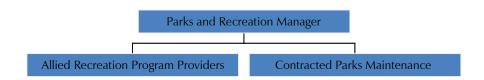


The City of Dunwoody was incorporated in December of 2008 and the staffing of the Parks and Recreation Division reflects the City's young age. Currently, the Parks and Recreation Manager is a contracted employee of the City through a contract with Lowe Engineers. Parks maintenance staffs are also contract employees and work to maintain road rights of way in addition to maintaining the City's parks. As part of the City's contract with Lowe Engineers, an administrative position in the Public Works Department is shared with the Parks and Recreation Division and assist with rental and special event permits which are administered by the Parks and Recreation Division.

Staff contracted by the City include, a concessionaire at the skate park. Other full time staff that are paid for by partnering not-for-profit organizations include the staff who operate the North DeKalb Cultural Arts Center, Dunwoody Nature Center staff, Stage Door Players staff and the concessions operator for Dunwoody Senior Baseball. There are no recreation programmers on staff at this time. Figure 4.1 below represents the current organizational structure in parks and recreation including partnering community groups and potential partner groups.

Figure 4.1
Dunwoody Parks and Recreation Division Organizational Structure



In addition to working with the contract staff and partnering groups, the Parks and Recreation Manager is also responsible for special event permits and rentals of park facilities. Field usage at Dunwoody Park is currently handled by Dunwoody Senior Baseball (DSB). The Parks and Recreation Manager is assisted by an administrative staffer housed in Public Works. It appears that this person does many activities dedicated to Public Works and handles rentals when available.

The Parks and Recreation Division permits a variety of special events, pavilion rentals and other park related activities. Stakeholders indicated that the existing procedure is cumbersome and very time consuming. In many instances, the Parks and Recreation Manager has to participate in coordination and set up of events; this takes him away from his pivotal role of strategically planning and managing operations of the multi-service agency.

Assessment

The focus of the existing agency is to maintain park properties and facilities throughout the City and to serve as a facilitator in the delivery of recreation programs and special events. Recreation programs, like youth athletics, fitness and other activities are provided through affiliated league associations and private providers, such as churches, the Marcus Jewish Community Center (MJCC) and other groups. The current structure appears to work in most cases but more coordination and communication between groups would be beneficial for long-term sustainability.



Relative to parks, the current contracted services needs to be improved in certain areas. First, facilities like the Donaldson-Chesnut Farm need significant attention relative to general maintenance as well as structural attention. Windwood Hollow Park areas also needed improved maintenance, based upon stakeholder and planning team review.

Secondly the practice of having the Dunwoody Senior Baseball League maintain fields and concession facilities at Dunwoody Park has caused major issues that need attention. The fields have severe grading issues and turf conditions are marginal. The concession area has no ADA access and internal conditions were not clean and in need of repair in areas.

Staffing Levels

The current parks maintenance staffing is done on contract with parks maintenance workers and a working supervisor. This staff is also responsible for assisting with right-of-way maintenance within Dunwoody.

The staffing ratio dedicated to parks maintenance is very low when compared to other agencies studied and industry norms. The International City/County Management Association (ICMA) uses agencies across the nation to provide benchmark guidelines for best-practices. While there is no "concrete" standard, best practice agencies historically have a lower basis of park acreage per person than those that have challenges maintaining developed park areas.

Based upon a current acreage of 170, the staffing ratio for parks maintenance is 42.5 acres per person. The planning team has studied other agencies and reviewed ICMA data: it has determined that the average is typically in the 18 to 20:1 ratio with best practice agencies staffing closer to 12:1 and as low as 9:1.

Administratively, the Division is very lean when compared to agencies of similar size and responsibilities. The parks and recreation manager is primarily "the division" when it comes to managing, budgeting, operating, marketing and planning. In a typical Division for a city of 40,231, many of these duties are delegated to others so the manager can typically strategically plan for agency goals and be the face of the Division in the community.

Most communities benchmarked are long-standing agencies that have grown through the years. Gainesville, for example, features a full-service parks and recreation agency that was created in the 1920s. The administrative section features a director, assistant director, three division superintendents and administrative support staff. Newer cities, like Johns Creek, have two employees and closely mirror Dunwoody's staffing characteristics.

Spending Comparisons

Another indicator historically used in parks and recreation assessment is per capita spending for services. Based upon services provided, the "averages" can range anywhere from \$40 to \$80 per capita. Current Dunwoody spending, per capita, is \$21; very low when compared to other agencies in the region. Below is table showing regional comparisons



Table 4.1 Per Capita Spending Comparison

	Per Capita Spending	
Dunwoody	\$21	
Gainesville	\$107	
Alpharetta	\$152	
Johns Creek	\$9	
Roswell	\$41	

As shown, more established agencies have been able to adjust staffing levels to a number that better meets the needs of each community. The planning team is familiar with the cities represented and further recognizes that some cities, such as Gainesville, continue to face challenges with parks maintenance, programming and contract management.

Recommendations

Current city administration has done an admirable job in continuing and improving parks and recreation services to the community since the transfer of park assets from DeKalb County. The Director of Public Works and Parks and Recreation Manager have provided a level of service that has exceeded DeKalb County services in many respects, but the level of service needs to be enhanced based upon community demand for quality and industry norms in respect to staffing levels and job assignments.

Administration Recommendations – Short Term

Policies, Procedures and Standards

The agency should create policies and procedures as soon as possible. Policies and procedures allow for existing and future employees to understand standard performance expectations within the department. Planning team members just recently completed providing parks and recreation policies and procedures for the young city of Doral, Florida, an established community in Miami-Dade County that was incorporated in 2003. Doral was in need of foundation practices that built upon existing City government policies. Providing the parks and recreation policies of areas such as cash handling, payroll, leave requests and emergency procedures provides a basic structure to which all employees are held.

A critical part of instituting policies for the Division should center on use of City facilities by allied groups. Many facilities within the Dunwoody park system are overused, antiquated, and in critical need of health, safety and welfare improvements. Policies should be created that institute a usage standard; that, for example, would include that concession conditions must meet City inspection requirements.

Another element that needs to be adopted is the City's concurrence on use of Dunwoody facilities by outside groups not affiliated with the City of Dunwoody. Stakeholders indicate that allied groups, like Dunwoody Senior Baseball, allow use of Dunwoody Park ball fields by other organizations. This practice is elevating the exposure of individuals to unsafe playing conditions. The City should have the ability to approve or deny these uses and collect rental revenues for use.

In the future as the City invests in the park facilities and provides maintenance at a consistently higher standard, consideration should be given to collecting fees from the affiliated program providers. This is common practice among public recreation providers. The current arrangement with program providers is based on free or discounted use of City facilities. This benefits Dunwoody residents and



the City recognizes that the administrative costs to provide these programs are borne by the provider, thereby relieving the City of that responsibility. However, since the City is subsidizing the facility use it is reasonable to consider charging a fee to recover as much cost, for services provided by the City, as reasonable without impacting the affiliated partner's ability to provide services.

Many agencies are adopting efficiency and effectiveness measures; these provide a measurable indicator that allows decision-makers to determine whether measures are being met or if other influences, such as resource inadequacies or personnel issues, may be influencing performance measures. Instituting these measures in the short term will allow the City to begin tracking maintenance, special event attendance or outreach to create a baseline of data. The planning team recommends instituting measures and tracking these semi-annually.

Facility Use Agreements

DeKalb County had instituted many facility use agreements with allied groups. Ranging from the North DeKalb Cultural Arts Center to the Dunwoody Nature Center, non-profits were able to use fields, buildings and parks for a variety of uses. Since Dunwoody's takeover of the parks system, these agreements have been allowed to transition on an interim basis.

The planning team recommends that all agreements made with DeKalb County be re-evaluated and terms renegotiated in order to create a true partnership with groups. Some agreements need strict enforcement as it relates to proper maintenance of facilities and which groups (City or user group) should provide supervision, maintenance, capital replacement, or other improvements. The City is currently exposed in many respects to inadequate maintenance of facilities, overuse of park areas and lacking necessary disability access in parks.

Staffing

The Parks and Recreation Manager needs support to administer and manage department operations and contracted and volunteer operated programs. The City should create a list of tasks to be included in the contract for management of Park and Recreation Services. These services include but are not limited to the items listed in Figure 4.2.

Overseeing a major capital program is a time consuming process. The Parks and Recreation Manager will need to work with consulting design firms on the execution of projects, be available to attend community meeting on each project and prepare updates for the Mayor and Council on how the capital projects are progressing. This will leave less time for working on rentals, programming coordination with current user groups and dealing with special event permits.



Figure 4.2
Task Items For Parks and Recreation Services

Coordination of facility rentals

Working with program partner groups (e.g. Dunwoody Baseball, Dunwoody Nature Center, etc.)

Administrative support

Special Event Permit coordination

Management of routine maintenance and maintenance subcontractors

Develop joint use agreements with other recreation service providers

Manage capital/deferred maintenance needs

Develop standard policies and procedures for park operations

Strategic planning

Oversee new facility development

Promotion of park facilities and affiliated programs

Programming of city sponsored park events

Administration Recommendations – Year 3 – 5

Based upon the perceived demand from City officials and park users, a Parks Superintendent is recommended in Year 2-3 of this plan. The superintendent should have experience in initiating park services in a jurisdiction and knowledge of managing contracts and crews. This person would have direct oversight of the contract maintenance supervisor and eventually city park maintenance staff.

The Parks Superintendent should spend time each day visiting parks to insure that maintenance contractor are being followed and to look for safety concerns and other issues which require maintenance activities. The Park Superintendent should hold certification in playground safety and conduct regular inspections of all playground facilities. The Park Superintendent shall develop a maintenance budget each year and submit it to the Parks and Recreation Manager as part of the annual budgeting process. The provision of recreation by the division will need to be considered by 2015. To facilitate this, the planning team recommends a Needs Assessment in 2014 to ascertain resident demand for recreation and whether outside agencies are sufficiently delivering programs desired. The budget for a study would be approximately \$20,000.

Figure 4.3 Dunwoody Parks and Recreation Division Mid-term Organization Chart



Parks

The transition of parks under the management from DeKalb County to the City of Dunwoody was a welcome move and residents are pleased to have improved services. However, the current level of service is well below industry norms. Stakeholders and City officials indicated the desire to be the model parks and recreation department in the region. If this is the case, parks maintenance services needs attention.

A good example of services that are below the industry norm is the level of custodial services in the parks and at facilities operated by partnering groups. As a norm, sports fields made available to the public and scheduled through an athletic association would be maintained by Parks staff. This ensures that the fields and supporting facilities are maintained in a safe manner. Park staff would have safety checklist to be filled out on a regular basis. Staff would be trained in proper field maintenance techniques to reduce the potential for player injury. Staff would also make sure restrooms and bleacher areas are clean and safe. Leaving the responsibility for field maintenance up to volunteers is not within the norm for a community the size of Dunwoody and could create a level of liability of exposure.

The same is true for buildings where community programs are held. Unless it is written into a lease agreement for the community group to maintain their building, grounds and restrooms, full time and part time park maintenance staff would provide both daily and regularly scheduled maintenance. While many agencies contract out specific aspects of maintenance (including janitorial duties), there has to be a standard of care established so that maintenance can be monitored and public safety protected.

Another example of the need for expanded maintenance is the water feature in the Brook Run Park Playground. The fountain has been broken for some time and the lack of staff and resources to repair the fountain has been a cause of complaints by the public. The fountain is a very popular part of the playground and was contributed by a civic partner in Dunwoody. Issues like this will only increase as the park system expands the mix of facilities throughout the system.

A staffing ratio of 40 acres per parks maintenance person is not sufficient based upon other agencies studied and industry norms. In 2011, the department should standardize maintenance expectations of sub-contracted maintenance crews and require them to provide additional staff to complete necessary tasks in a timely manner. This will provide the needed level of service and, based upon the Brook Run Master Plan recommendations, may need to be enhanced based upon specialized service areas at the park (sports fields, Great Lawn, etc.).

Working with the contracted maintenance firm will be critical to securing the necessary resources to provide adequate maintenance. Based upon our review of existing maintenance, turf care at parks needs to be increased as well as preventive maintenance (ex: playgrounds, sports fields, existing buildings). Landscaping within parks is an area of focus as well.

The correlation between staffing and per capita spending is direct. Dunwoody is far below any comparable model agency in the region. Park maintenance expenditures need to increase if Dunwoody desires to be a leader in parks and recreation provision.

The planning team is aware that other agencies may provide more full services in comparison to Dunwoody (ex: other agencies may provide parks, recreation and special needs programs). Recognizing this, the planning team recommends that the City strive to provide per capita spending of \$35 per resident by 2012. Tied to this, the City needs to create maintenance standards that will allocate resources



in an economical and effective manner.

Maintenance standards allow decision makers to measure how parks are being maintained and whether adjustments need to occur. For example, some sports fields are for league play while others may be for practice only. Mowing and preparation standards will differ for both. Creating this tool will assist management with allocating resources or managing contracts that allow for the care of parks, facilities, fields, and playground areas.

Recreation Programs

The current provision of programs in the City of Dunwoody is provided by affiliated partners and other non-profits. Some activity providers have continued from the transfer of facilities from DeKalb County. These providers, like Dunwoody Senior Baseball, continue to provide a beneficial service to residents and City park users.

Discussions with stakeholders and staff indicated that more checks and balances need to be instituted with league providers. Most agreements between municipalities and activity groups include the requirement that allied groups should provide an audited financial statement at the end of each calendar year. This practice needs to be adopted by the City immediately.

Stakeholders did indicate that communications between the City and associated program groups has improved but could be enhanced to provide better information to patrons and residents. Public workshops indicated confusion about not knowing where to go for youth and adult programs in Dunwoody. The department could be the community portal for information and seek underwriting from businesses in the City.

In the short term, the current structure of having private and non-profit agencies provide recreation programming appears to serve community needs at this time. It is recommended that a needs assessment be considered by 2014 to determine whether the services provided by the department should be enhanced to provide internal recreation programming.

Survey results indicate a desire for more programs of all types. In the area of seniors, several items, including senior games, senior trips and senior health classes, received scores of over 90% for desired programs. General programs that received high scores included computer classes, adult ultimate frisbee leagues, movies in the park, cooking and dance classes. All of these types of programs are commonly provided by public recreation agencies and are not being provided by the current partnering agencies. The survey findings are a good tool for directing future programming opportunities through partnering agencies or through self directed programs.

Other Mid-term Items

Revenue Enhancement in Department

Since recreation is not a primary focus of the department at this time, the desire to generate revenue to increase cost recovery is somewhat limited to rentals of facilities, sponsorships and creating agreements that allow the agency to recover some fees. A review of the 2010 budget identifies that only \$1,000 was budgeted for pavilion revenues. This equates to less than 1% cost recovery for department services.

Dr. John Crompton, a professor at Texas A&M, has done numerous studies of cost recovery and economic benefits derived from parks and recreation. Dr. Crompton has estimated that a national cost recovery



average is approximately 35%. This, of course, varies based upon the types of services provided and whether a community leans more towards parks and recreation services being more self-sufficient versus subsidizing services more for the community.

With the adoption of policies and procedures, creating standards, and revising use agreements, the City should institute a new fees and charges policy for adoption in 2012. This policy would allow the department to recover more costs versus the nominal amount currently received. In year one, the agency should attempt to recover 10% of departmental expenses. When based on the approved 2011 budget (exclusive of capital), this would equate to approximately \$91,000.

While this amount may seem sizable without directly managing and operating recreation services, there are mechanisms that could be used to raise revenue within the department. Some examples include:

- Secure a corporate partner for the year that allows for primary sponsorship of park and recreation events throughout the City.
- Entertain a corporate package that allows for naming rights at high profile facilities. This type of revenue generation is being used nationally at school facilities as well as parks.
- In new user group agreements, secure a \$5 per person surcharge per season for the use of City park facilities. These dollars could be targeted to provide capital or deferred maintenance assistance at parks where the surcharge is generated.
- Securing funding through a lodging tax. It is estimated that one cent generates approximately \$350,000 annually, based upon the Convention and Visitor Bureau estimates. The dollars could be targeted to enhance tourism based ventures, such as a sports tournament complex, Brook Run Park, or other revenue generating venture.

Formalize Stakeholder Coordination Committee

People in Dunwoody are passionate about finally having "their own" parks system. The enthusiasm that has been generated through this master planning process and recommended actions needs to be continued. The creation of a Parks and Recreation Stakeholder Coordination Committee should be initiated in the near future.

Committees take many shapes nationally. Some committees provide direct oversight of administration and dialogue between the board and the parks and recreation manager could be weekly. In other agencies, the committee is more advisory in nature, providing general guidance to operations and capital improvements. These types of boards also give the manager concurrence on future budgets and planning for future projects, and can be another communication arm between the agency and City Council. This second type of committee meets on a regularly scheduled meeting monthly, quarterly or other set intervals and has subcommittees that meet regularly.

The planning team recommends a Stakeholder Coordination Committee that is representative of the City Council. Members of the board should have an expressed interest in parks and recreation in the City of Dunwoody and represent a diverse cross-section of the community. Members should have an affinity towards youth sports as well as other areas of interest such as the arts, trails, special needs, and active adult populations. At the conclusion of this master plan, it is recommended this group meet monthly for the first year to gain a better understanding of recommendations and action plans.

Before the Stakeholder Coordination Committee is appointed, the Parks and Recreation Manger should work with the City Manger and City Attorney to craft as set of by-laws for the committee. These by-laws should be approved by the Mayor and Council prior to making appointments to the committee. After



the committee elects officers, it is recommended that they visit all the parks and facilities in the system as a group and attend an advisory meeting of a nearby parks and recreation department as part of the initial start-up process of the board.

Administration Recommendations – Year 5 – 10

The inception of creating a parks and recreation department in Dunwoody has provided great opportunities for growth, as well as recognition of the importance of providing what is desired within the City. The response to providing parks services has been appreciated among residents and stakeholders. The continued provision of parks and recreation in a feasible and efficient manner is important to City residents.

In Year 5, the planning team recommends an update to this first City parks and recreation master plan. Using the recreation needs assessment as a basis, the City can better determine how to allocate resources and maintain spaces through 2020. This update will provide better insight and perspective as the City grows from its incorporation in December of 2008.

Summary of Recommendations

Administration

Immediate Actions

- Develop Division policies and procedures.
- Create efficiency and effectiveness measures based upon existing resources. Limit the number of measures to three administratively and three for parks.
- Develop usage standards for non-profit user groups.
- Revise all agreements with user groups that reflect better equity between parties.
- Hire a Program Coordinator that would manage outside contracts with program providers, park services and other groups.

Short Term

- Retain a parks superintendent in year 3 to 5 of this plan. The individual should have experience
 initiating park maintenance services within a jurisdiction and knowledge of managing contracts
 and crews.
- By 2015, institute a Needs Assessment to ascertain whether recreation needs are being met.

Long Term

• Update the parks and recreation strategic plan in 2016

Parks

- Increase staffing that would move the existing provision of one person per 42 acres of parks to 30
 acres per person. This would equate to six parks maintenance workers. Turf care, preventative
 maintenance and landscape positions appear to be the areas where staffing additions should
 occur.
- Enhance per capita spending in the parks maintenance division. Per capita spending should be around \$35 per resident by 2015.
- Develop maintenance standards for the Parks and Recreation Division.



Recreation

- Enhance communications between affiliated agencies and allow the Department to be the community portal of information regarding recreation and cultural arts programming.
- Continue existing structure of recreation programming and consider a needs assessment by 2014 to determine whether the existing structure is meeting community desires.

Other Issues

Revenue Enhancement

• Institute a Fees and Charges Policy that is reflective of the community's values with regard to cost recovery. At a minimum, the City should strive to recover 10% of departmental expenses in FY 2012

Stakeholder Coordinator Committee

• Create a committee board that is made up of park stakeholders and user groups. Members shall represent a cross-section of community park and recreation desires. Prior to making appointments to the board, the Mayor and Council should meet on a consistent basis with Parks and Recreation Manager.

