose governments like cities, villages, and counties that provide a multitude of services such as fire, police, public works, economic development, etc., where revenues that are generated specifically for parks and recreation can be expended on these other services with limited, if any, input from voters.

- **Protection of assets.** Public parks and other real property owned by the park district is held in trust for the residents of the park district, and, subject to very limited exceptions, can only be sold or transferred if residents approve of the sale or transfer by a referendum. This is contrasted with general purpose units of government, which have authority to sell or dispose of property by a vote of the governing board.
- **Providing the Community More with Less.** The Park District does more with much fewer funding options. Unlike other units of local government that receive direct state funding, and income, sales, use, hotel/motel, motor fuel and other numerous taxes, the Park District's only tax revenues come from a modest portion of a resident's overall property tax bill. In fact, despite its limited funding options, the Park District share is only 8% of the local tax bill. Additionally, the Park District generates non-tax revenue through services, interest income, and other revenue sources.

As part of good governance and implementing best practices in the management of day-to-day operations, the Park District has also adopted the following ordinances, rules, policies, and procedures:

- Employee Policies & Procedures Manual
- Financial Policies & Procedures Manual
- General Use Regulations
- Safety Policy Manual

V. List of Shared Services and Partnerships

The Park District works diligently to provide the best possible programs, services, and facilities to our community at the least possible cost. One of the many ways the Park District achieves this goal is by partnering with neighboring park districts, school districts, other units of local government within or near the community, the State, non-profit organizations, and for-profit corporations. Below is a comprehensive list of the current partnerships, agreements, and other relationships that assist the Park District's mission of delivering the best possible services at the least possible cost to our community.

1. Membership in SRA

The Park District is part of the Northeast DuPage Special Recreation Association ("SRA"). Special recreation associations are a form of intergovernmental cooperation among units of local government that are authorized under the Illinois Constitution, the Intergovernmental Cooperation Act, the Park District Code, and the Municipal Code. Their formation is rooted in a fundamental belief and recognition that "Recreation is for Everyone." They are shining examples of local government efficiency.

By partnering together, local communities are able to effectively and efficiently deliver more successful program opportunities to community members who have special needs. Furthermore, by participating in the SRA, the Park District networks with 10 other local governments to provide many more program opportunities for our community members who have special needs and offers a choice between participating in the SRA's programs or in programs that are provided by the Park District.

The Park District and the SRA also achieve efficiency by utilizing existing facilities that are owned and operated by the SRA's members, including the Park District. Utilizing these existing facilities allows the SRA to deliver services to its member communities at a lower cost. Currently the Park District provides the SRA access to the following facilities for their program offerings:

- Heritage Center
 - Mario Parente Theater
- Heritage Park
- Lake View Nature Center
- Terrace View Park

The SRA also provides the support needed for participants with special needs who choose to register for the Park District programs or inclusive programming. The SRA collects information on the registered participant and determines what supports are needed for that participant to be successful in this inclusive setting or the Park District program. This could include additional training of the supervisory staff, additional support staff, the use of adaptive equipment, behavior management, and/or other measures that will assist in the successful participation of this individual in the Park

District program. Although success may not look the same for everyone, the SRA works with the Park District's staff to ensure the best possible results for all the participants in the program. The Park District's cost of providing these services would be much greater without its participation and partnership in the SRA.

In FY 2022-23, the SRA successfully served 1,657 distinct individuals (5,647 total registrations) in its 11 partner communities. The SRA also supported 71 participants in inclusive programs that were provided by the member partners.

The Park District is very proud of the ongoing collaboration with the SRA. By working cooperatively with other local governments, not only are we better able to collectively serve all citizens within our communities, including persons with disabilities, but we are able to do so in the most efficient and effective manner possible.

2. Other intergovernmental agreements with other park districts, forest preserve districts, conservation districts, or municipal recreation agencies

- Intergovernmental agreements for cooperative programming for nature programs offered in tandem with Hinsdale Parks & Recreation Department, Oak Brook Park District, Clarendon Hills Park District, and Westmost Park District

3. Intergovernmental agreements with other units of local government

- School District 48 – LEAP Afterschool program agreement
- City of Oakbrook Terrace – Tri-party agreement for land rights/air rights, as well as use of Terrace View Park for Summer Concert Series and 4th of July event

4. Intergovernmental agreements with the State of Illinois

- State of Illinois Joint Purchasing Program
- Sourcewell Cooperative Purchasing Agreement
- OMNIA Partners Cooperative Purchasing Agreement

5. Partnerships or agreements with athletic or similar affiliate organizations that operate sports or other leagues

- Elmhurst Youth Baseball – Agreement for discounted fees for use of Terrace View Park ball field in exchange for maintenance, upkeep, and investment in the space

6. Partnerships or other interrelationships with non-profits

- Partnership with Glenbard Transition and SASSED concerning Animal Care Mentorship Program (ACAMP)

7. Partnerships with for profit organizations

- Sponsorship agreements with Old Second National Bank

8. Informal cooperation with other units of local government which save taxpayer dollars by eliminating redundancy

- City of Oakbrook Terrace – Fee waivers for development projects
- Oakbrook Terrace Police Department – Park District participates in Police Department's National Night Out event and Police Department participates in the Park District's Touch-A-Truck and Back-to-School Park Playdate events

VI. Other Examples of Efficient Operations

Use of volunteers. One way in which the Park District reduces the burden on taxpayers is through the use of volunteers. Last year, 15 individuals volunteered approximately 175 hours of service to the Park District. The most notable of these are our ACAMP volunteers.

Youth employment. The Park District is a major employer of youth in the community. Last year, the Park District employed 11 youth between the ages of 16 and 22. Not only is this an efficient way to deliver services, but youth employment serves as a valuable training tool for the future workforce.

Collaboration with other park districts on best practices. Because park districts are not in competition with one another, they are more willing than the private sector to share best practices. These best practices help to avoid unnecessary costs and deliver services more effectively and efficiently.

Reliance on Non-Tax Revenue. Unlike most local governments that rely on a wide range of sales, use, and income taxes, the Park District is not permitted to assess these types of taxes. Additionally, although the Park District is an economic engine for the community and generates much revenue for the state and our community in the form of hotel/motel, sales, and motor fuel taxes, our Park District does not receive any of these revenues. Also, unlike Illinois cities, villages, counties, and school districts that received billions of dollars in direct financial assistance from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act and the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), our Park District did not receive any such direct federal aid. Our Park District also does not receive state funding under the Local Government Distributive Fund (LGDF) or General State Aid (GSA) that these same cities, villages, counties, and school districts receive through the State budget.

Instead, the Park District provides all of the programs, facilities, and services to the community with a very modest amount of property taxes and from **non-tax sources** such as memberships, program registrations, and other user fees as well as private donations and grants.

VII. Transparency to the Community

The following information about the Park District may be obtained by citizens in the location listed.

Document	Location(s) Available
Annual tax levy	Administrative Offices, County Clerk
Annual budget and appropriation ordinance	Website, Administrative Offices, County Clerk
Agenda and minutes	Website, Administrative Offices
Comptroller’s annual finance report (AFR)	Administrative Offices, County Clerk
Annual audit	Website, Administrative Offices, County Clerk
Statement of Receipts and Disbursements	Administrative Offices
Conduct Ordinances	Administrative Offices
Capital improvement plan	Website, Administrative Offices

The Park District offers residents many opportunities to provide feedback. These include:

- The board of commissioners meets once each month. Residents may provide public comment at every meeting.
- The Park District’s annual Budget and Appropriation Ordinance is available in tentative form at least 30 days prior to its adoption at an open meeting of the Park District board. Additionally, at least one public hearing is held prior to final action, and notice of the hearing is published in the newspaper at least one week prior to the hearing.
- The Park District’s annual property tax levy is approved at an open meeting of the Park District board in accordance with the Open Meetings Act. The Park District follows all public notice and hearing requirements under the Truth in Taxation Law prior to the adoption of this annual tax levy. The Park District’s annual levy is also subject to the limitations of the Property Tax Extension Limitation Law.
- Residents may contact or request information from the Park District by phone at (630) 627-6100 or email at info@obtpd.org.
- The Oakbrook Terrace Park District seeks out and values resident and participant feedback. Below are examples of community input.

- **Program surveys:**
 - Summer Camp survey
 - Nature Mini Camp survey
 - School District 48 Camp survey
 - Preschool survey
- **Operational surveys:**
 - Fitness Center operations (post-COVID) survey
 - Fitness Center hours survey
- **Public hearings for community input**
 - Design of Terrace View Park playground

VIII. District Awards and Recognition

The District's achievements have been recognized in numerous ways.

- The Oakbrook Terrace Park District encourages staff to pursue continuing education and certifications. Below are notable staff credentials, certifications, and licenses.
 - **Master of Science in Recreation, Sport & Tourism (UIUC)**
 - Shannon Elsey, Executive Director
 - **Certified Park & Recreation Executive (CPRE)**
 - Shannon Elsey, Executive Director
 - **Certified Park & Recreation Professional (CPRP)**
 - Lauren Jevaney, Superintendent of Recreation
 - **Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist (CTRS)**
 - Lauren Jevaney, Superintendent of Recreation
 - **Pesticide License**
 - Patrick Manieri, Superintendent of Parks & Facilities

- The Oakbrook Terrace Park District is proud to participate in the Illinois Parks & Recreation Association (IPRA), the state association for park and recreation agencies. Below are IPRA leadership roles held by Park District staff.
 - **ProConnect, IPRA's Mentorship Program**
 - Shannon Elsey, Executive Director, served on the Board of Regents for IPRA's ProConnect Program. She previously served as the Chair of ProConnect in 2022.
 - **Therapeutic Recreation (TR) Section**
 - Lauren Jevaney, Superintendent of Recreation, recently completed a term as Chair of IPRA's Therapeutic Recreation (TR) Section.

- The Oakbrook Terrace Park District values lifelong learning, continuing education, and training. Below are relevant trainings/schools attended by Park District staff.
 - **IPRA's Leadership Academy (Graduate)**
 - Shannon Elsey, Executive Director
 - **IPRA's Professional Development School (Graduate)**
 - Shannon Elsey, Executive Director
 - **NRPA's Supervisor Management School (Graduate)**
 - Shannon Elsey, Executive Director

IX. Benefits and Services

The Park District serves the entire community from the youngest child to the oldest adult and all ages in between. It does so in a variety of ways.

1. Facilities

The Park District offered the following facilities to the community last year:

Heritage Park

- 6.5 acres of land
- Paved walking trail
- Fitness stations
- Full-court basketball court
- Two half-court basketball courts
- Two sand volleyball courts
- Two tennis courts
- Gazebo
- Multi-level playground
- Net climber
- Native garden
- Green space

Terrace View Park

- 9 acres of land
- 2-acre pond
- Floating stage
- Crushed limestone walking trail
- Lighted softball field
- Gazebo
- Hill for event seating
- Playground
- Green space

Dorothy Drennon Park

- 4 acres of land
- Paved walking trail
- Gazebo
- Playground
- Native gardens
- Veterans Memorial Garden

Bill Cizek Bike Path

- 1 ¼ miles
 - ¾-mile asphalt path
 - ½-mile crushed limestone path

Heritage Center

- 12,000 square feet
- Administration offices
- 130-seat theater
- Preschool classroom
- Three meeting rooms/multi-purpose rooms

Lake View Nature Center

- 1,000 square feet
- Educational classroom
- Exhibit space with live animals

Fitness Center

- 16,600 square feet
- Gymnasium
 - 72' basketball court
 - Two full-sized volleyball courts
 - Two pickleball courts
- Group exercise studio
- Various cardio and weight equipment
- Full locker room facilities
- Seating area

2. Programs

The Park District offered 103 programs with 4,361 participants in 2023. Additionally, the Park District served an estimated 1,950 participants at free Park District special events throughout 2023.

3. Additional Services

The Park District provided the following additional services to the community.

- Park and facility rental opportunities
- Fishing (catch and release) at the pond at Terrace View Park
- Served as a polling place for general primary elections, general elections, and consolidated elections

- Worked with the Park District Risk Management Agency (PDRMA) and the American Red Cross to coordinate temporary shelter at the Park District's Fitness Center for displaced residents after a large apartment building fire. Although the service was ultimately not needed, the Park District is ready and willing to serve in such a capacity should the need arise again.

4. Other Benefits

While the Park District is a special purpose district, its impact to the community is multi-faceted and far reaching. For example, the Park District's parks, recreational programming, and other opportunities improve the community's overall physical and mental health and wellness, thereby reducing health care costs. Before and after school and summer programs offer safe, convenient, and affordable childcare options for working families during critical times when school is not in session. These opportunities also help reduce juvenile crime. The Park District's open space and trees help improve air and water quality and mitigate flooding.

X. Recommendations for Increased Accountability and Efficiency

1. Intergovernmental Fees and Charges

One opportunity for efficiency would be the elimination of fees and charges assessed by other units of government. By way of example, below are amounts that other units of local government charge the Park District even though the Park District's taxpayers are also taxpayers of these other units of local government. Such fees and charges, and the bureaucracy that accompanies them, inhibit the park district's ability to deliver programs, facilities, and services at the least possible cost.

- Stormwater management
- Elevator license and inspection
- Fire inspections
- Background checks
- Building permits
- Construction permits
- Business license

Other units of local government should recognize that intergovernmental fees often lead to inefficiency in the expenditure of taxpayer dollars through extra bureaucracy and administrative costs. In many cases, the unit of government assessing the fee ultimately benefits from the project or event, meaning it can recoup its costs through the extra sales tax or other revenue that will be generated. Where such fees are absolutely necessary, general purpose units of government should offset the fee by crediting the park district for all benefits they will receive from a project, event, or property. For example, open space that is protected and maintained by the Park District helps mitigate stormwater management costs, so assessing stormwater management fees on the Park District not only leads to inefficiency, but it is also shortsighted.

Governmental units should be discouraged or prohibited from charging more than their out-of-pocket costs associated with the activities covered by a fee that is assessed to another unit of local government with the same taxpayers. Put another way, one unit of local government should not profit by taxing another. Eliminating local permit fees is a way to reduce administrative costs without impacting overall public revenue. Local government best serves the people when it cooperates and works together. Some communities recognize this and do not charge fees to other units. All communities should be encouraged to follow that model to receive the best results for local taxpayers and to promote governmental efficiency.

2. Inefficiency of Other Governments

The Park District is also negatively impacted by the inefficiency of the state and other units of local government.

3. Unfunded Mandates

Unfunded state mandates are another cost driver. While the Park District recognizes that there are benefits to some of these mandates, modifications could help alleviate some of the burden to the park district.

a) Non-resident FOIA Requests. Last year, the park district spent at least \$1,000 in staff time and legal fees to fulfill FOIA requests. Often the individuals/businesses submitting the FOIA requests are from outside of the park district boundaries, and they appear to be serving a specific agenda, rather than assuring better local government.

- Inquiries from The Daily Herald concerning percentage of Park District revenue from tax dollars and acres per 1,000 residents
- Inquiry from NBC Chicago concerning dollars/time spent on FOIA requests
- Regular communication from third-party agencies (i.e. Labor Management Cooperation Committee) regarding capital projects and the bid process

Under current law, resident taxpayers end up footing the bill for these non-resident or commercial requests. In order to help alleviate the burden for these non-resident requests the law could be amended to: (1) add a requirement that non-residents identify/explain the purpose of the request for information; (2) add a time limit on how far back a non-resident can request information; (3) staff time and costs could be included in the amount that is reimbursable for non-resident and commercial requests; (4) move back the deadline for non-resident requests 10 business days so that the park district does not have to delay services to its residents in order to comply with a non-resident request.

Sunshine laws are supposed to protect taxpayers by allowing them to shed light on any issue that is not exempt from FOIA. However, local government can be burdened by having to drop everything to rearrange priorities to meet FOIA deadlines, particularly if it has limited resources. Since local residents ultimately bear the expense of complying with FOIA, treating resident and non-resident requests differently would be justified.

b) Criminal Background Checks. All park districts are statutorily required to conduct criminal background checks on all employees pursuant to Section 8-23 of the Park District Code. The background checks must be done through the Illinois State Police (ISP). Last year, the park district spent approximately \$600 for criminal background checks. The Park District does not recommend eliminating

this mandate because it is necessary to ensure the safety and well-being of children and other park district patrons. However, the State should explore ways in which it could improve the current system and make it less costly for park districts to comply with the law.

The mandate also raises the fundamental question as to why one layer of government is forced to charge its taxpayers to comply with a State mandate when the State made the determination to impose the mandate. Put another way, if the State has determined that criminal background checks are necessary for public safety, the State should assist with compliance.

The Park District recommends studying whether there can be a more efficient background check process implemented through the ISP to reduce the time and expense it takes for background checks. Another suggestion is for ISP to waive the fee for checks on minors or waive all fees for name checks. If there is a “hit” from a name check, the fee could be charged for the more costly fingerprint check. Since it is a state mandate, perhaps the fee structure for park districts should also be reviewed to determine whether the fee being charged exceeds the actual cost of doing the check and, if so, perhaps the ISP could consider reducing its cost to local governments.

c) Prevailing Wage. One way to reduce burden on local government staff is to limit the prevailing wage requirement to larger capital contracts. This would free up tracking of the paperwork on small repairs and projects. One reason for creating a threshold requirement is the cost of the administrative burden relative to the cost of the actual project. For example, eliminating prevailing wage on smaller projects, e.g., those less than \$50,000, will result in more local bids and decrease the overall cost for these smaller public works projects.

d) Newspaper Publication. The newspaper is no longer the most effective way to provide notice. Websites are cheaper and reach more people. Permitting the park district to post the information on its website in lieu of newspaper publications would reduce costs.

4. Opportunities for Increased Transparency

- As illustrated above, the Park District is very transparent in its operations. For this reason, the committee does not see any additional opportunities for increased transparency.

5. Opportunities for Other Intergovernmental Agreements

- The Park District works closely with other local governments and continues to seek ways to work together to achieve its mission.

6. Opportunities for Savings such as Energy Efficiency Projects and Joint Purchasing

- The Park District would like to focus on recruitment and utilization of volunteers for additional areas of its operations. This could lead to savings in labor costs and/or new service initiatives.
- Although the Park District has already transitioned the lights in its parks and facilities to LEDs, there is an opportunity for greater energy efficiency. When the Heritage Center roofing replacement is scheduled, staff will investigate solar panels and options related to energy savings to assess cost efficiency and return on investment.

XI. FINAL REPORT CERTIFICATION

The signature of the Committee Chairperson and date indicates the Decennial Committee on Local Government Efficiency's final review and approval of this Efficiency Report for the Oakbrook Terrace Park District.

Dated: 5/21/24

Signed: 

Chairperson of Committee