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Park District Profile

RPTA 235

Peoria Park District

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“To enrich life in our community through stewardship of the environment and through provision of quality recreation and leisure opportunities.”

Organized in 1894, the Pleasure Driveway and Park District of Peoria were the first park systems to be formed in the state of Illinois. Later, in 1963, the City of Peoria Playground and Recreation Department merged with the Park District of Peoria to better the community with a wider variety of offered programs. As the oldest and largest park district in Illinois, it ranks first in the state and is one of the top public park systems in the nation based on its ratio of open-space holdings to the population. The current relationship that the district has with the community is one that wants to provide for its members. This district forms cooperative agreements dealing with local concerns to find solutions to problems with specific programs. This district also keeps with the Americans with Disabilities Act to allow all community members to participate in all park district activities. Peoria Park District has also won the National Gold Medal Award three previous times and has been a finalist 10 other times. The National Gold Medal Award is given to communities within the United States that display an excellence in park and recreation. This award recognizes the parks abilities to demonstrate long-range planning, resource management, volunteerism, environmental stewardship, program and professional development, and agency recognition. A panel of five judges review all submissions made by the various park districts and chooses the appropriate finalists. (Overview, 2010).

Much of the land that the Peoria Park District lies on was funded through matching grants from the federal Land-Water-Conservation Fund, the Illinois Open Space lands Acquisition and Development program and many other generous gifts and donations from the community. This districts annual spending budget is about \$40 million. They have increased their funds significantly over the past several years due to increased emphasis on public and private partnerships to aid in completing projects such as a hiking trail, an inner city aquatic facility, and

a far north neighborhood park. About 35% of the budget comes from taxes and the rest is covered by fees, charges, and grants. With Peoria focusing its attention on forming partnerships with public/private organizations and businesses, they have been able to develop more facilities to offer the community. For example, the district had partnered with a local hospital, local foundation, and the city to develop the RiverPlex recreation and wellness center. The district has also done this to develop many other neighborhood parks. In the future the Peoria Park District would like to develop a partnership with an organization who will aid in completing the hiking/biking trail through Peoria, as well as expanding the zoo (Overview).

Financially the Administration and Business Department was responsible for the most revenue for 2009 at \$11,234,273. This has caused a -46% change from the preceding years while the Human Resource Department had the least amount of revenues with \$30,616 with a change of 1% from previous years. Total revenues for 2009 were \$12,709,290. Total expenditures for 2009 were \$13,349,290 with the Administration and Business Department having the most of \$6,209,814, a change of -60%. The Contract Services Department had a total expenditure of \$1,365,924 while the Human Resources Department \$242,130. The Maintenance and Repair Department spent \$1,623,417 and the Marketing and Public Relations Department \$588,310. The expenditures for the Parks, Landscape Maintenance Department was \$2,978,405 and last, the Planning, Design, and Construction Department was \$341,290 for the year of 2009 (General Fund Summary P. 148).

Currently within the Peoria Park District, there are 194 full-time administrators which include recreation programmers, police and facility maintenance personnel. During the summer and peak-activity periods the park employs over 1,400 people to fill part-time jobs throughout the district. The district employs a professional design staff to aid with planning, design and

construction of new parks and to make improvements to existing ones. The park board consists of six elected volunteers who represent three separate voting districts and are elected for four-year terms. The roles of the trustees are to attend meetings which are on the second and fourth Wednesday of every month. The public is welcome to attend these meetings as well to listen in on public matters within the park district (Overview).

Bonnie W. Noble is currently the executive director and it is her responsibility to provide leadership to all of the departments within the park district as well as aid in planning and implementing activities within the facilities and properties of the park district. It is also Noble's job to provide assistance to the superintendents of each department and maintain a successful park district (Executive Staff, 2010).

Also within the park district is the superintendents of each department. There are currently nine superintendents all of whom overlook the many different areas of the park district. The job of these nine individuals is to provide leadership to each of their departments in any way needed. They lead, overlook the budget, help organize and facilitate programs, as well as promote the park district and its programs (Executive Staff).

The program supervisors for specific departments also play important roles in maintaining the park district. These individuals help implement the different activities and lead individuals to success within each program. They help with the planning and promoting of each program and encourage all individuals interested in each activity (Executive Staff).

Recreation leaders within the Peoria Park District mainly focus on leadership. They aid participants within a specific activity and teach skills when necessary. Recreation Leaders look

out for the safety of the individuals as well as maintain a comfortable and enjoy atmosphere for all involved (Executive Staff).

Offering jobs in many different fields, the Peoria Park District has a variety of them to choose from. Whether looking for a part time, full time, or internship, the park district is sure to find the perfect department for one to work in. Below are some of the divisions of the district and the general field of each.

Parks Division

Park maintenance

Landscape and Forestry

Equipment Services

Golf Division

Maintenance

Pro Shop

Snack Shop

Starter/Marshal

Recreation Division

Recreation Instructor

Camp Counselor

Zoo

Athletics

Aquatics

Luthy Botanical Garden

Forest Park Nature Center

Owens Ice Skating Rink

Logan Recreation Center

Proctor Recreation Center

Other

Security/Park Police

Administrative

Refreshment Sales

Riverfront

Gateway Building

HISRA

RiverPlex: fitness/recreation (Park District Jobs, 2010).

The Peoria Park District currently covers about 60 square miles within Peoria County. It holds more than 9,000 acres in the City of Peoria, West Peoria, Peoria Heights, as well as many other outlying townships (Overview). There are over 60 properties within the park district. Many of the parks and facilities are located throughout the district which is open to the community and available for use.

Bicycle Safety Town is a park where beginners of riding bicycles on the road can come and practice their skills. This fenced in park consists of 3,961 feet of curves, one-way streets, a four-lane dividing highway, traffic signals, overpasses, ramps, and 79 various traffic signs. When attending this park one must bring their own bike and a properly fitted helmet must be worn at all times. Also located at this park is a covered seating area, port-a-potty, picnic tables,

and drinking fountain for visitors all of which are available from dawn to dusk and is free of charge (Bicycle Safety Town, 2010).

Established in the late 19th century, Laura Bradley Park is located next to Bradley University. This 140 acre park consists of high bluff woodlands that travel down the floodplain of Dry Run Creek. This park has a Japanese bridge over Dry Run Creek, equipment service center offices, baseball diamonds, Corn Stalk Theatre, Frisbee golf, lighted horseshoe pits, a picnic shelter, play areas, sand volleyball courts, lighted shuffleboard courts, sledding (weather permitting) tennis courts, and a dog park. Lydia Moss Bradley lost her husband in an accident and all six of her children passed at an early age. Laura, Lydia's longest living child lived into her teens and the park is now named after her in remembrance (Laura Bradley Park, 2010).

The Central Park Pool and Fitness Center is located next to Central High School and has a moderately-sized fitness center containing universal weight machines, lifecycles with racing network, nautilus, free weights, nordictrac, treadmills, and stairmasters. The fitness center is open to individuals 18 years and older or to those with parental supervision. The fee to participate is around \$50 for each season and is open Monday through Friday 6-7:30am and 5-7:30pm, Saturdays 9am-12pm, and Sunday 11am-3pm. This park also includes an eight lane pool with a separate diving well and a large open balcony for observers. The cost for the pool is \$1.50 and open from 6-7:30am (Central Park, 2010).

Another park owned by the Peoria Park District is Detwiller Park. This park offers golfing, soccer, volleyball, hiking, birding, and many other activities. Detweiller Drive goes through most of the park and features one of the most diverse collections of oak trees in the area. The blooms in the spring and colorful foliage in the fall is a sight that is loved by many of the

locals. The hiking trails here are over five miles long and cover steep underdeveloped bluffs. This 760 acre park also includes a BMX course, running trail, large open playfields, picnic shelters, and play areas (Detweiller Park, 2010).

Open every day from May 1st through November 1st, Detweiller Marina has 180 in-water slips from 20 to 30 feet with electric/water pedestals, 20 in-water beach slips, 20 dry dock and three public launch ramps (launch fee \$5 for any size boat). The marina is surrounded by a nine acre green space and for \$50 a shelter with electricity for picnics, public restrooms with showers, a playground, grills and picnic tables are available for use. Another marina within the park district is Galena Marina. This marina is located across from Detweiller Park and is open daily from dawn to 11pm. The facility offers boat ramps with free boat launching, a picnic area with grills, parking, and offers the scenery of the open riverfront. (Marina, 2010).

The Forest Park Nature Center consists of seven miles of hiking trails through forested and woodland prairie, (some of which are wheelchair accessible) a natural history museum with a viewing room for watching birds, the Trailhead Nature Store to purchase books and other unique nature items, a variety of musical education programs, and 500 acres of Illinois state nature preserve. The Nature Center is open year round from 9am to 5pm Monday through Saturday and 1 to 5pm on Sunday (Forest Park Nature Center, 2010).

Featuring a full-size gymnasium, a multi-purpose room including a kitchenette, a community room, dance studio, soccer field, two baseball fields, and an outdoor playground, the Franciscan Recreation Complex and Park is one of the larger facilities in the park district. This facility offers a variety of classes and special events available for all ages, and all activities are accessible to people with disabilities (Franciscan Recreation Complex, 2010).

Glen Oak Park was designed by the legendary landscape architect Oscar F. Debus and dedicated in 1896. This 117 acre park contains the District's Administrative and Recreation Offices and offers many other amenities such as picnic areas and shelters, baseball diamonds, biking/hiking trails, fishing/ice skating lagoon, fitness area and trail, Glen Oak Amphitheater, Peoria Zoo, Luthy Botanical Garden, lighted shuffleboard courts, tennis courts, tricentennial and other smaller playgrounds (Glen Oak Park, 2010).

Located in Glen Oak Park is the Glen Oak Amphitheatre. The Peoria Municipal Band conducted by David Vroman is featured here with their free performances every Sunday and Wednesday evenings at 7:30pm beginning June 9th. The amphitheatre offers a Twilight Theatre for \$1 per person, which is a family event featuring some of the popular movies on an outdoor big screen. Popcorn, nachos, candy and soda are sold at a nearby concession stand for the convenience of community members. Also offered is Dancing Under the Stars where community members can brush up on their ballroom dance skills free of charge (Glen Oak Amphitheatre, 2010).

The Luthy Botanical Center also located in Glen Oak Park and its mission statement is, "To provide a garden showcase and resource center, highlighting the vital connections between people and plants." The five acres of landscape displays is designed to give inspiration to community members for their home gardens. Some of the many displays include a rose garden, tropical foliage and on Mother's Day every year, a lily show. Classes and private tours are also available. To see the 15 garden displays only costs \$2 and there is also a Garden shop (gift shop) that has toys, books, jewelry, garden tools, and plants for purchase (Luthy Botanical Garden, 2010).

Another facility located within Glen Oak Park is the Peoria Zoo. The Peoria Zoo is open every day from 10am to 5pm, and visitors can see their newest display Africa during this time. The zoo is home to over 100 different species of animals and also hosts special events and weddings. Dating back to the 1800's, the zoo also offers tours, educational programs, and camps where the giraffe feeding deck can be utilized as well as the private rooms and lodge. (Peoria Zoo, 2010).

Logan Recreation Center includes three lighted basketball courts with bleachers, a soccer field, kickball area, two picnic pavilions, playground equipment, water playground, two giant water slides, one small slide, diving boards, and wet sand play area. This facility is often used for events and parties and is enjoyed by all ages of community members (Logan Recreation Center, 2010).

With 40 acres of various activities, Lakeview Park has been providing for community members for many years. This park offers Kickapoo Council Girl Scouts Headquarters, Lakeview Family Aquatic Center, Lakeview Museum, Owens Recreation Center, Peoria Public Library Lakeview Branch, a play area, Peoria Players Theatre, and YWCA Lakeview (Lakeview Park, 2010). The outdoor aquatics center includes a swimming pool, zero depth pool with play equipment, two giant waterslides, one small slide, diving boards, and a wet sand play area. This facility can also be rented from the park for parties and special events (Lakeview Family Aquatic Center, 2010). The Owens Center is an indoor ice skating facility including two full-size rinks open all year round and offers ice skating lessons as well as a hockey program (Owens Center, 2010).

In a cooperative extension with the Morton, Peoria, Chillicothe, and Washington Park District, the Heart of Illinois Special Recreation facility has a mission to provide quality recreation programs and services to individuals with disabilities and special needs. Providing opportunities for each individual to enjoy recreation activities in the least restrictive environment, this facility is a large supporter of Americans with Disabilities (ADA) (Heart of Illinois, 2010).

One special facility within the Peoria Park District is the Northmoor Observatory. This sky dome allows for community members to view the sky through a nine-inch refractor telescope. Most recently in 2009 the dome was replaced with a new one with the help of fundraising and the generosity of local donors (Northmoor Observatory, 2010).

Another park within the district is Northtrail Park. With 25 acres of land, this park has one basketball court, two unlighted tennis courts, a baseball field, soccer field, fishing pond with a pier, picnic shelter, play equipment, and a walking/biking path that is approximately .9 miles long (Northtrail Park, 2010).

The Proctor Recreation Center is a year-round recreation facility that is as large as one city block and is an excellent facility for private special events. Within this recreation center are two gymnasiums, an auditorium with a stage for performances, a lounge area with a television, weight room, arts and crafts room, game room, outdoor basketball courts, playground, swimming and wading pool, and a play field area. This facility is an official Safe Haven Site and their goal is to prevent, control, and reduce violent crime, drug abuse, and gang activity in and around Proctor Recreation Center. Membership fees can range from \$25 to \$50 but there are scholarship funds available to help community members cover the charge (Proctor Recreation Center, 2010).

One of the most well known facilities within the Peoria Park District is the RiverPlex recreation and wellness center. Joined with the Peoria Park District and OSF St. Francis Medical Center, this facility is complete with a fitness center, indoor aquatic park, multipurpose arena, pro shop which serves smoothies and refreshments, an activity room, educational classrooms and much more. This 118,000 square foot facility offers all day passes for visitors as well as yearly memberships. There are many classes, trainers, and activities available, most of which are youth outreach programs as well as health programs that are sure to please all ages and lifestyles (RiverPlex, 2010).

L.E. and Erma Robinson donated Robinson Park in 1951 in memory of their son Laurence who loved to play and explore there as a child. This wild, underdeveloped park offers narrow paths throughout the sight as well as better developed areas along the Illinois River Bluff Trail to satisfy all types of exploration. Robinson Park has a 151 acre nature preserve that also has glacial drift hill parries and oak woodlands along the ridges and valleys. All of this sits on two long, narrow, ridges and steep valleys drained by Moon Creek. This park offers 2.5 miles of hiking trails, a picnic shelter, open play areas, restrooms, and conservation area all of which sits on a total of 675 acres (Robinson Park, 2010).

With 320 acres of rolling meadows, parries, farmland, and open woodland, Sommer Park is available to the City of Peoria to hold private picnics and outings for groups up to 1,000 during the months April through November (Sommer Park, 2010). Another property, Trewyn Park also offers similar ammeneties as Sommer Park. Terwyn Park is 21 acres that contains a community center, spray pool, play areas, basketball courts, restrooms, and shelter rentals within the pavilions (Terwyn Park, 2010).

Wokanda Camp is very well known with the Peoria Park District and was acquired by the Boy Scouts of America. This camp offers a 360 acre woodland setting including a lake for fishing. This camp has a dining hall, sleeping cabins, program buildings, tent camping, naturalist tours, environmental education, and rental options for groups searching for a unique nature experience. Only 20 minutes from down town Peoria, this facility is primarily used for camping events but they do host guided tours as well as retreats and weddings (Camp Wokanda, 2010).

Gwynn, John/Park and Aquatics is another facility available within the park district. The park has four lighted basketball courts, open play areas, tennis courts, restrooms, a deck with outdoor classrooms, play/shelter area, playground, lighted baseball field, a soccer field, and walking paths (GJ Park, 2010). The aquatics center is open from June 3rd to August 8th and admission is about \$8. There is also a zero depth pool including play equipment, waterslide, diving well, and wet sand play area (GJ Aquatics, 2010). These two facilities provide for a unique birthday party or social event.

The Peoria Park District also offers five different golf courses to spend time at. Detweiller golf Course is nine holes, par 29, and has 1,758 yards of scenic river and natural riverbank foliage to view while golfing. This Golf course is well known for its beautiful scenery and it offers minimum hazards which are preferred by for junior golfers and senior ladies' leagues. Depending on the golfer's age, day of the week, and time, this course ranges from \$4 to \$11 (Golf Courses, 2010).

Next, Donovan Golf Course is a par 71, 18 hole golf course. The scenery here is rolling irrigated terrains with water bunkers. With 6,308 yards of golfing space, it costs anywhere from \$6 to \$20 and the Northmoor Observatory is located on the grounds as well (Golf Courses).

Kellog Golf Course is a par 72 and the terrain includes elevated trees, greens, water obstacles, and varied bunkers, perfect for ability of medium to low handicap golfers. The 6,370 18 hole golf course is the newest to the Peoria Park District and is always very busy. It is necessary that community members call ahead to reserve a golfing time. To play at this golf course is \$6 to \$20. Also offered from the Kellog Golf Course is a 2,744 yard nine hole course. At par 34 this course is not all par three's, but still offers a challenge for a shorter round of golf costing \$5 to \$13 (Golf Courses).

With steep terrain, moderate ravines, deep bunkers, and many mature trees, Newman Golf Course is a par 71 and is most popular with low to medium handicap golfers. There are 6,467 yards of challenging golf costing anywhere from \$6 to \$20 (Golf Courses).

Last, Madison Golf Course has 18 holes in a 5,332 yard area. The terrain here is quite level and has very few hazards allowing for a relaxing round of golf. Madison Golf Course is the oldest public golf course in Peoria and celebrated its 100th birthday in 2009. The costs to golf here ranges between \$6 to \$21 (Golf Courses).

Another unique golf facility that the park district has to offer is the Learning Center and Academy. Here, there is an indoor and outdoor practice facility available for golfers to practice all year. Inside there is a putting green, and area with nets for private practice and lessons, and a full service pro shop with food service. Outside there is are all weather tees on the driving range, nine hole pitch and putt course, practice putting green, and practice sand bunkers. The driving range also has a covered heated hitting station with re-created hole layouts for practice in the winter months (Learning Center and Academy, 2010).

Also within the Peoria Park District are over 15 neighborhood parks. Below is a list of a few of the parks, their acreage, and what can be found at them and/or their location.

Becker Park: 14 Acers. Three picnic shelters, walking paths, inline skating area, skateboard area, two half basketball courts, baseball field, and a playground (Becker Park, 2010).

Bielfeldt Park: 21 Acers. Picnic shelter, soccer/softball field, playground, restrooms, and a ½ mile walking trail around the perimeter of the park (Bielfeldt Park, 2010).

Charter Oak Park: 120 Acers. One basketball court, fishing pond with piers, picnic shelter, play equipment, hiking trail, and tennis courts (Charter Oak Park, 2010).

Chartwell Park: 25 Acers. Walking trails, picnic shelters, and playground equipment (Chartwell Park, 2010).

Columbia Park: Two Acers. Picnic tables, play equipment, and is adjacent to the McClure Branch Library (Columbia Park, 2010).

Creighton Woods Park: 20 Acers. Is located off of Creighton Terrace (Creighton Woods Park, 2010)

Endres Park: 10 Acers. Baseball/softball field, basketball court, and picnic shelter (Endres Park, 2010).

Giant Oak Park: One Acre. This park is the smallest in the district with a single large Burr Oak tree believed to be as least 300 years old. Its branches span at least 100 feet and the trunk is 13 feet in circumference. In this park is a small parking and picnic area and it also features the Historic Easton Fountain (Giant Oak Park, 2010).

Markwoodland Park: 18 Acres. Play field, shelter, baseball/softball field, soccer field, and is adjacent to Mark Bills School which also offers a playground (Markwoodland Park, 2010).

Martin Luther King Jr. Park: Seven Acres. Playground, shelter, restrooms, basketball courts and a garden plot (Martin Luther King Jr. Park, 2010).

Morton Square Park: Three Acres. Basketball court, baseball field, soccer field, playground, and restrooms (Morton Square Park, 2010).

Schmoeger Park: 42 Acres. Playground, shelter, ball fields, and a soccer field (Schmoeger Park, 2010).

Terwyn Park: 21 Acres. Community center, spray pool, play areas, basketball courts, restrooms, and shelter rentals inside the pavilion (Terwyn park, 2010).

Grandview Drive Park: 180 Acres. Has a 2,052 mile driving trail that offers views of the Illinois River Valley and the historic homes along it, picnic benches, ball diamond, hiking trail access, playground areas, a sand volleyball court, and a picnic shelter. Theodore Roosevelt refereed to it as the “world’s most beautiful drive” when he visited in 1910 (Grandview Drive Park, 2010).

Peoria Park District has all types of community members involved within its facilities. There are a variety of programs from educational classes for children as young as five, as well as fitness classes for seniors who want to stay as healthy as possible. This park district has something to offer every community members unique interest. There are many health groups as well as clubs that incorporate all activities and age groups. Many of these programs are self

directed and can be used at the will of the participant. There are also other programs that require participants to sign up or register in order to use the facility. Whichever type of recreation or leisure a community member from Peoria is looking for, they are sure to be able to find an activity to suit their needs through their local park district.

This park district also has many strengths and weaknesses. The park district has a lot to offer the public and its community members. While some of these facilities require fees for their use, there are ways to aid in paying for this as well as many facilities that can be used free of charge. Also, the district is very helpful and is willing to offer information to all community members and help them find the best activity for each individual person. While the Peoria Park District may have a few weaknesses within specific programs or with certain facilities, as a whole they are growing every day and providing more and more for their community. This district has a lot to offer and is satisfying the needs and demands of its community members. As long as the community members are happy and like the programs available, then the park district is doing its job. The Peoria Park District is doing just that and running a successful program within its community.

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