

PRESERVE. CONSERVE. EXPLORE.



A VISION FOR
LORAIN COUNTY
METRO PARKS



INTRODUCTION

Lorain County Metro Parks has grown in size and services over the last decade. The ever-changing landscape of Lorain County has required the park district to evolve its offerings and its dedication to preserving the county's best natural resources. The county, state, and world encountered unprecedented times with the introduction of the coronavirus pandemic in early 2020. Lorain County Metro Parks, along with parks across the state, became a respite from a rapidly spreading virus that endangered millions. The park district kicked into high gear, modifying established practices to ensure the safety of visitors and staff. During the pandemic, the park district saw record-setting numbers as our constituents rediscovered our green spaces and fresh air.

The pandemic has continued to impact lives even today. It has impacted the supply chain, production, costs, etc. This continues to affect the park district's work. The park district takes great pride in being fiscally responsible and that paid dividends as the park district weathered the pandemic, keeping its staff employed, pushing forward with the strategic plan, and accomplishing the goals set forth to Lorain County residents nearly a decade ago.

During that time, the park district partnered with the City of Elyria to renovate Cascade Park, including an impressive bridge over the Black River, a re-imagination and relocation of a historic barn in Oberlin, the addition of Cassell Reservation, many miles of connecting trails, and much more.

This work, in addition to annual maintenance items to aging facilities and parks, was done largely with the funds generated through a 1.6 mill tax levy passed in 2014. These funds account for nearly 70 percent of the park district's operating budget.



The Black River at Cascade Park



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A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

With great pride, we present the vision of Lorain County Metro Parks. On behalf of the Board of Park Commissioners, I am incredibly proud of the work accomplished for Lorain County and its residents. The park district has maintained its hallmark of clean and safe parks, while creating spaces and opportunities for citizens to recreate and experience the county's most precious natural resources.

Over the last few years, park visitation has grown more than 20 percent. This increase demonstrates the value Lorain County Metro Parks brings to its residents and communities. It is also a nod to the hard work of our dedicated staff. We appreciate the public's support through visitation, program participation, membership, and ultimately the passage of a tax levy every ten years.

During some of the world's darkest days amidst the coronavirus pandemic, our parks were a safe place to recharge physically and mentally. The work of the park district continued through this turbulent time in our history, delivering new parks, trails, programming, and experiences.

After a year-long process of surveying and public input, we are pleased the respondent's expectations for parks and corresponding services are higher than ever. We proudly report on the last decade of accomplishments and look to build on those successes to provide more opportunities in the future.

- **Kenneth M. Lieux, Chairman**

BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS:



Kenneth M. Lieux,
Chairman



Sherrill M. McLoda,
Vice Chairman



Joseph E. Hribar,
Commissioner

PROBATE COURT JUDGE:



James T. Walther,
Probate Court Judge



James E. Ziemnik,
Director/Secretary

A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

I am proud to offer our report that reflects upon our last 10 years of improving Lorain County's park district while sharing our thoughts and vision for the future. It has certainly been a great decade as the park district has continued to successfully preserve our precious natural resources and found new and exciting ways to serve our residents and the physical, mental, and recreational needs of the county.

I am privileged to serve as the park district's fourth director over the last 65 years. I am honored to follow in the footsteps of those who served before me, who were all guided by the principles set forth in the original 1961 regional plan. Its goal remains valid and relevant today: "Protect the best land, build quality parks, and maintain them at the highest quality."

We are certainly proud that as each year passes, we have been successful in following those principles, culminating in a first-class park district. Yet, we realize that we are not complete in our mission. In what has been a few turbulent economic years, we feel proud that, with the support of the residents and the leaders of this county, the park district was able to successfully move forward with achieving our goals.

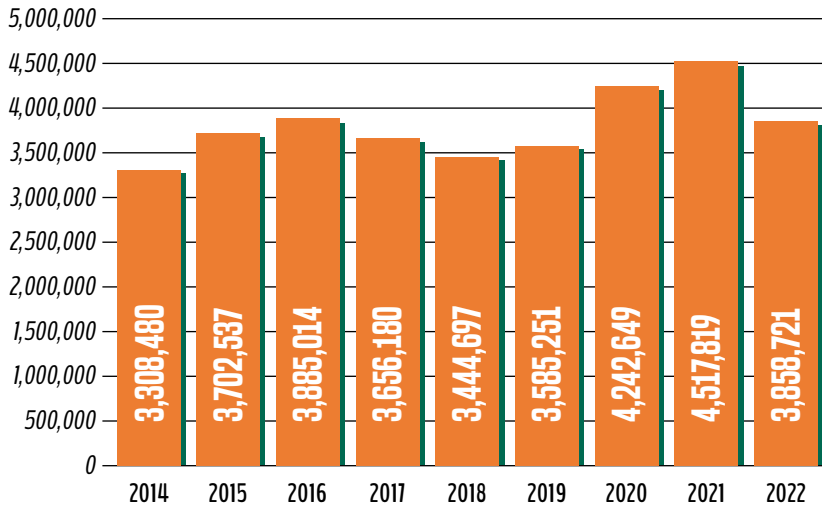
With an extremely dedicated and forward-thinking board, a talented staff, and committed volunteers, we have achieved many great things while preserving the integrity of our parks and natural resources. We deeply appreciate your unwavering support and look forward to your continued engagement and participation as we strive to make our park district exceptional.

- **James E. Ziemnik, Director/Secretary**

FACTS AND FIGURES

PARK VISITORS

Annual visitation to the Lorain County Metro Parks has increased from 3,308,480 in 2014 to 3,858,721 in 2022, with a significant spike at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.



On average, each public park was visited by **416.4** PEOPLE PER DAY

11,257
ACRES OF LAND

Lorain County Metro Parks
PROTECTS over 11,000 acres of land.

38
PARK PROPERTIES

The park district is comprised of public parks and reservations as well as preserved land, protecting some of the communities greatest natural resources.

65+ YEARS SERVING LORAIN COUNTY

Established in 1957, the Lorain County Metro Parks has been creating memories and preserving traditions for more than 65 years.

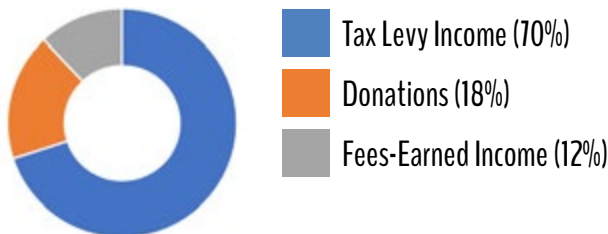


TRAILS

Lorain County Metro Parks has roughly 145 miles of trails (118 miles of multipurpose and 27 miles of designated water) for recreation.

FINANCIALS

2004-2013 REVENUES



2004-2013 EXPENSES

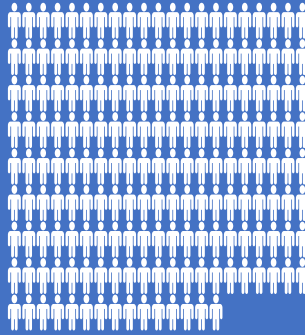


EMPLOYEES

The entire Lorain County Metro Parks team consists of full-time, part-time, and seasonal employees.



183 SEASONAL EMPLOYEES



1.6
MILL

The park district is supported by a 1.6-mill levy property tax, earned income, and a variety of donations and gifts. Capital improvements are financed by maintaining operating costs below annual revenues and utilizing grants, donations, and trusts.

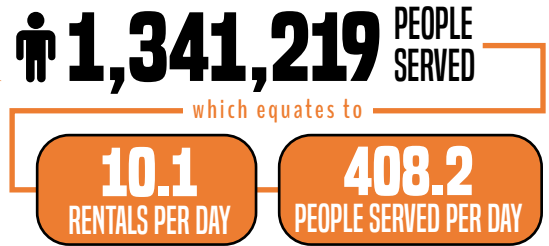
PROGRAMS

Environmental education programming is offered to the general public to create learning opportunities in the great outdoors. These programs are also offered by request to classrooms and groups.



RENTALS

The Lorain County Metro Parks offers picnic shelters, meeting rooms, and large event spaces available for rent to the public. From 2014-2022, park district facilities were rented 33,185 times, serving a total of 1,341,219 people.

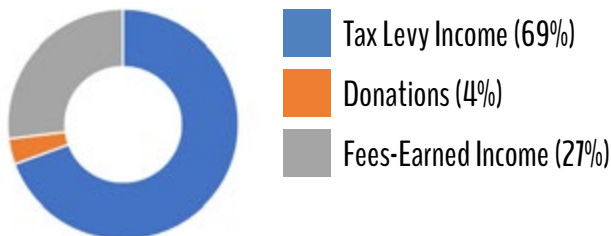


VOLUNTEERS

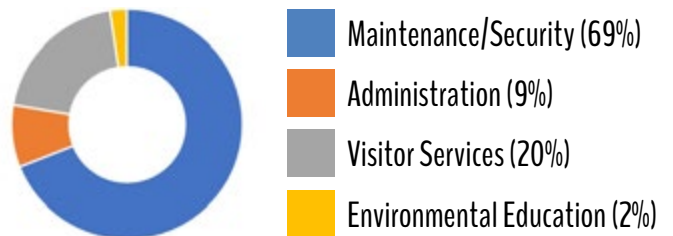
The Friends of Metro Parks in Lorain County, Inc. is the volunteer branch of the Lorain County Metro Parks. The Friends organization is currently comprised of 312 active volunteers assisting with programs, animal care, plant care, special events, gift shops, and more.



2014-2022 REVENUES



2014-2022 EXPENSES





ACCOMPLISHMENTS | 2014-2023

2014 1.6 mill levy passes

NEW PROJECTS:

- Black River Bikeway trail extension (4A)
- North Coast Inland Trail rest stop constructed
- Cassell Reservation expansion
- Indian Hollow Reservation expansion - Royal Oaks

RENOVATIONS:

- Rose Café kitchen renovation
- Forest Hills Golf Course hole no. 4 - new green
- Splash Zone locker room renovation

LAND ACQUISITION:

- Black River Reservation - 5 acres
- Miller Nature Preserve - 9 acres (Avon)
- Cascade Park - 145 acres (Elyria)

2015

NEW PROJECTS:

- Black River Bikeway Trail Extension (4B)
- Royal Oaks park and fitness trail constructed
- L.C.M.P. assumes operations at Cascade Park and develops Master Plan
- Kopf Family Reservation restrooms built
- Eagle cam installed at Sandy Ridge Reservation
- Dog Park at Splash Zone
- Kayak launch installed at Wellington Reservation
- Wellington Reservation Visitor Center pergola completed

RENOVATIONS:

- Carlisle Visitor Center Children's Play Space renovated
- Forest Hills Golf Course greens improvements
- Lakeview Park retaining wall improvements
- Lakeview Park boardwalk lighting upgrades
- Splash Zone fitness equipment upgraded
- Splash Zone field house and fitness room floors upgraded

LAND ACQUISITION:

- Indian Hollow Reservation - Royal Oaks (Grafton)
- The North Star Preserve - 11 acres (Oberlin)

2016

NEW PROJECTS:

- Extension of multi-use path from Amherst Beaver Creek Reservation across St. Rt. 2 to Amherst HealthPlex
- Dedication of General Quincy Adams Gillmore Ohio Historical Marker at Lakeview Park

RENOVATIONS:

- New wash bay installed at Central Maintenance Facility
- Carlisle Visitor Center lobby renovation
- 19 Acres picnic area at Cascade Park
- Playground safety surface installed at Splash Zone

2017 60th anniversary year

NEW PROJECTS:

- Henry's Barn at The North Star Preserve completed *(pictured below)*
- Multi-use path in Hollstein Reservation from Amherst HealthPlex north to the Beaver Creek
- Restroom facility at Vermilion Soccer Complex
- New restroom facility at Bacon Woods picnic area
- U.S. Rt. 20 section of the North Coast Inland Trail completed

RENOVATIONS:

- Forest Hills Golf Course renovated three greens

2018

NEW PROJECTS:

- Cromwell Trail extension in Lorain
- Black River Bikeway trail extension – 4C (Lorain and Elyria)
- 3-mile extension of the North Coast Inland Trail from Kipton to Wakeman along U.S. Rt. 20
- Paving of 1.3 miles of trail along the North Coast Inland Trail from Baird Road to Green Road
- Cascade Park renovated, Rotary playground opened

RENOVATIONS:

- Kopf Family Reservation Armour Road Trail repaved

LAND ACQUISITION:

- Brownhelm Reservation – 35 acres (Birmingham Twp.)
- The BUDMAR Farms Reservation – 11 acres (Amherst)
- The Oberlin Preserve – 43 acres (Oberlin)



Henry's Barn at The North Star Preserve
Photo Credit: Extraordinaire Photos

2019

NEW PROJECTS:

- Black River Bikeway trail extension (3B)
- Cassell Reservation trail
- Wildflower meadow at The North Star Preserve

RENOVATIONS:

- Carlisle Reservation - Nielsen Observatory addition
- Carlisle Reservation - Children's Nature Discovery Trail update
- Amherst HealthPlex parking lot extension
- Splash Zone roof replacement



Cascade Park bridge construction

2020

- March 2020 – Governor Mike DeWine shuts down the state of Ohio due to coronavirus (COVID-19)
- Halloween Fair and Holiday Lights transformed into drive-thru attractions due to COVID-19 restrictions
- Park visitation increases more than 20% to 4.2 M visitors

NEW PROJECTS:

- Black River Bikeway extension (3C) completed

RENOVATIONS:

- Amherst Beaver Creek Reservation - Brandt Street parking lot
- Black River Reservation - Bridgeway Trail re-decking
- Carlisle Reservation - Equestrian Center entrance road and parking lot repaved
- Central Maintenance Facility entrance repaved
- Forest Hills Golf Course - Parking lot and roadway repaved
- North Coast Inland Trail - culvert replacement between Albrecht and West River Roads in Elyria Township
- Sandy Ridge Reservation - Entrance road and parking lot repaved
- Splash Zone - Pool deck coping installed

LAND ACQUISITION:

- Cherry Ridge 9-hole Golf Course (Elyria)
- Century Park (Lorain)

2021

NEW PROJECTS:

- Black River Bikeway Extension (3C) Completed
- Transformation Trail at Amherst Beaver Creek Reservation completed
- Kopf Family Golf Course at Cherry Ridge opens
- Raptor Center Amphitheater constructed
- Bridge over Black River connecting Cascade and Elywood parks (*pictured above*)
- New butterfly house constructed at Miller Nature Preserve
- North Coast Inland Trail mile markers placed every 1/2-mile from Black River Reservation to the Huron Co. line

RENOVATIONS:

- New gravel parking lot constructed at Cassell Reservation
- Drainage repaired and replaced at Forest Hills Golf Course
- Burrell Homestead roof replaced
- The North Star Preserve parking lot paved
- Carlisle Visitor Center entrance road and parking lot repaved
- Amherst HealthPlex - Defective roof replaced over therapy pool
- Black River Reservation - Bridgeway Trail bridge re-decking

- Lakeview Park - Sidewalks constructed from Easter Basket to beach
- Lakeview Park - Replaced concrete stairs at Sunset Terrace entrance
- Vermilion River Reservation - New roof on maintenance barn

LAND ACQUISITION:

- Burcl Property - Cassell Reservation (Vermilion)
- Cedar Tree (Sheffield Village)
- Dorlon (Columbia Station)
- Michael's Locust Park (Lorain)
- VIE Estates (Sheffield Village)

2022

NEW PROJECTS:

- Implementation of new reservation software (CivicRec) for program and facility reservations
- Avon Wetlands

RENOVATIONS:

- Amherst HealthPlex - Defective roof replaced over natatorium

2023

NEW PROJECTS:

- Cassell Reservation opened
- Kopf Family Reservation - New playground built



STATUS OF THE 2014 REPORT

In 2014, the park district published its last strategic plan to the community with detailed goals and objectives. The district adopted five goals and 16 recommendations. The Board of Park Commissioners is proud to announce that the goals and recommendations have been accomplished.



GOAL 1:

To preserve and sustain the unique environmental habitats throughout Lorain County while responding to the needs of the citizens into the future.

At the time of this report, the park district maintains more than 11,000 acres of land. Over the last 10 years, 2,000 acres was added to the district through acquisition and land donations. With those acquisitions, the park district was able to identify and protect some of Lorain County's greatest, and in some cases, rarest natural resources.

Over the past 10 years the Lorain County Metro Parks has evaluated numerous properties as potential acquisitions and assisted in obtaining several properties through grants. Much of the park district's day-to-day work consists of steering plant communities through management and by the control of invasive species.



GOAL 2:

To further develop partnerships with communities to improve quality of life issues through economic development and protection of natural assets.

To ensure the citizens of the county have access to comprehensive experiences and resources, the Lorain County Metro Parks is a collaborative partner with many organizations like United Way of Lorain County, Lorain County Public Health, the Mental Health Recovery and Services Board of Lorain County, Western Reserve Land Conservatory, and local Rotary organizations among many others. Additionally, the Park District collaborates with municipalities to make sure community conservation needs are elevated to offset environmental impacts from development.



GOAL 3:

To meet the wide diversity of recreational, environmental, health and educational requirements of the public.

The park district offers a variety of natural resource and recreation programming every year. These programs are offered to the public as well as local schools and organizations through our requested programs initiative. The district's recreation centers, splash pads, as well as access to the county's finest waterways have provided opportunities to enjoy recreation opportunities year-round.

Despite the pandemic, the park district still managed to offer public programs and recreational opportunities. The programming staff pivoted to creating self-guided park experiences and digital learning opportunities. Families were also offered Yours2Explore learning boxes that were filled with resources and tools to experience nature in their own backyards.





GOAL 4:
To sustain safe, well-maintained facilities, accessible to everyone.

Clean and safe parks are the hallmark of Lorain County Metro Parks. As the district celebrated its 65th Anniversary, a significant amount of resources have been spent on upgrading roadways, trails, and aging shelters and facilities.

A public survey conducted in 2022 consistently demonstrates that safety remains a top priority for the park district. Our staff currently includes 14 full-time rangers that have a presence throughout the parks. As part of daily patrols, rangers are responsible to protect our park visitors, as well as the precious natural resources within each park.

The park district has continued its commitment to provide accessible recreation. The park district collaborated with Elyria Rotary to fund an inclusive playground at Cascade Park. This, like Amherst HealthPlex's Inclusive Playground, allows individuals with disabilities to play alongside others with no barriers.



Ranger at Trunk-or-Treat event



GOAL 5:
To connect parks and communities through physical improvements thereby creating greater opportunities for collaboration.

Over the last decade, the Park District has connected over 29 miles of trail that now makes up the Black River Bikeway/North Coast Inland Trail. Through collaboration with the Lorain Port Authority, mile marker 0.0 was established in 2018. Piece by piece the Black River Bikeway was constructed giving visitors the opportunity to traverse the county from the northern most point in Lorain to the Lorain County border in Wakeman.

Additional connections were made to existing parks, including the Amherst Beaver Creek Connector, linking Amherst Beaver Creek Reservation and Hollstein Reservation; Huron Bike Route 20, connections from Black River Reservation in and through Cascade Park. This park land and corresponding trail system give greater connectivity and access between the communities and their respective metro parks. This initiative also creates longer recreational experiences when visiting a metro park.



North Coast Inland Trail mile marker 0.0



2014 RECOMMENDATIONS



FISCAL – ACCOMPLISHED

- To pursue partnerships and alternative funding sources for both capital improvements and special events.
- To maintain the 65-year history of outstanding state audit reports and fiscal accountability.



OPERATIONS – ACCOMPLISHED

- To maintain and exceed the public approval ratings achieved in current park surveys.
- To encourage Friends of Metro Parks in Lorain County, Inc. to continue and expand their efforts and accomplishments with great enthusiasm and success.
- To maintain the quality, safety, and accessibility of existing facilities.
- To meet Lorain County citizens' demand for increased environmental and recreational opportunities through connectivity and partnerships.
- To encourage healthy initiatives through collaborations, education, and recreational opportunities.
- To continue cultural and educational offerings throughout Lorain County Metro Parks facilities to foster an environment for growth.



LAND ACQUISITION – ACCOMPLISHED

- To maintain and access land acquisition funds through partnerships, scenic easements, and donations.
- To preserve and protect the outstanding natural resources of Lorain County.
- To make progress toward the original 1961 Regional Plan while adjusting for the countless changes in our county.



CAPITAL – ACCOMPLISHED

- To continue the renovation of Cascade Park in Elyria, to maintain its county-wide significance through recreation, history, education, and preservation.
- To connect parks throughout Lorain County to encourage community interactions and public/private partnerships while pursuing county-wide recreational needs.
- To identify and encourage lakefront development and preservation, explore river corridors and inland water resources to encourage greater opportunities for water recreation.
- To pursue historical preservation of key Lorain County landmarks associated with the park district.



Kayaking program at Wellington Reservation



GIFTS AND DONATIONS | 2014-2023

GRANTS

COMMUNITY FOUNDATION GRANTS

- WeSwim
- Mind Your Health Swinging Bench
- Picnic and Play Program

FRIENDS OF L.C.M.P. GRANTS – ESTABLISHED 2018

- Weather Station at Sandy Ridge
- Concerts at Miller Nature Preserve
- Schoepfle Garden plant identification plates
- Carlisle Reservation Yard Games
- Bicycle Helmets
- Support of the Raptor Endowment Fund
- Raptor Center Continuing Education Grant
- Raptor Center Food Funds donation
- Floating Wetlands Treatment
- Fiberglass dinosaur
- Play structures for the Children's Discovery Center at French Creek Nature Center
- Butterfly House interpretive signs.
- Enclosed Archery Trailer
- Children's Discovery Center interactive trail murals
- Outdoor Water Table for French Creek Nature Center
- Bacon House Gardens
- Miller Nature Preserve Garden Renovations

NORD FAMILY FOUNDATION GRANTS

- Youth Programming in Nature

OHIO DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

- Royal Oaks Fitness Circuit and Hydration Station
- Girls in Gear
- Bicycle Helmets

OHIO PARKS AND RECREATION GRANT

- Yours 2 Explore Boxes (COVID-19 initiative)

OHIO DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

- Boating Safety and Education Grant

OHIO PUBLIC WORKS COMMISSION CLEAN OHIO FUND GRANTS

- Sandy Ridge Extension Site Improvements Project
- Cassell Reservation land acquisition
- Cassell Reservation land acquisition and site improvements
- Rocky River-Black River Headwaters Restoration Initiative (Dorlon)

MISC. GRANTS

- 2016 Successful grant application for funds to purchase 300 acres of vacant land on Case Road from LCCC for addition to Sandy Ridge Reservation.

GIFTS, DONATIONS, AND SPONSORSHIPS

COMMUNITY FOUNDATION ENDOWMENTS

- General Lorain County Metro Parks Endowment Fund
- Historic Burrell Homestead Fund
- Lakeview Park Historical Rose Garden Fund
- Gerald L. Prucha Fund for Lorain County Metro Parks
- Charles E. Tripphahn Fund
- Miller Conservatory Endowment Fund
- DeLorne N. Diedrich Fund for Lorain County Metro Parks
- Special Needs Access Fund
- Raptor Fund
- Florence Johnson Fund
- Hollstein/Mercy Health Recreation Fund
- Dr. Ibrahim & Mufide Eren Fund for the Miller Preserve

SCHOEPFLE GARDEN TRUST

The estate of Otto B. Schoepfle for the care and maintenance of the Schoepfle Garden property.

SPECIAL EVENTS/ANNUAL EXHIBIT SPONSORSHIPS

- 60th Anniversary even sponsor - Mike Bass Ford
- Holiday Lights sponsors - Various community partners

MEMORIAL AND HONORARY GIFTS

General gifts given to the district for use as designated by the donor. All gifts are noted in the Arrowhead, the park district's newsletter.

STRATEGIC PLAN



Looking to the Future



> STRATEGIC PLAN | 2024-2034

Lorain County Metro Parks operates to better serve all Lorain County residents. The Park Strategic and Master Planning process built on this approach by planning for each region within the Lorain County Metro Parks. Throughout the county, the planning team consulted residents, staff, and stakeholders, and conducted extensive community outreach. The planning team engaged with over 2,500 community members throughout the process.

This engagement resulted in a great many ideas for improvements to the Lorain County Metro Parks. These improvements helped form our Strategic Plan and will assist Lorain County Metro Parks in fulfilling the goals and recommendations set forth.

As indicated below and on the following pages, this report describes a list of comprehensive strategic master plan goals and recommendations that emerged from the extensive community input process.

COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN GOALS

1 To acquire, preserve, and conserve the diverse environmental habitats throughout Lorain County while meeting the needs of all citizens into the future.

2 To meet the recreational, environmental, and educational demands of our public, while promoting a healthier community and an appreciation for our unique natural resources.

3 To sustain safe, well-maintained facilities, accessible to everyone.

4 Recruit and retain high-quality employees at competitive wages to properly manage and maintain the growing Park District and natural assets within.

5 To collaborate on projects and initiatives that encourage a reclamation and redevelopment of land for public use and identify opportunities for Lake Erie development thereby creating better public access.



> RECOMMENDATIONS | 2024-2034

FISCAL

- To pursue partnerships and alternative funding sources for both capital improvements and special events.
- Create resilient, diverse, stable, and predictable funding and earned income strategies for the next ten years.
- To maintain the 65-year history of outstanding state audit reports and fiscal accountability.

OPERATIONS

- To maintain and exceed the public approval ratings achieved in current park surveys.
- Commitment to improve existing and aging Infrastructure.
- To encourage Friends of Metro Parks in Lorain County, Inc. to continue and expand their efforts and collaborate on ways to further support the Park District.
- To maintain the quality, safety, and accessibility of existing facilities.
- Update all existing park amenities over the next ten years to keep the image and positive use of parks intact.

LAND ACQUISITION

- To maintain and access land acquisition funds through partnerships, scenic easements, and donations.
- To preserve and protect the outstanding natural resources of Lorain County.
- To continue progress toward the original 1961 Regional Plan while adjusting for the countless changes in our county.
- Find opportunities to contribute to climate initiatives through environmental restoration.
- Continue to reforest Lorain County and create new wetlands.
- Establish new parks and additional trails.

EDUCATION/PROGRAMMING

- Continue to build on existing core programs that include special events, summer camps, nature education, outdoor adventure, and recreational opportunities.
- To meet Lorain County citizens' demand for increased environmental and recreational opportunities through collaboration and partnerships.
- Explore establishing a Park Foundation that works alongside the Park Board in raising funds for capital projects and land acquisition.



Maintenance staff member doing routine park improvements

OHIO PARK DISTRICT COMPARISONS

PARK DISTRICT	POPULATION	ACREAGE	LEVY MILLAGE	ANNUAL LEVY DOLLARS	NO. OF FULL-TIME STAFF	ANNUAL OPERATING BUDGET	ANNUAL LOCAL GOVERNMENT FUNDS
Cleveland Metroparks	1,249,475	24,706 <i>(as of Feb. 2023)</i>	2.70 mills	\$91,259,240	667	\$119,367,446	Varies; <i>Estimated to be approx. \$900,000</i>
Columbus and Franklin County Metro Parks	Approx. 1,310,000	28,496	0.95 mill	\$30,353,925	170	\$41,334,189	\$3,219,416
Erie MetroParks	74,000	3,300	0.5 & 0.6 mill <i>(Two 10-yr levies that alternate every 5 yrs.)</i>	Approx. \$2,500,000	19	Approx. \$1,800,000	Approx. \$200,000
Five Rivers MetroParks	535,840 <i>(Montgomery Cnty, OH)</i>	16,676	2 mills	\$18,631,024	196	\$24,008,980	\$372,442
Geauga Park District	94,031	10,198	2.6 mills	\$6,599,575	54	\$12,015,481	\$0
Lorain County Metro Parks	306,713	11,257	1.6 mills	\$11,250,364	77	\$20,823,364	\$0
Mill Creek MetroParks	226,762	5,012	2 mills	\$7,400,000	67	\$20,000,000	\$421,000
Park District of Ottawa County	45,000 year-round <i>(250,000-300,000 seasonal residents)</i>	0	0.6 mill	\$1,200,000	1	Approx. \$1,000,000	\$0
Stark County Park District	373,834 <i>(As of 2021)</i>	6,816.6	1 mill	\$7,500,000	73	\$8,400,000	\$10,000
Summit Metro Parks	Approx. 500,000	15,500	2 mills	\$24,700,000	150	\$34,700,000	\$0
Metroparks Toledo	431,279	12,900	4.3 mills	\$33,300,000	158	\$22,300,000	\$770,000

> PARK DISTRICT USER SURVEY

1. How long have you lived in Lorain County? *(Select one option)*

- Less than 1 year
- 1-2 years
- 2-5 years
- 5-10 years
- 10-20 years
- Over 20 years

2. How would you rate the Lorain County Metro Parks overall SERVICE to the community? *(Select one option)*

- Excellent
- Good
- Fair
- Poor

3. How would you rate the Lorain County Metro Parks overall VALUE to the community? *(Select one option)*

- Excellent
- Good
- Fair
- Poor

4. Based on your experiences, please rate the level of satisfaction with each of the following offerings of the Lorain County Metro Parks *(response options: Very Satisfied, Satisfied, Neutral, Dissatisfied, and Very Dissatisfied).*

- (a) Quality of Parks & Trails
- (b) Quality of Amenities
- (c) Cleanliness & Upkeep
- (d) Availability & Variety of Programs
- (e) Park Accessibility
- (f) Helpfulness of Staff
- (g) Value to you as a Lorain County resident
- (h) Knowledge of Staff & Instructors

5. Which of the following do you feel are the most important benefits you and your household receive from the Lorain County Metro Parks? *[Please select at most 3 options.] [Please consider providing a response. This information will be helpful for survey administrators.]*

- Personal Entertainment
- Providing Mental Relaxation
- Enjoying Outdoor Spaces
- Learning New Skills / Exploring New Interests
- Meeting / Interacting with New People
- Getting Out of the House
- Staying Healthy & Physically Active

6. Over the past few years, how frequently did you or the members of your household visit a Lorain County Metro Park location? *(Select one option)*

- More than Once a Week
- Weekly
- Monthly
- Occasionally
- Never

7. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, members of my household visited a Lorain County Metro Park location _____. *(Select one option)*
[Please consider providing a response. This information will be helpful for survey administrators.]

- Significantly More
- Somewhat More
- About the Same
- Somewhat Less
- Significantly Less

8. The Lorain County Metro Parks manages about \$15 million of income each year, and about 75% of our income is generated via our 1.6 mill local property tax levy. Overall, how would you rate the Lorain County Metro Parks stewardship of taxpayer dollars? *(Select one option)*

- Excellent
- Good
- Fair
- Poor

9. Below are five strategic goals for the Metro Parks that were outlined in the 2015-2024 Strategic Plan. Please tell us how successful you think the Metro Parks have been in pursuing these goals. *(Response options: Much Success, Some Success, Little Success, No Success, and Unsure/N/A)*

- (a) Preserve and sustain the unique environmental habitats throughout Lorain County while responding to the needs of the citizens in the future.
- (b) Further develop partnerships with communities to improve quality of life issues through economic development and protection of natural assets.
- (c) Meet the wide diversity of recreational, environmental, health, and educational requirements of the public.
- (d) Sustain safe, well-maintained facilities, accessible to everyone.
- (e) Connect parks and communities through physical improvements, thereby creating greater opportunities for collaboration.

10. What activities do you currently enjoy in the Metro Parks?

- Picnicking • Historical Programs • Restaurants • Hiking
- Playgrounds • Bird Watching • Walking • Fishing
- Special Events • Biking • Swimming • Kayaking / Canoeing / Stand-Up Paddle Boarding • Concerts • Fitness Facilities
- Kids / Educational Programs • Theatre Performances
- Golf • Senior Programs • Natural History Programs
- Horticulture (Gardens/Greenhouse) • Room Rentals
- Other (Please specify) _____

11. Please rank the following Services *(Response options: Excellent, Good, Fair, Poor, and N/A)*:

- (a) Park Safety
- (b) Bikeways
- (c) Nature Programs
- (d) Cultural Programs
- (e) Cleanliness
- (f) Playgrounds
- (g) Park Maintenance
- (h) Restrooms
- (i) Nature Trails
- (j) Special Events
- (k) Rooms for Meetings / Special Events
- (l) Customer Service

12. What special events / facilities offered by the Park District do you enjoy?

- Halloween Fair (Carlisle)
- Herb Fair (Mill Hollow)
- Live Theatre (French Creek Theatre)
- Summer Concert Series @ Mill Hollow
- Summer Patio Concerts @ Miller Nature Reserve
- Lakeview Sunset Concerts @ Lakeview Park
- Music Under the Stars @ Lakeview Park
- Maple Sugaring (Carlisle)
- Holiday Lights (Lakeview Park, Carlisle Reservation)
- Pools & Splash Pads (Amherst HealthPlex, Splash Zone, Cascade Park)
- Fall Wagon Rides (Wellington Reservation)
- Butterfly House (Miller Nature Center)
- Raptor Center (Carlisle Visitor Center)
- Sunset Beach Fest (Lakeview Park)
- Hiking Stick Program (All Parks)
- Tram Rides (Cascade, Kopf, Black River, Schoepfle, Sandy Ridge, Wellington)
- Indoor Play Spaces (French Creek, Carlisle Visitor Center)
- Other (Please specify) _____

> PARK DISTRICT USER SURVEY

13. Please tell us which additional services or facilities the Metro Parks should consider prioritizing in the future. *(Response options: Major Priority, Minor Priority, Not a Priority, and N/A/I Don't Know)*

- (a) Children's Programs
- (b) More Bike Trails
- (c) More Parks
- (d) Expand Existing Parks
- (e) Senior Events
- (f) Playgrounds
- (g) Outdoor Amphitheaters
- (h) Concerts
- (i) Walking Trails
- (j) Nature Programming
- (k) Lakefront Access
- (l) Conservation Initiatives
- (m) Park Connectivity
- (n) Meeting Spaces
- (o) Land Acquisition [for purpose of improving air and water quality]
- (p) Land Acquisition [to conserve and preserve, including along Lake Erie]

14. Where do you typically get information about the Lorain County Metro Parks and their programs, facilities, services and parks? *(select all that apply) [Please consider providing a response. This information will be helpful for survey administrators.]*

- Metro Parks Website
- Word of Mouth
- Social Media
- Television
- Email
- Fliers in Facilities/Parks
- Radio
- E-Newsletter (Arrowhead)
- Newspaper
- Google/Internet Search
- Other (Please specify) _____

15. What are the BEST ways for us to get information to you regarding Metro Parks programs, services, or facilities?

- (a) LorainCountyMetroParks.com
- (b) Hard Copy Newsletter (Arrowhead) in Newspapers
- (c) Local News (TV/Newspaper)
- (d) Facebook
- (e) Twitter
- (f) Instagram

16. Are there any other communications options you would want the Metro Parks to offer?

17. If you would like us to send you a digital copy of the Arrowhead newsletter, please add your email address below.

(It is distributed the 3rd Friday every other month (Feb, April, Jun, Aug, Oct, and Dec). It can also be found in the Rural Urban, Chronicle Telegram, Morning Journal, and the Plain Dealer -- as well as at our nature and visitor centers and local libraries.)

In order to better understand the responses we receive in this survey, we would like to ask you a few demographic questions before you go. You are not required to respond to any of these, but your demographic information helps us better understand who we are hearing from, and our potential blind spots.

We appreciate your honesty and participation, and remind you that your responses here are anonymized.

18. Do you currently have any children (age 17 or younger) currently living in your household? *(Select one option) [Please consider providing a response. This information will be helpful for survey administrators.]*

- Yes
- No

19. For demographic purposes, please select your Age: *(Select one option) [Please consider providing a response. This information will be helpful for survey administrators.]*

- Under 18
- 18-34
- 35-49
- 50-64
- 65 or Above

20. For demographic purposes, please select your home ZIP code. *(Select one option) [Please consider providing a response. This information will be helpful for survey administrators.]*

- 44001
- 44011
- 44012
- 44028
- 44035
- 44036
- 44039
- 44044
- 44049
- 44050
- 44052
- 44053
- 44054
- 44055
- 44074
- 44089
- 44090
- 44253
- 44851
- 44880
- 44889
- Other (Please specify) _____

21. Which of the following best categorizes your combined annual household income? *(Select one option)*

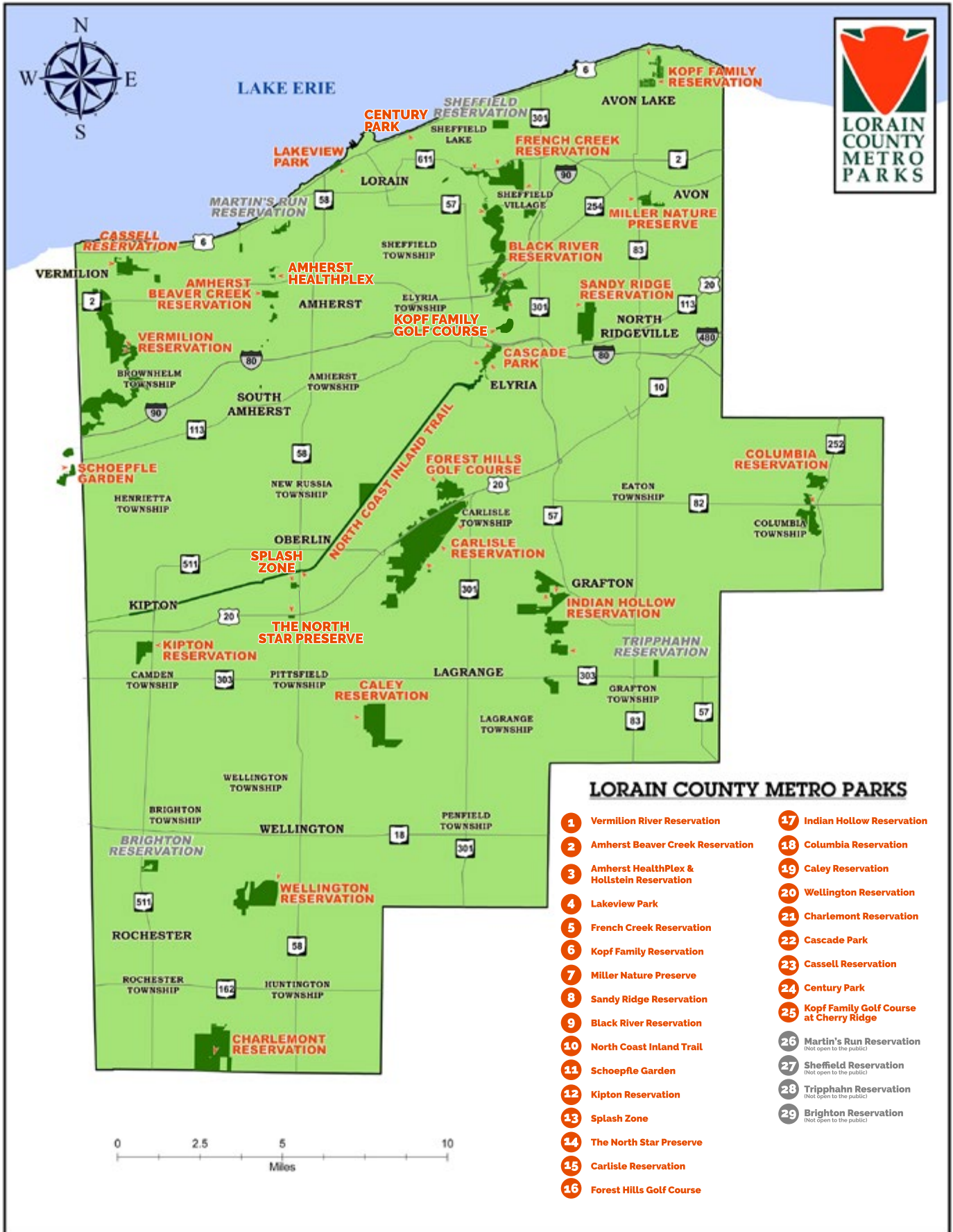
- Under \$50,000
- \$50,000-\$74,999
- \$75,000-\$124,999
- \$125,000-\$175,000
- Over \$175,000
- Prefer Not To Answer

22. For demographic purposes, please select which best describes your gender? *(Select one option) [Please consider providing a response. This information will be helpful for survey administrators.]*

- Male
- Female
- Non-Binary

23. Which of the following best describes your race or ethnic background? *(Select one option)*

- Asian American or Pacific Islander
- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latino
- Native American or Alaskan Native
- Multiracial or Biracial
- White or Caucasian
- A race/ethnicity not listed here



CONCLUSION

Over the 65-year history of the park district, we have been bestowed with numerous gifts of land and funds. Those gifts, coupled with leveraged funds from outside agencies and unique partnerships, have enabled the park district to preserve, enhance, and create facilities that are valuable assets within our county.

During the past 10 years, the park district has met or exceeded most of the goals and recommendations previously presented. In addition to the new facilities, public programs, senior events, and special needs activities were expanded. Through the public survey process, it was recognized that the needs of Lorain County and its residents are constantly evolving. The park district will be vigilant in responding to those needs.

The park district currently operates with a 1.6 mill levy. While that has enabled the park district to continue operating safe and well-maintained facilities, it has also allowed us to invest in the renovation and improvements to the projects and initiatives listed and described previously in this report, including and highlighted by, but certainly not limited to, Cascade Park, North Star Preserve/Henry's Barn in Oberlin, new trails throughout Lorain County, construction of new wetlands and trails in Avon, the renovation and improvements to the pool buildings at Splash Zone and the Amherst HealthPlex, the acquisition of open spaces in Grafton, Avon, and Columbia Township that offer unique preservation and trail opportunities, and investment in staffing and equipment to preserve the gift of Cherry Ridge Golf Course, as well as staffing that expands nature and the arts programming to a multitude of generations in the area.

Like many agencies, the park district lost funding and revenue as a result of the pandemic. The losses have taken a substantial toll on the park district's budget. Through strict fiscal discipline and implementation of other cost-saving measures, the park district has been able to continue operations thus far without a significant drop in services.

In order to achieve the goals and recommendations outlined in this strategic plan, the park district asks our residents to consider a 1.6 mill replacement levy. The funds generated by that will not only allow us to continue the staffing, programming, and maintenance that we already offer but also will provide the necessary capital that will allow us to seek additional opportunities that will enhance our outstanding park system as well as allow us to match state and federal grants that will be essential to complete the projects outlined in the strategic plan.

The Board of Park Commissioners, in conjunction with the staff, expresses deep appreciation to all of those individuals and groups who assisted with surveys and shared their experience and expertise. All of these efforts truly make the Lorain County Metro Parks one of the finest park districts that is an asset to our county and is cherished now and for future generations to come.

MISSION STATEMENT

The Lorain County Metropolitan Park District was established for the responsible use, enjoyment, and accessibility of every citizen of Lorain County.

The Park District acquires land to promote and demonstrate the wise use of our natural resources.

The Park District strives to preserve and create a diversity of ecosystems while providing educational and recreational opportunities which are compatible with and promote conservation of these resources.

