



Lakewood Parks and Open Space  
GREAT PEOPLE – GREAT PARKS – GREAT CITY

# Park System Strategic Plan

2010-2014



**GREAT PEOPLE - GREAT PARKS - GREAT CITY:  
Park System Strategic Plan  
2010-2014**

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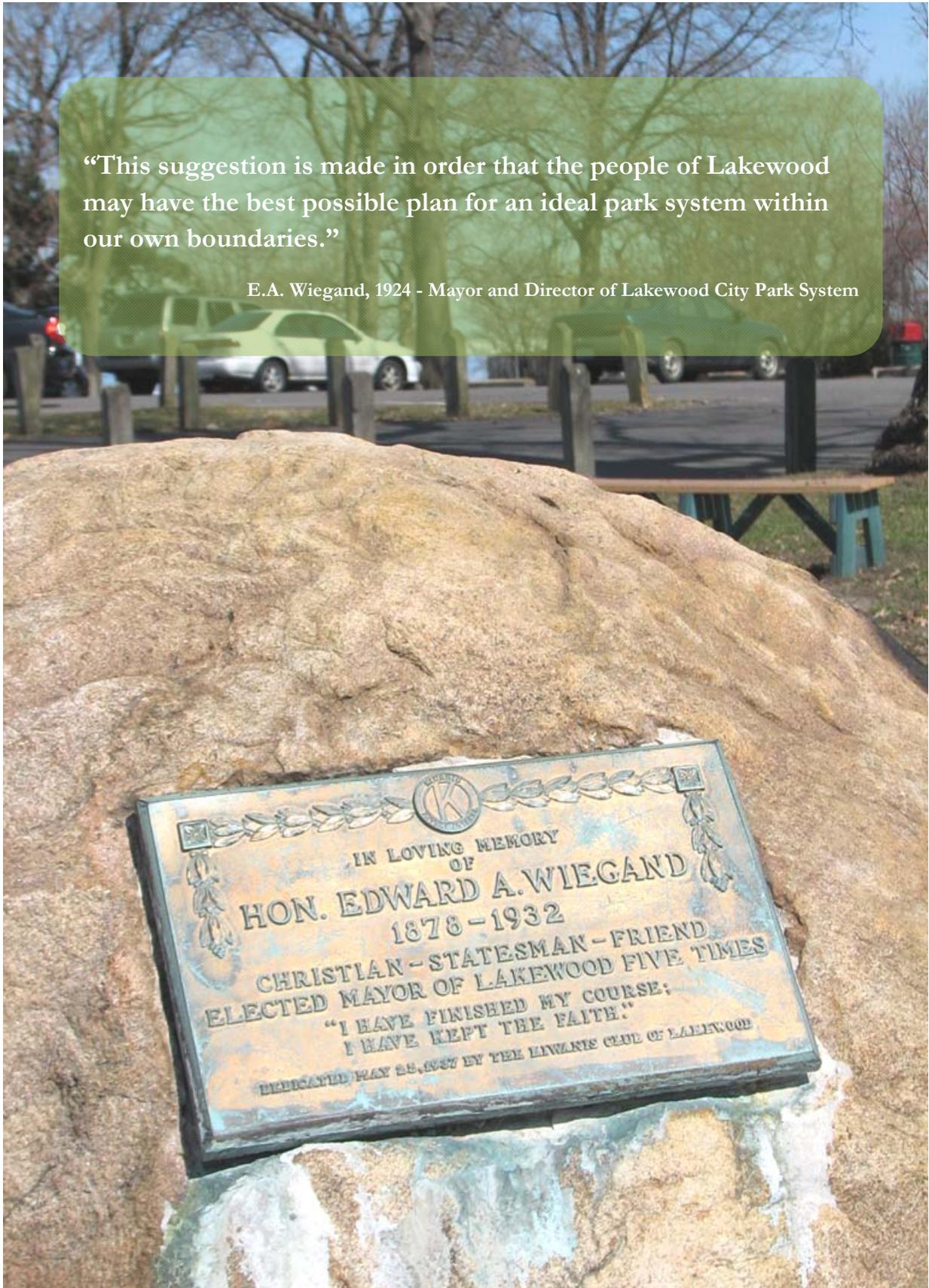
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“This suggestion is made in order that the people of Lakewood may have the best possible plan for an ideal park system within our own boundaries.”

E.A. Wiegand, 1924 - Mayor and Director of Lakewood City Park System



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This plan was created in collaboration with Lakewood’s residents and community organizations. Comments and recommendations from the community workshops held in October and December of 2009 and March of 2010 provided significant guidance in the development of this document. The number of residents (**GREAT PEOPLE**) who attended meeting, shared ideas and donated hours to this undertaking are too numerous to list but they are the authors and the reason this plan exists.

**Staff would like to thank everyone for their valuable participation**

## COMMUNITY PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

LEAF (Lakewood Earth and Food Community)  
Lakewood Community Service Center  
Lakewood Soccer Association  
Lakewood City Schools Recreation Department  
Lakewood City Schools Athletic Department  
Lakewood Outdoor Basketball Committee  
Leashed Dogs in Lakewood Parks  
Lakewood Public Library  
Friends of Madison Park  
Lakewood Alive  
ECO-Lakewood  
Live Well Lakewood  
Keep Lakewood Beautiful  
Lakewood YMCA

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# LAKEWOOD PARK SYSTEM

City of Lakewood Parks											
Park Name	Address	Acreage	Picnic	Pavilion	Tennis	Pool	Playground	Ball Field	Soccer	Volleyball	
<b>Community Parks (3+ acres)</b>											
Lakewood Park	14532 Lake	32	x	2	4	x	x	2			3
Madison Park	13029 Madison	17		1	3	x	x	1	1		
Kauffman Park	15450 Detroit	7			2		x	1	1		
<b>Neighborhood Parks (Up to 3 acres)</b>											
Dog Park	1299 Metropark Drive	1									
Webb Park	1301 Webb	2.25	x		1		x				
Edwards Park	16800 Detroit	1.5					x	1			
Wagar Park	15900 Madison	3	x		4		x				
Merl Park	Bunts & Merl	1	x		1		x				
Cove Park	1294 Cove	3	x				x	1	1		
<b>Pocket Parks (&lt;1 acre)</b>											
Park Row Park	1386 Park Row	0.55	x				x				
Niagara Park	Lakewood Hts & Niagara	0.95	x				x				
Celeste Park	Clifton and West Clifton	0.75									
Sloane Park	1355 Sloane	0.25									
City Center Park	Cook and Detroit	0.65									
Issac Warren Park	Warren, north of Detroit	0.85	x								
Clifton Prado Park	1265 Clifton Prado	0.25	x				x				
Mini Park	Madison & 117th	0.02									
<b>Totals</b>		<b>72.02</b>		<b>3</b>	<b>15</b>			<b>6</b>	<b>3</b>		<b>3</b>



## Executive Summary

Healthy parks are a key to a healthy community and responsible management is crucial to successful parks. The Parks System Strategic Plan is a guidebook to effectively maintain and improve our parks while being mindful of the need to prioritize limited resources. The plan considers the City's parks as a system, not just individual parks, and works toward consistency in appearance, maintenance and improvement design. The plan outlines an on-going community input process, articulates a clear vision and recommends implementation of strategic park improvements over a 5-year timeline.



The value of a high quality park system extends beyond the boundaries of the parks themselves. An excellent city park system can be considered a form of natural or green infrastructure that provides a multitude of positive effects for the city as a whole:

- Cleaner air, as trees and vegetation filter out pollutants by day and produce oxygen at night;
- Cleaner water, as roots trap silt and contaminants before they flow into streams, rivers, and lakes;
- Reduced health costs from sedentary syndromes such as obesity and diabetes, thanks to walking and running trails, sports fields, recreation centers, bike-ways and other opportunities for physical fitness;
- Improved learning opportunities from outdoor classrooms;
- Increased urban tourism based on attractive, successful parks, with resulting increases in commerce and sales tax revenue;
- Increased business vitality based on employer and employee attraction to quality parks as well as benefits to local business from activity in the parks;
- Natural beauty and respite from traffic and noise;
- Provides opportunities for communities to highlight heritage and culture through special events, festivals, parades and the cultural arts; and
- Increased property value of residences up to a radius of two-fifths of a mile.

(source: The Trust for Public Land: The Excellent Parks System)

## Introduction

### Why create a Parks System Strategic Plan?

Lakewood is fortunate to have 75 acres of parkland and 75 acres of open space. The parkland consists of 16 parks that fall into three categories:

Community Parks, Neighborhood Parks, and Pocket parks (See Park Roster). The open space is made of landscape medians, planting areas, roadway edges and other greenspace that in most cases serve as landscape buffers.

These 150 acres are a community asset that must be preserved and enhanced to ensure that they are of the highest quality for the residents of Lakewood and for our visitors.

Our mantra of ***Great People, Great Parks, Great City*** reflects Lakewood's aspirations as well as the fact that we are a proud and engaged community. We are a great city with



great people, as is demonstrated by our historical, architectural and cultural heritage and the willingness of our residents to donate their time and expertise to improve our city through the numerous organizations, events, and volunteerism.

### *The Why?*

**Our goal is to preserve our park assets and continually improve the physical elements in our parks to best serve the community as a whole.**

In 1993, the City adopted the *Community Vision* as a guiding document to function as the city's master plan. That plan shared a vision for the future and was needed to help coordinate policy decisions.

The *Vision* acknowledged the need for comprehensive park and open space planning *to insure their maximum utilization for the enjoyment of Lakewood residents.*

The current conditions of our park system varies from park to park, while some are outstanding, others are not living up to their full potential. This plan explains that by working in collaboration with our residents, community organizations and civic leaders, we can begin doing something to make sure all of our parks are, in fact, great.

In short, to realize the full potential of our greenspace as recommended by the *Vision*, we are taking needed steps as a community to more **effectively manage and systematically improve our parkland**. The park system master plan is a tool that can help make that happen.

## Introduction

### What is a Parks System Strategic Plan?

This plan makes recommendations for the management of all parks and is a decision making tool that sets priorities and outlines implementation. The plan's strength comes from the extensive research, analysis of existing conditions and community input that are the basis for the recommended goals, strategies and action steps it contains.

#### *The What?*

**Our plan (the document) records the process, current needs, values, priorities and strategy.**

This plan proposes a frame of reference for management decisions that can be stated as “whatever we do in one of our parks affects all of our parks”. This is an important change in thinking because for the most part, over the past several decades, we’ve treated our parks as individual places, separate unto themselves. This is not the vision that started Lakewood’s park movement in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (see History), but it is where we found ourselves at the beginning of this current planning process. In a sense, we are returning to a facet of our heritage by reinstating the idea of a Park System.

The plan consists of parts like a Community Profile, Current Conditions Analysis, Community Vision and Recommendations for Improvements. The plan is a comprehensive

handbook at our fingertips, the guidebook that helps to coordinate stakeholders and their efforts and a resource that is available to everyone.

### What is the Process for developing a Park System Strategic Plan?

The park strategic plan process provides residents the opportunity to give input and partner with City staff in determining the best practices to optimize management of park resources.

Through the public meeting process, the City and the residents have collectively explored how to best evaluate the current state of our parks, the maintenance and management of available resources and articulate the local values that should be reflected in the design of our parks.

As each park site comes with a unique set of conditions, the master planning process is dynamic, allowing for flexibility as use, demand and site circumstances change. When opportunities and funding arise to improve, redesign or expand any part of our park system the City and the citizens have established and documented a productive way of working together.

#### *The How?*

**Our method is a public process that establishes a forum for the community to work together.**

## Community Vision

### What should our parks be?

The Vision statements are an outcome of community comments at the October and December 2009 Parks Workshops, articulating local values and expectations for the park system. At the meeting, the participants were asked a series of questions that included, “What makes a great park?”; “What do you like best about our parks?”; “What are the challenges?” and “What should we do first?”

The vision statements summarize public sentiment and offer a set of principles in our efforts to continually improve the parks in our ever-changing community. Dubbed the *Should* declarations, they describe the community’s aspirations for our parks.

#### ***The Should Declarations:***

- Parks ***should*** be visible to invite use, to encourage a sense of ownership and to allow neighbors and visitors to effectively monitor.
- Parks ***should*** feel safe through good visibility, good maintenance and good use.
- Parks ***should*** be comfortable for a wide range of users throughout the year.
- Parks ***should*** have amenities that fit the changing needs of citizens of all abilities and ages.
- Parks amenities ***should*** be located to capitalize on natural features and community assets.
- Parks ***should*** always feel like intentional and purposeful places.
- Parks ***should*** be designed for multiple purposes, uses and events.

## Community Priorities

### What matters most?

Through the workshop process a wealth of ideas, comments and concerns were shared and inventoried. As part of gathering input, the community's many ideas were categorized into related groups. Staff and residents collaborated to sort this information into six categories that became a working list of thematic priorities. These priority categories, in conjunction with the vision statements, are umbrella ideas that will help guide park management decisions.

**“Does the proposed modification meet our community priorities?”**

Whenever the City is evaluating a proposal to change a policy affecting park management, a partnership opportunity with a community organization, or a plan to alter the physical condition of a park, the one question that should always be asked is “Does the proposed modification meet our community priorities?”

As with the vision statement, this priority list was a direct result of residents sharing ideas, desired improvements and concerns during the community workshops.

**Safety**

**Quality of Facilities**

**Access**

**Natural Resources  
(Protection/Enhancement)**

**Cultural and Social Resources  
(Highlight)**

**Year Round Use**



## Community Priorities - Defined

### Safety – *it's more than police*

Safe parks are well designed, well maintained and well used both day and night. Our safety forces in Lakewood are exceptional, have a good presence in the parks and respond quickly when called, but a safe park system is more than police and security cameras. Just like feeling safe in your own home is a combination of many factors, so too is real and perceived safety in the parks. Clean parks that are busy and attractive to a variety of park users look, feel and are safe.



### Quality of Facilities – *we're playing here!*

The condition of park facilities like ball fields, seating, parking, pools, restrooms, shelters and trails leave a lasting impression on park patrons. From those who just drive by to everyday users, our parks will have life long fans who have a sense of ownership and will be protective of the parks. If not, they will be lifelong detractors or have little interest in the condition of the parks. Existing facilities need to be proactively maintained with needed



repairs happening quickly, being done correctly and long lasting. New amenities must be durable, cost effective and improve the park. The key is to look at facilities from the perspective of the customer and ask “would you recommend our parks to a friend?”

### Access – *equitable and healthy*

Access to safe and well-designed parks, trails, and public open spaces is an absolute necessity for communities to effectively combat the alarming rates of chronic disease related to physical inactivity in the United States. Access also means that the parks provides for and accommodates passive enjoyment and active recreation for users of all ages and abilities.

### Natural Resources – *the trees will hug you back*

Natural resources like Lake Erie, the Rocky River, and our urban forest contribute significantly to the beauty, recreational value and ecological habitat of the parks. Protecting these resources is a must and so is taking steps to enhance or create natural habitat areas in

the parks while highlighting nature through programming and interpretive signage. Increasing opportunities for contact with nature will attract a wider variety of users to our parks.



**Cultural and Social Resources – *it's more than the food (really)***

Cultural and social resources encompass events, history, food, buildings, traditions, food, festivals, arts, music, food, theater: all the activities that are important to the heritage and identity of the community. Lakewood is rich in these resources, and the parks are an ideal venue to highlight our cultural history through special events, public art, and the style and type of constructed improvements. Did we mention the food?

**Year Round Use – *June, July, August and Winter***

Due to the climate in Northeast Ohio, the peak use in our parks is during the warmer months and tends to taper to almost zero from the middle of December until March. In addition to all the warm weather uses, wintertime provides an opportunity to activate our parkland in creative ways. Winterfests, cross-country ski events, holiday gatherings and sledding, to name a few, are prospects to make our parks a year-round asset to the community.



## Improvement Recommendations

### Recommendations and Action Steps

The improvement recommendations are a result of a community dialogue from October 2009 through May 2010.

The plan categorizes the recommended improvements into four time and resource based types; On-going, Short-Term, Mid-Term and Long Range. The categories and are established in response to the identified community priorities while being sensitive to financial parameters and the time necessary for project development.

As noted in the Parks Report Card portion of the plan the 5-year target goal is to improve the parks to an **A** ranking for the entire system. (See current conditions report card for existing conditions) The recommendations are structured in a manner that supports that goal through action steps – things that we can accomplish as a community in the next 5 years.



Long Range improvements are included in the recommendations to document the types of park improvements that are important to the community but are currently beyond the 5-year focus of this plan.

The Strategic Plan recommendations were developed through a collaborative public process and can only be implemented if the same collaborative spirit is applied to turning recommendations into action. The partnership between the City and all of our and our collaborators must continue to develop and grow if we are to be successful.

To that end, the recommendations include some ideas to formalize partnership and engagement, such as a parks working group to advise and support City staff.

### Recommendation Categories

#### On-going

In practice or currently in progress

#### Short-term

Completed within the next 1-2 years

#### Mid-term

Completed with the next 3-5 years

#### Long Range

Beyond 5 years

## Improvement Recommendations

<b>On-going Improvements</b> (Currently in practice or in process)	Safety	Quality of Facilities	Access	Natural Resources	Cultural & Social Resources	Year Round Use
1. <b>Annual Parks Report</b> - Year end progress update to City Council	*	*	*	*	*	*
2. <b>Community Park Site Improvement Plans</b>	*	*	*	*	*	*
3. <b>Strategic Maintenance Program</b>	*	*	*			
4. <b>Obsolete Equipment and Structure Removal Plan</b> (ex. Usher Field Bleachers, Little Links, Playground Equipment)	*	*	*			
5. <b>Tree &amp; Planting Donation Program</b> (Coordinate and advertise Dana's Legacy, Tree Donation, Arbor Day)	*	*		*	*	
6. <b>Community Garden Program</b> (Development of Use Permit and Design Standards ex. LEAF/LCSC)	*	*	*		*	*
7. <b>Community Work Days</b> (Clean up and planting days with partner groups ex. Friends of Madison Park)	*	*	*	*	*	*
8. <b>Public Art and Performance</b> (Expansion of the art/performance opportunities ex. Shakespeare in the Park)	*	*	*		*	*

<b>Short-term Improvements</b> (Completed with the next 1-2 years)	Safety	Quality of Facilities	Access	Natural Resources	Cultural & Social Resources	Year Round Use
1. <b>Parks Advisory Committee</b> (Ad Hoc advisory group representing stakeholders to advise staff)	*	*	*	*	*	*
2. <b>Parks Foundation</b> (Non-profit group established to fundraise for and promote the park system)	*	*	*	*	*	*
3. <b>Signage and Wayfinding Program</b> (Re-brand the parks system with new logo and signage)	*	*	*		*	*
4. <b>Community Partner Network</b> (Update to City and Recreation website highlighting community partners)	*	*	*	*	*	*
5. <b>Park Standards Handbook</b> (Standardizing level of finish and type of amenities to ensure uniform quality)	*	*				
6. <b>Safety Initiatives</b> (Non-emergency number, Community Liaison, Community Education)	*	*	*			*
7. <b>Urban Forest Inventory and Assessment</b> (Taking stock of the health our mature forest and implementing management measures)	*	*	*	*	*	*
8. <b>Strategic Scheduling of Recreation Programs</b> (Locating activities to benefit local business and allow for optimum care of facilities)	*		*		*	*
9. <b>Pilot Projects</b> (Evaluation of proposed changes to management policies ex. Outdoor Basketball)			*			*

## Improvement Recommendations

Mid-term Improvements (Completed with the next 3-5 years)	Safety	Quality of Facilities	Access	Natural Resources	Cultural & Social Resources	Year Round Use
1. <b>Connectivity Planning</b> (Assessment of current inter-park connections and develop linkages)	*	*	*	*	*	*
2. <b>Bikeway Planning</b> (Develop City wide bikeway routes with parks as destinations and hubs)	*		*	*		*
3. <b>Open Space Habitat Development</b> (Convert open space areas to native plantings to reduce maintenance and support wildlife)	*			*		
4. <b>Investigate Renewable Energy Alternatives</b> (Evaluate alternative power for facilities and consider demonstration projects)	*	*		*	*	*
5. <b>Major Structures Rehabilitation and Improvements</b> (Skatehouse, shelters and pavilions will require overhaul and upgrade)	*	*	*		*	*



Long Range Improvements (Beyond 5 years)	Safety	Quality of Facilities	Access	Natural Resources	Cultural & Social Resources	Year Round Use
1. <b>Lakefront Access Improvements</b> (Enhancement to Lakewood Park promenade and pursuing other opportunities)	*	*	*	*	*	*
2. <b>Acquisition of Additional Park Land</b> (Strategic expansion of existing parks or creation of new parks)	*	*	*	*		*

## Improvement Recommendations

### Action Steps – On-going Improvements

1. **Annual Parks Report** – during the fourth quarter of the year, staff will report to the Planning Commission and City Council on project updates and significant developments. Every two years the report will include a re-evaluation and grading of the park system to track progress on implementing improvements.
2. **Community Park Site Improvement Plans** – specific improvement site plans for the three largest parks. These plans would be developed under the framework of the strategic plan.
3. **Strategic Maintenance Program** – implemented in 2009 and outlined in Section 7 of this report, this sets policy and procedure for targeted and effective maintenance. Updates to the program and results will be tracked and included in the annual report.
4. **Obsolete Equipment and Structure Removal Plan** – this process, currently occurring, has resulted in the removal of outdated play equipment and unused facilities like bleachers at Usher Field that had become a nuisance. A key element to this effort is the repurposing of the material from the removal and the reuse of the spaces created.
5. **Tree & Planting Donation Program** – building on the success of existing programs like Dana’s Legacy and Keep Lakewood Beautiful, this is a more coordinated effort to allow residents to still donate trees and plantings but in targeted locations that contribute to the site improvement plans for the parks as well as urban forest management.
6. **Community Garden Program** – develop a conditional use permit process and design guidelines for community gardens in the parks. Organizations like LEAF and Lakewood Community Service Center currently have gardens plots and the ordinance revision would assist in effectively managing this use, as well as support the community gardeners in their efforts and investment.
7. **Community Work Days** – groups like the Friends of Madison Park coordinate volunteer successful clean up days to the benefit of the park. By coordinating volunteer groups that are actively seeking service hours (ex. St. Ed’s and LHS students) and advertising those opportunities regularly scheduled clean up and workdays can supplement staff efforts.
8. **Public Art and Performance** – building on existing success, the park can be the outdoor forum and gallery for our artist and performance community. By working with groups like Lakewood is Art, the Beck Center and the Templar Building Art Co-op, additional programs and displays should be put in place.

## Improvement Recommendations

### Action Steps – Short-term Improvements

1. **Parks Advisory Committee** – create a workgroup similar in function to the Heritage Advisory Board to assist staff in park management efforts, promote the parks and advise City Council on policy related decisions.
2. **Park Foundation** – develop a group whose specific goal is to fundraise for and promote the parks system. A number of our neighboring cities have successfully implemented park foundations in recent years.
3. **Signage and Wayfinding Program** – rebrand the park system and provide standardized information in all of the parks about the entire system. This is a high-visibility but cost-effective method to highlight our park assets.



4. **Community Partner Network** – centralized, web-based information resource on both the City and Recreation sites that identifies all of the park users, supporters and partners.

5. **Park Standards Handbook** – create a guidebook of standards for everything from signage and trail design to picnic tables and benches. This would help insure consistent, high quality amenities and save cost through bulk purchase and ease of replacement.
6. **Safety Initiatives** – expanding successes like the park rules and regulations signs, citizen education on the use of non-emergency police number and how to report a problem this item would include the possibility of adding a part-time community liaison who would be a presence in the parks to share information with residents and be an additional point of contact with the police.
7. **Urban Forest Inventory and Analysis** – create a comprehensive inventory and evaluation of all trees on public property and develop a strategic management plan.
8. **Strategic Scheduling of Recreation Programs** – continue our growing partnership with the Recreation Department and proactively scheduling high use activities at facilities in and around our commercial districts.
9. **Pilot Projects** – develop criteria for pilot projects that could be conditional and/or temporary explorations of new uses or policies such as the reintroduction of outdoor basketball.

## Improvement Recommendations

### Action Steps – Mid-term Improvements

1. **Connectivity Planning** – undertake an access assessment of all parks and determine a method to link parks through bike routes, sidewalk connections and trails.
2. **Bikeway Planning** – in conjunction with the connectivity planning efforts, identify both recreational and commuter bike routes through the City. Parks could function as recreational destinations as well as connecting hubs for bicyclists.
3. **Open Space Habitat Development** – strategic conversion of open spaces like the Clifton Bridge Approach and ODOT right-of-way from turf grass to prairie plantings. This would reduce labor intensive maintenance, be an attractor for birds and butterflies and be a visually striking green space.
4. **Renewable Energy Alternatives** – actively explore supplementing power for park facilities with solar, wind or geothermal technology. This would provide potential opportunity for grant money, lessen the utility burden of the parks and serve as high visibility demonstration projects.
5. **Structure Rehabilitation and Improvements** – identify all needed upgrades. As part of capital planning set a timeline to make improvements to pool structures, shelters and pavilions and other facilities.

### Action Steps – Long Range Improvements

1. **Lakefront Access Improvements** – consideration for expanded access to Lake Erie.
2. **Acquisition of Additional Park Land** – actively seek opportunities to expand existing parks through strategic land acquisition or develop new parks in underserved areas.



## Existing Conditions

In the fall and winter of 2008/2009, the park system strategic plan working group conducted a detailed inventory of every park owned and operated by the City of Lakewood. The working group consisted of staff from the Department of Planning and Development and the Department of Public Works. The goal was to establish a base line of existing conditions and a system of rating the amenities and facilities in the parks.



The group developed an evaluation form that listed park elements and assigned a letter grade and brief explanation of the condition of the item. The list of evaluated elements included parking, play equipment, ball fields, courts, shelters, benches, buildings, fences, lighting, trails, walks and miscellaneous.

The evaluation also included anecdotal accounts and observations of issues with focus on certain aspects of the parks such as drainage issues on trails and baseball fields, wear and tear on athletic fields, and concentrations of seasonal activity.

## Current Conditions – Parks Report Card

In order to consistently rank the quality of the park amenities during the evaluation period, the following letter grade system was created as a common rating method:

**A – Excellent Condition** – new or recently installed, requires only annual maintenance

**B – Good Condition** – wear from standard use, requires maintenance and minor repair

**C – Fair Condition** – wear from use and age, requires annual repair

**D – Poor Condition** – worn, functional life span is a year before replacement

**F – Failing** – should be removed and or replaced immediately

Members of the working group toured Madison Park together to calibrate their review and ranking process to ensure that the letter grades would be uniformly applied. Individual members were then assigned three to four parks to inventory and evaluate. The

**The overall grade given to the 2009 conditions of the Park System was a C+.**

evaluations were collected and tabulated in early 2009 and from this an overall picture of Lakewood's parks and facilities was developed. A few parks received high scores

overall and in most cases, each park had a least one high

scoring amenity or feature. From this evaluation, an overall qualitative letter grade was assigned to the whole park system.

Based on the findings during the inventory and evaluation, **the overall grade given to the 2009 condition of the park system was a C+.**

Beyond providing foundational research, the self-assessment was valuable for other important reasons:

1. The analysis was a needed update to our parks inventory and recorded a number of important changes that occurred in the last five years. Items such as the removal of all basketball hoops, the addition of community garden space and upgrades such as the newly-installed state-of-the-industry playground equipment at Madison and Wagar parks were noted. These changes had bearing on the rankings.
2. The analysis and its process for inventory and ranking provided a standardized and replicable way to

measure our parks. This method will be part of future evaluations and a way to measure progress in the coming years.

3. The analysis aided staff in identifying the need to realign maintenance personnel and equipment resources, and the intake, prioritizing and processing of citizen complaints. This resulted in the development of a strategic maintenance plan. (see Strategic Maintenance)
4. The analysis reinforced the need for a comprehensive improvement plan that **establish a five year target goal of an A rating for the park system.**



## Community Profile

### Lakewood Now - Density and Demographics

Lakewood is 5.3 square miles in area with an approximate population of 53,000 residents, according to the estimate from the 2008 American Community Survey. Lakewood is the most densely populated city in Cuyahoga County and has more than 10,000 residents per square mile. Anecdotally, it is often cited that Lakewood is the most densely populated city between New York and Chicago. In a local context, most cities in the county are less than half of Lakewood's density.

Lakewood is also known for its diversity and its educated and active population that takes full advantage of our top-flight institutions, organizations, recreational options and community events. The median age of our residents is just over 34 years old, making Lakewood one of the youngest communities in the county.

Lakewood has a variety of housing options that range from classic single-family homes to high-rise apartments. Since our city is so densely populated, most of our residents do not have large backyards, or, as in the case of most apartment dwellers, any backyard at all, making access to high quality parkland a necessity.

It is reasonable to assert that Lakewood's parks see a high volume of use based on population numbers, housing profile, attendance at recent community events, registration for recreation programs and observational assessments.

Population Density Per Square Mile	
Community	Number People/mi <sup>2</sup>
Lakewood	10,208.5
East Cleveland	8,761.8
University Heights	7,713.6
Cleveland	6,166.5
Cleveland Heights	6,160.2
Maple Heights	5,039.1
South Euclid	5,019.2
Euclid	4,923.2
Shaker Heights	4,685.0
Parma	4,291.3
Garfield Heights	4,253.0
Fairview Park	3,742.2
Warrensville Heights	3,661.4
Cuyahoga County	3,040.4
Brook Park	2,815.1
Bedford	2,653.3
Bedford Heights	2,507.4

	Median Age
University Heights	32.1
Cleveland	33.0
Lakewood	34.2
Cleveland Heights	35.2
Cuyahoga County	37.3
Maple Heights	37.4
Warrensville Heights	37.7
South Euclid	38.0
Garfield Heights	38.3
Bedford Heights	38.7
Euclid	38.9
Bedford	39.0
Parma	39.4
Shaker Heights	39.6
Brook Park	40.1
Fairview Park	40.9

Type of Structure	Number of Structures	Percentage	Number of Units	Percentage
Single Family	9,316	60.1%	9,316	29.2%
Two Family	3,230	20.8%	6,460	20.3%
Multi Family	982	6.3%	12,630	39.6%
Rental Single Family	434	2.8%	434	1.3%
Rental Multi Family	1,530	10.0%	3,060	9.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>15,492</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>31,900</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

## Community Profile

### Parkland and Population – A National Context

The amount of available parkland per resident directly impacts quality of life and the community’s self-image. It also informs policy decisions regarding parkland maintenance and management. The following chart outlines Lakewood’s current acreage of parkland relative to its population and land area, and provides context through comparisons with cities locally and nationally.

<b>Park Area and Population</b>			
Total City Land Area = 3,392 acres Population = 53,000 +/-	<b>Total Park Acres</b>	<b>Park Acres per 1,000 residents</b>	<b>Park Acres as percentage of Total Land Area</b>
<b>Lakewood Parks</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>1.42</b>	<b>2.21%</b>
<b>Lakewood Parks + Open Space</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>2.84</b>	<b>4.42%</b>
<b>National Comparisons</b>			
Pittsburgh	3122	10.00	8.80%
Denver	5900	10.00	10.00%
St. Louis	3381	9.50	9.50%
Buffalo	2140	7.80	8.20%
Cleveland	3127	7.10	6.30%
Toledo	2206	7.00	4.30%
New York	38229	4.60	19.60%
Chicago	11860	4.20	7.90%
Fresno	1507	3.20	2.30%
Newark	822	2.90	5.40%
Santa Ana	357	1.10	2.10%
<b>Local Comparisons</b>			
Fairview Park	71	4.40	2.30%
Rocky River	80	4.20	2.30%
Cleveland Heights	136	2.90	2.60%
Euclid	101	2.10	1.47%

Overall, Lakewood has a relatively limited amount of parkland for the size of its population. Therefore, all of the parks must be of good quality and well managed in order to meet the needs of the community.

## Park System History

### A new idea with a long history

In 1924 Mayor Edward Wiegand wrote an article entitled “Parks and Playgrounds” discussing the virtues of parks while articulating the importance of well managed and well planned city parks. At the time he was not only the Mayor but the Director of the City Park System as well. He was a parks enthusiast, going so far as to make trips to Detroit and Milwaukee to learn from their world-class park systems so he could apply those same ideals to Lakewood.



Mayor Wiegand can be credited not only for significantly expanding the size of our park system but for also having a long-range vision that made recommendations for management of the park system. In “Parks and Playgrounds”, Wiegand stated:

“The increasing population requires a park program continued over a period of years. Therefore, a Lakewood Park Committee of a permanent nature, composed of ten or twelve representative citizens, chosen from agencies working for the betterment

of Lakewood should be formed to make a comprehensive study of the need and problem, which, if formed would make possible by investigation, study and a frequent report of recommendations a developed program for years to come. This suggestion is made in order that the people of Lakewood may have the best possible plan for an ideal park system within our own boundaries.”

Lakewood has had a commitment to outstanding parks for a century. Our current effort to revitalize the park system is possible only because our forefathers had the prudence to establish it in the first place. Having an understanding of our parkland heritage reminds us of responsibility ensure “...the people of Lakewood may have the best possible plan for an ideal park system within our own boundaries.”

### Highlights of Lakewood’s Park History

Our parks have enjoyed a colorful history. From the early days of the amusement park in the Rocky River valley to the current network of parks throughout the city, the citizens of Lakewood have taken pleasure in the natural scenery and beauty inherent in this coastal city.

In 1866, nine businessmen came together with the idea to create a summer resort at the mouth of the Rocky River, called the Clifton Park Summer Resort. It featured picnic groves, beer gardens, bathing and boating, as well as a cable car attraction to traverse the

## Park System History



river. By 1917, the City had purchased the property and the park became Lincoln Park now under the management of the Cleveland Metroparks system, where it is part of the popular Rocky River Reservation.

In 1918, the City purchased what is now considered to be the “diamond in Lakewood’s tiara,” Lakewood Park for \$214,500 by acquiring 25 acres on the former Rhodes estate. An additional four acres were purchased from the Hopkinson estate to add to the park. In 1953, construction began on Foster Pool, named for long-time Recreation Commissioner Charles A. Foster. This Olympic-sized pool replaced the old wading pond, which had been popular among children despite its diminutive depth. In 1996, a promenade was built to provide a place to stroll along the lakefront and enjoy the views.

The 15 acres of Madison Park were purchased in 1917 for \$40,222. This park features a pool designed by architect John Lidaj that was built in 1955 for the sum of \$260,000. The park has been home to many softball and baseball teams.

Elks Field, no longer extant, was located near Detroit and Bunts, due south of the rail line. This field was very popular in the 1930s and 40s, and was home to the first lighted softball field in the entire United States. The field had the privilege of hosting the 1944 and 1946 World Softball Championships.

The City Ice & Fuel Skating Rink on Lakewood Heights Boulevard was very popular in the 1930s and on. In 1961, Lakewood purchased the rink for \$200,000 and eventually built an indoor rink, now called Winterhurst. At the time, it was the largest rink in the country, and was a popular training facility for world- and Olympic-class skaters.

In addition to its heritage of fine outdoor spaces, Lakewood has also enjoyed a strong city-wide recreation program. From the play schools of the 1930s to the youth sports teams of today, the citizens have had abundant opportunities to get outside and enjoy beautiful Lakewood.



## Strategic Maintenance

Strategic maintenance is an effort to improve the methods for the ongoing upkeep of the parks by more efficiently using existing resources in order to meet the five year target goal of an **A** rating. During the inventory and assessment of the parks, a review of the Parks Division current staffing, methods and responsibilities was also undertaken.

### Staffing and Responsibilities

10 Full Time groundskeepers total.

Three groundskeepers are at Lakewood Park full time from 7:00 AM to 11:30 PM seven days a week. One of the groundskeepers is on nights rotating between parks and the public works garage.

Six groundskeepers on days attending to the majority of the park system when staffing is at maximum levels.

**Efficient operations are crucial for the city to successfully manage the use and quality of the parkland.**

Cut and trim approximately 75 Acres of dedicated Parks Property  
Cut and trim approximately 75 Acres of Public Property (Green Space)  
Pick up all ground litter  
Empty over 90 garbage cans in the City Parks  
Remove all trash from the Public Works garage and Armory  
Remove over 375 Tons of garbage from the Parks a year

Clean and maintain 8 pairs of restrooms throughout the City's Parks  
Clean, setup and tear down for all events at the Woman's Club Pavilion, 264 events in the year 2008  
Clean Kiwanis Pavilion for events, 157 events in the 2008 season  
Backup for school crossing guards  
Setup for special events, band concerts and Friday night flicks  
Remove graffiti from parks  
Maintain both municipal swimming pools  
Repair fences  
Fall leaf cleanup and removal  
Snow and ice removal from city owned parking lots and sidewalks  
Respond to resident concerns and complaints



### Management Challenges and Opportunities-

Facing limited personnel resources, efficient operations are crucial for the city to successfully manage the use and quality of the parkland. The review revealed a number of challenges that could be mitigated and opportunities that could be realized:

1. Volume and duration of wear and tear on athletic fields from Recreation Program activities. Example: Soccer at Madison Park is from April through November anywhere from 5 to 7 days a week.

## Strategic Maintenance

2. Management of the 75 acres of green space currently maintained by the City but not useable park space (I-90, Clifton Bridge approach etc.)
3. Staff responsibilities that are not directly related to parks maintenance and management and or overlap with another department.  
(Crossing guards, tree lawn repair, building refuse pick up)

The strategic planning aspect of the maintenance program sought creative and financially viable solutions to change the problems or challenges into opportunities to improve the parks. The results created the modified work program and became some of the key improvement recommendations of the strategic plan.



### 2009 Changes in Parks Division Maintenance Work Program

In 2009, the goal for the Parks Department was to more efficiently deploy resources and to become more proactive in addressing issues while prioritizing and responding to citizen complaints in a timely fashion. The following

modifications have been made to last years' work program:

1. Parks Department trucks and trailers were standardized and outfitted with all equipment that is needed to perform all essential functions for their job, each truck has been equipped with locking boxes. This eliminated the need for frequent trips to the maintenance shop allowing for more working hours spent doing productive maintenance work.



2. Parks maintenance routes have been reconfigured so that the City has been broken up in three sections, with two park employees assigned to each section.
3. The maintenance routes in each one of the assigned sections have been divided up so that a complete maintenance circuit takes approximately three days to complete.
4. Inspection sheets have been provided for every location so that work can be tracked and verified.
5. When crews arrive at a park, it is their responsibility to clean the restrooms, pick-up ground litter, empty trash cans, inspect and remove any graffiti, and cut and trim the location.

## Strategic Maintenance

### Maintenance Updates and Improvements

The process of working collaboratively with the community has been fruitful in fostering good communication between City staff and parks users. The 2009 modifications to the maintenance work program coupled with the on-going education and training of staff and the improved partnerships have helped already to produce positive results.

In an effort to address the maintenance challenges identified in 2009 as well as improve practices and methods, the following steps are being made to make 2010 our best year yet:

#### **Ohio State Extension Turf Grass Seminar**

Parks Division staff will be attending this continuing education course to understand technique to mitigate wear on the high use fields.

**Tree School** – Parks and Forestry staff are attending an on-going arboriculture course to increase our knowledge of urban forest best management practices.

**Athletic Field Rest Weeks** – in coordination with the Recreation Department, soccer scheduling has been modified in 2010 to include three rest or “no-use” weeks for Madison Park field. These weeks will happen in April, July and October and allow maintenance staff to aerate, patch and fertilize the field to improve the overall quality of the turf and this high use facility.



**Recreation and Park staff Monthly Meeting** – in the interest of sharing information and coordinating the use and management of the parks, staff members from the City’s Parks Division and the Board of Education’s Recreation Department will have monthly meetings from March through September. Staff will brief each other and review items such as upcoming projects, special events, complaints, shared maintenance and construction improvements.





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