

How Do We Pay To Play?

A LOOK AT

PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITIES IN HAMILTON COUNTY, INDIANA

BY

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Chapter I

Introduction



CHAPTER I

This paper represents a review of parks throughout Hamilton County, and the various ways by which they are funded. As you read this report you will see that its main purpose is to detail current park funding, suggest a number of alternate and/or additional funding methods, and propose the specific alternative ideas.

The paper is the work of a subcommittee of the 1996-1997 Hamilton County Leadership Academy Class. The purpose of the Leadership Academy is to provide class members with information about the community and leadership training, thereby giving them tools to grow and serve in various leadership roles in Hamilton County. The Academy was organized with the support of all the Hamilton County area Chambers of Commerce. Five classes have graduated to date. A requirement for graduation is the completion of a group project. This paper is one of those projects.

This year's class is composed of twenty-five individuals. The subcommittee authoring this paper consists of seven members of the class. All seven members are Hamilton County residents, but still a diverse group in many ways. Facts about the committee include:

- Gender - three women and four men.
- Age - 30's through 50's
- Education - High School through post graduate studies
- Work Sector - Private and public, profit and non-profit
- Industry - Production, manufacturing, distribution, services, agriculture

- Residence - City of Noblesville, Noblesville Township, Town of Fishers, Delaware Township, Washington Township & Arcadia

Information for the paper was drawn from a variety of sources, both within Hamilton County and other Park Directors in Indiana. They include: park directors, newspapers, parks and recreation departments, convention and visitors bureau, park boards and others. Our thanks to all who graciously supplied information and gave of their time.

The parks in Hamilton County vary greatly in size, development, amenities, and uses. However, they all provide leisure time activities of some type for residents and visitors of the county. Suggesting alternative means of funding these parks is proposed as a way to grow and further enhance them, and not as a criticism of what is currently being done. Some of the ideas are currently being utilized in some of the parks. Our intent is to share these successful approaches with the Leadership of Hamilton County.

Chapter II

Current Conditions



CHAPTER 2

Presently, there are 33 public parks and/or recreational facilities located in Hamilton County. Various governmental agencies own these parks and facilities. At the request of this Group, and for purposes of this paper, each agency provided to the Group specified data concerning the parks and facilities within each agency's respective jurisdiction. This Group summarized the data based upon the supporting documentation which was provided to it by the agencies.

Some of the parks are governed by parks boards which receive funding via city, town, and/or county councils, while others do not have park boards and are governed by the applicable council only. The parks and park boards are authorized by state statutes pursuant to Indiana Code 36-10 et. seq. (Title 36, Local Government; Article 10, Recreation, Culture, and Community Facilities).

Based upon this Group's interpretation of the data, the total cost to the citizens of Hamilton County for the parks was \$4,063,936.00 for 1996, and is anticipated to be \$6,335,590.00 for 1997.

Again, based upon this Group's interpretation of the data, the parks and facilities are funded by various sources. The greatest source of funding appears to be from property taxes, which comprised 57% of the 1996 total budget, and is anticipated to comprise 33% of the 1997 total budget.

These analyses are reflected in the supporting documentation found on the following five (5) pages.

Hamilton County Parks And Recreation Sites

Arcadia

Total Acreage: 180' x 212'

Arcadia Park

Atlanta

Total Acreage: 1-1/2 acres

Dolles Park

Carmel

Total Acreage: 41 acres owned; 5 acres leased

Flowing Wells Park

Meadowlark Park

Carey Grove Park

Carmel City Park

Carmelot

Pleasant Grove Park

Cicero

Total Acreage: 30 acres

Red Bridge Park

Cicero Community Parks

Fishers

Total Acreage: 230 acres

Cumberland Park

Fishers Community Park

Harrison Thompson Parks

Richey Woods Nature Preserve (in Fishers-operated by Indianapolis Children's Museum)

White River Park (unnamed at this time)

Hamilton County Recreation Department

Total Acreage: 330 acres

Carmel-Clay County Park
Central Pool at Forest Park
Cottingham Park
Cool Creek Park
Geist Park, Florida Road
Morse Beach Park
North Pool
Potter's Bridge Park
River Road Park
Tecumseh Park
White River Park and Campground

Noblesville

Total Acreage: 331 acres

Forest Park
Fox Prairie Golf Course
Seminary Park
Southside Park

Sheridan

Total Acreage: 23 acres

Biddle Memorial Park

Westfield

Total Acreage: 6.1 acres

Roy O. Hadley Memorial Park
West Main Street Park (unnamed and undeveloped)

Hamilton County Park Budgets

CITY/TOWN	1996	1997
Arcadia	\$2,000.00	\$2,000.00
Atlanta	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00
Carmel	\$752,550.00	\$2,872,248.00
Cicero	\$176,900.00	\$179,900.00
Fishers	\$789,897.00	\$743,806.00
Hamilton County	\$1,483,965.00	\$1,523,530.00
Noblesville	\$817,424.00	\$970,906.00
Sheridan	\$35,000.00	\$35,000.00
Westfield	\$1,200.00	\$3,200.00
TOTAL	\$4,063,936.00	\$6,335,590.00

County Wide Revenue Sources

Budget	1996 4,063,936	PERCENT OF TOTAL 1996 BUDGET	1997 6,335,590	PERCENT OF TOTAL 1997 BUDGET
Property Tax	\$2,100,314.00	57.4%	\$2,118,413.00	33%
Rentals	\$71,842.00	2%	\$74,106.00	1.1%
Excise Tax	\$208,828.00	5.7%	\$270,337.00	4.2%
Golf	\$614,000.00	16.8%	\$764,680.00	11.9%
*Impact Fees	\$289,686.00	7.9%	\$412,500.00	6.4%
Pool	\$18,000.00	.5%	\$18,000.00	.2%
Interest	\$7,191.00	.2%	\$1,130.00	.0%
Camps & Camping	\$61,250.00	1.7%	\$38,500.00	.6%
Provider Agreements	\$2,000.00	.0%	\$2,400.00	.0%
Private Funds	\$35,000.00	1.0%	\$35,000.00	.5%
FIT (Federal Inheritance Tax)	\$7,564.00	.2%	\$9,633.00	.1%
Softball	\$28,512.00	.8%	\$30,000.00	.5%
COIT(County Option Income Tax)	\$60,894.00	1.7%	\$1,044,442.00	16.2%
Sale of Investments	\$125,000	3.4%	----	----
Misc.	\$26,490.00	.7%	\$25,000	.4%
**Other Government Entities			\$1,603,348.00	24.9%
Total	\$3,656,571	100%	\$6,447,489	100%

* Includes donated property.

* A breakdown of this revenue's source was not acquired from the City of Carmel.

Note: Totals do not balance due to Carry Forwards from previous year or anticipated Carry Forwards to next year.

Entities Having Park Boards

Atlanta

Fishers

Sheridan

Noblesville

Carmel

Hamilton County Parks & Recreation Department

Westfield

Washington Township

Entities Having Councils Only

Arcadia

Cicero

Chapter III

Potential Efficiencies



CHAPTER 3

The following is a list of potential efficiencies that could be realized in many of the parks in Hamilton County. Some of these ideas are currently in use but not in all parks in Hamilton County. It is hoped that the sharing of this information and these ideas may produce cost savings in the operation and maintenance of our current park systems.

Contracting

Typically, there is an economy of scale in contracting and services. The purchase of supplies and particularly outside services required by the various park departments in Hamilton County could benefit from pooling of competitive bids. This can be accomplished through inter-local agreements for the singular purchase or bid of services or supplies (i.e., mowing, insurance, labor, equipment).

Inter-Agency Partnering

The partnering concept could typically be the supply of a building by a park system and the supply of services by another agency. For example, an agency that the Ft. Wayne Parks Department is currently working with is the Boys and Girls Club. The club provides the service in one of the parks buildings. With the parks department providing the building and the Boys and Girls Club providing the services a successful partnership was formed. The combination has worked so well that a new building is being constructed under the same partnership concept. Another example in the Ft. Wayne Parks Department is the Easter Seals Society. The parks department provides the venue and they provide the service. The Easter Seals Society provides an annual festival of lights from which the park department

receives a fixed amount of money.

This process can also work in reverse. The parks department can also work with schools or other established public buildings and use the facilities for their programs. This can be an economical use of a structure during non-use time.

Volunteers

Volunteers can be an extremely important asset to the operation of any park. Hamilton County is a volunteering community. The challenge is to have a volunteer coordinator whose primary responsibility is to match up volunteers to the appropriate task and provide appropriate recognition. The volunteers can be involved in anything from delivery of service or program to background and local history.

Impact Fees

Impact fees are also a form of alternative financing for cities and towns experiencing rapid growth. Developers are required to pay a certain amount for each home they build for parks, sewers or roads. Developers and builders then pass this fee along to the home buyer. Because the city's or town's rapid rate of growth, the local government needs increasing amounts of money to provide expanding services. The purpose of these fees is to maintain the level of service before the growth occurred because of the lag in the collection of property taxes on a new construction. Growth means all of the city's infrastructure - such as roads, sewers and parks - need to be expanded. Impact fees are an alternative to increasing already high property taxes.

Work Release

Some offenders and the community might be better served by assigning juveniles and/or adults to work their sentence off as laborers in the parks, as opposed to jail time.

Fair Share Policy

It is recommended that a Fair Share Policy be adopted. This would include charging non-residents more for services provided than that which residents are charged. Typically, the charge would be up to 50% more for a non-resident than for a local. The Fair Share Policy could be implemented for any park service that currently does or potentially could generate revenue.

Landholdings

For property purchased for future expansion of park systems, it is suggested that lease opportunities be investigated until the development of the landholdings occurs. This could also include investigating the federal government crop programs, from which federal monies are received for not farming the land.

Fee Programs

A fee or a cost to participate in programs is highly encouraged; however, at the same time, a scholarship fund is available for those who are economically deprived so that no one is turned away. Everyone should be allowed to participate in these programs regardless of their ability to pay. These dollars for scholarship funds are often times received from private sources.

The development of county-wide park districts would open up several advantages for funding opportunities. It could allow for more equitable collection and distribution of available funds in Hamilton County for park related activities and facilities. However, if the advantages are apparent to our legislators, we believe the support could be provided by our elected officials. This would require legislative action in order to legally facilitate this entity.

Chapter IV

Executive Summary



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CHAPTER 4

This report has illustrated the sources of revenue currently used by the various park systems. Additional sources have also been suggested which might be useful to some if not all of the parks. Ideas for cost savings have been proposed for the purpose of increasing the efficient use of the public dollar which in turn could facilitate expansion of park area and/or amenities.

Conclusion

Economy of Scale, we believe, affords the greatest opportunity to realize cost savings. In order to implement this potential to its fullest extent, a county-wide park district would need to be formed. Beyond the savings associated with large scale purchasing and contracting, it would also be reasonable to assume there could be efficiencies associated with administrative and operations costs.

In conclusion, our observations of the current park and recreation facilities in Hamilton County is that they are well run and efficient in themselves. Therefore, the creation of a county-wide park district would allow for the greatest impact by making it possible to utilize all the recommends presented in Chapter 3 and possibly others outside the current ways of thinking. It is the consensus of this committee that the rewards of creating a county wide district far outweigh the difficulties of its formation and it should be a part of county-wide future planning.