

Parks Department

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Mission

The Kent County Parks Department enhances the quality of life in Kent County by providing outstanding parks and trails adhering to the highest standards of recreation. The department efficiently achieves this vision by developing vibrant partnerships, sustainable funding, and accessible parks and trails that amply meet the needs of future generations.

Overview

The Parks Department manages over 7,040 acres of land in 43 properties and trails, offering a wide range of recreational opportunities. Family and corporate picnicking, swimming, hiking, cross-country skiing, and golf at our four-star golf course are just a few of the activities available in County parks. In addition, the Department operates a campground with 90 campsites and four rental cabins at Wabasis Lake Park.

One significant ongoing project is completing the acquisition and development of Millennium Park. This 1,500 acre park reclaims lands once used for gravel and gypsum mining, oil production, and waste disposal. The completed recreation area features a popular beach and splashpad, with opportunities for fishing, picnicking, volleyball, basketball, and boat rentals. The Meadows area includes a large pavilion for big group and community events. The park also is popular for its network of trails stretching more than 17 miles and providing access to extensive natural areas within the park.

To meet the goal set by the Board of Commissioners of a 7,500 acre park system, the Parks Department also seeks to strategically acquire and protect greenspace to meet the recreational needs of future generations, as current funding permits. The current emphasis in land acquisition is on expanding existing parks, particularly where population growth is expected to lead to increased demands for recreational opportunities. The department also holds undeveloped greenspace for a few new parks planned for eventual development in underserved areas of the county.

Strategic Goals

- Diversify funding sources - become more self-supporting (Stable Revenues, Efficient Use of Resources, Proactive and Innovative Government)
- Provide a comprehensive array of park experiences to the county population that meets/exceeds community expectations (Proactive and Innovative Government, High Quality of Life)
- Achieve position as a provider of preferred recreation attractions in the Grand Rapids area (High Quality of Life)



In 2018, the central link in the Fred Meijer M-6 Trail was completed with two new bridges and a mile of newly paved trail.

Significant Accomplishments

- Completed the central link on the Fred Meijer M-6 Trail, including two bridges and one mile of new trail between Division Avenue and 68th Street.
- Constructed additional storage to improve functionality of the enclosed shelters at Townsend and Douglas Walker Parks
- Completed construction on a new maintenance garage at Dwight Lydell Park, to transfer operations out of an existing structure in poor condition in the center of the main recreation area.
- Initiated a multi-year project to restore and stabilize Mill Creek through Dwight Lydell Park.
- Upgraded substandard electrical and plumbing utilities serving campsites at Wabasis Campground.
- Collaborated with the Village of Caledonia to successfully secure DNR grant funding allowing the Village to purchase 19 acres to expand Caledonia Lakeside Park.
- Completed the Idema Wetlands project, including restoring the wetland and developing public access
- Purchased 12.8 acres at the gateway of Fallasburg Park, with support from the Lowell Area Community Fund.
- Completed construction of a family restroom at the Millennium Park beach house.
- Initiated a project to improve the flood resiliency and habitat quality of Plaster Creek in Dutton Shadyside Park.
- Constructed a new mountain bike loop and established a new native prairie at Wahlfield Park.

DEPARTMENT: PARKS

Department Mission Statement:

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Service Area: General Parks

Goals

- Develop and enhance park and trail facilities to improve the diversity and quality of recreational opportunities.
- Acquire parklands, green spaces and trail corridors to address the current and future needs of the community.
- Improve efficiency of operations and service delivery.
- Increase awareness, use and support of Kent County Parks through enhanced public outreach.
- Protect the quality and sustainability of the Kent County Parks system by continuing to increase and diversify funding sources.
- Provide park and trail facilities that are clean and safe.

Objectives

- Complete at least five in-house construction or restoration projects per year to improve park facilities.
 - Pursue the Board's long term goal of a 7,500 acre park system through strategic land acquisitions as funding permits.
 - Increase coverage of digitized park maintenance data by collecting and converting at least 50 records per year.
 - Achieve and support at least 9,000 volunteer hours per year.
 - Take more than 40% of reservations for shelters and picnic areas through online transactions.
 - Expand contact list for targeted communications by 500 households per year.
 - Take at least 2,000 day use facility reservations annually.
 - Use outside funding to support at least five projects per year.
 - Fund at least 40% of parks general operations and management through sources other than the County general fund.
 - Collaborate with outside agencies and organizations on at least 75 projects annually.
 - Participate in at least ten public outreach events per year.
 - Over the most recent four-year period, receive an average of at least \$500,000 annually in capital funding from outside sources.
 - Maintain, update and implement the Parks Master Plan
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Indicators	2015 Actual	2016 Expected/ Actual	2017 Expected/ Actual	2018 Expected/ Actual
Outcomes				
% of event reservations made online	43.12%	43.90%/43.14%	41.67%/34.20%	40.00%
Average annual funding received from outside sources for capital projects over the most recent four-year period.	\$735,927	\$1,757,767/ \$903,217	\$1,000,000/ \$1,061,805	\$811,055

Indicators	2015 Actual	2016 Expected/ Actual	2017 Expected/ Actual	2018 Expected/ Actual
Efficiencies				
% of operations and management expenditures funded through sources other than the general fund	47.65%	42.00%/46.00%	44.70%/44.20%	41.60%

Indicators	2015 Actual	2016 Expected/ Actual	2017 Expected/ Actual	2018 Expected/ Actual
Outputs				
# of in-house construction or restoration projects completed	12	10/ 10	10/ 11	10
Acres of parkland or greenspace acquired per year	0.00	197.00/ 170.50	12.80/ 12.80	145.00
# of maintenance and installation records in centralized database	410	430/ 435	485/ 545	600
# of volunteer hours per year (including community service hours)	10,685	10,500/ 11,218	11,250/ 11,520	11,500
Total number of day use facilities reserved.	0	0/ 2,032	2,000/ 2,062	2,000
Event reservations made online (each may include multiple picnic areas and/or shelters)	705	725/ 799	750/ 624	720
Event reservations total (each may include multiple picnic areas and/or shelters)	1,635	1,650/ 1,852	1,800/ 1,823	1,800
# of subscribers to department newsletters	16,006	16,500/ 16,403	16,700/ 16,657	17,000
# of followers on department social media pages	3,280	3,600/ 3,753	4,100/ 4,683	5,250

# of projects supported in part through funding other than the County General Fund	10	9/ 9	9/ 10	9
Total revenues earned to support operations and management	\$2,282,251	\$2,045,438/ \$2,229,780	\$2,460,341/ \$2,363,346	\$2,421,495
Total expenses for general fund operations and management	\$4,789,166	\$4,866,137/ \$4,847,090	\$5,508,984/ \$5,350,756	\$5,826,767
Number of project collaborations with outside agencies or organizations.	90	>75/ 81	>75/ 87	>75
Number of public outreach events in which the department participated.	10	>10/ 15	>10/ 12	12
Capital support received from outside sources.	\$421,000	\$1,070,000/ \$1,201,800	\$1,100,000/ \$1,336,419	\$285,000
Number of Action Plan items completed from the Parks Master Plan	9	9/ 8	8/ 9	6

Service Area: L.E. Kaufman Golf Course

Goal

- Efficiently provide a quality 18-hole golf course for the general public

Objectives

- Maintain a consistent level of use by achieving at least 30,000 total rounds played per year.
- Maintain an excellent ranking by a reputable reviewing entity.
- Operate golf course and driving range at a Revenue:Cost ratio of at least 1.05

	2015 Actual	2016 Expected/ Actual	2017 Expected/ Actual	2018 Expected/ Actual
Indicators				
Outcomes				
Public course ranking by a reputable reviewing organization		NA	Top 10 in State / 77th in US	Use Customer ranking

	2015 Actual	2016 Expected/ Actual	2017 Expected/ Actual	2018 Expected/ Actual
Indicators				
Efficiencies				
Revenues earned per dollar of expense	1.32	1.19/ 1.19	1.07/ 1.11	1.05

	2015 Actual	2016 Expected/ Actual	2017 Expected/ Actual	2018 Expected/ Actual
Indicators				
Outputs				
# of 18 hole rounds	21,525	18,750/ 21,043	19,900/ 20,972	19,000
# of 9 hole rounds	12,893	12,000/ 14,138	13,400/ 12,206	11,000
# of buckets sold (driving range)	9,681	10,000/ 10,367	10,400/ 10,634	10,500
# of season passes and punch cards sold	130	141/ 137	140/ 155	150
Total revenues	\$973,125	\$1,005,000/ \$983,873	\$1,002,400/ \$1,023,912	\$1,034,000
Total expenses	\$735,238	\$840,676/ \$828,610	\$934,370/ \$921,649	\$985,000

Service Area: Wabasis Campground

Goals

- Efficiently provide a range of campsite and support facilities for the general public.
- Provide an enjoyable camping experience.

Objectives

- Operate pull-in primitive sites at a minimum of 60% occupancy during the peak season
- Operate improved sites at a minimum of 65% occupancy during peak season
- Operate the cottage and cabins at 80% capacity during peak season
- Operate the campground at a Revenue:Cost ratio of at least 1.15

Indicators	2015 Actual	2016 Expected/ Actual	2017 Expected/ Actual	2018 Expected/ Actual
Outcomes				
% occupancy for cottage and cabins, Memorial Day through Labor Day weekends	83.20%	84.20%/ 88.00%	89.00%/ 88.00%	88.00%
% occupancy for improved sites Memorial Day through Labor Day weekends	61.80%	61.90%/ 65.00%	65.00%/ 72.00%	65.00%
% occupancy for pull-in primitive sites Memorial Day through Labor Day weekends	54.50%	54.80%/ 65.00%	63.00%/ 70.00%	60.00%

Indicators	2015 Actual	2016 Expected/ Actual	2017 Expected/ Actual	2018 Expected/ Actual
Efficiencies				
Revenues earned per dollar of expense	1.48	1.59/ 1.30	1.12/ 1.37	1.15

Service Area: Millennium Park

Goal

- Efficiently provide a range of enjoyable recreational opportunities at Millennium Park that are easily accessible to the general public.

Objectives

- Maintain an annual beach attendance of at least 80,000
- Assist under-privileged county residents by providing free admission to the beach, equaling at least 15% of total beach attendance.
- Operate Millennium Park at a Revenue:Cost ratio of at least 0.6 (i.e., earn \$6 for every \$10 of expense).
- Rent at least 8,000 boats annually

Indicators	2015 Actual	2016 Expected/ Actual	2017 Expected/ Actual	2018 Expected/ Actual
Outcomes				
% of total beach/splashpad attendance attributable to free admission through the SPLASH program	16.11%	>15.00%/ 16.71%	>15.00%/ 14.85%	>15.00%

Indicators	2015 Actual	2016 Expected/ Actual	2017 Expected/ Actual	2018 Expected/ Actual
Efficiencies				
Revenues earned per dollar of expense	0.82	>0.60/ 0.71	>0.60/ 0.63	>0.60

Indicators	2015 Actual	2016 Expected/ Actual	2017 Expected/ Actual	2018 Expected/ Actual
Outputs				
Total Millennium Park beach/splashpad attendance	96,579	>80,000/ 101,709	>80,000/ 89,995	>80,000
Beach/splashpad attendance through SPLASH program	15,563	>15,000/ 16,997	>15,000/ 13,368	>15,000
Total Revenues	\$448,800	\$334,325/ \$443,806	\$557,800/ \$395,795	\$451,525
Total Expenses	\$544,576	\$566,874/ \$624,206	\$655,822/ \$623,902	\$663,158
Total boat and paddleboard rentals	9,055	>7,500/ 9,291	>8,000/ 9,418	>8,000