
The 2012 Annual Report

of the City of Columbus – Parks and Recreation

City of Columbus





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This Annual Report is prepared for the City of Columbus, Bartholomew County, the commissions and boards involved in local parks and recreation as well as the following 2012 elected community leaders:

Columbus Mayor:
The Honorable Kristen Brown

Columbus City Council:
*Dascal Bunch
Ryan Brand
Frank Jerome
Frank Miller
Tim Shuffett
Aaron Hankins
Jim Lienhoop*

Parks & Recreation Board Members:
*Nancy Ann Brown, Member
Jim Hartsook, Member
Brian Russell, Member
Mary Tucker, Member
Dascal Bunch, City Council Liaison*





Executive Summary

Overview from Director Ben Wagner

2012 has been a year of growth, change and challenges. We have been working to GROW our facilities through partnerships with user groups and our not-for-profit arm, The Columbus Parks Foundation. Through these partnerships, we are working to expand our People Trails into a People Trails' Network, which will eventually connect 90% of City residents to within 3 blocks of a safe route to use people-powered transportation. We thank our major supporters in this effort, the Heritage Fund: The Community Foundation of Bartholomew County, the City of Columbus and all of our donors who have made this \$1 million fundraising effort a reality.

This year, we also began looking at ways to CHANGE the types of programming we offer the community as well as how best to use our facilities. We wrapped up work on our 5 year Master Plan earlier this year and are looking to provide programming that YOU, our users, are interested in experiencing, including new sports and using our existing facilities in new ways.

Finally, your CHALLENGES are how to best care for and repair and maintain our aging facilities, while continuing to provide rich programming options for all users. We appreciate your input as we look at new ways to improve how we serve you at these facilities. As always, we thank Mayor Brown, City Council members, our Park Board members, Brian Russell, Mary Tucker, Nancy Ann Brown and Jim Hartsook, for their continued support of our efforts.

2012 Budget

Columbus Parks and Recreation utilizes three funds (Parks General Fund, Parks Non-reverting, Commons Non-reverting) in order to run our hundreds of programs and maintain nearly 900 acres of parks, 7 facilities and 23 miles of trails. 2012 was a solid year, financially for Columbus Parks & Recreation. Following Mayor Brown's guidance, the Park staff reduced our 2012 General Fund budget by 10%. Columbus Parks & Recreation Department managers carefully watched their budgets, and were able to stay within these budgeted guidelines, while maintaining our General Fund reserve at the 6 month level as recommended by the City's Clerk-Treasurer's Office and the State Board of Accounts. The Parks & Recreation Department General Fund ended 2012 with a reserve level of \$2,253,231.

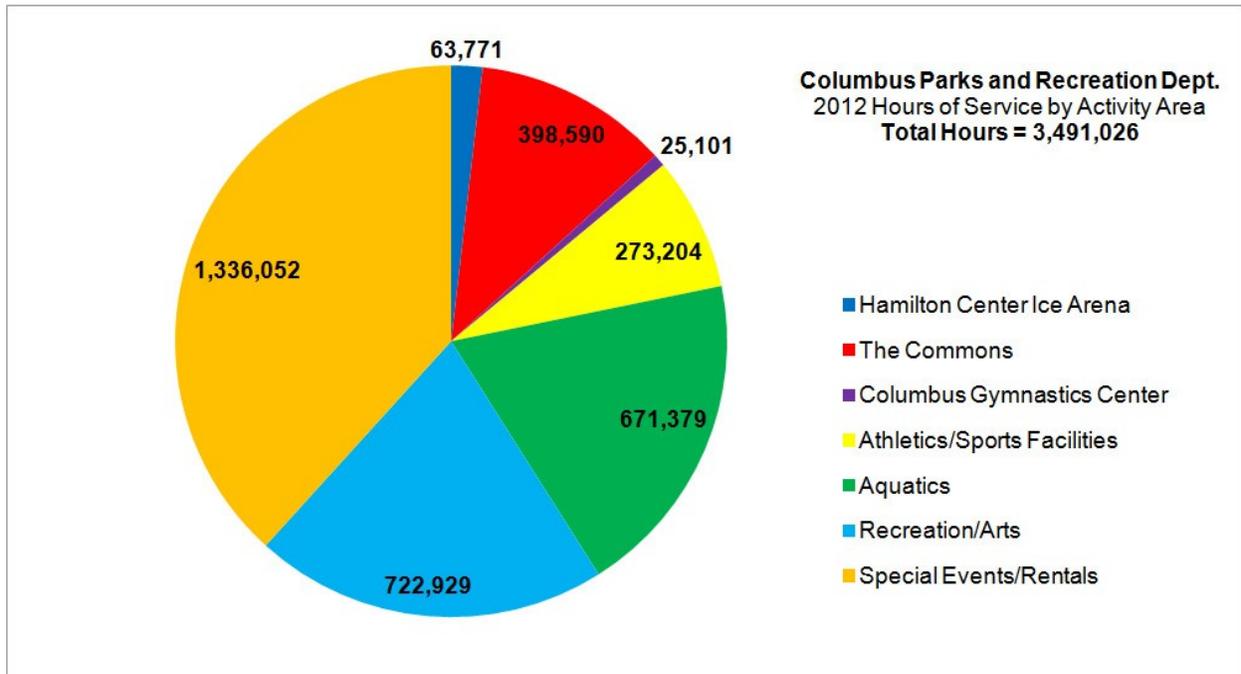


The Parks Non-reverting fund, which serves to provide funding for recreational programming and the maintenance of the Hamilton Center facility, saw revenues grow by nearly 20% for the year due to some expanded programming offered, as well as growth in several of our larger programs (i.e. youth soccer). These additional programs did lead to some additional expenditures for the year; however, the Parks Non-reverting fund was still able to grow by \$168,000. The Parks Non-reverting fund now has a 3.8 month reserve level, so we are continuing to go in the right direction after the losses suffered in this fund as a result of the flood of 2008.

The final Parks fund, Commons Non-reverting, is responsible solely for the operations and upkeep of The Commons facility. Due to stronger than anticipated revenues and good control of expenditures, The Commons staff was able to return \$237,762 to The Commons Non-reverting account. This money will be used for future capital and operational needs of The Commons to lessen the burden to the taxpayers of Columbus.

Programs at a Glance

In 2012, Columbus Parks & Recreation Department continued tracking the “hours of service” we provided to our users. This year, we provided over 3.4 million hours of service (the equivalent of 145,459 days) to users. This does not include casual use of our People Trails and parks which, while not measured, is considerable. Of the services provided by our Department, 38% of our users enjoyed a special event in one of our parks during the year, while 21% participated in a recreational day camp or class, 19% of our customers spent time participating in aquatics based activities at Donner Aquatic Center and Foundation for Youth, 11% participated in a public or private event or visited the playground at The Commons, 8% of customers spent time participating in athletics based activities at various facilities and 2% spent time at Hamilton Center Ice Arena. By using “hours of service” as a measure, we are able to compare all programming areas equally and can better measure the impact that Columbus Parks & Recreation Department has on the health and well-being of our citizens.



2012 Accomplishments

Park Operations

- Park Operations worked with 14 different volunteer groups representing 2,123 hours of service in the parks. Projects included putting flags on veteran's graves in the City Cemetery for Memorial Day, painting the stage at Donner Shelter, painting Donner Garage and the props for Sneakers at Starlight, cleanup at Mill Race Park, and picking up trash within the park system.
- Park Operations supported over 150 Department, Columbus Park Foundation and community events. These included the City Easter Egg Hunt, After Prom, Tour de Trails, Battle of the Bands, Rock The Park, Drive in Movie, Hospice Concert, numerous benefit running and walking events, Touch a Truck, benefit concerts, Sneakers at Starlight, park patrol requests and concerns, Ethnic Expo, Festival of Lights, and numerous athletic tournaments.
- Summer 2012 was the driest summer in recorded weather history. This was following an extremely dry 2011. Park Operations hauled over 160,000 gallons of water over the course of the summer to hundreds of newly planted trees. As a result, at the end of the summer, our losses of new trees were minimal.



Athletics

- 3,600 youth participated in baseball, soccer, sports camps, and our girls fast pitch softball league
- In 2012, over 4,500 adults participated in softball, kickball, volleyball, soccer and rugby
- This year, Columbus Parks and Recreation Department was host to 20 baseball girls fast pitch softball, and adult slow pitch softball tournaments, bringing over 10,500 visitors and millions of dollars in tourist revenue to our community



Columbus Gymnastics Center

- Registration for classes at Columbus Gymnastics Center increased from 952 to 1,203 enrolled for 2012 (a 27% increase)
- Our camps for 2012 were well attended, with 84 children enrolled in either cheer camps, gymnastics camps or tumbling camps, an increase from 2011 enrollment. These camps give us a great programming opportunity for hours during the day that were not being fully utilized during the summer
- Attendance at our “Flip & Dip” programs for 2012 attracted 49 more children in 2011. Co-sponsored by Foundation for Youth, children “flip” for an hour in the Gymnastics Center and then “dip” in the FFY pool for an hour. We also started monthly “Flip & Dips” for a group of local home school families in the last half of 2012. We anticipate attendance to continue to increase in 2013 due to the increased popularity of this program
- Birthday party rentals for 2012 increased almost 13% from 2011, with 192 rentals in 2012



Donner Aquatic Center

- Our American Red Cross Swim Lessons were once again well attended by 885 students this year, an increase over our previous record enrollment year in 2011
- Donner Aquatic Center was the host facility to the Central Zone Swim Meet for the first time in 2012, as well as the annual Jamie Miller Swim Meet in June and the Columbus Youth Triathlon, which enjoyed another record participation in its second year
- Columbus Parks and Recreation Department has reached an agreement to provide programming at the new Columbus East High School pool. Under the agreement, we are providing water polo this Fall and will be offering American Red Cross Lifeguarding and Water Safety Instructor classes during Winter 2013.
- Recreation and Aquatics staff joined forces to offer our Special Swim Program in 2012 to 16 local special needs youth. This program, which has been offered for over 50 years, allows for one-on-one swimming instruction for those with special physical and mental needs and continues to be a favorite among our users and staff

Hamilton Center Ice Arena

- Due to the change in the school calendar this year, Hamilton Center has implemented new mini camps, such as Princess Skates, additional variety camps, and spotlight skates. They had good participation, and will continue to grow as more people learn about them
- Our broomball league has grown to over 100 participants this year. They held their first tourney ever at the rink in 2012 and will host another in January 2013, attracting teams from all over the region
- Our Ice Extravaganza was a huge success this year, with over 160 adult and children skaters participating. This event grows every year and helps to attract new users to this unique facility



Recreation and Special Events

- The “Come Out & Play” free, supervised playground program for ages 6-12 once again had wonderful attendance this summer! Children visited this program 1,988 times during the 7 weeks it was offered. We also had an additional 270 visits by children at Ninth Street and Pence Street Parks. Children at Ninth Street and Pence Street Park playground sites continued to come for lunch, provided by BCSC, for an added two weeks after the regular playground program ended. Harrison Ridge saw a 31% increase in visits and Pence Street had a 6% increase in visits over 2011
- Field trips continue to be a popular draw during the summer playground program. We had an increase of 7% in attendance for the Tuesday field trips to the pool from Ninth Street and Pence Street Parks. Our Thursday field trips saw a slight decline from 473 children in 2011 to 465 in 2012, but were still well attended
- Summer 2012 saw the return of our drama camps, the result of a partnership with the Columbus North High School Theatre Department. Fortunately the construction at the Columbus North Auditorium had been completed enough to allow us to hold the camp this summer. We had a total of 89 children enrolled in these camps. Overall, day camp enrollments increased almost 38%, from 397 children in 2011 to 546 children in 2012
- Mill Race and Donner Parks continued to be popular venues for large and small community events. 52 community/family/special recreation events were held in one of these parks for 2012. This number does not include private events such as birthday parties and family reunions. Over 26,000 people attended these events in 2012

The Commons

- The Commons, open for its first full year this year, fulfilled its role as “the community’s living room” with 400 free uses of the Xenia S. Miller Conference Room, 137 events in public space (Nugent-Custer Performance Space, Upper and Lower Miller-Tangeman Lobby), with 30 of these events free to the public (ex. First Fridays for Families, Community Band Concert, Tri-County Expo), and played host to both the Franklin and combined Columbus East/North High School proms



- This fall we welcomed Snappy Tomato Pizza and Subway Restaurant back to The Commons, joining Puccini's and Scotty's Burger Joint, which opened in November 2011
- The James A Henderson playground, featuring the 40' high Luckey Climber, continues to be a popular destination for families

The Columbus Park Foundation

Overview

While thousands of citizens in Columbus are very familiar with the Columbus Parks and Recreation Department and the many parks and programs it provides, few are as familiar with a very important supporting entity that makes these possible – The Columbus Park Foundation. Founded in 1988, the Columbus Park Foundation's mission is “to aid and encourage the Department of Parks and Recreation in the acquisition, conservation and development of lands for park and recreational purposes; to secure long-term financial support, including an endowment fund for park and recreational projects; and to support participation in recreational programs through scholarships and other resources.” In short, this not-for-profit arm of the Department is in place to allow for alternative sources for funding for important improvements to parks and facilities that could not be funded by tax dollars alone.

The Columbus Park Foundation Board, led by Board President, David Hayward and Director of Projects and Resource Development, April Williams, began the year with the creation of a new brand identity for the Foundation. The new logo represents the four focus areas of the Foundation: People Trails, Parks and Park Facilities, Youth Scholarships and Endowment. With the new image came a new website, Facebook page and a video series entitled “What's Your Passion?” all to help guide donors in choosing their area of passion for growing Parks and Park Programs.

The new flagship project for this year was the People Trail Network Campaign, an effort led by several prominent community leaders to raise \$1 million to leverage an additional \$4 million to expand the existing 21 miles of People Trails to a larger people-powered network of multi-use trails, bike lanes, sharrows and other connections. The ultimate goal is to connect 90% of City residents within 3 blocks of a bicycle or



pedestrian facility. With a lead gift of \$250,000 from The Heritage Fund, the Community Foundation of Bartholomew County and gifts from businesses, foundations and individuals, the campaign reached its goal in pledged donations. Several projects have been completed and more are scheduled for 2013 and beyond.



2013 Goals

Overview

As the Foundation moves into 2013, it will turn its attention to raising much needed funds for several aging facilities, including Hamilton Center Ice Arena, Race2Play, a revitalization of four neighborhood playgrounds in partnership with Tony Stewart & Tony Stewart Foundation, Carter Oosterhouse Foundation/Sinclair Playgrounds, Tammy and Bob Burton – Haddad Foundation, Estep & Company/Jared Fogle Foundation, Elizabeth Ruddick Nugent Foundation, Clarence E. and Inez R. Custer Foundation, Hazel M. Teegarden Foundation, Columbus Regional Health Foundation, Coca-Cola Foundation and Victoria Craig Griffin, and raising additional funds for the Chuck Wilt Youth Scholarship Fund and Endowment Fund.