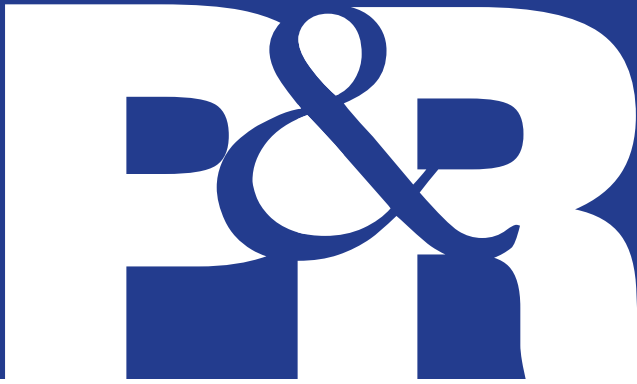


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PARKS AND RECREATION

The magazine of the Illinois Association of Park Districts and the Illinois Park and Recreation Association



community engagement

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FROM THE EDITOR

Checking the Pulse of Your Community

One of the things I love about getting to be a part of Illinois Parks and Recreation magazine is being able to connect with all of you with every issue we send out.



Connectivity is something that feels so deeply entrenched in any park district, forest preserve, conservation district, recreation, or special recreation agency. Every day you are reaching out to the people in your community to form bonds that bolster the work you do and create memories to last a lifetime.

This issue is shining a light on how your agency can create those bonds. Whether it's a simple pulse check on what your community cares about or its fine tuning the services you offer to make sure all residents are being heard, listening to those you serve can only make your agency operate that much better.

On page 20, Village of Hawthorn's Director of Parks and Recreation Brian Sullivan shares his life lessons on listening to a community and a few strategies to be more open to change in *Are You Listening?* Urbana Park District's Park Planner Kara Dudek-Mizel shares her agency's story of involving children in the creation of a playground in *Let's Get Creative with Community Input* on page 26. On the more technological side, Confluence's Senior Principal/Senior Vice President Terry Berkbuegler shares his company's perspective of creating spaces that draw visitors in who then share those experiences to create points of interest in *Designing for the Social Experience* on page 28. Finally, we share stories about creating calming spaces to meet accessibility needs in *Creating Calming Spaces Through Multi-Sensory Rooms* by the South East Association for Special Parks and Recreation on page 32, and *SootheSpace: Bringing Calm and Comfort to the Community* by the Fox Valley Special Recreation Association on page 34.

We hope these stories inspire you to actively listen to your community and adapt to meet the ever-changing needs of those who turn to you for their physical and mental health.

Thanks for reading!

— Wayne Utterback, Editor

Cover photo taken by JP McNamara, Palatine Park District, for the 2019 Give Us Your Best Photo Contest.



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GET ON **BOARD**



Calling All Park and Forest Preserve Commissioners and Trustees

Peter M. Murphy, Esq., CAE, IOM
IAPD President and CEO

January is the perfect month to hone your leadership skills at the IAPD/IPRA State Conference taking place January 26-28, 2023.

The largest state conference in the nation brings unequalled opportunities to learn about everything parks and recreation. Topics on governance and laws directly impacting your board services will be discussed. Add in an exhibit hall brimming with the latest park and recreation equipment and services and it equates to a one stop shop for you to stay at the top of your game.

Encourage your entire board to attend with you for a wonderful opportunity to build your team. Every park district budget includes resources for continuing education and this is the best way to maximize the use of those dollars.

Best Practices for Responding to Harassment and Discrimination Complaints

Date: 1/26/2023 | Time: 9:00 AM - 10:00 AM
How should an organization respond when an employee makes a complaint alleging workplace harassment or discrimination? Is an organization obligated to investigate a harassment or discrimination concern when the alleged victim does not wish to proceed with an investigation?

Land Acquisition for Park and Forest Preserve Districts

Date: 1/26/2023 | Time: 10:30 AM - 11:30 AM
This session covers the land acquisition process, from identifying the right parcels, negotiating essential business terms, seller incentives, due diligence essentials, and making the closing and post-closing simple.

Master the Power of Change

Date: 1/26/2023 | Time: 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM
In this session, one of North America's leading change agents lays out a step-by-step approach for successfully implementing change in a group or department. This user driven process will create a sense of ownership as well as highly effective plans that stakeholders will buy into.

Legal/Legislative, Part I

Date: 1/27/2023 | Time: 8:30 AM - 9:30 AM
Legal experts will discuss new laws and recent court decisions that affect park districts, conservation districts, forest preserves, recreation, and special recreation agencies.

Property Acquisition and Sale 101: Understanding the Ways to Acquire and Sell Real Property

Date: 1/27/2023 | Time: 8:30 AM - 9:30 AM
This session will explore the ways to acquire property ranging from a typical purchase, to donations, impact fee requirements and intergovernmental agreements.

Cyber Security & Video Surveillance Best Practices, How to Protect The Ship

Date: 1/27/2023 | Time: 8:30 AM - 9:30 AM
In this presentation, you will learn technology best practices for yourself and your organization. In addition, how a video surveillance system can help protect your facilities, staff and patrons will be addressed.

"Leadership and learning are indispensable to each other." – John F. Kennedy



Legal/Legislative, Part II

Date: 1/27/2023 | Time: 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM
Get familiar with the many new laws, regulations, and administrative and judicial decisions issued in 2022 affecting your operations. This session will explain recent developments in state and federal employment law, OMA, FOIA, constitutional rights (prayer, gender, flags, etc), tort immunity, and other new governance mandates affecting your agency's operations.

Board Member to Board Leader

Date: 1/27/2023 | Time: 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM
At the heart of every park board is a good-intentioned citizen who wants to give back to their community. If you're looking for a session that goes beyond the nuts and bolts and digs into real, meaningful, and applicable board topics, then look no further! This is just what you need to acquire new skills and energize yourself for a successful board tenure!

Public Meeting Best Practices: Dealing with Engaged, Passionate, and Sometimes Unruly Members of the Public

Date: 1/27/2023 | Time: 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM
This presentation will discuss the best practices for public meetings in the era of ultra-engaged citizenry.

Social Media and the Law: Facebook? Instagram? What Now?

Date: 1/27/2023 | Time: 3:45 PM - 4:45 PM
Julie Tappendorf, a local government attorney and author of the book "Social Media & Local Governments: Navigating the New Public Square," will discuss how to identify and navigate the legal issues that arise in park activities on social media.

Park Finance 101: Levying, Budgeting and Reporting

Date: 1/27/2023 | Time: 3:45 PM - 4:45 PM
Do your eyes cross when you read a tax levy ordinance? Can you understand your agency's budget and appropriation ordinance? What reports does your agency file every year? This session will answer these and other basic questions about park and recreation agency finances.

Are You Allowed to do That? What Local Government Leadership Must Know About Ethics Requirements

Date: 1/27/2023 | Time: 3:45 PM - 4:45 PM
This session will provide elected officials, officers, and employees with critical information on the Gift Ban Act, prohibited political activities, conflicts of interest, official misconduct, and executive session confidentiality.

Boardmanship Part I

Date: 1/27/2023 | Time: 3:45 PM - 4:45 PM
This session provides critical information every commissioner must know to be effective at meetings, including: agenda/public recital rules and problems, public comment rights and limits, rules and problems with remote attendance, special voting rules, small board rules of order, illegal meetings, the use (and abuse) of closed meetings, and keeping the PAC away.

Not in My Park: Regulating Controversial Park Activities

Date: 1/28/2023 | Time: 10:30 AM - 11:30 AM
What authority do park districts have to regulate contentious activities, while respecting the individual rights of park patrons? Participants will explore scenarios based on real cases, and vote on the topics they want to learn about most, including guns, alcohol, nudity, and more!

I'm On the Board, Who is Robert and What About His Rules?

Date: 1/28/2023 | Time: 10:30 AM - 11:30 AM
Members serve on a board to accomplish shared goals of an organization, but how does the board accomplish those goals if it has to spend time agreeing on rules?

Successful Intergovernmental Cooperation Revisited

Date: 1/28/2023 | Time: 10:30 AM - 11:30 AM
Collaboration amongst a city's multiple governmental agencies is crucial for the success of meeting the needs of the community. The session will identify a variety of opportunities that a collaborative team can utilize to share with the residents of your respective cities.

The Culture Code: Creating a Healthy Relationship Between Executive Directors and the Elected Officials

Date: 1/28/2023 | Time: 12:30 PM - 1:30 PM
Learn tips for a healthy working relationship with the board's employee and the executive director, and setting expectations that lead to successful outcomes on achieving the mission of the district.

Boardmanship Part II

Date: 1/28/2023 | Time: 12:30 PM - 1:30 PM
This session explores strategies for managing and responding to serious park board conflict, aggressive, manipulative commissioner political tactics, the hostile public, and methods for regaining public confidence. We will explore new and established law pertaining to censure, removal from office, relief for closed meeting misconduct, and the protection of your district's interests generally.

Illinois Open Meetings Act

Date: 1/28/2023 | Time: 12:30 PM - 1:30 PM
This presentation will discuss the basic requirements of the act: when is there a meeting; the pitfalls of the use of electronic communication; what should be on the agenda; what can or should be discussed in closed session; and the mechanics of closed session.

Social Media and Electronic Communications for the Candidate and Elected Official

Date: 1/28/2023 | Time: 2:00 PM - 3:00 PM
This session will explore the opportunities and risks related to use of social media, email, text and other forms of electronic communication regarding public business. This session will explain the rules and give practical advice on how to navigate this complex world.

Commissioner Roundtable - The Importance of Equity & Inclusion With Our Parks

Date: 1/28/2023 | Time: 2:00 PM - 3:00 PM
There will be a group of four to five park commissioners from throughout Illinois who will discuss topics and concerns surrounding the need to focus on equity and inclusion for all within our parks.

I look forward to seeing you all at the state conference. Until then have a wonderful holiday season and a happy and peaceful new year!



By Barbara Arango, CAE
IPRA Executive Director

Engaging Your Staff and Community Through Fun!

Instead of working for a living, how about having fun for a living? Even if you don't love every aspect of your job, it's important to remember to incorporate fun in your workday - for you and for your colleagues.

The world has become a pretty negative place of late. I suppose it was always there, but now with 24/7 news and social media at our fingertips, the negativity seems to be growing exponentially. Along with negativity is a growing sense of seriousness. Where's the silliness? The humor? The lightness of heart? As park district professionals looking for ways to deal with burnout and staff turnover, you can start by focusing on improving your culture and work environment.

Research shows the many benefits of humor and levity for people's mental and physical health. And this is true for the workplace as well. Start with incorporating fun into your agency to promote the well-being of your employees. Then take it to your community as a team. Fun is infectious and I believe you will be surprised at how quickly it catches on.

In their book, *Firms of Endearment*, Raj Sisodia, Jag Sheth and David Wolfe demonstrate the financial benefits organizations can reap by making sure they have a culture that includes fun. Look at Southwest Airlines for the perfect example, "Southwest's employees are introduced to the positive contribution that humor can make to easing customer's anxieties as well as to making work more fun." The antics by Southwest employees are legendary and create incredible brand loyalty.

So, it's good for your team and it's good for the bottom line - but how do we do it? Even in a "fun" industry like ours, we can all use a reminder to lighten up. Make humor a priority in your interactions with your team and transform your culture into one where people not only want to work but want to spread the love to others as well.

Put Fun on the Agenda

You've heard the saying, "Work Hard - Play Hard". It's well known that taking breaks can actually make you more productive. Your brain needs down time in order to perform at its best. Schedule some time for your team to bond over a fun activity or friendly competition. We do a monthly staff huddle that includes both work and fun on the agenda. Game ideas include "Two Truths and a Lie", "Would you Rather?" and "Never Have I Ever...". We not only end up laughing a lot, but we learn more about each other as well.

Research shows the many benefits of humor and levity for people's mental and physical health.



It's important to be consistent and incorporate your whole team. The work environment won't change overnight. And with many teammates working outside the office, you will need to make an effort to be inclusive. Include a mix of activities and humor in communications. Sign off team emails with a joke. Think about what makes you laugh and share it with your colleagues. If you spend some time brainstorming ideas, you can surely think of some new ways to bring fun to your team. Then enlist others to do the same. When you find something that works, we'd love to hear about it on IPRA Connect.

Use Levity of Voice

In our office we have one person that always finds the perfect meme to post on our Teams discussions. It threads humor throughout the workday. One of the priorities I communicated to my staff when I started this position was that I wanted us to laugh every day. It seems like a "fluffy"

requirement, but if you make fun a priority, your staff will feel more comfortable incorporating fun themselves. It lightens the mood in the office and greatly reduces the overall stress level.

Look for opportunities to use that levity in outside communications as well. Can you find some fun facts to post on social media? Or incorporate a contest for your residents? Where else can you provide opportunities for your community members to really enjoy themselves? Oftentimes we are focused on public health or education, which are vital aspects of our mission, but there's always room for more amusement in the world. Build a "fun space" and the community will come.

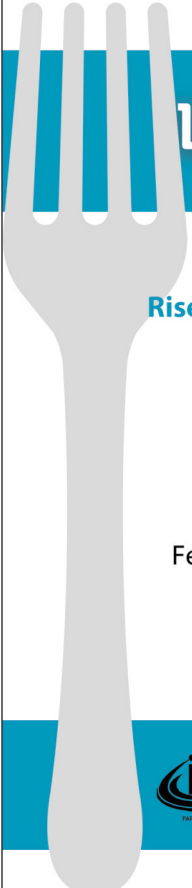
Lead by Example

If you are stressed, rushed or overly serious, your staff will not only pick up on that, but feel the same by association. There will always be a budget shortfall, a disgruntled resident or graffiti on the new playground. Don't let those challenges alter your demeanor. The people around you will mirror your mood, so start by taking deep breaths, relaxing and showing up every day with a great attitude.

Fun and laughter are both contagious. Show your staff you can enjoy work and even poke a little fun at yourself. And then your newly energized staff will provide an example for your residents.


When's the last time you visited your parks? Or the facilities of neighboring districts? Take some time to play on the swings like when you were a child and experience the enjoyment you bring to those in your community. It's a great reminder of your mission and how having fun can make you feel.

In an article for Harvard Business Review entitled "Why Work Should Be Fun", author Bob Nelson advocates for the importance of fun by stating, "Though fun at work is sometimes thought to be a distraction, research suggests that it has a positive impact on engagement, creativity, and purpose — increasing employee retention and reducing turnover." Keeping your employees and community happy is certainly going to produce dividends for your agency, but more importantly, in a world where we should all take better care of each other, it is also just the right thing to do.





LUNCH & LEARN

Rise of Message Based Communication
January 13, 2023 from 11:00am-12:00pm
presented by:



Build Your Fleet Dream Team
February 24, 2023 from 11:00am - 12:00pm
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By Duane Smith, CPRP
IPRA Education Director

Demographics: Key to Community Engagement

Parks, facilities, and programs are the three basic services offered by park and recreation agencies for individuals and the community, each providing numerous social and physiological benefits fundamental to a higher quality of life. These services function as a catalyst for individuals to engage and build trust with their local government and people within the community. With the US population becoming remarkably more diverse each year, this trust becomes increasingly more difficult to obtain because there are more distinctions to be realized. Thus, the case is made for the necessity to invest in resources that will identify key community demographics because it will induce an effort to review and expand on the current scope of services offered to people in your community.

As explained in the 6th Edition Certified Park & Recreation Professional (CPRP) Study Guide, there are different types of service user levels, ranging from 'high-user' to 'non-user'. Practitioners are taught the end goal is make everyone a high user of agency services, and that its more cost effective to focus on advancing light-to-medium users because they've already bought into the agency brand and trust the services afforded to them will meet their needs. In other words, common practice says time is money, and working with existing customers is easier and more cost effective than trying to fortify new relationships that theoretically will not provide the same return on investment. Unfortunately, neglecting non-users generally means excluding people from underserved and marginalized communities, thus contradicting the very essence of public service in providing places for health and well-being that are accessible by persons of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds.

Let's be clear, collecting demographic information is not new because its common practice for things such as program planning and capital development. The challenge here is intentionally immersing oneself into the non-user communities to better understand their needs. This

requires time and money, both precious resources on the heels of the COVID-19 pandemic, but it also requires one to be vulnerable and accepting to the fact that this work will challenge biases and necessitate some grace for oneself and others.

There is no one-size-fits-all approach because not all agencies have the same fiscal, physical, technological, and human resources, but that shouldn't discourage anyone from doing the work. Jessica Hersman at the Buffalo Grove Park District says her agency has used a variety of approaches to better understand their community demographics. She states, *"The Buffalo Grove Park District uses traditional methods such as surveys, and we are actively engaged with other community organizations. Communicating openly with businesses, schools, and places of worship have helped us gain a sense of the individuals we are serving, not just the groups."*

Jon Marquardt at the Skokie Park District says his agency has been able to expand its scope of service with a better foundational knowledge of its community demographics. Says Jon, *"The more you are visible in the community the better you are understanding it. The turtle doesn't know the world if he keeps his head in his shell. The more visible you are the more voices you hear. More voices lead to more ideas which lead to better programs and services."*

As we turn the corner into 2023, I challenge you to connect with your team to talk about the non-users in your community. Ask if you can identify those individuals and groups and what can be done to engage them in your parks, facilities, and programs. Make no mistake, this is a challenging task that requires you to be very intentional with your efforts, but understand it will result in a better understanding of your community and more diverse portfolio of opportunities for engagement. I'd say that's a worthwhile investment, wouldn't you agree?



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Jason Anselment
General Counsel

Upcoming Efficiency Report Presents a Unique Opportunity

During the past decade, IAPD has spent countless hours on the issue of local government consolidation. In addition to serving on the 2012-13 Local Government Consolidation Commission, attending every meeting of the 2015 Task Force on Local Government Consolidation and Unfunded Mandates, and closely monitoring and attending hearings on local government consolidation that were a focus of the General Assembly's 2019 Property Tax Task Force, we have also been actively engaged in a variety of legislative proposals on this important issue.

In recent years, a primary legislative threat has been the continued reintroduction of the so-called Citizens' Empowerment Act, which would allow just 5% of voters to initiate a referendum to dissolve any unit of local government and transfer all its property and other assets to another unit of government. IAPD was one of the only organizations to consistently oppose these bills and to testify against them on multiple occasions in committee hearings because we recognize the dangerous, long-term implications they could have for Illinois communities. Contrary to the title, the legislation provides no protections for citizens when it comes to their long-term investments in facilities, programs, and services and would instead place public assets and services at risk without providing citizens with any safeguards to protect those assets. Moreover, the claimed savings are purely hypothetical, as nothing in the legislation requires or guarantees savings to taxpayers; in fact, such initiatives could end up costing taxpayers more in the long run.

During the current 102nd General Assembly, we worked behind the scenes on another legislative proposal that was initially introduced as a local government consolidation bill. Originally proposed in 2021 as the Decennial Committees on Local Government Consolidation Act, HB 162 (Keicher, J. / Morrison, J.) was primarily focused on local government consolidation as its original title suggests. The bill required local governments to create committees to make recommendations on consolidation, allowed counties to appoint committee members, and imposed many burdens and other costs on local governments, including a mandatory public survey of at least 10% of residents to inquire about consolidation. Last year, IAPD worked with state legislators and another stakeholder organization to make several important changes to alleviate the most concerning portions

of the bill, shift the focus from consolidation to efficiency, and eliminate costly provisions such as the mandatory community survey. That bill passed the House but not the Senate in 2021, but it was then refiled this year by the Senate sponsor with our negotiated language.

Now known as the Decennial Committees on Local Government Efficiency Act, SB 3789 / Public Act 102-1088 (Morrison, J. / Carroll, J.) was passed by both chambers during the Spring Session with near unanimous approval and was signed into law this past June. As its new name suggests, the bill is now more appropriately focused on local government efficiency rather than consolidation. Although still an unfunded mandate, this law gives park districts, forest preserve districts, and conservation districts the ability to appoint the committee membership and provides an opportunity for these agencies to demonstrate the countless ways in which they efficiently and effectively deliver park, recreation, and conservation programs, facilities, and services to their residents.

To assist member agencies, IAPD has been working with members of the Joint Legislative Committee during the past several months to develop resources that member park districts, forest preserve districts, and conservation districts can use to formulate their reports.

The first of those resources is a list of frequently asked questions and answers about the new law.

Q: Who must form an Efficiency Committee?

A: Public Act 102-1088, also known as the Decennial Committees on Local Government Efficiency Act, requires units of local government that levy any tax, including park districts, forest preserve districts, and conservation districts, to form a committee to study local efficiencies. Municipalities and counties are exempt from the Act.

Q: When do we have to form a committee?

A: Units of local government must form a committee within one year after the Act's effective date. Because the Act took effect on June 10, 2022, each governmental unit must form its committee no later than June 10, 2023, and at least once every ten years thereafter.

Q: Who serves on the committee?

A: Each committee must include: (1) the elected or appointed members of the governing board of the governmental unit, (2) at least two residents of the governmental unit appointed by the board president and approved by the board, and (3) the chief executive officer or other officer of the governmental unit. The chairperson may also appoint additional members to the committee as he or she believes appropriate.

Committee members serve without compensation but may be reimbursed for incurred expenses with the approval of the governmental unit.

Q: Who chairs the committee?

A: The committee will be chaired by the board president or their designee.

Q: What are the duties of the committee?

A: Each committee must: (1) study the governmental unit's governing statutes, ordinances, rules, procedures, powers, jurisdiction, shared services, intergovernmental agreements, and interrelationships with other governmental units and the State of Illinois, (2) collect data, research, and analysis as necessary to prepare a written report that includes recommendations with respect to increased accountability and efficiency, and (3) provide a written report to the county board in which the governmental unit is located.

Q: What is the deadline for completing the report?

A: Each committee must provide a report to the county board in which the governmental unit is located no later than eighteen months after the formation of the committee. If a committee is formed on the last possible date (June 10, 2023), then the report would need to be provided to the county board no later than December 10, 2024.

Q: What other State laws apply to the committee?

A: Each committee is considered a public body to which provisions of the Freedom of Information Act and the Open Meetings Act (OMA) apply.

Q: How often must the committee meet?

A: The committee is required to meet at least three times. The committee may, but is not required to, meet during the regularly scheduled meeting of the governmental unit if the following conditions are met: (1) separate notice is given in conformance with the OMA, (2) the committee meeting is listed as part of the board of the governmental unit's regular meeting agenda, and (3) at least a majority of the members of the committee are present at the committee's meeting. However, because the committee's membership is not identical to the park board membership, the park board would want to adjourn or recess its regular meeting before convening a meeting of the committee.

Q: What are the requirements for each meeting of the committee?

A: Each meeting of the committee must be public and held in accordance with the OMA. The committee must provide an opportunity for any person to be heard at each meeting

for at least three minutes. At the conclusion of each meeting, the committee must conduct a survey of residents who attended the meeting and ask for input on matters discussed at the meeting. Pursuant to the OMA, all public bodies must keep written minutes of the meeting.

Q: What resources will IAPD provide to assist with the Act?

A: In addition to these FAQs and a corresponding fact sheet, IAPD is also preparing tools such a model resolution to form the committee and a comprehensive template that agencies may use as they prepare their report.

Although each agency will need to adapt the IAPD template to incorporate its own specific details, we will provide model language to complete some sections such as a General Overview of Governing Statutes, Ordinances, Rules, Procedures, Powers, and Jurisdiction. Even where specific examples may vary depending on a district, the template will provide lists of examples an agency may wish to include.

For example, to demonstrate its best practices we will provide a list of examples of policies, manuals, plans, and reports that an agency may want to cite. To demonstrate efficiency of operations, the template will offer descriptive language and also identify items such as intergovernmental agreements and other partnerships that illustrate how your agency avoids duplication of services and saves taxpayer dollars. A separate section on transparency will provide similar examples. The template even offers recommendations for increased accountability and efficiency that you may consider as your agency prepares its report.

As always, IAPD will also be available to answer questions from the membership.

Finally, the new law permits, but does not require, a committee to employ or use the services of specialists in public administration and governmental management and any other trained consultants, analysts, investigators, and assistants it considers appropriate.

Q: What happens once the report is provided to the county?

A: After the report is provided, the committee is dissolved until it is reestablished with newly appointed members in 10 years.

This new requirement offers park districts, forest preserve districts, and conservation districts a unique opportunity to demonstrate that their agency operates more efficiently and effectively than any other unit of government within the community. IAPD will provide resources that will not only help your agency satisfy its statutory obligations, but also help document the numerous reasons why your agency is the absolute best form of local government to deliver your services to the community. Ultimately, your report may provide a solid response to any future shortsighted proposal that suggests another form of local government could provide the same services at a lower cost.

Legal calendar 2023

Prepared by Peter M. Murphy, IAPD President/CEO & Jason A. Anselment, IAPD General Counsel

The following park district calendar includes key dates and duties based upon a fiscal year that begins on May 1 and ends on April 30. For those park districts that have adopted another date for the commencement of the fiscal year (70 ILCS 1205/4-4), this calendar must be adjusted for those duties that must be performed at times related to the fiscal year. The calendar is also established around regular park board meetings held on the third Thursday of each month. Selected election dates are based on the Consolidated Primary Election to be held on February 28, 2023, and the Consolidated Election to take place on April 4, 2023. For additional election dates, consult the Tools section of the IAPD website, ILparks.org.

This Legal Calendar was compiled by the Illinois Association of Park Districts as a resource for our members. It is not an exhaustive list of every law that may impact park districts or a substitute for individual legal research. As with any question requiring legal advice, you should contact your park district's attorney. For questions or additional information, you may also contact the IAPD.

All statutory references are to the Illinois Compiled Statutes (ILCS).

ANNUAL REQUIREMENTS

AT THE BEGINNING OF THE CALENDAR (OR FISCAL) YEAR:

- Post the date, time and place of park district regular meetings for the year. Mail copies to the news media. (5 ILCS 120/2.02)
- Review the requirement that all closed sessions are to be recorded verbatim by audio or video. (5 ILCS 120/2.06)
- Review the requirement that open meeting minutes must be approved within 30 days after the meeting or at the public body's second subsequent regular meeting, whichever is later, and made available for public inspection within 10 days after approval. (5 ILCS 120/2.06)
- Review the requirements that all Open Meetings Act and Freedom of Information Act officers must complete the Illinois Attorney General's annual training requirements. Newly appointed officers must complete the training within 30 days after designation or assuming the position. (5 ILCS 120/1.05; 5 ILCS 140/3.5(b))
- Review the requirement that newly elected or appointed members of a public body must successfully complete a course on the Open Meetings Act offered by the Illinois Association of Park Districts or the electronic training curriculum on the Open Meetings Act developed by the Illinois Attorney General's Public Access Counselor within 90 days of their oath of office or otherwise assuming their responsibilities if no oath is required. (5 ILCS 140/1.05)
- Review the requirement that all local governments with Internet websites are required to post on that website an email address for their

- elected officials for the public's use in contacting those officials and post a hyperlink on the local government's homepage to allow the public easy access to the contact information. (50 ILCS 205/20)
- Review with the park district treasurer the requirement that all funds of the district not immediately needed for disbursement must be invested within two working days at prevailing interest rates or better. (30 ILCS 225/1)
- Review the requirement that every person, other than the treasurer, receiving money for the district must keep a triplicate record of the money, and deliver the money to the treasurer not later than the middle of the month following the month of receipt. (30 ILCS 20/1)
- The American flag must be displayed and flown each day of the week from each City Hall or Village Hall and Village Square and at the principal entrance to all supervised public parks. (5 ILCS 465/3b)
- Contributions to the Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund (IMRF) must be deducted each pay period from covered employees' pay and remitted to the IMRF along with the contribution from the local government. (40 ILCS 5/7-132, 7-172, 7-173)
- Districts that have employees under Social Security must send their FICA contributions at such times as may be designated by the Internal Revenue Service. (40 ILCS 5/21-105.2, 21-109)
- Review the requirements that all newly hired employees must be reported to the Illinois Department of Employment Security. (820 ILCS 405/1801.1)
- For persons or entities required to report under the Lobbyist

- Registration Act, review reporting requirements for expenditures. (25 ILCS 170/6, 170/6.5)
- All employers must post a notice developed by the Illinois Department of Human Rights (IDHR) and include information concerning an employee's rights in any employee handbook. Samples of these required notices are available on the IDHR's website. 775 ILCS 5/2-102(K)
- For IMRF employers with a website, ensure that the district's website contains a hyperlink to the IMRF webpage that includes the statutorily required information pertaining to all participating municipalities (40 ILCS 5/7-135.5)
- Review the requirement that Illinois employers must provide sexual harassment prevention training to all employees at least once a year. (775 ILCS 5/2-109)
- All employers that provide group health insurance coverage to their employees must provide all eligible employees with a written list of covered benefits in a format that easily compares those covered benefits with the essential health insurance benefits that are required of individual health insurance coverage that is regulated by the state. The information must be provided upon hire, annually, and upon request, but the employer may do so by email or by providing the information on a website that an employee is able to regularly access.

EVERY SIX MONTHS

Unpublished written minutes of all closed meetings are to be reviewed at least every 6 months, or as soon thereafter as is practicable, taking into account the nature and meeting

schedule of the public body, to determine if (a) the need for confidentiality still exists as to all or part of those minutes, or (b) if the minutes or portions thereof no longer require confidential treatment and are available for public inspection. The results of the review are to be reported in the open session of the board of commissioners. (5 ILCS 120/2.06)

Check the IAPD database to verify that all information is up to date for your agency.

NOVEMBER 2022

NOVEMBER 3

First day notice of intention to file a petition to create a political subdivision, whose officers are to be elected rather than appointed, may be published in a newspaper within the proposed political subdivision, or if none, in a newspaper of general circulation within the proposed territory for the Consolidated Election. (10 ILCS 5/28-2(g))

NOVEMBER 28

Last day for filing petitions (must contain original sheets signed by voters and circulators) for referendum for the submission of questions of public policy (local) for the Consolidated Primary Election. [EXCEPTION: proposition to create a political subdivision, referendum held under the provisions of Article IX of the Liquor Control Act and Section 18-120 of the Property Tax Code. (10 ILCS 5/28-2, 28-6, 28-7)]

NOTE: Petitions to initiate back door referenda must be filed under the deadline specified in the specific statute authorizing the referenda, but in no case later than 92 days prior to the ensuing election.

DECEMBER 2022

DECEMBER 5

Last day to file objections to petitions for referenda for the submission of questions of public policy (local) for the Consolidated Primary Election. Objections to petitions for local referenda are filed with the same office in which the original petitions were filed. [EXCEPTION: proposition to create a political subdivision, referenda held under the provisions of Article IX of the Liquor Control Act, and Section 18-120 of the Property Tax Code.] (10 ILCS 5/10-8, 28-4)

DECEMBER 5

Last day notice of intention to file a petition to create a political subdivision, whose officers are to be elected rather than appointed, may be published in a newspaper within the proposed political subdivision, or if none, in a newspaper of general circulation within the proposed territory for the Consolidated Election. (10 ILCS 5/28-2(g))

DECEMBER 5

Last day to file petitions (must include original sheets signed by voters and circulators) to create a political subdivision with the appropriate officer or board (for park districts, circuit court clerk) for the Consolidated Election. (10 ILCS 5/28-2(b); 70 ILCS 1205/2-3)

NOTE: Objections can be filed on or before the date of the hearing with the appropriate circuit court clerk. (10 ILCS 5/28-4)

NOTE: If initial officers are to be elected at the election for creation of a new unit of government, candidates for such offices shall file nomination papers 113-106 days before such election (December 12-19, 2022). (10 ILCS 5/10-6)

NOTE: The circuit court clerk shall publish the hearing date for a public policy petition filed in his/her office not later than 14 days after the petition is actually filed, but at least 5 days before the actual hearing (final orders within 7 days of hearing). (10 ILCS 5/28-4)

NOTE: See the specific statute governing the unit of local government to be established for filing procedures. (10 ILCS 5/28-4)

DECEMBER 12

Last day for local governing boards to adopt a resolution or ordinance to allow a binding public question to appear on the ballot for the Consolidated Primary Election. (10 ILCS 5/28-2(c))

DECEMBER 12

Last day for county, municipal, school, township and park boards to authorize the placement of advisory referenda on the ballot by resolution for the Consolidated Primary Election. (10 ILCS 5/28-2(c); 55 ILCS 5/2-3002, 5-1005.5; 60 ILCS 1/30-205, 80-80; 65 ILCS 5/3.1-40-60; 70 ILCS 1205/8-30; 105 ILCS 5/9-1.5)

DECEMBER 12

Last day to file objections to petitions to create a political subdivision in the appropriate office where the petitions were originally filed (for park districts, circuit court clerk) for the Consolidated Election. (10 ILCS 5/10-8, 28-4; 70 ILCS 1205/2-3)

DECEMBER 12

First day for candidates to file in office of the local election official or board of election commissioners, original nomination papers (must contain original sheets signed by voters and circulators) for nonpartisan candidates in park districts and forest preserves for the Consolidated Election. (10 ILCS 5/10-6(2))

NOTE: Filing is between 113-106 days prior to the Consolidated Election. December 12, 2022 is the 113th day prior to that election and is the first day of filing in those offices which are open.

DECEMBER 19

Last day for candidates to file in the office of the local election official or board of election commissioners, original nomination papers (must contain original sheets signed by voters and circulators) for nonpartisan candidates for park district boards, forest preserve district boards, and road district, fire protection district, library district and municipal library boards, and school and community college boards for the Consolidated Election. (10 ILCS 5/10-6(2))

NOTE: The office in which petitions for nomination must be filed shall remain open for the receipt of such petitions until 5:00 P.M. on the last day of the filing period. (10 ILCS 5/1-4)

DECEMBER 22

Last day for the circuit court clerk and the local election official to certify any binding public question or advisory referenda to the election authority having jurisdiction over the political subdivision for the Consolidated Primary Election. (10 ILCS 5/28-5)

DECEMBER 27

Last day for filing objections to nomination papers for nonpartisan candidates (whose nomination papers were filed during the period December 12-19, 2022) in the office of the election authority or the local election official with whom the nomination papers were originally filed for the Consolidated Election. (10 ILCS 5/10-8)

NOTE: The objection period consists of five business days. If the office of the election authority or local election official is closed for days that would normally be business days other than Monday, December 26, 2022, they must extend the deadline for filing objections in their office.

JANUARY 2023

JANUARY 3

Last day for filing petitions (must contain original sheets signed by voters and circulators) for referenda for the submission of questions of public policy (local) for the Consolidated Election. [EXCEPTION: Proposition to create a political subdivision, referenda held under the provisions of Article IX of the Liquor Control Act, and Section 18-120 of the Property Tax Code. (10 ILCS 5/28-2, 28-6, 28-7)]

NOTE: Petitions to initiate back door referenda must be filed under the deadline specified in the specific statute authorizing the referenda, but in no case later than 92 days prior to the ensuing election.

JANUARY 10

Last day to file objections to petitions for referenda for the submission of questions of public policy (local) for the Consolidated Election. Objections to petitions for local referenda are filed with the same office in which the original petitions were filed. [EXCEPTION: Proposition to create a political subdivision, referenda held under the provisions of Article IX of the Liquor Control Act, and Section 18-120 of the Property Tax Code.] (10 ILCS 5/10-8, 28-4)

JANUARY 17

Last day for local governing boards to adopt a resolution or ordinance to allow a binding public question to appear on the ballot for the Consolidated Election. (10 ILCS 5/28-2(c))

JANUARY 17

Last day for county, municipal, township, school and park boards to authorize placement of advisory referenda on the ballot by resolution for the Consolidated Election. (10 ILCS 5/28-2(c); 55 ILCS 5/2-3002, 5-1005.5; 60 ILCS 1/30-205, 80-80; 65 ILCS 5/3.1-40-60; 70 ILCS 1205/8-30; 105 ILCS 5/9-1.5)

JANUARY 19

Regular January board meeting.

JANUARY 26

Last day for local election official to certify candidates and the offices they are filing for to the election authority for the Consolidated Election. (10 ILCS 5/10-15)

JANUARY 26

Last day for the circuit court clerk and the local election official to certify any binding public question or advisory referenda to the election authority having jurisdiction over the political subdivision for the Consolidated Election. (10 ILCS 5/28-5)

JANUARY 26-28

Attend the IAPD/IPRA Annual Conference, Hyatt Regency Chicago.

JANUARY 31

Last day to file with the chief county assessment officer for all tax exempt real estate an affidavit/certificate of exempt status stating whether there has been any change in the ownership or use of the exempt real estate and the nature of any such change to continue the exemption of park property from real estate taxes. (35 ILCS 200/15-10)

NOTE: Copies of leases or agreements related to exempt property that is leased, loaned or otherwise available for profit must be filed with the assessment officer. (35 ILCS 200-15-15)

FEBRUARY 2023

FEBRUARY 1

Last day by which the chief administrative officer or his or her designee for a unit of local government with persons described in items (a), (b) and (c) of Section 4A-101.5 of the Illinois Governmental Ethics Act shall certify to the appropriate county clerk a list of names and addresses of such persons who are required to file statements of economic interest. In preparing the lists, each chief administrative officer or his or her designee shall set out the names in alphabetical order. (5 ILCS 420/4A-106.5)

FEBRUARY 16

Regular February board meeting.

FEBRUARY 21

Last day for the election authority to publish a notice of any question of public policy to be voted upon within the jurisdiction at the Consolidated Primary Election. The notice shall also be given at least ten days before the date of the election by posting a copy of the notice at the principal office of the election authority. The local election official shall also post a copy of the notice at the principal office of the political or governmental subdivision, or if there is no principal office at the building in which the governing body of the political or governmental subdivision held its first meeting of the calendar year in which the referendum is being held. (10 ILCS 5/12-5)

FEBRUARY 28

Consolidated Primary Election

MARCH 2023

MARCH 16

Regular March board meeting

MARCH 27

Last day for the election authority to publish notice of the Consolidated Election. The notice must include the polling hours, and the offices for which candidates will be elected. Such notice must also include a list of precinct polling addresses unless published separately at least ten days prior to the Consolidated Election. (10 ILCS 5/12-4)

MARCH 27

Last day for the election authority to publish a notice of any question of public policy to be voted upon within its jurisdiction at the Consolidated Election. The notice shall also be given at least ten (10) days before the date of the election by posting a copy of the notice at the principal office of the election authority. The local election official shall also post a copy of the notice at the principal office of the political or governmental subdivision, or if there is no principal office at the building in which the governing body of the political or governmental subdivision held its first meeting of the calendar year in which the referendum is being held. (10 ILCS 5/12-5)

APRIL 2023

APRIL 1

Last day by which the county clerk of each county shall notify all persons whose names have been certified to him or her, other than candidates for office who have filed their statements with their nominating petitions, of the requirements for filing statements of economic interests. The Illinois Governmental Ethics Act, 5 ILCS 420/4A-101.5, requires the following persons to file verified written statements of economic interests: (a) Persons who are elected to office in a unit of local government, and candidates for nomination or election to that office; (b) Persons appointed to the governing board of a unit of local government and persons appointed to a board or commission of a unit of local government who have the authority to authorize the expenditure of public funds but not members of boards or commissions who function in an advisory capacity; (c) Persons who are employed by a unit of local government and are compensated for services as employees and not as independent contractors, and who:

1. are, or function as, the head of a department, division, bureau, authority or other administrative unit within the unit of local government, or who exercise similar authority within the unit of local government;

2. have direct supervisory authority over, or direct responsibility for the formulation, negotiation, issuance, or execution of contracts entered into by the unit of local government in the amount of \$1,000 or greater;

3. have authority to approve licenses and permits by the unit of local government (this item does not include employees who function in a ministerial capacity);

4. adjudicate, arbitrate, or decide any judicial or administrative proceeding, or review the adjudication, arbitration or decision of any judicial or administrative proceeding within the authority of the unit of local government;

5. have authority to issue or adopt rules and regulations within areas under the authority of the unit of local government; or

6. have supervisory responsibility for 20 or more employees of the unit of local government. (5 ILCS 420/4A-106.5; 5 ILCS 420/4A-101.5)

APRIL 3

The suggested date to prepare the budget and appropriation ordinance in tentative form and place on file for public inspection at least 30 days prior to final action. (All park districts are required to adopt a combined budget and appropriation ordinance within or before the first quarter of each fiscal year.) (70 ILCS 1205/4-4)

NOTE 1: IMRF employers must post on their website or at their principal office the total compensation package of employees with a total compensation of \$150,000 or more per year at least six days before the employer approves the total compensation package. The employer must also post the total compensation package within six business days after approving their budget for employees with a total compensation package in excess of \$75,000 or more. If the employer maintains a website, it may choose to post a physical copy of this information at the principal office of the employer in lieu of posting the information directly on the website, but the employer must post directions on the website on how to access the information. (5 ILCS 1207/3)

NOTE 2: Before an IMRF employer increases the earnings of an officer, executive or manager by more than 12 percent, the employer must obtain a "Pension Impact Statement" from the IMRF which states the effects of the salary increase on the employee's pension benefits. (40 ILCS 5/7-225)

APRIL 4

Consolidated Election

APRIL 20

Regular April board meeting.

APRIL 25

Last day for the county clerk or board of election commissioners to canvass the election results for the Consolidated Election. (10 ILCS 5/22-17)

APRIL 26

Register newly elected commissioners for IAPD Boot Camps. Commissioners will receive valuable information on the legal requirements of their new positions and will also successfully complete a course on the Open Meetings Act that is required within 90 days after they take their oath of office

MAY 2023

MAY 1

The last date for filing statements of economic interest for persons who have not previously filed during the calendar year. (5 ILCS 420/4A-105)

NOTE 1: Failure to file a statement of economic interests within the time prescribed shall not result in a fine or ineligibility for, or forfeiture of, office or position of employment, provided that the failure to file results from not being included for notification by the appropriate agency, clerk, secretary, officer or unit of government, and that a statement is filed within 30 days of actual notice of the failure to file. (5 ILCS 420/4A-105)

NOTE 2: All statements of economic interests shall be available for examination and copying by the public at all reasonable times. (5 ILCS 420/4A-106.5)

NOTE 3: Any person required to file a statement of economic interests who willfully files a false or incomplete statement shall be guilty of a Class A misdemeanor; provided, a filer's statement made in reasonable, good faith reliance on the guidance provided by the Illinois Secretary of State pursuant to Section 4A-102 or his or her ethics officer shall not constitute a willful false or incomplete statement. Failure to file a statement within the time prescribed shall result in ineligibility for, or forfeiture of, office or position of employment, as the case may be; provided, however, that if the notice of failure to file a statement of economic interests is not given by the county clerk, no forfeiture shall result if a statement is filed within 30 days of actual notice of the failure to file. (5 ILCS 420/4A-107)

NOTE 4: The county clerk with whom a statement is to be filed may, in his or her discretion, waive the late fees and penalties, and the ineligibility for or forfeiture of office or position for failure to file when the person's late filing of or failure to file is due to (i) serious or catastrophic illness that renders the person temporarily incapable of completing the statement or (ii) military service. (5 ILCS 420/4A-105)

MAY 1
(Beginning of new fiscal year.) The date to post the dates, times and places of park district regular meetings for the fiscal year. Mail copies to news media. (As an alternative, this can be done at the beginning of the calendar year.) (5 ILCS 120/2.02; 2.03)

MAY 1
The date to start the annual audit. Every governmental unit receiving revenues of \$850,000 or more is required to make an annual audit to cover the immediately preceding fiscal year. The audit must be completed and the audit report filed with the Illinois Comptroller within 180 days after the close of the fiscal year. All governmental units are also required to file a copy of the completed report with the county clerk. (50 ILCS 310/2 and 310/3)

NOTE 1: Any governmental unit receiving revenue of less than \$850,000 for any fiscal year is required to file a financial report with the Comptroller in lieu of an audit. Governmental units receiving revenue less than \$850,000 for any fiscal year must also provide copies of this annual financial report to each member of that governmental unit's governing board of elected officials and present it either in person or by a live phone or web connection during a public meeting and have the financial report approved by a 3/5 majority vote. Otherwise, that unit must cause an audit of the account to be made once every four years in addition to filing the annual financial report with the Comptroller.

NOTE 2: Any governmental unit receiving revenue of \$850,000 or more shall, in addition to complying with the audit requirements, file a financial report on forms required by the Comptroller. (50 ILCS 310/3)

NOTE 3: Pursuant to 50 ILCS 310/2 and 310/3, these reports must be submitted to the Comptroller electronically unless the governmental unit provides the Comptroller's Office with sufficient evidence that the reports cannot be filed electronically and the Comptroller waives the requirement.

MAY 1
The date to begin preparation of the Statement of Receipts and Disbursements. (30 ILCS 15/1)

MAY 1
Update IAPD with information pertaining to new commissioners and verify accuracy of other information.

MAY 2-3
Attend the IAPD Legislative Conference in Springfield. The Legislative Reception is held the evening of May 2 with the conference starting the next morning on May 3. May 2 is Parks Day at the Capitol with park district, forest preserve, conservation district and special recreation displays lining the Capitol Rotunda.

MAY 5
The suggested date to publish notice of public hearing on the budget and appropriation ordinance (must be done at least one week prior to hearing). (70 ILCS 1205/4-4)

MAY 18
Regular May board meeting. This is the suggested date to hold the public hearing on the budget and appropriation ordinance and the date for enacting the ordinance at the board meeting following the hearing. (70 ILCS 1205/4-4)

NOTE 1: The budget and appropriation ordinance must be made available in tentative form for public inspection at least 30 days prior to final action thereon.

NOTE 2: All taxing districts are also required to file a certified copy of their budget and appropriation ordinances with the county clerk within 30 days of adoption, as well as an estimate, certified by the district's chief fiscal officer, of revenues, by source, anticipated to be received by the taxing district in the following fiscal year. Failure of a district to file the required document will authorize the county clerk to refuse to extend the tax levy imposed by the governing authority until such documents are filed. (35 ILCS 200/18-50)

MAY 31
General Assembly scheduled to adjourn.

JUNE 2023

JUNE 15
Regular June board meeting.

JUNE 16
The last day for filing a copy of the district's budget and appropriation ordinance with the county clerk, as well as a certified estimate of revenue by source anticipated to be received in the following fiscal year (assuming a passage adoption date of May 18).

JULY 2023

JULY 1
Deadline to report to the Department of Human Rights specific information regarding any adverse judgment or administrative ruling, which found sexual harassment or unlawful discrimination in the employee's favor and against an employer during the preceding calendar. (775 ILCS 5/2-108)

JULY 20
Regular July board meeting.

AUGUST 2023

AUGUST 17
Regular August board meeting

SEPTEMBER 2023

A good month to review and update park district policies and ordinances.

SEPTEMBER 21
Regular September board meeting.

OCTOBER 2023

OCTOBER 1
The suggested date to review documents to determine which records can be destroyed. Permission of Local Records Commission required. See 50 ILCS 205/7 for authorization to digitize records. (50 ILCS 205/1)

OCTOBER 10-12
Attend the NRPA Congress in Dallas, Texas

OCTOBER 19
Regular October board meeting. Review non-referendum bonding needs preparatory to selling bonds before close of calendar year. (70 ILCS 1205/6-4)

NOTE: Before adopting any ordinance selling non-referendum general obligation bonds or limited bonds, the district must hold a public hearing concerning the intent to sell the bonds. Although the hearing may be part of a regular meeting, the ordinance authorizing the bonds may not be adopted for a period of seven days after the hearing. Notice of the hearing must be published not less than seven nor more than 30 days before the hearing. (30 ILCS 352/10, 352/15, 352/25)

OCTOBER 19
The suggested date for the board to determine the amount of money estimated to be necessary to be raised by the tax levy ordinance and to determine whether the funds to be raised exceed, by more than 105 percent of the amount, which has been extended or is estimated to be extended, upon the final aggregate levy of the preceding year. (This determination must be made at least 20 days prior to enactment of the levy ordinance.) (35 ILCS 200/18-60; 200/18-65)

NOTE 1: Local governments must file either a certificate of compliance or a certificate indicating the inapplicability of the Truth in Taxation Law with the tax levy ordinance filed with the county clerk. (35 ILCS 200/18-90)

NOTE 2: It is recommended that the park district attorney review all determinations and proceedings relating to this reference, which is the Truth in Taxation Law. (35 ILCS 200/18-55 *et seq.*)

OCTOBER 27

The last day to file annual audit report (or financial report if district received revenue of less than \$850,000) with the Illinois Comptroller and county clerk (within 180 days of close of fiscal year) and make a copy open to public inspection. Governmental units receiving revenue less than \$850,000 for any fiscal year must also provide copies of this annual financial report to each member of that governmental unit's governing board of elected officials and present it either in person or by a live phone or web connection during a public meeting and have the financial report approved by a 3/5 majority vote. Otherwise, that unit must cause an audit of the account to be made once every four years in addition to filing the annual financial report with the Comptroller. Any governmental unit receiving revenue of \$850,000 or more shall, in addition to complying with the audit requirements, file a financial report on forms required by the Comptroller. (50 ILCS 310/2; 310/3; 310/6)

NOTE: Pursuant to 50 ILCS 310/2 and 310/3, these reports must be submitted to the Comptroller electronically unless the governmental unit provides the Comptroller's Office with sufficient evidence that the report cannot be filed electronically and the Comptroller waives the requirement.

OCTOBER 31

The last day to publish the annual statement of receipts and disbursements and file a copy with the county clerk for districts on a May 1-April 30 fiscal year. In lieu of publishing the annual statement of receipts and disbursements, the district can publish a notice of availability of its audit report that includes the time period covered by the audit, the name of the firm conducting the audit, and the address and business hours where the audit may be publicly inspected. (Must be accomplished within six months after expiration of fiscal year.) (30 ILCS 15/1; 15/2)

NOVEMBER 2023

NOVEMBER 2

Attend the IAPD Legal Symposium at The Conference Center / Hyatt Lodge (formerly McDonald's University), Oak Brook

NOVEMBER 6

The suggested date to publish the notice of hearing (Truth in Taxation Law) if the district's proposed levy is greater than 105 percent of last year's extension or estimated extension. The notice must be published not more than 14 days, nor less than seven days prior to the date of the public hearing. Publication date assumes a hearing date of November 13-17, 2023. The notice must also be posted on the taxing district's website if the taxing district has a website that is maintained by the full-time staff of the taxing district. (35 ILCS 200/18-70; 200/18-75)

NOTE: The form of the notice is set forth in the Truth in Taxation Law. Be sure to check special publication requirements found in statute. Further, any notice that includes information in excess of that specified and required by the Act shall be considered an invalid notice. (35 ILCS 200/18-80)

NOVEMBER 16

Regular November board meeting and the suggested date to hold a hearing pursuant to the Truth in Taxation Law. (35 ILCS 200/18-55 *et seq.*)

NOVEMBER 16

The suggested date to enact a tax levy ordinance at the regular meeting following the Truth in Taxation hearing (if required).

DECEMBER 2023

DECEMBER 1

The suggested date to verify that, for real estate acquired in 2023, appropriate applications have been filed to exempt the real estate from real estate taxes. (35 ILCS 200/15-5)

DECEMBER 1

The suggested date to confirm that a certified copy of the levy ordinance was properly filed with the county clerk. (70 ILCS 1205/5-1 and 35 ILCS 200/18-15 require that a certified copy of the levy ordinance be filed with the county clerk not later than the last Tuesday in December.)

DECEMBER 1

(If levy ordinance was enacted on November 16, 2023) the last day to publish a Truth in Taxation notice if levy amounts as enacted exceed prior published figures, or if levy exceeds 105 percent of last year's extension and there was not prior publication. The notice must also be posted on the taxing district's website if the taxing district has a website that is maintained by the full-time staff of the taxing district. (Notice must be given within 15 days of the date the levy ordinance was enacted.) (35 ILCS 200/18-85)

DECEMBER 21

The regular December board meeting date and suggested date to enact a bond ordinance for non-referendum bonds to be issued prior to the end of the calendar year. (70 ILCS 1205/6-4)

DECEMBER 22

The suggested date to prepare and file with the Supervisor of Assessments the annual affidavit/certificate of exempt status stating whether there has been a change in the ownership or use of the district's exempt real estate and the nature of any such change to continue the exemption of park property from real estate taxes. (Last day for filing is January 31, 2024.) (35 ILCS 200/15-10)

DECEMBER 22

The suggested day by which bond ordinances should be filed with the county clerk in order to receive extensions of taxes for the payment of principal and interest on general obligation bonds or limited bonds for 2023 taxes collected in 2024. The filing must actually take place prior to March 1, 2024. (30 ILCS 350/16)

NOTE: This filing has no relationship to the General Tax Levy filed by park districts.

DECEMBER 26

The last day to: (a) file certified copy of tax levy ordinance with county clerk (70 ILCS 1205/5-1; 35 ILCS 200/18-15), and (b) file the board president's certificate of compliance with the county clerk. Beginning in 2022, the certification of levy and supplemental or supportive documentation may be submitted electronically pursuant to Public Act 102-0625. (35 ILCS 200/18-90)

NOTE 1: State statutes require a certified copy of the tax levy ordinance to be filed with the county clerk on or before the last Tuesday in December.

NOTE 2: State statute requires that all local governments file either a certificate of compliance or a certificate indicating the inapplicability of the Truth in Taxation Law with the certified copy of the tax levy ordinance filed with the county clerk.

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Anyone who has tried sitting on a two-legged stool knows it's a lot easier sitting on a stool with three legs. You might be asking yourself, what does this stool have to do with listening?

By **Brian Sullivan**

Director of Parks and Recreation, Village of Hawthorn Woods

ARE YOU Listening?

The legs represent the expectations vested parties have of leadership. In a leisure service agency, the two legs represent board and staff expectations, the third – community expectations. Relying on the board as the only proxy for community expectations may be subject to bias, while feedback from staff interactions with the public provides useful information but is limited representation. Without civic engagement in addition to the information provided by board and staff, fully understanding community expectations can be tricky.

Leisure service leadership is a balancing act between board wants, community needs, and staff hopes.

Fortunately, community expectations do not require the same attention as does staff and board expectations, but if ignored long enough they will disrupt your organization.

Engaging the community every 5 to 10 years when it's time to update the organization's master plan or conduct a formal needs assessment is a start, but could be better if understanding community expectations is a priority. It does not have to be difficult, nor excessively time-consuming to stay apprised of how your organization is living up to your communities' expectations for it. But it does take effort, belief in the value of engagement, and asking a few open-ended questions. To measure the receiving of information (ROI) effectively, calls for being able to listen to the responses (good and bad) without interrupting. This is not about informing the person you are talking to what your organization offers or plans to offer the community, it is meant to listen and learn what the other party has to offer and teach.



On a daily basis, your staff interacts with the public/users, **but do they engage them?** Simple things improve customer service when staff engages, eye contact, a smile, asking how they are doing today when greeting someone. Staff interacting with users should try to get feedback regarding their experiences, how was the workout today, etc. The information your staff collects should be relayed to leadership and the results shared with staff. Interacting with users is good customer service and provides user feedback as to the organization's ability to service their needs. If less than 100% of the community is interacting with either the board or staff, do you have full information without additional civic engagement? Unfortunately, randomly calling people within the community is not the most productive way to understand community expectations, particularly if a large percentage of the community does not have strong feelings one way or another about the organization. You are looking for feedback from influential/respected people within the community.

A leisure service agency that challenges itself to collaborate with the public as a partner will have a process of evaluating community satisfaction, along with strengthening its mission, vision, and values. Such a process will keep the agency on its way to:

- being well informed
- raising staff level of play and service delivery
- seeing things, it might have missed
- looking forward, helping it to proactively avoid trouble
- assigning resources efficiently

An effective public engagement campaign leads to a discussion of what is possible rather than simply what "is."

The following are a few suggestions for productive public engagement:

PUBLIC SECTOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT KEY COMPONENTS - 6 Cs for Success

1) CLARITY

- A)** Know what you want to achieve and what (mechanism/practice) you intend to utilize.
- B)** Be prepared to allocate necessary resources.
 - 1) Allot sufficient time to explanation of process as well as training of elected officials, staff, and volunteers (we found a Saturday morning workshop worked best where this was the sole item of discussion. Remember to post the workshop.)
 - 2) Key participant identification.

2) COMMUNICATION

- A)** Transparency of process and outcomes (Clear and concise).
- B)** Review of data with board and staff.
- C)** Develop Action Steps with timelines.
- D)** Assign responsibility.

3) CONTINUITY

- A)** Important to ensure engagement is ongoing. (You commit to doing this every so often, not just a one-time fling.)
- B)** It is normal for community/agency members to come and go, so your community engagement campaign plan/strategy must be able to withstand those transition periods.
- C)** Leadership must be willing to LISTEN not just hear the public concerns and comments.
- D)** Commit to taking action on the information gathered.

4) COLLABORATION

- A)** Community members feel a sense of connectedness when engaged, deepening community roots with the agency. Participants feel they are bettering the place they live, work, worship, and play.
- B)** Establish a genuine sense that the process is about caring and listening.
- C)** Establish a belief in participants does matter and further that their input will result in positive change and become reality.
- D)** Reiterate that the data collected is important to the agency and its ability to best serve the community.
- E)** Champion transparency and sharing all information collected across all departments and committees.
- F)** Continue relationship with key stakeholders on an ongoing basis.

5) CONSCIENCE

- A)** Develop a belief that your agency/participants local government, supports them as much as they support their community.
- B)** Keep your word to develop and maintain trust.
- C)** All participants in the process must be treated equally, with dignity, and respect. (Invite individuals to the process you may know have negative feelings about your agency, do not shy away from poor reviews of your service delivery.)

6) CELEBRATE

- A)** Annually invite/appraise the public of the findings from your ongoing listening campaign.
- B)** Acknowledge all participants/organizations.
- C)** Pledge to make changes as necessary based on the information received.

Engagement is crucial to guiding any decisions that affect the community. Our agency utilized these components to create a listening campaign for our community called *100 Cups of Coffee*.

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Thoughts on a Listening Campaign

By **Brian Sullivan**, Director of Parks and Recreation, Village of Hawthorn Woods
Robin Grooms, Sustainability Program Manager, Lake County

Our listening campaign, titled *100 Cups of Coffee*, is a way to understand the complexity of an issue, build relationships with key people and organizations, and discover opportunities for synergy. The campaign arose from an idea generated at this year's IAPD Leadership Institute from speaker Ian Hill on the need for community engagement on a personal level.

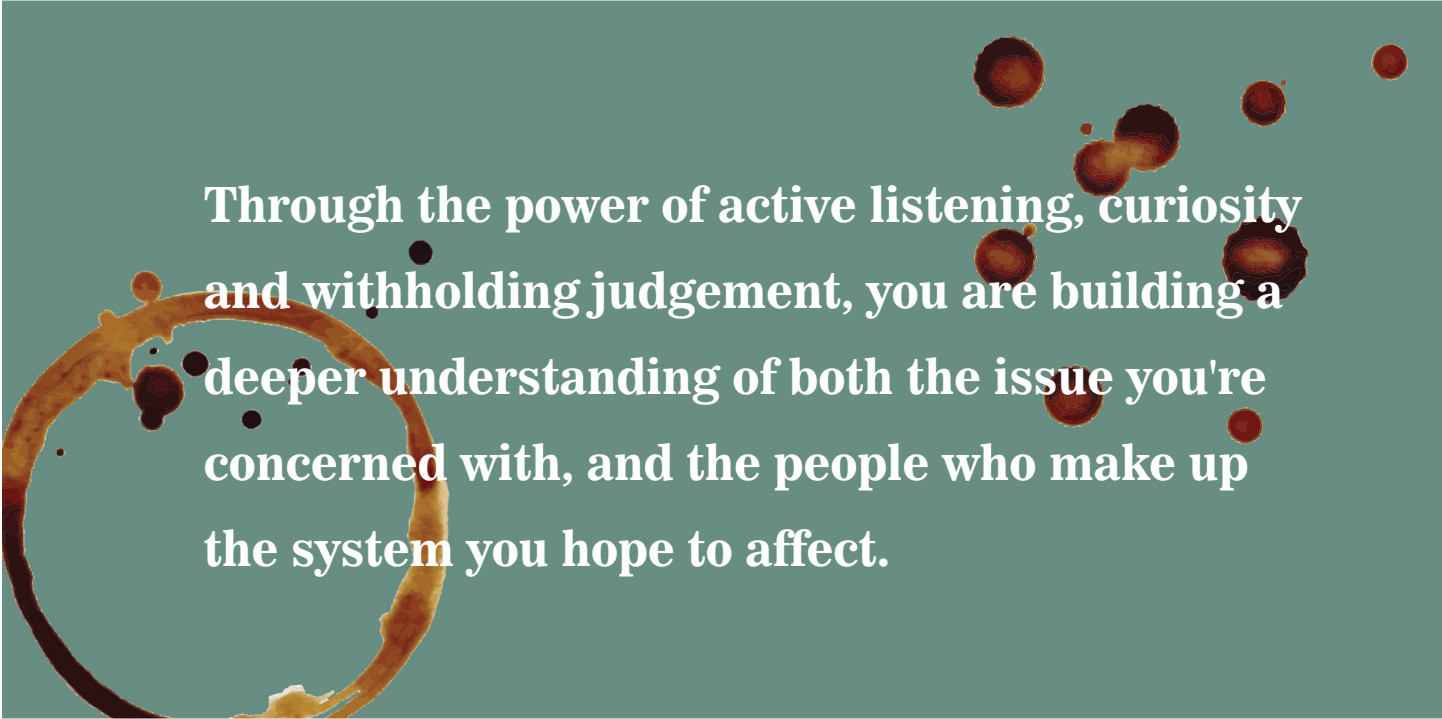
Make a list of people who care about or actively work to strengthen your community. Think of them as key influencers on social media. Who do people listen to or who makes decisions that impact your community? This could be educators, health care officials, community leaders, non-profit staff, day care providers, faith leaders, government elected officials, foundations, families, service groups, sports affiliates, or personnel/participants. Assign key staff and elected officials ten names with contact information. Ask them to start making coffee dates. Set a deadline (we used a 75-day window or two and 1/2 months), to complete brief summary reports from each coffee clutch discussion. Strangely, patterns and issues common through all meetings will emerge. A follow up

meeting of all parties organizes the collected data which is then reported at the next board meeting. The entire process should take about six months.

Questions to be asked:

- A) "What's working to support safe and engaging activities, events, or services?"
- B) "Where do our best intentions fall short, and why?"
- C) "If you had a magic wand, what would you change?"
- D) "How close are we to success?"
- E) "What can you bring to this work, and what do you need?"
- F) "Who's not involved in this issue, but should be?"

These are some of the questions we ask over coffee (could be a beer/wine, a walk, a meal, after church in the sanctuary etc.), and I let the conversation evolve as we



Through the power of active listening, curiosity and withholding judgement, you are building a deeper understanding of both the issue you're concerned with, and the people who make up the system you hope to affect.

talk. We phrase the questions to focus more on strengths than deficits – on what is possible rather than what is beyond our circles of influence. We keep it informal, no protocols or questionnaires. However, we ask our interviewers to take numerous, (wish I could think of a better word for numerous), notes, and or jot down bullet points, flow charts such as drawn pictures or diagrams with arrows showing relationships to illustrate what we are beginning to understand. In short, we're sense-making, co-creating an understanding of an issue, system or challenge. You may feel embarrassed to reveal what you don't know, or worry that you will ask a “dumb” question. Don't be. Most people love to talk about what they are passionate about, and we are all starved for opportunities to reflect on our work. Thoughtful questions, attentiveness and engagement can be very pleasant, even exciting, for both the guest and interviewer. Each conversation advances our knowledge of who we are and where we need to go.

Through the power of active listening, curiosity and withholding judgement, you are building a deeper understanding of both the issue you're concerned with, and the people who make up the system you hope to affect. You are also – most importantly – building trust, and communication bridges to be used in order to both send and retrieve information. Which is critical to any change effort.

As trust and understanding deepens, opportunities for collaboration and alignment can emerge.

Campaign Purpose

The purpose of *100 Cups of Coffee* campaign is to give a voice to often unengaged, easily dismissed, or too often left feeling disenfranchised without a champion or someone or place to turn to for help.

The intent is to set the stage for transformative change on the issues impacting your community vitality and livability.

100 Cups of Coffee Rules of Engagement

- To introduce questions on a topic of interest and listening without judgement.
- To gain a better understanding of people's concerns and priorities.
- To identify common ground between individuals and groups with differing or opposing views.
- Identification of new, creative grassroots solutions.
- To cultivate new leaders, organizers and activists, as well as a re-energize staff, officials, residents, patrons that conducted and participated in *100 Cups of Coffee*.
- Below is an illustration of a potential Summary Report Form. The simpler the better and the easier and less time consuming for interviewers to complete and return.
- By the third or fourth coffee meeting, interviewers are more at ease and find it an enjoyable encounter. Often, we found the selected interviewee suggests others to be contacted. In addition, we received calls from residents wishing to be involved.
- One very basic outcome emerges; we receive a contact list of key community influencers we can repeatedly utilize to effectively disseminate and collect information.

QUICK RECAP AND CHRONICLE FOR EACH CONVERSATION

Interviewer: _____ Date: _____

Participant First Name: _____ Last Name: _____

What they like to be called if not name: _____

Resident: _____ Non-Resident: _____

How Many Years: _____

Where do they Get Their Information (Circle all that Apply):

People Emails/Texts Social Media Church/Bulletin

Other _____

What do they think of our agency?:

A) Elected Officials: _____

B) Police: _____

C) Staff: _____

D) Parks: _____

E) Events: _____

Do they trust us: Yes _____ No _____

Why: _____

Do they use any of our: Yes _____ No _____

A) Facilities: _____

B) Services: _____

C) Programs: _____

Explanation if any: _____

How can our agency better serve you: _____

What do they think we need: _____

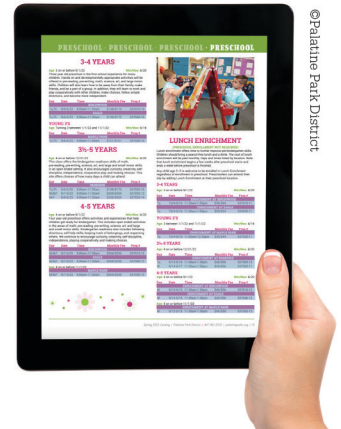
Do they recommend anyone else that we should speak with?: Yes _____ No _____

Name: _____

How can we reach them? _____

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LET'S GET CREATIVE WITH



By **Kara Dudek-Mizel**, AICP, Park Planner, Urbana Park District

Does your organization embrace community engagement? There is a difference between simply checking a box and engaging your community in a meaningful way. To really know our community and their needs, we must vary our outreach and take care to include underrepresented voices. Not everyone can attend an evening meeting at a specific location, and not all community members have the experience or internet access to fill out an online survey. The best approach to community engagement includes a variety of techniques and a little bit of fun.



On a playground replacement project, the Urbana Park District facilitated an imaginative activity for kids to design the next playground. Ready with poster paper, markers, glue, and a variety of real playground pieces directly out of catalogs, camp kids created a collage of their perfect playground. Since kids use the playground during their camps every day, they are the experts!

After the collage creation, park district staff were able to count which play pieces were most popular among kids and use that data to directly inform the design. Playground manufacturers submitted designs based on these parameters, and then it was time to take it back to kids for sticky dot voting. Kids voted for their favorite designs, and one rose to the top—but they thought the group swing from another design should be included. In the end, we were able to merge the two design and provide a much better product thanks to their insights!

Teens are another group often left out of planning processes, even though they have creative ideas. To pull them into a master planning process for a 14-acre park, Urbana Park District held a mini charrette at the middle school to collaborate on a mapping exercise. Teens learned about mapping and master planning, and then provided their input on what they would like to see in the park. It does not have to be complicated— you can use an aerial map and basic tools in Microsoft Word to facilitate the exercise. Not only do you gain valuable input, but maybe those teens will find a love of mapping or park planning along the way!

For the creation of our Strategic Plan 2020, the Urbana Park District took a multifaceted approach to reaching people. We were present at events around the community such as concerts in the park and the Farmer's Market. Here people could quickly jot down an answer to a white board

question (kids too!), or take more time to fill out a survey. A colorful prize wheel drew visitors in. Focus groups gathered more detailed input, and participants received a gift card for a grocery store in exchange for their time and information.

A particularly unique aspect of the Strategic Planning process was the graphic facilitation exercises. Throughout a community meeting, a local artist was actively drawing ideas and suggestions on a large 4 foot by 8 foot poster and creating art! Not only do people feel heard, but it also creates a poster you can hang in your recreation facilities to garner more enthusiasm for your projects.

Consider how your agency can bring multiple engagement strategies together to reach more people. Think beyond the basic community meeting with low attendance! The possibilities are abundant. If you create a survey, administer it in person and online. Create a quick “mad lib” style fill-in-the blank for input that feels more like fun than work.

If your project relates to a specific park or playground, go there and capture the audience you are looking to reach. Get kids engaged through schools, and adults through meetings that are actually fun. Record the meeting and post it online with a survey for those who could not make it. Talk directly with groups that are also advocating for your mission, such as accessibility and inclusion groups.

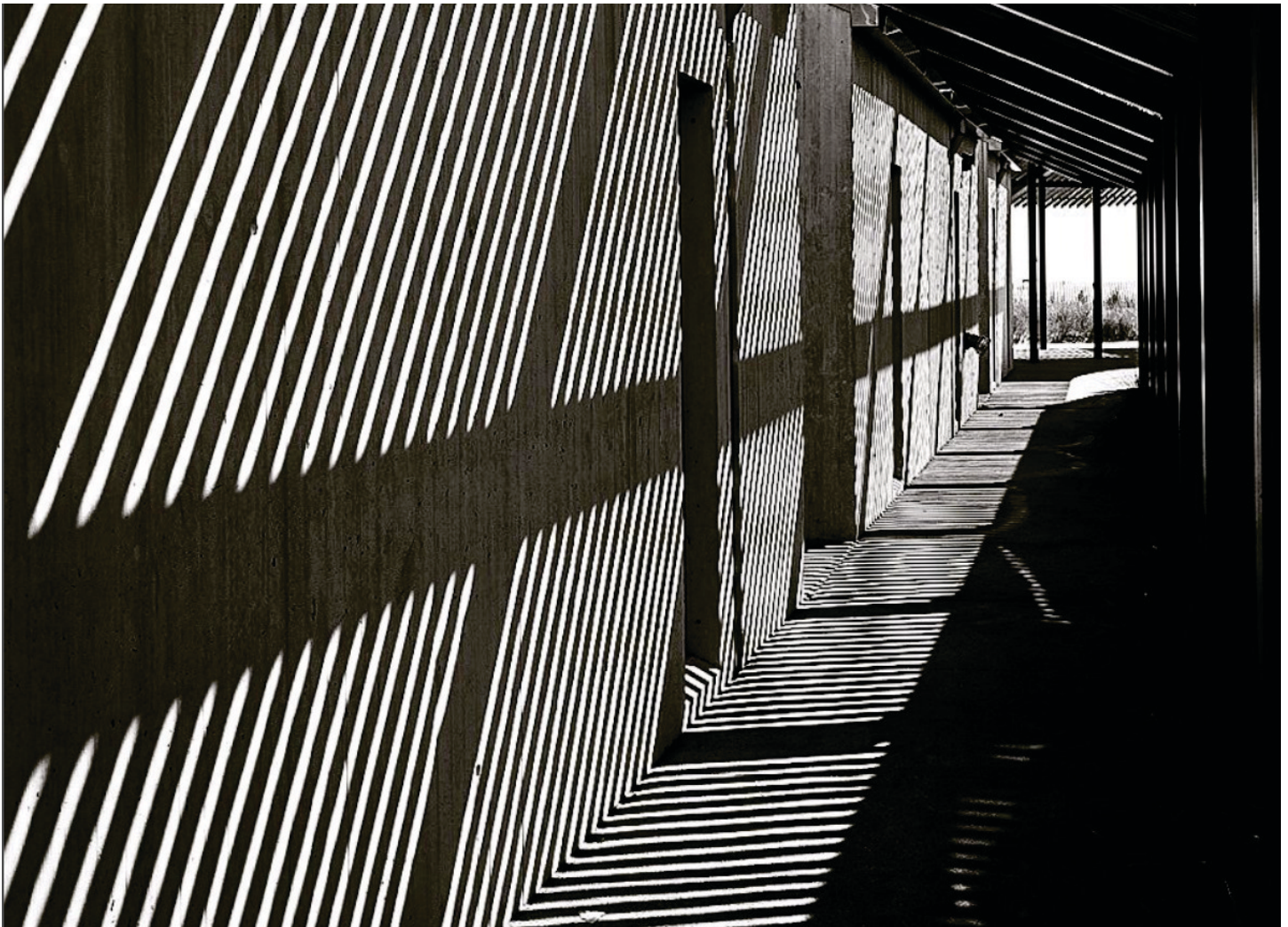
Utilizing your own agency's events and programs is a great way to go to where people are and helps draw more attention to the process. You can decide to get out from behind your desks and computers and interact with community members. This will not only gather more meaningful input, but also create trust and lasting relationships.



Designing For the Social Experience

By **Terry Berkbuegler**, Senior Principal / Senior Vice President & **Craig Soncrant**, Principal, Confluence

Before most of us decide to visit a new place, there's a good chance we'll do a little research. And we're not just googling a destination or looking at travel websites. We're often experiencing destinations for the first time via the images we see on social media.



Framed through the door of the beach house, the lakefront is finally revealed, providing a stunning – and instantly Instagrammable visual for park visitors.

Ninety-five million images are posted every day to Instagram. We're seeing photos posted by friends and family or perhaps looking at user reviews and photos on websites like Yelp. According to a 2019 study, fully 86% of people - and 92% of Gen Z – researched a destination after being inspired by other users' posts online. What we see online, according to a study out this year, directly influences where we decide to go.

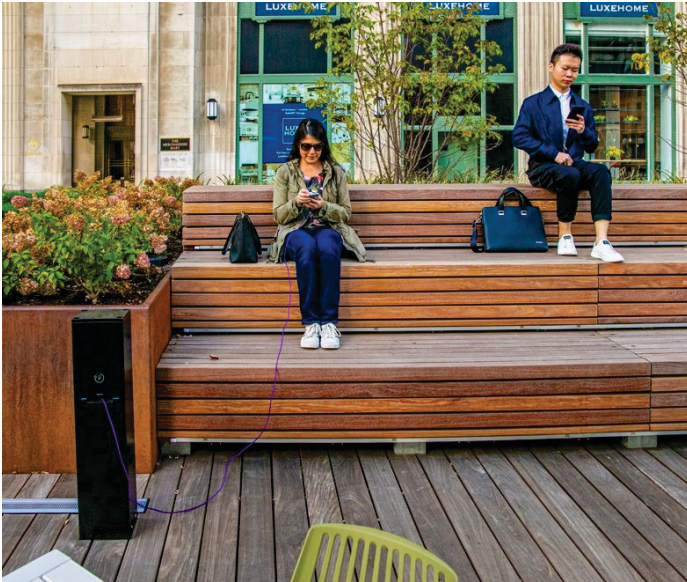
This shift in the way we experience (and share) places today offers an opportunity for landscape architects, designers and planners to more thoughtfully accommodate both virtual and physical placemaking into our design of parks and public spaces.

By understanding the audiences for a particular park or public space and curating the design to offer distinct memory points, we can elevate the experience of place and bring more people together in new ways.

At Gilson Park Beach House in Wilmette, our team at Confluence knew we were targeting primarily residents of Wilmette and secondarily, regional visitors – people from Evanston or up north. For a resident who is generally familiar with the area, the goal became creating special moments of discovery and providing spaces for families and groups of friends – the most likely audience for this park – to come together.

The special draw here is obviously the lakefront, so taking cues from resort design, we crafted the arrival sequence to reveal that element only at the end, creating a sense of anticipation.

The landscape through the entry sequence is naturalized, providing an intentional transition from the busy road into the tranquility of the park. From the parking, visitors are guided through the Woodhouse Tinucci-designed beach house to a carefully framed view – at last – of the beach and Lake Michigan beyond. While the beach may be local for visitors, the experience is made to feel special.



The park increases access to the Chicago River and marks an important spot for social engagement, creating a (digital) destination within the city.

The design is curated with the urban professional in mind. Terraced seating and outdoor workspaces allow visitors to multitask while enjoying the perfect vantage point overlooking the water. Lawn areas with freestanding furniture offer a spot to relax and an area to accommodate food trucks borders an adjacent dining area – perfect for grabbing lunch (and perhaps tagging the food truck vendor in a lunch pic).

Recognizing that the Gallery Park in Glenview draws families from all over the region, the design is crafted to provide out-of-the-ordinary gathering spaces alongside the adventure and educational play elements. From special events to everyday moments, the park is designed to frame particular views and experiences that feel like the kind of moment you want to capture.

For The Park at the Mart in Chicago, we transformed a 500+ foot swath of thoroughway into an urban park outside one of Chicago's most iconic buildings.

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Each location has its own unique sense of place – defined by the surrounding physical environment, the people utilizing the area, and daily activities. Ultimately, designing for the modern user is less about creating flashy #Instagram moments and more about helping users orchestrate unforgettable moments in their everyday experiences in the natural environment.

The key is for parks systems to view their assets through fresh eyes – to consider not just which programming elements they want to include or update in a park, but to understand how and where these elements are experienced in order to maximize user engagement and impact. With all that goes into getting a new park or a park refresh across the finish line, choreographing the sequencing within the park or optimizing the placement of various elements to offer the very best experience or view can, understandably, feel like more of a nice-to-have. This is a missed opportunity, given how increasingly ingrained the online experience is in our decision-making process and how deeply connected the online and in-person experiences are – particularly for younger generations. Keeping the interest and attention of the next generation will become even more critical in the coming years.

So how do you ensure the design is so thoughtful that the visitor feels compelled to return again and again (and ideally post about their experience)? Outside of working with a great landscape architecture, planning and design firm, the best advice we would give is to think about ways to build excitement. Rather than visually bombarding visitors with all of their options all at once, which provides instant gratification, but effectively shortens the amount of time any user will spend appreciating and considering each element, think about every moment from arrival as a slow build. When they are taken through each element on a thoughtful progression, there is more time to take in the view, appreciate the design and – ideally – to feel inspired to capture and share the experience.

This same approach can be applied to the selection of elements within the park. Rather than feeling you have to be all things to all people and cramming in a variety of elements, instead think about doing several high-impact elements impeccably. The experience you create with carefully selected elements will ultimately leave a more lasting impression than the kitchen-sink approach.

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CREATING CALMING SPACES THROUGH MULTI- SENSORY ROOMS

BY MATT CORSO

CTRS, CPRP, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, SOUTH EAST ASSOCIATION FOR SPECIAL PARKS AND RECREATION

MOLLY DOWNING

CTRS, RECREATION COORDINATOR, SOUTH EAST ASSOCIATION FOR SPECIAL PARKS AND RECREATION

Multi-sensory rooms are a great space and tool for individuals with autism, anxiety, sensory processing disorder, ADHD, and other disabilities to reset and recharge in a calming, relaxing, and accepting environment that incorporate the senses in a multitude of ways.

The journey with multi-sensory rooms for the South East Association for Special Parks and Recreation (SEASPAR) started with family inquiries about how to provide their children with a safe, calming, and fun environment that can assist them with everyday life. Staff research eventually led them to the Snoezelen concept of a sensory room and believed that a multi-sensory room would open many new possibilities in recreation.

BETWEEN BOTH MULTI-SENSORY ROOMS, SEASPAR OFFERS NUMEROUS PROGRAMS AND VISITS WITH LOCAL SCHOOLS TO SERVE HUNDREDS OF INDIVIDUALS EVERY YEAR WITH A VARIETY OF SPECIAL NEEDS.

The Snoezelen room concept is an integrative technique that incorporates the five senses and turns it into an individualized experience. Surveys were created and sent to families and organizations and results determined that the need for this type of a space was indeed real. The Lisle Park District offered space at their recreation center and with the cooperation and support the Lisle Park Board of Commissioners and the SEASPAR Board, capital funds were dedicated for the build-out costs, furniture, fixtures, and specialized equipment. SEASPAR also received funds from multiple legislators, a local business, and multiple service clubs.

The room, named Wonders, opened in 2014 and was one of the first sensory rooms built within a public recreation facility. In the eight years since, Wonders has been a huge success and very popular among SEASPAR families and groups that visit. Schools, private organizations, other special recreation associations, and community members have visited SEASPAR's Multi-Sensory Room spaces to learn about what makes them successful and how to duplicate them. As a result, multiple sensory rooms have now been opened throughout the area.

With Wonders being well received and the increase in popularity for sensory programs, SEASPAR started looking for space to build another Multi-Sensory Room. In 2019, opportunity arose when the Village of Western Springs had a tenant leave one of its facilities. As one of SEASPAR's member entities, they knew the goals, vision, and success that SEASPAR staff had with its Multi-Sensory Room and offered use of

dedicated space to provide access to SEASPAR's families that live within the eastern communities of its service area. With the support of the Village of Western Springs Board of Trustees and the SEASPAR Board, funds were again provided to build a second sensory room. Donations also were received from multiple families and a service club.

This second room, named Ray's Bay after long-time former SEASPAR Board Member and Western Springs resident Ray Jasica, opened its doors in 2020. During the planning process which included feedback from families who have experienced Wonders, the desire was to provide a new feel to this room and not have it designed exactly like Wonders. Ray's Bay has an aquatic theme to match its name, including an actual waterbed to mimic floating on water, with waves being projected on the bed and water sounds. While a few features are similar to those at Wonders, the unique aquatic theme brings a different experience to those who visit. Even though it opened during the pandemic, Ray's Bay has uplifted the community and all of the SEASPAR participants it serves.

Between both multi-sensory rooms, SEASPAR offers numerous programs and visits with local schools to serve hundreds of individuals every year with a variety of special needs. This was a true partnership of multiple public entities and their leaders, staff, family members, and most importantly, the residents who get to enjoy the benefits of these rooms.

Community engagement is how these rooms were developed and we can't wait to provide more opportunities to our community.

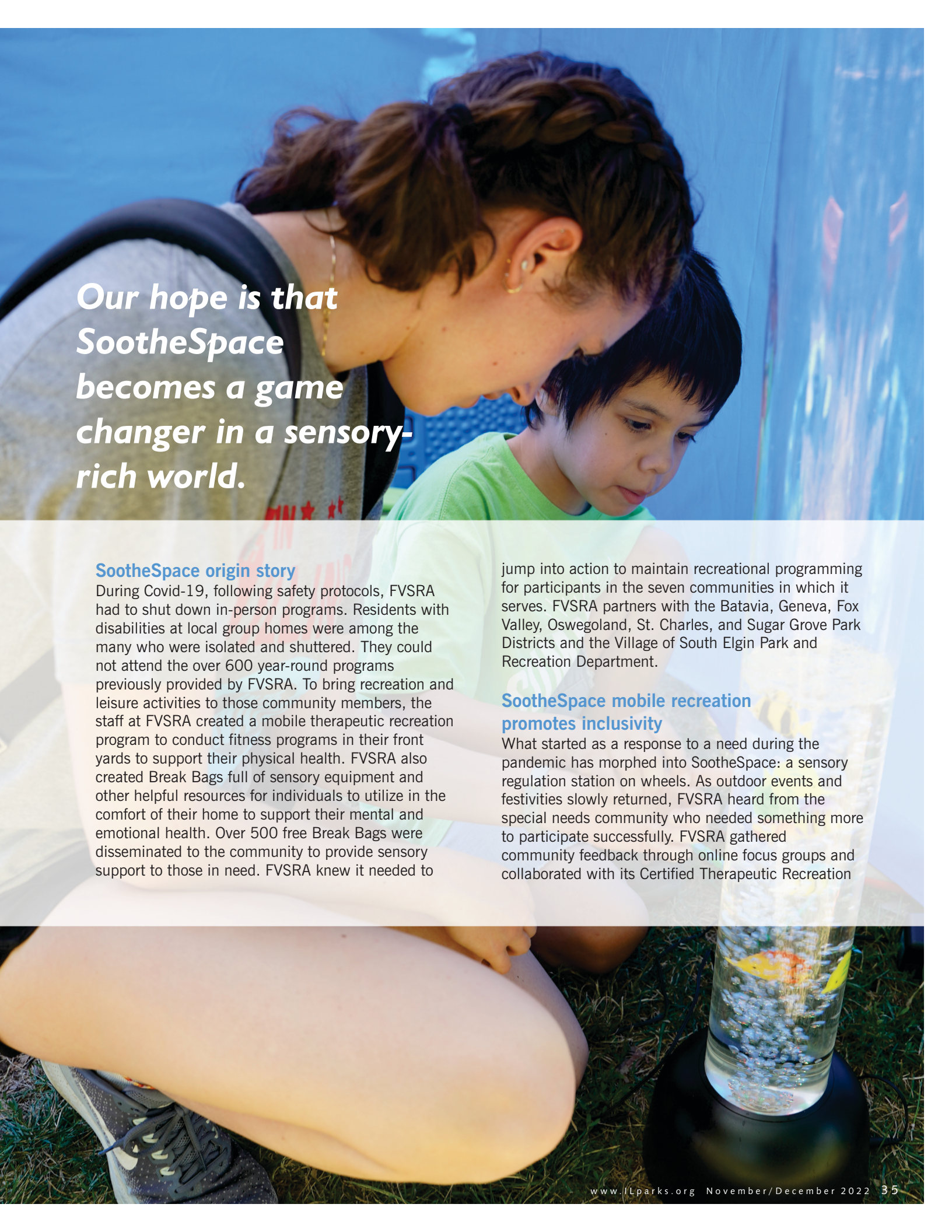


SootheSpace:

Bringing Calm and Comfort to the Community

By Alex Engelhardt, Executive Director, Fox Valley Special Recreation Association

Attending large community events and festivals can be overwhelming for anyone, and they are often incredibly taxing for people with disabilities. Imagine navigating the diverse array of sights, sounds, smells, and choices at a local event without having access to a space that promotes sensory regulation. With the new SootheSpace from Fox Valley Special Recreation Association, people with disabilities, and their family and friends, have a safe space to regroup, recharge, and then continue to enjoy the event.

A woman with a backpack and a young child are looking at a sensory station. The woman is wearing a grey hoodie and a backpack. The child is wearing a green shirt. They are both looking down at a clear cylindrical container filled with water and colorful beads, which is mounted on a black base. The background is a blue wall with some colorful patterns.

***Our hope is that
SootheSpace
becomes a game
changer in a sensory-
rich world.***

SootheSpace origin story

During Covid-19, following safety protocols, FVSRA had to shut down in-person programs. Residents with disabilities at local group homes were among the many who were isolated and shuttered. They could not attend the over 600 year-round programs previously provided by FVSRA. To bring recreation and leisure activities to those community members, the staff at FVSRA created a mobile therapeutic recreation program to conduct fitness programs in their front yards to support their physical health. FVSRA also created Break Bags full of sensory equipment and other helpful resources for individuals to utilize in the comfort of their home to support their mental and emotional health. Over 500 free Break Bags were disseminated to the community to provide sensory support to those in need. FVSRA knew it needed to

jump into action to maintain recreational programming for participants in the seven communities in which it serves. FVSRA partners with the Batavia, Geneva, Fox Valley, Oswegoland, St. Charles, and Sugar Grove Park Districts and the Village of South Elgin Park and Recreation Department.

SootheSpace mobile recreation promotes inclusivity

What started as a response to a need during the pandemic has morphed into SootheSpace: a sensory regulation station on wheels. As outdoor events and festivities slowly returned, FVSRA heard from the special needs community who needed something more to participate successfully. FVSRA gathered community feedback through online focus groups and collaborated with its Certified Therapeutic Recreation



*"It's as if you created [SootheSpace] just for my family. I wish you were at the pumpkin patch we visited yesterday. I hope to see you on many more of our family outings."
- Parent of three children*

Specialists (CTRS) team. FVSRA realized the mobile recreation concept combined with the sensory Break Bags could be the solution to making the events and festivals more welcoming to the disability community.

With \$100,000 in funding from the Fox Valley Special Recreation Foundation, the FVSRA team collaborated with a team at a5, a Chicago-based branding and digital firm, to develop and adopt the SootheSpace name and brand. Today, the portable programming concept is a fully operational inclusive program that the community can use and be proud of.

SootheSpace is equipped with sensory integration equipment and staffed by Certified Therapeutic Recreational Specialists (CTRS). The goal is for all community members to enjoy events and festivals, knowing there will be a safe space to regroup and recenter if there is sensory overload. FVSRA hopes that, in the near future, SootheSpace will be as common as first aid tents, so people of all abilities can maximize their enjoyment and attendance at community events without getting overstimulated or having to leave early.

SootheSpace cultivates a fresh take on accessibility

"Many festivals and carnivals offer a special needs pre-event hour," says Claire Howes, Superintendent of Recreation. "At FVSRA, we want to expand on this starting point and encourage the entire event to be inclusive and mindful of the community's various needs."

In just a few short months, SootheSpace has welcomed hundreds of visitors during its appearance at UnPlug Illinois Day in South Elgin and various events in Geneva, Aurora, St. Charles, Wheaton, and Elburn. Howes added, "Our SootheSpace tents let children who are sensitive to stimulation regulate by interacting with equipment and tools that support sensory integration." Weighted blankets, noise-canceling headphones, bubble tubes, mini trampolines, gel pads, fidgets, and body socks are just a few items housed in the SootheSpace tent.

We empower people with disabilities to live active, healthy, fulfilling lives

FVSRA is committed to making partner agencies' events and programs as accessible as possible for everyone. SootheSpace empowers and enables visitors to enjoy events on their own terms. To experience SootheSpace for yourself or to learn how you can create a SootheSpace in your community, visit www.fvsra.org/soothespace. To schedule SootheSpace, contact SootheSpace@fvsra.org.

PEOPLE & PLACES



Ken McEwen joins Plainfield Park District as new Director of Parks

The Plainfield Park District recently announced the hiring of **Ken McEwen** as the new director of parks.

Ken comes to Plainfield after serving as the parks maintenance manager at Bolingbrook Park District for the past 8+ years. At Bolingbrook, he was responsible for planning all daily activities for full-time and part-time employees covering maintenance for playgrounds and athletic fields for 50 park sites, which included 43 playgrounds, 26 ballfields, 22 soccer fields and seven football fields.

Prior to Bolingbrook, Ken was the assistant superintendent of parks at West Chicago Park District (2008-2014) where he planned, organized, researched, implemented and followed up on all projects ranging from playground construction to tree removal. He also oversaw maintenance for the aquatic center, while also creating schedules for maintenance of 13 park sites and snow removal for the entire district.

Ken began his career in the parks and recreation field as an intern at Bensenville Park District before becoming the athletic supervisor at West Chicago Park District (2005-2008). He was responsible for all youth and adult athletic programming at West Chicago, including planning, scheduling and administering the various programs.

Ken is a graduate of Western Illinois University with a bachelor's degree in recreation, park and tourism administration.



Nicole Vickers Named Executive Director of Geneva Park District

The Geneva Park District Board has named **Nicole Vickers** as the new executive director. Vickers has been employed with the district for the past 18 years, nine of those most recently as the superintendent of recreation.

Throughout nearly two decades of service, Vickers has achieved numerous accomplishments, ranging from assisting with acquisitions to guiding major renovation projects. She has held multiple supervisory positions at the park district, including aquatics and facilities. Vickers also has overseen the park district's introduction of a variety of programs, including special events, which have increased opportunities for residents and attributed to growth in program participation.

Vickers will assume her duties on Jan. 1, 2023.

WebXtra



In this issue's Web Xtra, the Wheeling Park District shares how it uses surveys, focus groups, and community awareness to deliver exceptional programs, events, and outdoor offerings to residents.

Looking for the latest Web Xtras, including additional employment announcements, park district stories and more? Check out the digital version of Illinois Parks & Recreation magazine, located at ILparks.org.



Sheavoun Lambillotte Retires as Executive Director of Geneva Park District

Sheavoun Lambillotte, executive director of the Geneva Park District, will retire on Dec. 31, 2022.

Lambillotte began her career at Geneva Park District in 1999 as superintendent of recreation. She was named executive director in 2009.

She has guided several projects of the district in scope and size. Some of the most notable include: the development of Hawks Hollow Nature Playground at Peck Farm Park; the creation and implementation of Kids' Zone, the Park District's before- and after-school program, in cooperation with Geneva CUSD 304; the development of Playhouse 38, the park district's community theater facility; and the development of the Community Garden at Prairie Green in cooperation with the City of Geneva and the Kane County Forest Preserve District.

Lambillotte was instrumental in securing more than \$1 million in grant funding for numerous projects throughout the park district, including \$400,000 for the Peck Farm North Trail Expansion. Under her leadership, the district received the NRPA National Excellence in Aquatics Award from the National Recreation and Park Association and three Distinguished Agency Accreditations (2010, 2015, 2020).

Other enhancements to the park district during Lambillotte's time at the helm include the acquisition of Mill Creek Pool, sprayground additions at Mill Creek and Sunset Community pools, and a museum grant for The Peck House with its new History Room, Gift Shop and Historic Front Porch.

Want to Read More?

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Want to submit news from your agency for People & Places?

E-mail information and jpegs to wutterback@ilparks.org. Jpegs should be 300 dpi at about 2 inches tall.

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