

# STRATEGIC PLAN



Park District of Ottawa County  
Approved by Board of Park Commissioners  
July 8th, 2025





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## SECTION 1

# COMMUNITY PROFILE





Ottawa County is located on the northern boundary of the State of Ohio on the shores of and into Lake Erie. According to the Ohio Genealogical Society, the county encompasses 254.7 square miles of land. However, its legal boundary includes an additional 330 acres of the water of Lake Erie. Of the 88 counties in Ohio, there are only two counties that are smaller in land mass. One of those smaller counties is nearby Erie County.

Established on March 6, 1840, it was formed from portions of Erie, Lucas, and Sandusky Counties. The western area of the county was the last to be settled as it was part of the Great Black Swamp. The eastern area was part of the Connecticut Western Reserve and was the first area to be settled and developed. The county has twelve townships, one of which is Put-in-Bay township and includes several islands in Lake Erie.

With its proximity to Lake Erie, the county is a popular destination for recreation opportunities related to access to Lake Erie. The U.S. Census Bureau reports that as of July 1, 2024, the population of Ottawa County is 39,692. That number reflects a decrease of 111 from the 2023 figures. Overall, the permanent resident population has been decreasing since 2010 and is projected to continue to decrease in the coming years (Ohio Department of Development).

Access to Ottawa County includes many state highways including the Ohio Turnpike and State Route 2, major east/west corridors passing through the county. There are numerous other state highways crossing the county providing access to residents and visitors.

There is one city in the county, Port Clinton. This community serves as the county seat. There are seven villages including Clay Center, Elmore, Genoa, Marblehead, Oak Harbor, Put-in-Bay, and Rocky Ridge. Additional unincorporated communities are sprinkled throughout the county.



With its proximity to Lake Erie, Ottawa County is home to a significant number of parks and nature preserves that draw thousands of visitors annually. Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge, Magee Marsh, Perry's Victory and International Peace Memorial, Catawba Island State Park, Oak Point State Park, North Bass Island State Park, Middle Bass Island State Park, and East Harbor State Park are found in the county. There are also additional private preserves located in the county.

Seasonal visitation to the county creates a number of challenges to both the permanent residents and visitors. Traffic flow is a problem during the peak recreation season. Recent studies conducted by the Park District of Ottawa County seek enhanced access to off-road trails that will connect people and communities throughout the county. These include the Catawba Islander Trail and Greenway Master Plan and the Marblehead Peninsula Trail Feasibility Study.

With its proximity to Lake Erie and the abundance of recreation opportunities, Ottawa County is expected to continue to attract visitors in the future. Ottawa County is expected to continue to have an abundance of recreation opportunities related to Lake Erie. While the permanent resident population is projected to decline (U.S. Census Bureau), the seasonal population will likely grow.







## SECTION 2

# ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE





In 1992, Ottawa County resident, Attorney Mark E. Mulligan, requested that the Ottawa County Commissioners consider adopting a resolution for the formation of a park district that would include all territory within Ottawa County. After discussion, the commissioners passed a resolution requesting Ottawa County Probate Court conduct a public hearing regarding the creation of a park district. The resolution stated, “. . . the creation of a county-wide park district would be the most effective and efficient means to establish the orderly development, operation, acquisition, and maintenance of park and recreation facilities and activities for the citizens.” It further stated that the Board of County Commissioners supported the creation of a park district as outlined in Section 1545.01 of the Ohio Revised Code. The resolution was delivered to Ottawa County Probate Court on July 17, 1992.

After receiving the resolution from the county commissioners, Probate Judge David Zeitzheim scheduled a hearing in the matter for August 24, 1992, at 9 a.m. Those in attendance at the hearing, including Attorney Mark E. Mulligan, supported the creation of a park district. After consideration of the evidence presented at the hearing, on September 1, 1992, Judge Zeitzheim ordered the creation of the Park District of Ottawa County to include all areas of Ottawa County.

Chapter 1545 of the Ohio Revised Code provides for the operation of park districts. Section 1545.11 states, in part, “The board of park commissioners may acquire lands either within or without the park district for conversion into forest reserves and for the conservation of the natural resources of the state, including streams, lakes, submerged lands, and swamplands, and to those ends may create parks, parkways, forest reservations, and other reservations and afforest, develop, improve, protect, and promote the use of the same in such manner as the board deems conducive to the general welfare.”

After its creation in 1992, the park district initially focused on working on grant opportunities to assist with the development of the North Coast Inland Trail within Ottawa County. With limited funding opportunities, the park district had no opportunities to grow. In 1999, Sandusky County Park District purchased a section of the North Coast Inland Trail corridor in Ottawa County. In the ensuing years, this



portion of the trail was improved. In 2018, Sandusky County Park District transferred its ownership of the trail to Ottawa County Commissioners.

Also in 2018, Ottawa County Commissioners formed a steering committee to create an Ottawa County Active Transportation Plan. The committee began its work on April 25, 2018, with representatives from many Ottawa County organizations, subdivisions, and residents. The park district was an active participant in the planning process. Funded by the Ohio Department of Transportation, the Active Transportation Plan Committee was to examine the needs of the community including alternatives to vehicular traffic as well as the promotion of healthy living conditions within the county.

The Steering Committee met monthly starting in April of 2018 through September. In addition, public meetings were held on June 6, 2018, at the Ottawa County Fairgrounds and on August 29, 2018, at the Shores & Islands Welcome Center to gather input on the Active Transportation Plan.

During the development of the Active Transportation Plan, it became clear that residents and visitors supported the creation of safe bicycle facilities in Ottawa County. Due to heavy traffic conditions, especially on weekends, the ability for both year-round and seasonal residents to use safe bicycle routes would help reduce traffic levels on both local and state roads. It would also provide an economic benefit to local businesses that would have access along the bicycle routes. Most supporters of the Active Transportation Plan noted that safe, off-road trails would be the preferred design. The final plan was adopted on November 1, 2018, and included mapping of various trail opportunities throughout the county as well as discussion of potential funding opportunities and maintenance of new trail corridors.



Strategy 1 of the Active Transportation Plan called for an active Ottawa County Park District. Since its formation in 1992, the park district had not developed a funding mechanism and had become inactive. On February 13th, 2020, Ottawa County Probate Court appointed two additional commissioners to the park district board at the request of the park district. With the new members, the board set about organizing the park district, developing its administrative policies, and seeking funding for the full operation of the district.

In May 2020, the park district contacted The Trust for Public Land for guidance with developing a funding model for the park district. The Trust agreed to provide



assistance in the form of a feasibility study that would examine potential sources of funding. The study included a phone poll conducted by John Wilson Research of Alexandria, Virginia. With limited funding options provided in the Ohio Revised Code, this poll tested public support for a ballot issue that would enact a real estate tax in the amount of .6 mill to benefit the park district. The ballot language proposed was as follows: "An additional tax for the benefit of The Park District of Ottawa County for the purpose of preserving land to protect drinking water sources and the water quality of rivers, lakes and streams, protecting natural areas and wildlife habitat, connecting existing parks and preserves with recreational trails, acquiring and improving new parks, and assisting in maintaining, improving, and operating existing parks, at a rate not exceeding six-tenths (0.6) of one mill; for each one hundred dollars of valuation, for a period of eight years commencing in 2021."

Those surveyed were given the opportunity to react to the ways in which the funding would be used. The five uses generating the most positive responses included the following (ranked from highest to lowest).

- Protect the water quality of Lake Erie (79%)
- Preserve land to protect drinking water sources (78%)
- Protect the water quality of rivers, lakes, and streams (76%)
- Provide nature education for children (70%)
- Develop and maintain recreational trails for walking and biking (69%)

The survey responses provide a road map for activities of the park district. It concluded there was strong support for a levy to support the park district going forward. With the information provided by the survey, the park district board of commissioners placed a ten-year levy on the November 2020 ballot using the ballot language as follows:

***An additional tax for the benefit of the Park District of Ottawa County for the purpose of operating, promoting, conserving, acquiring, developing, improving and protecting lands and water areas as parks, trails, both bike and walking, and forest reservations at a rate not exceeding 0.6 mill for each one dollar of valuation, which amounts to \$.06 for each one hundred dollars of valuation, for a period of ten years commencing in 2020, first due in calendar year 2021.***

The levy was passed with just over sixty percent of voters approving. The ballot language will continue to guide the park district in the expenditure of its funds.



Following passage of the levy to support the park district, the board began working on a plan for startup of operations and working on behalf of the residents of Ottawa County. The first paid staff member of the park district was added in 2022 when Jannah Wilson was hired as the Executive Director of the park district. Jannah came to the park district with a degree from Central Michigan University with a Major in Outdoor Recreation and a Minor in Natural Resources. She has

worked at several park locations in Michigan and moved to Ohio when she became employed as a full-time naturalist with Lorain County Metro Parks. She served as Outdoor Experiences Manager from 2019-2021.

In addition to the director, a part-time administrative assistant has been added along with a seasonal/intermittent operations assistant. The park district currently operates from rented office space in Port Clinton.

In 2023, the park district approved the Catawba Islander Trail and Greenway Master Plan. The plan envisions a trail that will run from the north to the south end of Catawba Island. The total plan envisions five phases, each taking three to five years to complete. A more detailed study was conducted of the Phase One area with more detailed route options and preliminary cost estimates.

Also in 2023, the Black Swamp Conservancy donated a twelve-acre parcel of land on West Harbor for future park development in Catawba Island Township. A Marblehead Peninsula Trail Feasibility Study was begun in 2023 with completion scheduled in 2025. The Park District also approved monetary support for the Port Clinton Recreational Amenities Plan.

In 2024, the park district acquired a key parcel on Catawba Island that will become a trailhead for the Catawba Islander Trail. The seven-acre parcel was acquired with a grant from the Clean Ohio Fund. Master planning for the development of this park and the land donated by the Black Swamp Conservancy is currently underway.

Also in 2024, the park district assisted with funding an extension of the North Coast Inland Trail through Veterans Park in Genoa. An Ohio Department of Transportation TAP Grant was secured to extend the trail from Veterans Park to Millbury. Funds were also provided for planning and engineering of further improvements to the North Coast Inland Trail to convert a trail segment from on-road to off-road. The Marblehead Peninsula Trail Feasibility Study was completed and approved by the board in April 2025.

Since the hiring of the director, the park district has worked to increase its presence in the county through programs and events. Park district marketing initiatives have included e-newsletters, a Facebook page, press releases, website updates, and the development of informational brochures and logo-printed items for distribution at events throughout the county.

Friends of Ottawa County Parks is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization that exists to assist the park district with its mission. Friends supports the park district through volunteerism and financial resources. The group recently conducted a strategic planning process and meets regularly.

As provided in the ballot language, the park district established a Parks and Trails Improvement Grant program to assist local political subdivisions with park and trail improvements throughout Ottawa County. Through 2024, the program has awarded grants totaling more than \$700,000.





## SECTION 3

# STAKEHOLDER MEETING





The park district invited local stakeholders to attend a meeting on August 22, 2024, to discuss the strategic operation of the park district and future planning. Held at the Oak Harbor Public Library, the sixteen attendees included representatives from local governments, federal agencies, non-profits, and the park district. A copy of the meeting notes and attendance are located in Appendix A.

A presentation outlining a history of the park district was given to attendees. Information was also shared regarding the statutory requirements for the district. A description of activities of the district since the passage of the levy in 2020 was included. First collection of revenue from the levy began in 2021.

A public opinion survey conducted by the Trust for Public Land before the levy passage created a basis for the operation of the park district going forward. Environmental and water quality preservation were most important with recreation and public programming also being ranked as important.

The park district began its work in the county with the survey results in mind as well as the statutory requirements for park district operations. These activities were presented to attendees and are outlined in the Organizational Profile in this document. After the presentation, attendees were asked to provide input regarding the performance of the park district and what, if anything, the park district should change.

The significance of the Parks and Trails Improvement Grant program to local communities was emphasized by local government representatives in attendance. The availability of funds to help improve local parks has been a game-changer for communities in the county. The continuation of this program is essential to future improvements of local parks.





An increase in public programming, both recreational and educational, was also identified as important. Additional staffing was recommended to improve this aspect of the operation of the park district. Some in attendance volunteered to assist with programming until park staffing is available for this task.

The importance of the expansion of trail corridors within the county was stressed by several in attendance. The presentation included information regarding trail projects that are ongoing with the county. This will continue to be a high priority going forward.

Comments about the progress of the park district since funding became available were positive. It is important to continue to make progress in improving parks, adding recreation opportunities, and adding educational programs moving forward. A copy of the presentation made at the meeting is available in Appendix B.



## SECTION 4

# PUBLIC INPUT SURVEY

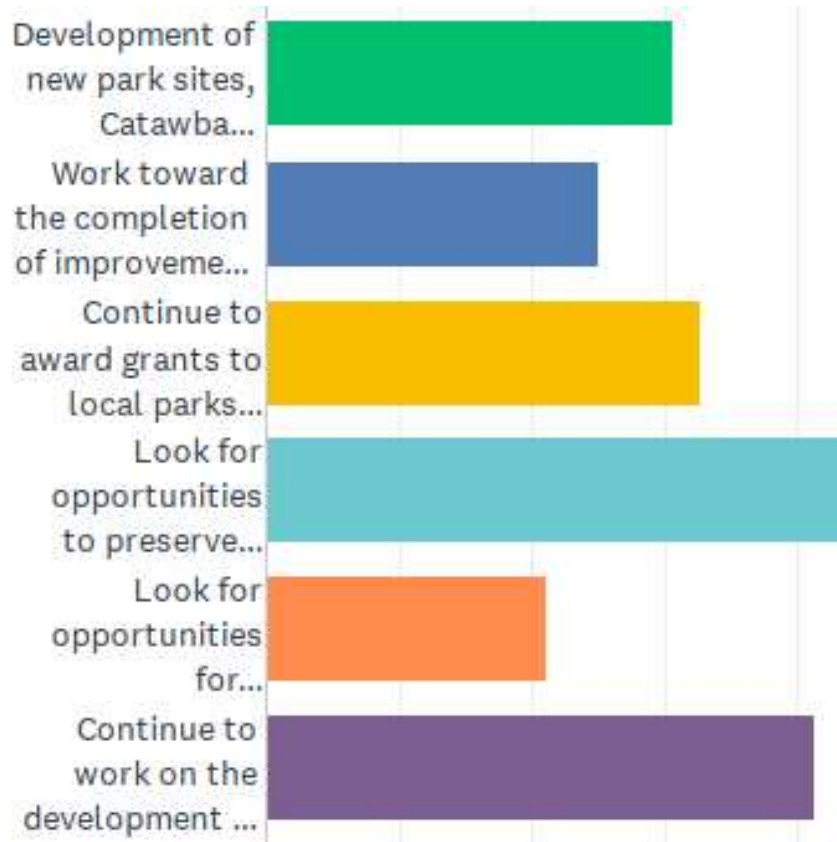




As a part of the strategic plan process, an online survey was developed to communicate the accomplishments of the park district and to gather public input on goals for the park district through the current levy period and beyond. A copy of the survey results is included in this report and is in Appendix C. The park district publicized the survey through email blasts, online posts, and in local newspapers. The survey was available from November 8-29, 2024. A total of 104 responses were received.

Thirteen potential goals were listed. Respondents were asked to select their top three goals. Six of the stated goals were most often selected. The top six goals, listed in order, were as follows:

1. Look for opportunities to preserve natural resources in Ottawa County. (44.23%)
2. Continue to work on the development of trail corridors in the Marblehead Peninsula and Catawba Island areas. (41.35%)
3. Plan for the financial stability of the park district beyond the current levy period. (39.42%)
4. Continue to award grants to local parks through the Parks and Trails Improvement Grant Program. (32.69%)
5. Development of new park sites, Catawba Islander Woods and Trailhead, and West Harbor Preserve. (30.77%)
6. Work toward the completion of improvements to the North Coast Inland Trail utilizing park district and grant funding. (25%)



While the top three goals were closely rated, natural resource preservation was clearly the most popular. Trails were also popular, appearing in three of the top six goals. Other proposed goals were selected less frequently but remain as important considerations for the park district. For example, the goal of finding a home for the park district was not selected very often but remains important to the operation of the park district. Similarly, the goal of adding staff where needed to maintain parks and conduct programs was the least popular, however it can be important to secure support for the park district in the future through well-maintained trails and programs that are accessed by residents. In addition to selecting the top three goals, respondents were given two open-ended questions seeking additional information.

### ***What amenities would you like to see as new parks are created in Ottawa County?***

Probably the most reoccurring theme in the responses to this question were bike trails, nature trails, community connectivity, and walking paths (including ADA accessible trails). These responses are in line with the park district's emphasis since it was created. Numerous responses mention access to safe bicycle routes in the Marblehead and Catawba areas.

Other responses included typical amenities found in parks such as restrooms, shelters, dog parks, parking, programming, playgrounds, water fountains, trash cans, etc. One respondent mentioned expanding park access in the western area of the county.

The complete list of responses is in Appendix C. Of the 104 who responded to the survey, 73 entered a response to this question.

### ***How are we doing?***

The danger that comes with inviting input on your organization includes having several negative comments posted relative to individual pet peeves. It is clear from the responses received related to this question that most of the respondents feel that the park district is doing a great job.

The majority of the responses demonstrate that the community is impressed with the progress made this far and recognize that funding has only recently become available to support the operation of the district. There were mentions of doing a great job with limited resources and encouragement to continue seeking grant funding as well.

Trails were mentioned several times by those responding. Expanding parks into Western Ottawa County was mentioned again under this question, by the same respondent to the question above as demonstrated by the time and date stamp. Seventy-one people provided answers to this question.



## ***What are we missing?***

This question had the least responses, with sixty-three people taking the time to record their answers. The list varies. There were some common themes in the responses. The need for safe bicycle trails was raised on several occasions. The need for better communication about the district and its programs came out in several answers.

Interestingly, the need to expand the park district through land acquisition was mentioned several times, showing concern over the loss of land to development. One respondent felt that a more visible location of an office complex was important along with staff supporting the operation of the park district, its improvements, and programs. A full list of responses to this question is found in Appendix C.

The responses to the survey show strong support for the park district, its goals, and its achievements since the passage of the levy. There were several responses from the Catawba Island area that demonstrate some concern about the park district's efforts in that area. There were also a few responses about property taxes that demonstrate the need to be aware of some anti-tax sentiment in the community.



## SECTION 5

# BENCHMARKING





Eight park districts were selected for the benchmarking survey. These districts are spread throughout the state and were all asked to respond to a list of twenty-six questions regarding funding and operation. A chart listing the responses from each district is in Appendix D.

Levies for all of the selected districts have been voted on in the last ten years. The largest levy in place is in Sandusky County at one mill. The lowest levy in place is in Ross County at two-tenths of a mill. The funding generated by a real estate levy varies greatly based on the economic development of each county. Half of those surveyed are operating with a five-tenths of a mill levy. Funding generated is between \$620,000 and \$750,000. Most of the levies supporting the park districts surveyed are for a period of ten years. None included in the benchmarking had more than one levy in place.

The amount of land controlled by the district and the number of open parks varied based on the age of the levy. The smallest number of open parks was in Richland County, which passed its first levy in 2023. The smallest amount of land was in Auglaize County with just forty acres. This district also passed its first levy in 2023.

As expected, staffing levels varied with the number of parks and the length of time the district has had a levy in place. In Sandusky County, the park district has been supported by a levy for many years. The current one mill levy was passed in 2016 and generates \$1,000,000 annually. The presence of a swimming area and campgrounds leads to higher staffing levels.

All the park districts had a staff member dedicated to programming. One had four and another added five to six seasonal employees for programming. Most park districts throughout the state see public programming as an important way to maintain support for the district and its operations.

All park districts reported trails as an important amenity. While some did not report the total length of nature trails, all have them. The popularity of paved trails is also evident with all districts reporting varying length of paved trails in place.

Most of the established districts have purchased vehicles and equipment used in the operation and maintenance of the parks. Most districts also use employees and volunteers for mowing activities. Two contract most of the mowing with a third considering using contractors. This is a growing trend in parks as it is becoming more difficult to hire and retain maintenance employees. It reduces operational costs when maintenance staff is reduced to those who have responsibility for fleet and building management. It also lessens the need for capital equipment. Licking Park District has been successful with a mowing contract program.

The strength of park districts throughout Ohio has been the ability to operate under Chapter 1545 of the Ohio Revised Code to meet community needs. Each district has a slightly different approach to its mission. The focus of each of the park districts surveyed centered around conservation, passive recreation, and nature education. Ross County Park District divides its budget equally between trail development and programming. Auglaize County Park District is primarily focused on land acquisition and opening new parks since this is its first year of funded operations. The information provided from other park districts supports the primary focus of The Park District of Ottawa County.



## SECTION 6

# FISCAL REVIEW





As noted in the Community Profile, the park district operates under Chapter 1545 of the Ohio Revised Code. The manner in which park districts are able to raise funds is specified in Sections 1545.20 and 1545.21.

## **INSIDE MILLAGE**

Section 1545.20 permits the levy of one-half mill of taxes on properties located within the park district as a portion of inside millage for the county. Inside millage is authorized by Section 133.17 and is available for any authorized political subdivision. However, inside millage is limited to ten mills and in Ottawa County, all of the ten mills had been authorized for other political subdivisions before the park district was created.

## **TAX LEVY FOR USE OF PARK DISTRICT - SUBMISSION TO ELECTORS, BONDS**

Section 1545.21 outlines the process for a park district to submit a tax levy to the voters for approval. These levies can be submitted to the voters at any general election. The process to submit an issue to the voters is spelled out in this section of the Ohio Revised Code and is the process that was utilized to submit the first levy for approval. A park district cannot ask for more than two mills in any single request (unless the park district operates a zoo). Once a levy is passed, this section also describes the manner in which tax anticipation bonds can be issued for improvements. The length of the levy is determined by the ballot question authorized by the board of park commissioners. The current levy for the Park District of Ottawa County was approved for ten years.

## **EXPIRATION OF THE LEVY**

Section 1545.21 also provides the process for renewing or replacing a levy upon expiration. If the levy is to be renewed, it may first be placed on the ballot in November of the year that the levy expires. Should the levy fail, the commissioners can submit the question in either of the general elections of the ensuing year to keep the funding in place.

If a simple renewal of an existing levy will not provide sufficient funding to

operate the district, the board may submit a renewal levy with an increase to the voters. It must first pass a resolution declaring the necessity of additional funding. The ballot question must state that the existing levy will be renewed and state the amount of the additional funding to be approved. This section of law also permits a park district to request a new levy or renewal and additional levy at any point during the term of the existing levy. The ballot language must state that the existing levy will be cancelled upon passage of the new levy.

The Park District of Ottawa County will expire on December 31, 2029 with the last year of collection in 2030. A renewal levy or a renewal and increase can first be submitted to the voters in November of 2029. The board is permitted to submit a new levy at any general election. As described above, it may also decide to renew and increase its levy at any point prior to 2029.

## OTHER FUNDING

The board is authorized to accept donations in Section 1545.11 of the Ohio Revised Code. Donations of goods, services, or property may be accepted by the board. Any special terms of such donations must also be approved by the Probate Court.

The board may also seek to supplement tax funding through the use of public and private grants. The Park District of Ottawa County has been successful in obtaining grants for land acquisition and trail construction since the passage of the tax levy. Most grant programs require a local match, making local funding important. Since the passage of the tax levy in 2020, the park district has successfully raised \$2,020,273 in grant funding to supplement local funding. Without the local matching funds, these grants would not have been awarded. Park districts in Ohio are eligible for funding from the Local Government Fund. At this time, the park district does not receive funding from this source.

## NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION

The park district has the support of a 501(c)3 non-profit organization, Friends of Ottawa County Parks. This group has the ability to raise funds to assist the park district with its mission. Work is currently underway to increase the presence of the organization in the community to provide a vehicle for private donations to assist the park district with its improvement of parks in Ottawa County.



## FINANCIAL ANALYSIS

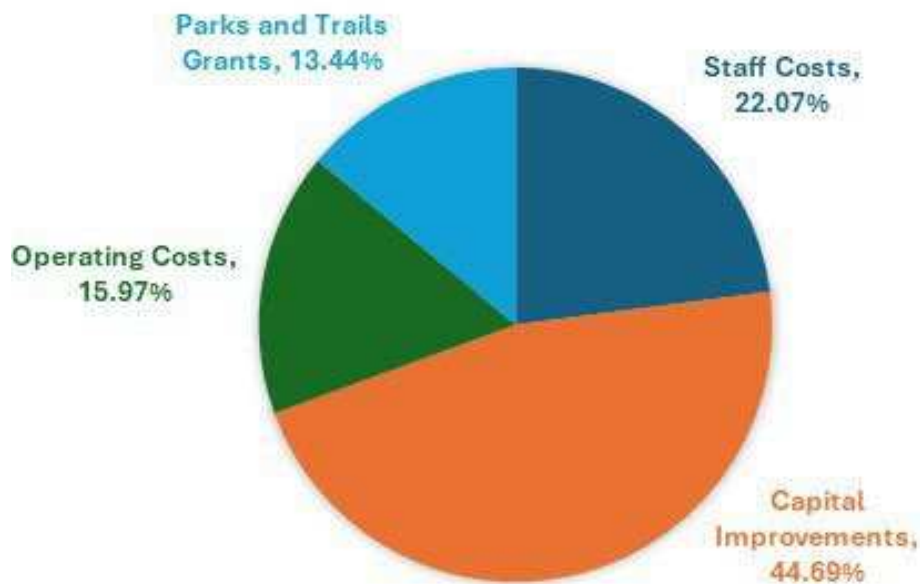
As a part of the strategic planning process, the fiscal health of the organization was reviewed. Actual expenditures from the start of collections of the existing park levy in 2021 and projected expenses through 2030 were collected and analyzed to demonstrate how the funding has been utilized. The results of this analysis are shown in the chart below.

The Ottawa County Auditor serves as the fiscal agent for the park district. Park staff process invoices for payment to submit to the county auditor for processing. Payroll processing is also handled by the county auditor's office.

In accordance with the laws of the State of Ohio, the park district is audited every two years for compliance with government accounting policies and procedures. Results of the audits are on file with both the state auditor's office and the park district. Audits have not revealed any issues with the operation of the park district and the management of its funds.

The park district received its first funds from the new levy in 2021. The park board began work toward finding and employing an Executive Director, paying for the election expenses from 2020 and working with consultants to create plans for the future operation of the district. Total expenditures in 2021 were 6.43 percent of revenues. (A detailed breakdown of revenue and expense is provided in Appendix E.)

### EXPENDITURES BY CATEGORY 2021-2030



In 2022, an Executive Director was employed. The first grants were awarded from the Parks and Trails Improvement Grant Program assisting local governments with park improvements. Planning for future projects continued during the year as consultants began work on park district improvement plans. Expenditures totaled 18.91 percent of revenues.

In 2023, additional part-time staff members were added. An administrative assistant and operations assistant were added to assist the director with the day-to-day operations. Work continued on planning for future improvements. Additional grants were awarded from the Parks and Trails Improvement Program. Total expenditures were 49.78 percent of revenues.

In 2024, the park district funded its first capital improvement project for improvements on the North Coast Inland Trail. Work on other projects including the Catawba Islander Trail Master Plan, the Marblehead Trail Feasibility Study, and land acquisition moved forward. The third round of grants to local political subdivisions were awarded. Total expenditures totaled 83.85 percent of revenues.

Revenue and expenditures through the end of the current levy and two years beyond have also been projected. These projections include changes in the operation of the park district that are contemplated in both the short-term and long-term goals found later in this report.

The 2025 budget for the park district includes a number of changes in expenses. In June 2025, the park district relocated to a new office location that will result in an increase in rent. Previously awarded grants from the Parks and Trails Improvement program will be spent. Further major work will be completed on the North Coast Inland Trail along with the anticipated construction of the first new park. Proposed staffing changes include a full-time operations manager to assist with capital projects, a seasonal maintenance worker to work on park care, and a seasonal naturalist to increase community engagement. Expenses in 2025 will exceed revenues by utilizing unexpended funds from previous years.



Projections for the next seven years include allowances for capital improvements, staff changes, a continuation of the Parks and Trails Improvement Grant Program. Through the last year of collection of the current levy, expenditures are kept within total receipts (including cash carryovers from previous years).

Minor additional staff changes are anticipated. In 2026 the seasonal naturalist



position will increase from 600 hours to 1040 hours allowing additional programming. In 2027 the seasonal naturalist position is elevated to a full-time position providing for year-round programming. A naturalist program is often referred to as the “face” of the park district by providing a way for the public to interface with the organization on a personal level. In 2027, an additional seasonal maintenance position is added to assist with care of additional park improvements. After 2027, no additional staff changes are projected in this plan. (However, changes in the operation and additional park improvements may necessitate additional staffing).



With the expiration of the current levy on December 31, 2029, the financial projections anticipate the passage of a renewal and additional levy in November 2029 or in 2030. It is currently estimated that a renewal of the existing 0.6 mill levy with a small increase of 0.175 mill would generate additional funds for the operation of the district. Should a renewal and additional levy pass, annual revenue would increase from \$1.3 million to \$1.9 million. This increase would restore funding to the level originally approved in 2020 and fund additional capital improvements and increased operational costs. The park board could also opt to renew the existing levy without an increase which would provide the park district with funds to continue operations with \$1.3 million in annual revenue.

As noted above, the board could request a renewal and additional levy at any point during the term of the existing levy. (Ohio Revised Code 1451.21 (B)2) Any combination of mills is permitted with a renewal and additional levy.

The park board operates in a fiscally conservative manner. To that end, it strives to maintain a reserve balance that generates revenue for the operation of the district and to provide a cushion for a fiscal emergency in the future. The goal of the board is to have a cash balance of a least equal to the annual income of the levy that supports the district (as permitted by law).





## SECTION 7

# FIVE AND TEN-YEAR GOALS





## FIVE-YEAR GOALS BEGINNING IN 2025

### **Define the Park District – what is the park district's role in the community**

#### **Update the mission statement:**

To clarify the role of the park district in the community, it is recommended that the mission statement be updated to state: *The Park District of Ottawa County is dedicated to preserving, enhancing, and connecting Ottawa County's natural and recreational resources for the enjoyment and benefit of all.*

#### **Update the vision statement:**

An update of the vision statement would further clarify the role of the park district in the community. The following vision statement is recommended: *Building a future where nature is accessible, shared and connected to Ottawa County's communities.*

#### **Motto:**

*"Connecting People, Places, and Parks"*

### **Five-Year Goals Beginning in 2025 (to be reviewed annually)**

- **Complete Key Trail Projects**
  - Finalize the North Coast Inland Trail projects, including:
    - » Martin Williston Road separated multi-use path.
    - » Village of Genoa Phase One project.
  - Support the Village of Oak Harbor Riverwalk Project.
- **Expand Public Access Throughout Ottawa County**
  - Provide public access to Catawba Island properties owned by the Park District, prioritizing environmental sustainable trail systems.
    - » Island Woods and Trailhead
    - » Davenport Memorial Woodlands
    - » West Harbor Preserve (including paddle craft launch)
- **Mapping and Monitoring**
  - Identify, catalog, and monitor natural areas in Ottawa County that are worthy of preservation and enhanced public use.
  - Develop trail maps for park district properties and the North Coast Inland Trail.
  - Create an interactive map for completed Parks and Trails Improvement Grant projects.
- **Advance the Catawba Islander Trail and Greenway**
  - Continue development through Park District properties and trail easements with willing property owners.

- **Begin Marblehead Peninsula Trail Development**
  - Utilize the Marblehead Peninsula Trail Feasibility Study to begin to implement trail development plans.
  - Advance connections to the Sandusky Bay Pathway.
- **Explore a Collaborative Park Development Project in Western Ottawa County**
  - Explore a partnership with Sandusky County Park District to create a new park (on land already publicly owned).
- **Enhance Portage River Water Trail**
  - Collaborate with partners to improve paddle craft launch areas and enhance overall water trail development.
- **Support County-wide Parks and Trails Grants**
  - Continue offering the Parks and Trails Improvement Grant for the benefit of the entire county.
- **Expand Educational and Recreational Programming**
  - Broaden outreach efforts and enhance programming across Ottawa County.
- **Enhance Operational Capacity**
  - Acquire essential equipment for Park District operations.
  - Hire appropriate staff to meet operational needs.
  - Develop and maintain a robust park district volunteer program while integrating support from Friends of Ottawa County Parks.
  - Establish a central base of operations for staff and volunteers.
  - Develop and implement operational and maintenance standards for park properties.
- **Financial Balance**
  - Develop a comprehensive financial strategy for continuing operation of the park district including the allocation of funding for operations and capital improvements as well as recommendations for future funding initiatives.



## TEN-YEAR GOALS

- **Extend the North Coast Inland Trail**
  - Complete the extension of the North Coast Inland Trail through Ottawa County, connecting to Wood County.
- **Integrate Eastern and Western Trail Networks**
  - Develop plans to connect trail networks in the County's eastern and western regions, including integration with the North Coast Inland Trail.
  - Explore east to west trail routing through the Village of Oak Harbor.
- **Broaden Portage River Corridor Plans**
  - Expand access to the Portage River through:
    - » Preservation of natural resources.
    - » Improved connectivity for non-motorized on-land trails.
    - » Enhanced public access.
- **Promote Stewardship and Maintenance**
  - Develop and implement stewardship standards that will ensure proper care and maintenance of park lands and improvements owned by both the park district and partner agencies.
- **Collaborate on regionally significant projects**
  - Continue to develop Sandusky Bay Pathway plans and Ottawa County route options.
  - Work with local communities, metropolitan planning organizations, and neighboring counties to explore the feasibility of developing a pedestrian corridor via the former Sandusky Bay Bridge and other trail connection opportunities.



## SECTION 8

# APPENDIX





# APPENDIX A - STAKEHOLDER MEETING MINUTES

## Meeting Minutes Summary –PDOC Strategic Discussion

**Presenter: Jannah Wilson – NCIT & PDOC Update**

### 1. NCIT Trail Updates

- *Elmore to Genoa Section*: Martin-Williston on-road trail to be widened and repaved as a separate off-road path. Construction slated for 2025.
  - *Phase One – Village of Genoa*: Extension of NCIT through Genoa to the abandoned rail line. PDOC received \$1.1M ODOT TAP grant for this expansion.
  - *Former Rail Line*: Acquisition process underway for future trail use.
- 

## Discussion Highlights

### Staffing & Operations

- **Jason Lewis** inquired about PDOC staffing model.
  - *Jannah Wilson*: Current staffing is at capacity. Discussion underway with the park board about expanding staff. Priorities include hiring an **Operations Manager** (trail development, conservation, inspections) and a **full-time Naturalist** (programming, education, camps). Volunteer base is also being expanded.
- **Kim Kaufman** emphasized the need for broader staffing to support community programming and engagement. Offered **Black Swamp Bird Observatory** partnership opportunities in the interim.

### Vision & Planning

- **Tom James**: Long-term planning includes Catawba Islander Trail Plan, Marblehead Peninsula Trail Feasibility Study, and expanding safe off-road biking routes. Emphasis on balancing project ambition with financial feasibility.
- **Quinton Babcock**: Called for clear priorities and financial planning to ensure sustainable infrastructure investment. Noted different visions and needs across communities.
- **Tom Bergman**: Stressed that PDOC levels the playing field in funding access between municipalities and villages. Expressed strong support for the grant program's impact.
- **Lisa Brohl**: Expressed excitement about levy support and matching grant opportunities. Highlighted public demand for shoreline access and continued grant programming.
- **Jasmine Cupp**: Asked about the *Active Transportation Plan* and its role in addressing lack of public transportation and access to public lands.
  - *Jannah Wilson*: The plan helps identify and address infrastructure gaps. Resulted in better local engagement, especially in places like Catawba, which is gradually shifting from resistance to support through outreach and greenspace preservation efforts.

## Community Engagement & Strategic Support

- PDOC has supported several community park plans (Port Clinton, Oak Harbor, Elmore) and is exploring adding this as a formal part of its strategic planning process.
  - **Amanda Kovach:** Emphasized quality in grant writing and project descriptions.
  - **Dave Hower:** Expressed desire for park planning support due to inactivity in local park development.
  - *Jannah Wilson:* Suggested PDOC could assist one community per year with a park plan as part of the strategic framework.
- 

## Next Steps

- PDOC to continue exploring staffing increases.
- Public meeting to be scheduled following this stakeholder session.
- Continued development and rollout of the grant program (Year 4 launching in October).
- Ongoing collaboration and partnerships encouraged to support programming and outreach.



# APPENDIX B - STAKEHOLDER MEETING PRESENTATION

8/22/2024



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3



- In 1992, Ottawa County Resident Mark Mulligan asked the County Commissioners to pass a resolution calling for the creation of a park district under Ohio Revised Code Chapter 1545.
- A resolution was passed by the County Commissioners and delivered to Probate Court on July 17, 1992.
- A hearing on the matter was scheduled for August 24 at 9 a.m. There was no opposition to the creation of the district.
- Probate Judge Zeitzheim ordered the creation of the district to include all of the territory of Ottawa County on September 1.

4

4



## THE PURPOSES OF A PARK DISTRICT

### Chapter 1545 of the Ohio Revised Code

Park districts have existed in Ohio since the early 1900's.

The board of park commissioners may:

- Acquire lands either within or without the park district for conversion into forest reserves and for the conservation of the natural resources of the state, including streams, lakes, submerged lands, and swamplands
- May create parks, parkways, forest reservations, and other reservations
- May afforest, develop, improve, protect, and promote the use of the same in such manner as the board deems conducive to the general welfare.

5



### AFTER 1992 CREATION

- First work was focused on grants for work on the North Coast Inland Trail within Ottawa County
- With no source of income, progress was difficult
- Sandusky County Park District purchased a portion of the trail corridor in 1999
- In the ensuing years, this portion of the trail was improved
- Sandusky County Park District transferred ownership of its portion of the trail to Ottawa County Commissioners in 2018

6

6

### 2018 A RENEWED INTEREST IN THE ROLE OF THE PARK DISTRICT IN THE COUNTY

1. Also in 2018, Ottawa County Commissioners formed a steering committee to create an Ottawa County Active Transportation Plan
2. The park district was active on the committee along with representatives from many Ottawa County organizations, subdivisions, and residents
3. Funded by the Ohio Department of Transportation
4. Residents and visitors supported the creation of safe bicycle facilities with the county
5. Strategy 1 of the Active Transportation Plan called for an active park district
6. Two additional board members were appointed in 2018 and the board set about reorganizing the park district and seeking funding for its operation

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## **2020 A PLAN TO ADVANCE THE PARK DISTRICT MOVES FORWARD**

1. In May 2020, the park board enlisted the help of The Trust for Public Land (TPL) for guidance with a funding model for the park district
2. TPL researched funding methods for park districts and conducted a public opinion survey to gather opinions on the addition of a real estate tax to fund the park district
3. The proposed levy would be in the amount of .6 mill for a period of eight years.
4. The survey concluded there was strong support for a levy
5. The park board placed a ten-year levy on the November 2020 ballot, and it passed with just over sixty percent (60%) approval

8

8

## **SURVEY RESULTS USE OF FUNDS A ROAD MAP FOR THE PARK DISTRICT**

- Protect the water quality of Lake Erie (79%)
- Preserve land to protect drinking water sources (78%)
- Protect the water quality of rivers, lakes, and streams (76%)
- Provide nature education for children (70%)
- Develop and maintain recreational trails for walking and biking (68%)

9

## THE PARK DISTRICT MOVES FORWARD PROGRESS SINCE THE LEVY PASSED

- First collection of levy was in 2021
- Park board hired Jannah Wilson to be the Executive Director in 2022
- Part-time employees added to assist with administration, maintenance, and programming
- In 2023, the Catawba Islander Trail and Greenway Master Plan was created

10

10

## THE PARK DISTRICT MOVES FORWARD PROGRESS SINCE THE LEVY PASSED

- The park district received twelve acres of land for a new park in Catawba Island Township, master planning is currently underway
- Marblehead Peninsula Trail Feasibility Study began in 2023 and will be completed in 2024
- A Clean Ohio grant assisted with the purchase of a seven-acre parcel on Catawba Island that will become a trailhead for the Catawba Islander Trail, master planning is currently underway

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## THE PARK DISTRICT MOVES FORWARD PROGRESS SINCE THE LEVY PASSED

- Programs and events are being held throughout the county to increase awareness of the park district
- Marketing initiatives have increased the outreach of the park district
- A Parks and Trails Grant program has been established and aids with local park improvements throughout the county

12

12

## MOVING FORWARD NEXT STEPS

- Complete master plan for Catawba Islander Trailhead area, move forward with development plans and construction
- Complete master plan for West Harbor Preserve, move forward with development plans and construction
- Complete work on the North Coast Inland Trail utilizing park district and grant funding
- Continue work with the Parks and Trails Improvements Grant Program

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## MOVING FORWARD NEXT STEPS

- Examine potential land acquisition opportunities to preserve the natural resources of Ottawa County
- Examine opportunities in the Portage River corridor for preservation and improved water access
- Continue to work on trail opportunities in the Marblehead and Catawba Island areas
- Create a clear expectation of trail ownership and operation on trails established with park district funds

14

14

## MOVING FORWARD NEXT STEPS

- Find a home for the park district – administrative office and maintenance operations
- Review maintenance standards and establish guidelines going forward
- Examine staffing levels and add staff where needed to provide quality park experiences
- Work to expand access to programming throughout Ottawa County

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## MOVING FORWARD NEXT STEPS

- Establish working relationships with other public landowners to utilize existing assets for expanded nature program opportunities
- Increase awareness of the park district through a well-defined marketing effort
- Plan for the financial stability of the park district - next levy?

16

16

**YOUR  
EXPECTATIONS**

How are we  
doing?  
What are we  
missing?

17



## FINAL THOUGHTS



The board of park commissioners and the park district staff appreciate your time and input. We look forward to working with you in the future to make Ottawa County a great place to live and work.

18

18

## THANK YOU

### Board of Park Commissioners

Mike Shadoan  
Jack Madison  
Judy Indorf  
Betsy Slotnick  
Trish McCartney

### Park Staff

Jannah Wilson, Executive Director  
Sara Hill, Administrative Specialist  
Chuck Mattimoe, Operations Assistant

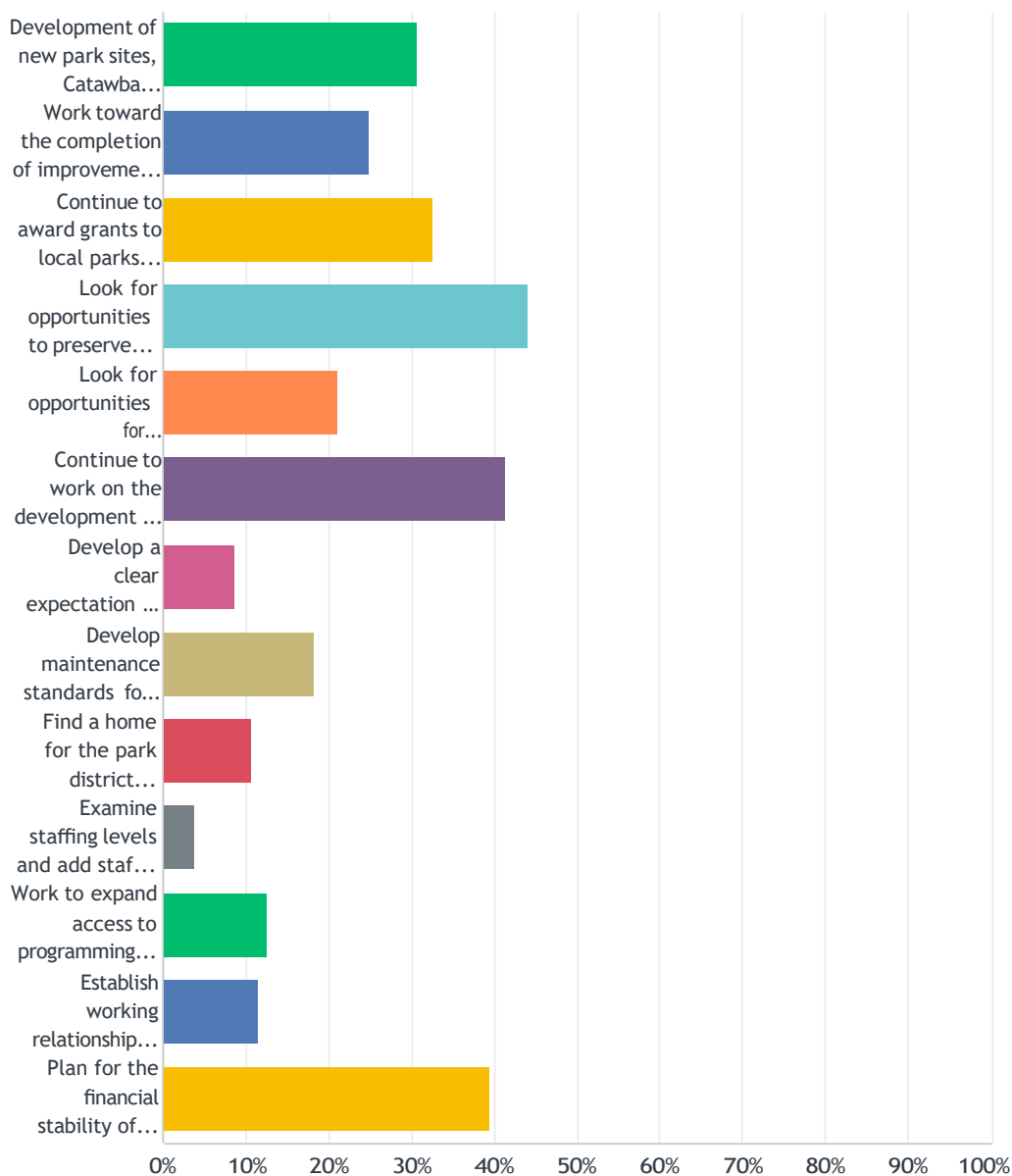


## APPENDIX C - PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY RESULTS

Park District of Ottawa County Community Input Survey

Q1 From the goals stated above, what are the three most important to you? (choose three)

Answered: 104 Skipped: 1



## Park District of Ottawa County Community Input Survey

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Development of new park sites, Catawba Islander Woods and Trailhead and West Harbor Preserve.	30.77%	32
Work toward the completion of improvements to the North Coast Inland Trail utilizing park district and grant funding.	25.00%	26
Continue to award grants to local parks through the Parks and Trails Improvement Grant Program.	32.69%	34
Look for opportunities to preserve natural resources in Ottawa County.	44.23%	46
Look for opportunities for preservation and improved water access in the Portage River corridor.	21.15%	22
Continue to work on the development of trail corridors in the Marblehead and Catawba Island areas.	41.35%	43
Develop a clear expectation of trail ownership and operation of new trails established with park district funds.	8.65%	9
Develop maintenance standards for all park properties.	18.27%	19
Find a home for the park district including space for administrative and maintenance operations.	10.58%	11
Examine staffing levels and add staff where needed to provide quality park experiences.	3.85%	4
Work to expand access to programming throughout Ottawa County such as a park naturalist and park maintenance staff.	12.50%	13
Establish working relationships with other public landowners to utilize existing assets for expanded nature programs opportunities.	11.54%	12
Plan for the financial stability of the park district beyond the current levy period.	39.42%	41
Total Respondents: 104		



## Q2 What amenities would you like to see as new parks are created in Ottawa County?

Answered: 73    Skipped: 32

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	More paved trails and interpretive signage. Habitat restoration for birds and Bald Eagles. Storm water improvements within the Portage River watershed to help improve water quality within the Portage River	11/29/2024 8:34 AM
2	Bike and hiking trails on the Marblehead peninsula. And connect them to trails in Ottawa County in a contiguous fashion. Ongoing support of the park system rather than levy to levy support process	11/28/2024 10:51 AM
3	Trail connections between communities	11/27/2024 2:51 PM
4	The main thing that I am interested in is to make Ottawa County more bike friendly and walking friendly!	11/25/2024 10:50 PM
5	Well maintained trails	11/25/2024 8:01 PM
6	Bathrooms	11/25/2024 3:48 PM
7	trash cans: there aren't enough trash cans available for dog waste	11/25/2024 3:36 PM
8	Every park to have a bicycle rack and repair station like the ones at Veterans Park in Oak Harbor and Hopfinger Zimmerman Park.	11/25/2024 2:34 PM
9	accessibility	11/25/2024 2:16 PM
10	Restrooms Trash cans Playground equipment	11/25/2024 9:23 AM
11	Preserve public access and viewing of lake Erie, Sandusky Bay and Portage River.	11/24/2024 8:49 PM
12	Safe biking trails away from traffic. Adequate parking in these areas Prohibiting motorized bikes, scooters etc from these areas.	11/24/2024 6:46 PM
13	Would like NOT to see new parks on Catawba. The small island is overwhelmed and inundated with too many people now.	11/24/2024 5:30 PM
14	Bathrooms and playgrounds	11/24/2024 4:26 PM
15	Picnic shelters, playground areas	11/24/2024 4:13 PM
16	More bike and walking trails. Badly needed in the Marblehead and catawaba island area	11/24/2024 3:14 PM
17	An extended paved walking/bike path along the lake in downtown Port Clinton	11/24/2024 3:11 PM
18	hiking trails, restroom facilities (vault toilets, etc), good access sites for parking, and partnerships to bring programs to promote uses and access.	11/21/2024 11:42 AM
19	Walking paths, but preserve wildlife habitat.	11/21/2024 8:21 AM
20	benches	11/20/2024 10:27 PM
21	More trails and amenities along the trail (restrooms, water stations, etc)	11/20/2024 4:10 PM
22	Hiking/biking trails, canoe/kayak ramps, parking lots, restrooms	11/20/2024 3:18 PM
23	Adequate parking	11/20/2024 12:45 PM
24	Educational displays and structured programs like bringing in a nature expert to talk about local fauna and flora.	11/20/2024 10:35 AM
25	Native plantings, walking trails, bike paths at some	11/20/2024 9:15 AM
26	ADA accessibility, bike racks, clear & informative signage, fishing piers?	11/20/2024 9:11 AM

## Park District of Ottawa County Community Input Survey

27	Restrooms. Especially in parks away from towns. On longer trails, trash receptacles at beginning and farthest point of the trail.	11/20/2024 8:41 AM
28	Minimal development for as natural of an experience as possible. No pets allowed!	11/20/2024 7:52 AM
29	Restrooms, parking	11/20/2024 7:33 AM
30	Hiking trails, Gardens	11/20/2024 7:13 AM
31	Leave nature alone. Keep it as a nature intended, alone.	11/20/2024 5:32 AM
32	Bike trails off of the highway	11/19/2024 9:35 PM
33	Continue with trails	11/19/2024 1:49 PM
34	Dog swimming area	11/19/2024 9:21 AM
35	I would like to see shade structures that can be used for large groups, picnics and even a music venue.	11/18/2024 6:14 PM
36	Continue development of trails throughout the county	11/18/2024 9:01 AM
37	Adequate parking and safe, paved ADA accessible trails, trail signage	11/16/2024 11:00 AM
38	Walking trails, educational signage, outdoor learning spaces	11/15/2024 4:23 PM
39	Would like to see more wildlife signs and maybe some historical descriptors of the areas along trails.	11/15/2024 11:54 AM
40	More parks along shorelines with walking trails, beach access, and general areas to sit and look at the river. I know Oak Harbor has received funding for riverfront improvement and I would love to see more water based parks and projects around Oak Harbor.	11/14/2024 5:30 PM
41	More walking, biking, and water access in the portage river and the Oak harbor area.	11/14/2024 5:22 PM
42	Marblehead and Catawba are in desperate need of a network of bike trails. Those who attempt to bike in these areas do so at severe risk of injury or death, having to share the roads with cars and trucks. This should be the highest priority of the Park District, in my opinion.	11/14/2024 12:28 PM
43	Public access to Lake Erie and other waterways. Kayak rental.	11/14/2024 10:02 AM
44	Walking/ Bike trail around Marblehead peninsula	11/13/2024 1:20 PM
45	Better trail signage and trail maps	11/13/2024 9:04 AM
46	Improved water/wetland access. Ottawa County has tremendous wetland natural resources that are ripe for recreational pursuits like kayaking/paddleboarding, fishing, and birdwatching.	11/13/2024 8:13 AM
47	Restroom facilities, maps, well-groomed trails	11/13/2024 8:10 AM
48	Walking/biking trails and paths, play grounds, pickle ball and basketball courts,	11/12/2024 10:56 PM
49	Trails	11/12/2024 8:41 PM
50	Rest rooms, interpretive trail signage	11/12/2024 8:41 PM
51	More events similar to the hiking challenge and the pumpkin walk	11/12/2024 7:53 PM
52	Not sure, maybe more boardwalks for birding??	11/12/2024 7:43 PM
53	Continue to attempt to link our county (and others) through trail systems which will serve and benefit residents and tourists alike.	11/12/2024 7:37 PM
54	I'd like to see similar parks to Hopfinger Zimmerman in our more rural areas, as it seems many parks focus on cities, and that restricts the size and scope of what they can offer.	11/12/2024 7:06 PM
55	restroom facilities	11/12/2024 6:50 PM
56	Bathrooms, inclusive playground equipment, clearly marked trails. storybook trails	11/12/2024 1:26 PM
57	I think the Catawba bike trail is a waste of money. No serious biker will use it because there are too many sharp turns. It will become a path for golf carts.	11/12/2024 8:53 AM

## Park District of Ottawa County Community Input Survey

58	Bike trail connectors	11/11/2024 8:18 PM
59	More walking trails. More birding opportunities. Concerts and organized events.	11/11/2024 5:33 PM
60	A dog park, we have one in Danbury and on out on oak harbor southeast, but nothing in town that could be walked to or easily accessed. Also dog related - water fountains that have dog bowls at the bottom.	11/11/2024 9:07 AM
61	A disc golf course. Accessible playground equipment.	11/10/2024 11:02 PM
62	Water bottle filling stations at all new parks that will have running water, connectivity and third places	11/10/2024 9:55 PM
63	Clear signage/maps.	11/10/2024 9:46 PM
64	Expand into western Ottawa County.	11/10/2024 6:00 PM
65	Outhouses	11/10/2024 5:45 PM
66	Water access	11/10/2024 1:18 PM
67	Bike trails	11/10/2024 10:55 AM
68	Nature centers and restrooms	11/10/2024 7:29 AM
69	better water access to the Portage River	11/10/2024 6:40 AM
70	Bike trail connectivity, dog park/areas	11/9/2024 7:34 PM
71	More kayak and paddleboard entry points, more nature trails	11/9/2024 2:20 PM
72	More bathrooms at parks.	11/8/2024 4:14 PM
73	picnic areas & shelters, walking trails, playgrounds, restroom facilities, kayak & canoe launch areas, fishing access platforms, benches	11/8/2024 10:12 AM



## Q3 How are we doing?

Answered: 71 Skipped: 34

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	Awesome. The Park District is laying the groundwork for the protection, restoration and exploration of the county's natural resources. Planting seeds so future generations can enjoy the county's beautiful natural environment.	11/29/2024 8:34 AM
2	Master plan is a big improvement. Now it needs to be implemented and maintained	11/28/2024 10:51 AM
3	Good start	11/27/2024 2:51 PM
4	Well-you are expanding the preservation of natural areas and increasing awareness.	11/25/2024 8:01 PM
5	Great	11/25/2024 3:48 PM
6	Very well, lots to be proud of. Biking and boating are key assets we have that can attract visitors. Not sure if you are connected with Shores and Islands, but a relationship could prove beneficial to both.	11/25/2024 2:34 PM
7	Great	11/25/2024 2:16 PM
8	I believe the park district is doing a very good job overall. The individuals are able to seek a goal for the future of the district and support changes as needed.	11/25/2024 12:44 PM
9	Great -	11/25/2024 9:23 AM
10	Meadowbrook park improvements should be used as an example of nature preservation with access for recreation, education and fitness for all age groups.	11/24/2024 8:49 PM
11	Impressed with what has been done so far	11/24/2024 6:46 PM
12	Pushing too hard to bring too many people to the island	11/24/2024 5:30 PM
13	Good	11/24/2024 4:26 PM
14	I think you do a wonderful job with the parks.	11/24/2024 4:13 PM
15	Overall good but things are taking a long time to develop especially the catawba island trail.	11/24/2024 3:14 PM
16	Great	11/24/2024 2:59 PM
17	Great!	11/24/2024 1:17 PM
18	I think you are doing a wonderful job with the limited staff and office space.	11/21/2024 11:42 AM
19	I love how you are protecting some of the few natural areas left.	11/21/2024 8:21 AM
20	Good so far as I can see	11/20/2024 10:27 PM
21	Great! We love visiting the area from Columbus.	11/20/2024 4:10 PM
22	Good	11/20/2024 3:18 PM
23	Haven't heard much out of you	11/20/2024 12:45 PM
24	Great start to things!	11/20/2024 9:15 AM
25	Can't say, just learned of this organization!	11/20/2024 9:11 AM
26	Great! Keep going!	11/20/2024 7:52 AM
27	A+	11/20/2024 7:33 AM
28	Excellent progress in many areas.	11/20/2024 7:13 AM
29	Keep working with local park groups	11/20/2024 5:32 AM

## Park District of Ottawa County Community Input Survey

30	Keep up the great work! It's continuous progress	11/19/2024 9:35 PM
31	Great!	11/19/2024 1:49 PM
32	Awesome! Keep up the good work!	11/19/2024 9:21 AM
33	You are doing amazing, especially since you have only been funded for 4 years.	11/18/2024 6:14 PM
34	Very good. District staff is working hard to develop relationships and carry out District mission and goals	11/18/2024 9:01 AM
35	Pretty good!	11/16/2024 11:00 AM
36	Very good!	11/15/2024 4:23 PM
37	Great. Keep up the good work. (Especially on the future development of the Marblehead bike path!)	11/15/2024 11:54 AM
38	I have enjoyed the events the parks district has hosted. I was not able to finish the hike challenge, but I loved the pumpkin walk at the park. It was a great community event that felt accessible and special. Would love to see Christmas light trails in different community parks across Ottawa County.	11/14/2024 5:30 PM
39	4/5	11/14/2024 5:22 PM
40	With so many initiatives being tackled at once, I think you're doing a great job. Just need more resources to complete the tasks that have been started.	11/14/2024 12:28 PM
41	I support the Catawba Islander Trail. It can't happen soon enough. Great job.	11/14/2024 10:02 AM
42	Love the hiking program, found more parks than we realized we there!	11/13/2024 9:04 AM
43	Great! You're a new entity, it takes time to build a program. You're making good headway	11/13/2024 8:13 AM
44	You are doing a GREAT job! We've enjoyed all the local parks we've visited so far.	11/13/2024 8:10 AM
45	Good, but not great. The Hiking Challenges are great. Please continue that. I've lived in the area for fifty years and never knew some of the parks existed.	11/13/2024 7:58 AM
46	There has been improvements to all areas of Ottawa county, keep up the good work	11/12/2024 10:56 PM
47	Keep persevering	11/12/2024 9:37 PM
48	I really don't know enough to comment.	11/12/2024 8:41 PM
49	Good	11/12/2024 8:41 PM
50	Excellent	11/12/2024 7:53 PM
51	Great!!	11/12/2024 7:43 PM
52	Amazing what has been accomplished in such little time, especially with obstacles often thrown in your way. The county should be extremely happy with your efforts!	11/12/2024 7:37 PM
53	I love seeing the work that's being done, and would love to see more of it.	11/12/2024 7:06 PM
54	Good	11/12/2024 6:50 PM
55	Awesome!	11/12/2024 1:26 PM
56	good job working within the restrictions of your budget. Continue seeking new grants.	11/11/2024 8:18 PM
57	Doing well.	11/11/2024 5:33 PM
58	I love the progress, happy to see where we go from here!	11/11/2024 9:07 AM
59	So far, so good! We have loved the improvements we've seen.	11/10/2024 11:02 PM
60	So far so good	11/10/2024 9:55 PM
61	I think you have done phenomenal work the last few years! The hiking challenges, guided walks, presentations, etc. have been great additions to the community. In addition, you continue to try to increase awareness on the beauty and offerings around us.	11/10/2024 9:46 PM

## Park District of Ottawa County Community Input Survey

62	See more in western Ottawa county.	11/10/2024 6:00 PM
63	Fair	11/10/2024 5:45 PM
64	Great	11/10/2024 1:18 PM
65	Great with limited resources.	11/10/2024 10:55 AM
66	Fair compared to Wood and Sandusky	11/10/2024 7:29 AM
67	too much expansion will result in lack of proper long term care of parks/trails and they will deteriorate. sure they look good when opened, but what about the long term	11/10/2024 6:40 AM
68	Great with limited resources	11/9/2024 7:34 PM
69	Great!	11/9/2024 2:20 PM
70	Great!	11/8/2024 4:14 PM
71	the park district has made a good start	11/8/2024 10:12 AM



## Q4 What are we missing?

Answered: 63 Skipped: 42

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	Habitat restoration. Converting low productive farm land and other disturbed areas into what the area looked like before European settlers arrived. Uplifting the Native American heritage/story in Ottawa County.	11/29/2024 8:34 AM
2	A comprehensive Ottawa county trail plan.	11/28/2024 10:51 AM
3	continue the community grant programs but with more trail components	11/27/2024 2:51 PM
4	Funding. We need to control grow the amount of parkland and programming.	11/25/2024 8:01 PM
5	Cant think of anything, you have a comprehensive list of priorities. I wish you tons of luck!	11/25/2024 3:48 PM
6	Coordinated program with Army Corps of Engineers and USCG to clean the downed trees and snags from the Portage River down to the SR19 crossing in Oak Harbor i.e. the federal channel that makes it a navigable waterway. Engage Kaptur's office on this and both new Ohio senators on this. Portage River Clean Up Days would be supported and the Sheriff's Office has a drone that could fly the route and mark out the snag areas and access points to them.	11/25/2024 2:34 PM
7	Nothing	11/25/2024 2:16 PM
8	The concentration of the work needs to be split across the County and just not in the Catawba/Marblehead area's.	11/25/2024 12:44 PM
9	Unknown -	11/25/2024 9:23 AM
10	Better promotion of park activities to local residents.	11/24/2024 9:21 PM
11	Opportunities to link parks through walking and biking paths. Massive repaving project in Marblehead did not expand shoulders. Many residents and visitors are utilizing these traffic corridors in an unsafe manner due to lack of planned access.	11/24/2024 8:49 PM
12	When I attended Catawba Island meeting I was surprised that our police dept knew nothing about these plans for parks and had not been contacted about security. Who will provide the security?	11/24/2024 6:46 PM
13	You are not listening to the residents of Catawba	11/24/2024 5:30 PM
14	Money	11/24/2024 4:26 PM
15	Doing well	11/24/2024 4:13 PM
16	Buying more available land for preservation and trails and green space	11/24/2024 3:14 PM
17	Garbage cans at dog friendly parks	11/24/2024 2:59 PM
18	Develop a more sustainable and more visible office complex that supports connected communities across Ottawa County and seasonal or semi-permanent staff to support programs for outreach and education in partnership with various land management agencies/organizations and not for profits across the county.	11/21/2024 11:42 AM
19	If the Catawba trail takes 25 years to complete, I will be dead before it gets to our end of the township.	11/21/2024 8:21 AM
20	Island property continues to be expensive a tough to come by so get it while it lasts	11/20/2024 10:27 PM
21	Trails...I know you have your challenges there. We would love to ride along the coast of Lake Erie!	11/20/2024 4:10 PM
22	More public programs	11/20/2024 3:18 PM
23	Maps to notify the county citizens where parks are located. Taxes are too high already—find	11/20/2024 12:45 PM

## Park District of Ottawa County Community Input Survey

	other means of generation support!!!	
24	Same as #3 above. All the best! =:)	11/20/2024 9:11 AM
25	Nothing that I know of.	11/20/2024 7:13 AM
26	The parks throughout ottawa county should be supporting each other with information about the other parks in ottawa county and the key features in them	11/20/2024 5:32 AM
27	Keep doing what you're doing! I love the outdoor education for children. Green Creek had a junior creekers conservation program for kids to be involved in. Roadside cleanups, bird banding, environmental education, etc. May be nice to see something local for this area's children.	11/19/2024 9:35 PM
28	If possible, acquire sights in western end of county (Clay Township/ Genoaarea). Preserve land for wildlife and slow down the development that hurts it.	11/19/2024 1:49 PM
29	Transfer the 96 acres of land in Harris Twp. from the Sandusky County Park District to the Ottawa County Park District. You can use this space for new administrative and maintenance facilities.	11/18/2024 6:14 PM
30	Better volunteer network and fundraising	11/18/2024 9:01 AM
31	Not much!	11/16/2024 11:00 AM
32	Volunteer opportunities	11/15/2024 4:23 PM
33	Overall the district is doing a great job! I think I answered some opportunities in the previous questions, but it is all a continuation and build upon current work.	11/14/2024 5:30 PM
34	A lot of focus on new parks and trails on Catawba and not west of Port Clinton	11/14/2024 5:22 PM
35	Again, there is a glaring need for a good system of off-road bike & hike trails around Marblehead/Catawba/Port Clinton. This should, literally, be a life or death priority.	11/14/2024 12:28 PM
36	More public education about your mission and goals.	11/14/2024 10:02 AM
37	Address to the chosen parks on the hiking challenge form. We had trouble finding a few of them. Address and description would be very helpful.	11/13/2024 9:04 AM
38	Don't let the perfect be the enemy of the good, and don't hesitate to say no if capacity is limited.	11/13/2024 8:13 AM
39	I'm not sure...	11/13/2024 8:10 AM
40	I can't think of a thing that is missing. Keep re-investing in our communities!	11/12/2024 10:56 PM
41	A pamphlet identifying all Ottawa County Park District land and amenities offered at each location. Summit County Metroparks and Cleveland Metroparks are two models to follow.	11/12/2024 8:41 PM
42	Better public visibility	11/12/2024 8:41 PM
43	Keep up the great work you've already accomplished amazing things in a short time	11/12/2024 7:53 PM
44	Can't think of anything	11/12/2024 7:43 PM
45	I'm sure there are some parks in the area that need refreshed, but I'm not familiar enough with them to give details.	11/12/2024 7:06 PM
46	The hiking challenge is a great idea which costs very little but gives incentives to go to new or unknown parks. Keep it going.	11/12/2024 6:50 PM
47	Would like to see more one time events for families to showcase the parks and what is available across the county	11/12/2024 1:26 PM
48	Bike trail connection from Marblehead-Catawba-Port Clinton to the NorthCoast Trail.	11/11/2024 8:18 PM
49	Better promotion.	11/11/2024 5:33 PM
50	See option 1	11/11/2024 9:07 AM
51	More programming and interaction!	11/10/2024 11:02 PM

## Park District of Ottawa County Community Input Survey

52	Nothing noted	11/10/2024 9:55 PM
53	It would be amazing if there were longer trails available. I know available space is limited around us but we would love to have the North Coast Inland Trail connect through Ottawa County versus having to commute for an option like this. We usually bike around 30 miles/day or hike around 10 miles/day, and there aren't many options close that allow for this.	11/10/2024 9:46 PM
54	Western Ottawa County	11/10/2024 6:00 PM
55	Outreach , publicity	11/10/2024 5:45 PM
56	Public hunting access	11/10/2024 3:36 PM
57	Land use north of SR163 from The Q to Fort Firelands camp ground. We often see Eagles perching in the trees at waters edge. We have beavers in the area also.	11/10/2024 1:18 PM
58	Walking and bike trails	11/10/2024 10:55 AM
59	Nature preservation and access	11/10/2024 7:29 AM
60	the extension of trails and parks will require significant funds to maintain them in proper order over the long term. cut back on expansion and focus on maintaining what you have.	11/10/2024 6:40 AM
61	Bike trails, places to walk off the roadway, more park coverage throughout the county	11/9/2024 7:34 PM
62	Transparency. You mentioned 5 or 6 projects without a single map showing where they are or just what the objectives are. I have never heard of a one of them. "Develop expectations of ownership..." has some ominous connotations without more info. I am, personally, reluctant to give you any guidance that can be used to come back and bite me in the rear.	11/9/2024 6:00 PM
63	would like to see a more aggressive program to develop parks along the Portage River, especially in the middle and western areas of the county	11/8/2024 10:12 AM



## APPENDIX D - BENCHMARKING RESULTS

Benchmarking Survey	Auglaize	Richland	Licking	Muskingum	Ross	Pickaway	Seneca	Sandusky
Population *	48,050	125,064	183,201	86,305	76,501	61,086	54,527	58,709
Acres of Land Controlled	40	530	1600	431	2200	407	738	2800
Open Parks	4	2	13	7 (Note 1)	7	5	11	17
Staff - full time	1	5	7	3	12	4	8	10
Staff - part time	0	4	0	0	6	2	2	4
Staff - seasonal	0	0	8	2	4	0	0	35 to 40
Program staff (part of above numbers)	1	4	1	0.5	1 dedicated, 1 50%, 4-5 doing occasional	1	2	3 full-time, 5 to 6 seasonal
Playgrounds	0	0	1	1 nature play	1	1	1	1
Nature Trails - miles	1		30	8.5	20	7.8	21	Not recorded
Mult-purpose trails - miles	5	17.8	48+	8.5	22.5 paved, 3 mile water trail	3	2+	31 miles - North Coast Inland
Vehicles	0	2	5 vehicles, 4 UTVs	2	7	3	5	13
Mowers/Tractors	0	2	1 riding mower, 1 tractor, 1 skid steer	1 tractor with loader, 2 zero turn mowers	5 zero-turn mowers, 2 tractors	3 mowers, 1 bulldozer with mower, tractor with mowing	4 mowers, 3 tractors, compact excavator, skid	7 mowers, 2 tractors, 2 Bobcats, 2 UTVs
Lawn Maintenance - in-house or contract	Contract	In-house	Contract most work, one area mowed by volunteer	Contract 80% of mowing	In-house, considering contracting	In-house	In-house	In-house
Tax levy in mills	.5 mill	.65 mill	.375 mill	.2 mill	.5 mill	.5 mill	.5 mill	1 mill
Levy first passed	2023	2023	2012	2021	2019	2017	2016	2016
Length of current levy	5 years	10 years	5 years		10 years	10 years	10 years	10 years (renew)
Funds generated by tax	\$620,000.00	\$1,246,000.00	\$2,102,926.00		\$700,000.00	\$750,000.00	\$650,000.00	\$1,000,000
Funds generated by donations	\$0.00				\$0.00	\$0.00		
Funds generated by program fees	\$0.00		\$35,000 rentals, \$9,000 program fees	\$6,250	\$3,000 program fees	0.00	\$5,000 to \$7,000	2023- \$28,052 programs and rentals
Friends group members/donors	None	None	None	Yes, not a membership org	8	foundation fund, not a membership group	Yes, membership limited at his time.	Yes, board, no additional members
Number of regular volunteers	Work as needed	100	100	7	0	48	Less than 10	6067 hours
Strategic Plan (Yes or No)	No	Yes	Yes	No	In process	Yes	Operational Plan	Yes
Strategic Plan term (in years)		10, in conjunction with levy term	5		5 with foundation for 10	5	Updated annually	10, in conjunction with levy term
Park District Master Plan (Yes or No)	No	No	No	Yes	In process,	No	Comprehensive plan in cooperation with other agencies	No
Master Plan term (in years)				5	Two phase, 5 years through end of levy, 5 years beyond		Short and long-term goals, 1 to 25 years	
Primary Focus	Grow the park district by preserving land and adding open parks for public benefit		Acquire, manage, preserve and conserve natural areas, provide parks, paths, trails, special events and educational activities	Conserving natural areas, providing passive and active recreation opportunities, developing appreciation of natural, historical, and cultural heritage	Trails and programming. Budget divided equally each year.	Create, preserve, and manage a system of parks, trails, and natural areas for outdoor recreation.	Providing safe, clean natural parks.	Preserving natural areas for public appreciation, education and recreation
* Based on information from Ohio Demographics								
† Two sites are public gardens								

## APPENDIX E - BREAKDOWN OF EXPENDITURES

Expenses	2021-2030
Salaries	\$1,514,864.13
Supplies	\$22,200.41
Land Acquisition	\$1,739,360.50
Contract Services	\$858,491.26
Other Expenses	\$265,662.53
Uniforms	\$7,690.95
Rent	\$105,420.92
Capital Improvements	\$3,120,970.24
Educational Programs	\$78,149.40
Education and Memberships	\$37,981.00
Transfers Out	\$12,000.00
Advance Out	\$0.00
Equipment	\$324,126.08
Travel	\$64,042.31
Real Estate Taxes	\$14,374.43
Advertising & Printing	\$51,480.24
Grants	\$1,922,188.12
Auditor and Treasurer Fees	\$237,654.14
DRETAC Fees	\$46,579.37
Election Expenses	\$14,546.74
Public Employees Retirement	\$223,302.47
Workers Compensation	\$13,845.80
Unemployment	\$15,000.00
Medicare 1.45%	\$23,207.72
Capital Improvements - NCIT	\$1,091,654.09
Capital Improvement - Catawba	\$377,144.38
Capital Improvements - Water Trail	\$10,000.00
Capital Improvements - Park Dist. HQ	\$150,000.00
Health Insurance	\$178,698.71
H.S.A. Contribution	\$0.00
Life Insurance	\$0.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$12,520,635.94</b>

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