

2016-2020 Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan

City of Beech Grove, Indiana
Beech Grove Parks Department



Adopted
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2016 - 2020 Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan

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Beech Grove Parks Department

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1 – Plan Summary

Purpose of the Plan

This Master Plan for the Beech Grove, Indiana parks and recreation system is in response to the continuing objective of the City of Beech Grove to maintain a guide for the present and a vision for the future through sound planning and periodic internal and citizen review.

Federal and State requirements mandate periodic updates of community parks master plans to maintain eligibility for certain grants from the National Park Service and the Indiana Department of Natural Resources. This 2016 – 2020 Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan represents an update to the previous 2010 - 2014 Master Plan.

Planning Committee

The Beech Grove Board of Parks and Recreation served as the Planning Committee to research and prepare this 2016 - 2020 Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan.

Planning Methodology

The following planning methodology was utilized for the development and update of the Parks Master Plan:

- Determination of the characteristics, perception, and desires of the existing and potential parks system user population and the identification of real and perceived needs/gaps in recreational and open space resources relative to that population.
- Evaluation of the appropriateness of current resources, objectives, and plans to meet the needs of the system’s constituency.
- Conceptualization of an array of park system components, linkages, and imagery that builds upon the achievements to date, and carries on the sustaining vision of an integrated community resource of open space, facilities, and programs.

Based upon the above planning methodology, the master plan is organized as follows:

Inventory & Analysis

For the 2016 - 2020 Master Plan, a process of inventory and analysis was established to determine the context of the existing Beech Grove park system. Each of the parks facilities was visited, inventoried, and evaluated. In addition, the natural/cultural

features and demographics of the planning area were analyzed.

Needs Analysis

Park system needs were determined through issues analysis and review of state and national standards. A public participation process was utilized to help ensure that the plan will be responsive to the recreational and leisure needs of the community and to the vision that residents have for their park system.

The public participation process included a community preference survey, public meetings, and a public meeting for presentation of the final plan in April 2016 with a three week period for further comment before and after the meeting. The survey was made available online to all Beech Grove residents through the City website, with hard copies available upon request. The survey was specifically shared with City administrators, the City Council and members of all City boards and commissions to reach elected and appointed officials who represent all members of the community and have a vested interest in the success of our community. Social media was used as an additional means to share the survey and largely contributed to a 62.7% increase in responses over the survey for the previous five year plan. Survey responses were used to determine the characteristics, perceptions, and desires of the existing/potential park system user population and the identification of real/perceived needs or gaps in recreational /open space resources relative to that population.

All meetings of the Parks Board are open to the public and are an ongoing method of hearing concerns, suggestions and requests from the community. This public input is used to help set goals and priorities to guide development and implementation of the master plan.

A Parks Board member serves on the Beech Grove Greenscape Commission, which advises the city on matters related to trees and landscaping.

The Beech Grove Redevelopment Commission has made a significant monetary investment in maintaining and improving our city parks. As stated by BGRDC President Donald Webb, “We believe parks and schools are two things that make a community stand out and believe the money would be well spent in this area.”

Evaluation

The 2010 - 2014 Parks Master Plan was used as the base upon which the Plan Update builds. The plan process included the study of the previous recommendations to determine their appropriateness and/or success upon evaluation.

Vision Plan

Taking into consideration the needs and desires of the community and an evaluation of the existing system, a vision plan was developed for the park system. This portion of the plan provides the Park Board and other community leaders with an overall vision for the future of the parks, open space, and recreational system.

Action Plan

The Action Plan identifies short-term improvements or planning activities and establishes a priority system, taking into account considerations of revenue, funding, and phasing.

The Mission Statement and Summary of Goals serve as the policy basis for the Master Plan.

Mission Statement

The Mission of the Beech Grove Parks Board is to create and responsibly manage a citywide system of parks, open space, and cultural resources, and to provide recreational, cultural, and educational programs based on these resources to enhance the quality of life for all Beech Grove citizens.

Summary of Goals

Goals for the Master Plan derive from the Mission Statement and the ongoing experience of providing for the recreational and open space needs of Beech Grove citizens.

- A. That sufficient open space and natural areas be available to meet the present and future needs of Beech Grove residents, and that these resources be located relative to the population throughout the city.
- B. That the existing parks be linked through a greenway system and that system link to the neighborhoods and commercial centers of the city.
- C. That the parks serve as examples of sound environmental practice and sensitivity and contribute to a healthy community through the treatment of their natural systems.
- D. That partnerships be enhanced and developed to the benefit of the park system and the community.
- E. That programs offered provide inspiration, improve the health of and are beneficial to residents from youth to seniors.
- F. Provide the community with an attractive parks setting where visitors feel comfortable, safe and secure.

Summary of Vision Initiatives

The Beech Grove Park Board and the Greenscape Commission envision their role as that of lead agencies in the management of the city's natural resources and the development of the city's recreational resources. The Board is committed to enhancing the quality of life for Beech Grove residents by pursuing the following series of initiatives:

- Integrate the Park System into the city through the development of a greenway system, a pedestrian plan, and the image/identity of the city.
- Continue to grow our partnership with the City of Beech Grove Schools to develop educational, athletic and social opportunities for Beech Grove youth.
- Improve the community's natural resources to complement the green identity of the city and to improve the experiences of visitors and residents.
- Continue to develop a year-round schedule of programming that serves the cultural and recreational needs of the community.
- Promote an appreciation for nature and the environment.
- Master plan all individual parks to improve the quality of the parks system.
- Continue to improve the marketing and public information of the park system through the refinement/development of an information distribution system and logo/graphic for the Beech Grove Parks.

The vision for the future is that of a linked and visible park and open space system. This resource will enhance the quality of life for Beech Grove residents, and add to the economic vitality of the community. Working in partnership with other city and county agencies and with neighborhood groups, the 2016 - 2020 Parks Master Plan can become reality.

2 – Context of the Plan

Planning Area

Beech Grove is located to the south and east of Downtown Indianapolis in Marion County, Indiana. Under Uni-Gov, the Indianapolis City Council and the Marion County Council combined to form the City-County Council.

Because they wished to retain their autonomy, the City of Beech Grove and three other local governments were not included in Uni-Gov. Instead, residents of the “excluded” units of local government elect their own mayors, clerk-treasurers, councils, and boards. As residents of Marion County, however, dwellers in Beech Grove and the other cities are obligated to pay countywide taxes. Because of this and because the Indianapolis mayor’s power extends to the entire county, residents of the four communities can vote for the mayor of Indianapolis and a city-county council member.

Beech Grove parks do attract users from the surrounding Indianapolis population; some because Beech Grove parks are closer to their residence than the nearest IndyPark, others for particular amenities such as the Dog Park or Fitness Center. The July 3rd Fireworks/Family Fun Day in the Parks and other public events also attract visitors from the greater Indianapolis area. There is no evidence to suggest that non-resident users affect the Parks Department’s ability to maintain and operate city parks. In fact, revenues derived from non-residents for banquet and meeting room rentals, Dog Park memberships and Fitness Center memberships benefit the city and parks. The city also recognizes that local businesses depend on a broad customer base to thrive and encourages visitors from outside Beech Grove to explore the community and patronize local businesses.

The planning area for the Beech Grove Parks Master Plan is the Beech Grove city limits. (See *Map 1*)

At the southern edge of the city, a major interstate, I-465, runs east/west across Beech Grove. The CSX railroad line that serves the Amtrak Maintenance Facility also borders the city.

Historic Content

Prior to 1820, by virtue of treaties with the Miami, Delaware, Weo, and Kickapoo Indian tribes, the United States Government held title to the land on which Beech Grove lies. In the early 1820’s various parcels of land

were sold to individuals. That land was cleared of timber and used as farmland until after 1900. In 1864, M. F. Churchman, of the Indianapolis banking firm of Fletcher and Churchman, purchased a large tract of land known as the “Snyder Farm” in the area later to become Beech Grove. He formed a partnership with George Jackson of Delaware, who imported the first Jersey cattle to this country. Their enterprise with pedigreed Jersey cattle was very successful, and their farm, called “Beech Grove Farm”, became widely known.

Prominent among early citizens are the families of Churchman, MacGregor, Bolton, and Cottman. In 1930, one of those descendants, George S. Cottman, wrote about the origin of the city and its name. He wrote, in



Map 1: City of Beech Grove Planning Area

part, “Because of the Beech Grove farm industry, a railway installation was at the nearest point on the Cincinnati road and this, at first called Ingallstown, afterwards took the name of Beech Grove Station. Still later the embryo town took the name of the station, and here we have the origin of the name, the first cause being the beech trees on the piece of woodland adjoining the cattle farm.”

Probably the best-known early resident was Sarah Tittle (Barrett) Bolton, famed poet and author of “Paddle Your

Own Canoe.” The Sarah T. Bolton Park, “originally known as “Beech Bank”, was purchased in 1930 from the Bolton Estate.

Most of the early Beech Grove area was platted in 1906 by the Beech Grove Improvement Company, a firm engaged in the buying, holding, and selling of real estate. Beech Grove became an incorporated town that year with a town board form of government. As the city grew, it became a fifth class city in 1935 with a mayor-city council form of government. Then, it became a fourth class city in 1961. It is currently classified as a third class city. Since 1935, the city mayors have been Charles Adams, Allen Hunter, Richard Byland, David Finney, Elton H. Geshwiler, Warner Wiley, Donald “Joe” Wright, John Jennings (Interim Mayor), Terry Dilk and currently Dennis B. Buckley.

Beech Grove Shops

The Big Four Railroad, more appropriately called the Cleveland, Cincinnati, Chicago and St. Louis Railroad, built the Beech Grove Shops in 1905. It was designed to maintain steam locomotives, passenger cars and freight cars. In 1922 the parent company, New York Central, absorbed the Big Four Railroad and took control of the shop. New York Central continued to make improvements and expanded the shop operations.

During the world war years of 1900-1950 there were more than 5,000 employees. This was certainly the peak of activity here at Beech Grove. After World War II, trains met with a fierce competitor known as the airplane. Passenger train travel began a gradual decline, and with that decline there was a decrease in the operations here at the Beech Grove Shops. Financial difficulties arose within the New York Central Railroad as well as the Pennsylvania Railroad, which took over operations here at Beech Grove. But even this merger was plagued with financial difficulties and many years of deferred maintenance existed. The facility came to a state of general disrepair.

In 1971, Amtrak came into existence and took over the passenger rail service for all other railroads with the exception of the Southern Railroad and the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad. An ambitious program was undertaken to repair the old and uncared for passenger cars and bring them to a usable condition. In 1973, Amtrak contracted with the Penn Central Railroad to have its passenger cars repaired and refurbished here at Beech Grove. Amtrak was pleased with the quality of the work and the central location of Beech Grove. After much negotiation, Amtrak acquired 62.5 acres of the shop

for approximately \$3,500,000. The Beech Grove Shops officially became part of Amtrak on April 1, 1975.

Natural Landscape Features

Much of the original natural features of Marion County and Beech Grove have been lost to development. Prior to urbanization, the southeast corner of the county (including the Beech Grove area) was primarily farmland and woodland.

Beech Grove has two waterways within its boundaries. The primary is Lick Creek, which feeds into the White River within Marion County on the southwest side of the city. The second and smaller waterway is a tributary of White Lick Creek.

An underground spring at the west end of Sarah T. Bolton Park makes mowing the area difficult. In 2009, the Parks Department began the process of allowing the area to “go natural.” Native flowers were planted to attract birds and butterflies.

Low-lying areas along Lick Creek in Sarah T. Bolton Park are prone to flooding during heavy rainstorms. Erosion has been a serious problem and in 2013 the City invested \$309,000 in stabilizing the creek bank south of the vehicular bridge. Native plants, flowers and trees are now planted along the creek and allowed to grow naturally to protect the banks, reduce the impact of flood waters and benefit aquatic life. Erosion issues north of the vehicular bridge will need to be addressed in the future.

Hornet Park features a wooded area covering several acres, with many mature trees of native species. The Parks Board, along with the city’s Greenscape Commission, strongly supports preserving this small woodland in its natural state. A walking path and bridge through a portion of the area allows visitors to enjoy the quiet beauty of the woods. Hornet Enrichment Academy students have adopted the walking path as a continuing community service project.

According to the Indiana Department of Natural Resources, there are no significant natural areas located within the Beech Grove planning area.

The Emerald Ash Borer has made its way into the city and is affecting ash trees on both public and private properties. In 2015, seven ash trees were removed in the parks. The remaining nine ash trees are being monitored. Insecticide treatments have not been employed as they can be expensive and have no guarantee for success. Consistent with Parks Department policy, replacements

will be native trees which require less maintenance and have a greater chance for success.

At this time, bush honeysuckle is the only invasive plant posing a problem in our city parks. It is found mostly among scrub trees growing at the edges of the parks. Cutting back and removing the honeysuckle is part of the Parks Department's regular maintenance plan. Use of herbicides is kept very minimal in the parks to protect our wildlife and human visitors.

Approximately 36 acres at the northwest corner of the Emerson Avenue/Subway Street intersection was annexed by the City with the intention to develop it into a Sports and Recreation Park. Half of the acreage is held by a private individual and half is owned by the city. The property sits on top of a former landfill. Due to environmental issues, restrictions on building and installing utilities at the site and the inability to provide adequate parking, the City has withdrawn its support for developing the area for public use. Efforts have focused on maintaining the integrity of the cap and improving the appearance of this parcel.

No other significant land is available within our city limits for parks and recreation expansion.

Man-made, Historical, and Cultural Landscape Features

There are no significant historic open-space sites in the City of Beech Grove.

The Big Four Railroad Yards, or the "Beech Grove Shops" as they are commonly called, are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The district contains twenty structures of significance as well as a facility that covers over 100 acres.

Additionally, Beech Grove has at least another 114 historic sites and structures rated from notable to outstanding by the Decatur, Perry and Franklin Townships, Marion County Interim Report.

Sarah T. Bolton Park is named for city's most prominent early resident and reflects the life and beauty that Mrs. Bolton often spoke of in her poetry. Her home still stands on 17th Avenue, just outside the park property. Within the park, Geshwiler Fountain was erected in memory of former Mayor Elton H. Geshwiler. First elected in 1959, his 32-year tenure was among the longest in any Indiana City. Near the main entrance, a memorial honors Beech Grove soldiers who gave their lives in World War I,

World War II, the Korean War, Vietnam War, and Iraq War.

A review of access to the parks from all areas of the city for bike riders and pedestrians revealed the following:

Railroad tracks are all located north of residential areas and do not affect access to any parks. I-465 borders the city on the south, east of Emerson Avenue, and travels over 9th Avenue, which is the only other through street affected. With consideration of the layout of surrounding neighborhoods, it does not affect access. Emerson Avenue is a potential impediment for bike riders and pedestrians. This Indianapolis street is a major thoroughfare, connecting Greenwood and the north side of Marion County. Hornet Park is located east of Emerson, and the other three parks are located west. Residents on either side must cross Emerson to access the other parks. The intersections at Hornet Avenue and Churchman Avenue are the best places to cross. Both feature traffic lights, lined pedestrian crossings and a safety island midway, but the high volume of traffic affects the comfort level of pedestrians in particular. The proposed Greenway Trail will address the intersection at Hornet Avenue with enhanced safety features, in addition to providing connectivity between all city parks. Also, Churchman Avenue lacks sidewalks extending through from the residential neighborhoods west to the school entrance which connects to Hornet Park. This will be addressed with the Churchman Avenue Pedestrian Path Project scheduled for 2018. The only bike lane in the city is on the south side of Main Street from 13th Avenue to Emerson. The city should consider adding bike lanes on other major city streets.

Schools, Library and Other Open Space/Recreational Resources

Students from the city of Beech Grove attend the following public schools:

- Hornet Park Elementary School
- Central Elementary School
- South Grove Intermediate School
- Beech Grove Middle School
- Beech Grove High School
- Hornet Enrichment Academy

Beech Grove schools and associated recreational/athletic facilities are for student use and not typically open to the public. The Beech Grove High School tennis courts and Beech Grove Middle School track are exceptions and available to the public when not in use for school events.

The Central Elementary School playground is also available for public use outside of school hours.

The lease agreements for Beech Grove City Schools use at Hornet Park allow for the Parks Department to utilize certain school facilities outside of school activities.

Beech Grove High School sponsors youth sports programming for football, cheerleading, wrestling and basketball.

The Beech Grove Soccer Club offers a spring and fall season for youth soccer.

The Beech Grove Middle School Softball Fields are maintained in part by the Parks Department, but are currently programmed only for use by students and the Beech Grove Girls Softball Association.

The ball diamond at South Grove Intermediate School and Don Challis Park was renovated in 2014 for use by the Beech Grove Middle School baseball team.

The Beech Grove Public Library offers numerous programs, activities and events for all age groups.

The Elton H. Geshwiler Senior Center provides programs, activities and services for senior citizens which would typically be offered by a city's parks department.

Private Recreational Facilities

There are a number of private recreational facilities located in the Beech Grove planning area. Most facilities are private gyms, clubs, organized recreation such as bowling, etc. Several large apartment complexes in the city have swimming pools and playgrounds for their residents. However, some of the facilities are open to the public and include:

- The Benedictine Center
Offers programs, retreats, meeting space and a Peace and Nature Sanctuary Garden
- Elton H. Geshwiler Senior Center
- Beech Grove United Methodist Church
Their newly renovated facility, BG "Our Place," offers free Family Movie nights every Friday, as well as a venue for dinner and concerts, theatrical performances, recitals, vendor fairs and weddings.

Other Regional Recreational & Open Space Facilities

In addition to the Beech Grove parks and recreational system, there are a variety of other public and private recreational resources available to local residents. Residents of Beech Grove can take advantage of their proximity to Indy Parks. Within a five-minute driving distance, Beech Grove residents can access Tolin-Akeman Park, Garfield Park and Aquatic Center, the Pleasant Run Trail, and Sarah Shank golf course. Within a 15-30 minute driving distance, residents can access a much broader array of recreational and cultural amenities of the Cities of Indianapolis, Lawrence and Greenwood.

Community Partnerships

As noted throughout this plan, the Parks Board and Parks Department have cultivated many partnerships with community organizations and facilities. These partnerships and cooperative relationships allow the Beech Grove Parks to be used by the community for programs and events which could not otherwise be offered with current staff level and funding.

The Beech Grove Promoters Club hosts the annual July 3rd Fireworks in Sarah T. Bolton Park. The Promoters Club also assists with the Annual Halloween Costume Contest and Community Day in the Park.

Visits with Santa Claus and the Halloween Costume Contest are held at the Elton H. Geshwiler Senior Center.

Hartman Park is home to Beech Grove Little League and the organization shares responsibilities for maintenance and improvements of the playing fields and facilities.

The Beech Grove Fire Department teaches a CPR/AED Certification class each month at the Hornet Park Community Center.

The Beautify Beech Grove Committee sponsors an annual Family Walk/Run in Sarah T. Bolton Park. The Committee also funded the purchase of new flags and flag poles for War Memorial in this park.

The Beech Grove Lion's Club hosts the Annual Easter Egg Hunt in Sarah T. Bolton Park.

The Pi Iota Xi Sorority, as well as several individuals and families, donate funds for the planting of new trees in the parks.

The Beech Grove High School Cross County Team utilizes Don Challis Park for a portion of their cross-

country course and the Baseball Team plays their home games at Dick Templin Field in Sarah T. Bolton Park.

Beech Grove High School utilizes the Fitness Center for a limited number of physical education classes during the school day.

Beech Grove City Schools have worked with the Beech Grove Parks Department to provide summer sports camps and other programming for youth.

The Hornet Park/Central Elementary PTO co-sponsors Family Game Nights at the Hornet Park Community Center.

The Southeast Community Service Center is a partner in providing programs, services, seminars and events such as a recent Career Fair.

Central Nine Career Center offers English as a Second Language (ESL) and High School Equivalency (HSE) classes at the Hornet Park Community Center.

The Beech Grove Greenscape Commission shares an interest in protecting and developing green space throughout the city. The commission maintains an inventory of city trees.

The Greenscape Commission has also partnered with the Parks Board to sponsor a Community Day for projects in the parks. Volunteers from the community and several organizations have painted restroom and other outbuildings, installed fence cap at Dick Templin Field, and cleared accumulated winter debris, fallen branches, etc., and mulched flowerbeds. The Beech Grove Lion's Club and Indianapolis Power & Light have supplied gloves and trash bags for the event.

The Beech Grove Girl Scouts Troops have installed two flower gardens along the main road through Sarah T. Bolton Park and painted a mural in the hallway of the Parks Director's office.

The Parks Director and Community Center Facility Manager serve as stakeholders for the Beech Grove's CLEAN Community Challenge Program.

3-Defining the Constituency and Its Needs

Socio-Economic Analysis

Population

Beech Grove, incorporated in 1906, is considered part of the greater Indianapolis metropolitan area. Throughout the 1990s, the Indianapolis area was growing and annexed many of the smaller cities and towns. Beech Grove remained in a separate jurisdiction.

The 2010 Census total population was 14,192. From 2000 to 2010, the population of Beech Grove decreased by approximately 4.6% or 688 fewer residents. This decrease is in contrast to Indianapolis, which saw growth of 4.75% and the State of Indiana, with an increase of approximately 6.2%. The decrease can be attributed to the downturn in the housing market prior to the 2010 Census, during which a large number of homes were unoccupied due to foreclosures. There were 581 vacant housing units in 2010 compared to 421 vacant units in 2000. This situation is reversing and population is expected to rise. The US Census Bureau estimates the 2013 population to be 14,470, which is still less than the 14,880 residents recorded in the 2000 Census.

Implications for parks and recreation:

- *New residents may not be aware of park locations or recreational opportunities.*
- *Many new residents relocate from Indianapolis and are accustomed to highly developed park districts, facilities, and programming.*

Housing and Families

The total number of households in Beech Grove decreased 3.07% from 6,085 in 2000 to 5898 in 2010. The household size remained nearly the same (2.39 persons per household in 2000 to 2.36 in 2010). Although the average household size remained almost constant, it is still lower than that of the remainder of Marion County (3.03 persons per household). The percentage of households with children under the age of 18 is 30.8. The number of single parent households with children under the age of 18 continues to rise, from 469 in 2000 to 820 in 2010.

According to the US Census Bureau, the number of housing units in Beech Grove decreased by 25 from 2000 to 2010. A new senior housing project with 60 units

opened in 2016. With little available land for new housing starts, no additional growth is expected at this time.

Implications for parks and recreation:

- *Increases in single parent households suggest increased demand for after-school and summer youth programs.*
- *Providing evening and weekend family and youth programs is important to meet the needs of families in which both parents work.*

Age

The “graying” of the population is an important issue that many communities are being forced to face. In 1990, the median age for Beech Grove residents was 34.3 years, by 2000 that figure rose to 36 years, and in 2010 the median age was 37.7 years. This can be attributed to an increase in residents aged 45 - 64 years, from 19.3% in 2000 to 25.5% in 2010. All other age groups had an increase or decrease of less than 1%.

These statistics can be attributed to a variety of factors, including the maturation of the “Baby Boom” generation and medical advances that have increased the average life span. In addition, several communities within the City of Beech Grove have marketed their facilities specifically to seniors and older adults, which has attracted more seniors to the community. Beech Grove has a Senior Center that offers many amenities and activities throughout the year.

Implications for parks and recreation:

- *The senior population has unique exercise and recreational needs that vary considerably from those required for younger populations. Senior use of the Fitness Center is increasing and their needs should be considered when purchasing new or replacing existing equipment. Walking and sitting areas are very important, especially in conjunction with areas that provide interesting activities to observe.*
- *Demand for senior and adult programming will increase as the population continues to age. Seniors enjoy activities with a social aspect and the Senior Center could be a good partner in providing additional functions and programs of interest to this age group.*
- *Beech Grove will need to provide activities for young adults and children to attract and keep young families.*

Minority Population

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 2010 the minorities represented 8.5% of the total population. At 4.2% of the total population, persons identifying themselves as Hispanic or Latin doubled from 2000 to 2010, well below the Marion County average of 9.6% and Black or African American individuals accounted for 3.2% of the total population, also below the county average of 27%.

Implications for parks and recreation:

- *The growing minority population may require changes in programs and amenities to meet their cultural needs.*

Education

For residents age 25 and older, in 2010 86.4% of residents in Beech Grove were high school graduates or higher, up from 80.6% in 2000 and slightly below the national average of 87.2%. For the same age group, 15.5% had a bachelor's degree or higher, down from 16.7% in 2000 and below the national average of 23.2%.

Disability Status

In 2000, 2786 residents over the age of five had disability status, representing 21.6% of the city's total population. The national average was 19.3%.

Implications for parks and recreation:

- *There is significant need to ensure that all facilities, programs, activities, events and services are handicap-accessible.*

Economic Data

Employment, Industry and Commerce

In 2012, the City's largest employer, Franciscan St. Francis Health, closed their Beech Grove hospital campus. The future of the facility remains uncertain, but offers potential commercial and/or residential development. Remaining large employers include Amtrak, the Beech Grove School Corporation, and the City of Beech Grove. In 2014, both ADM Milling and Kinetrex Energy broke ground for expansion of their Beech Grove operations. Additionally, the City's Main Street Business District continues to grow, with a number of small businesses opening in recent years.

Poverty Levels, Personal Income and Unemployment

In 2013, Beech Grove City Schools commissioned a *Study of the Community and Student Demographics and Space Utilization*. Based on *Census Bureau Data*, the

study notes that approximately 15.9% of Beech Grove residents are considered in poverty. The percentage is lower than the Marion County level of 18.3% and higher than the Indiana level of 14.1%.

The study also notes that Beech Grove residents are far less affluent than is generally the case in the county and the State of Indiana. The median household income in Beech Grove is \$40,053 which is \$3,144 per year less than the county and \$8,340 less than the state. Per capita income is \$20,459, approximately \$4,000 per year less than the county and the state. Both per capita and median household incomes have decreased by approximately \$1,000 per year since 1999.

The study lists the December 2012 unemployment rate for Marion County at 8.9%, down from 9.8% in January 2010. IndyChamber reports a January 2014 county unemployment rate of 6.4%. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports a December 2015 unemployment rate of 4.1% for the Indianapolis area.

Implications for parks and recreation:

- *These statistics indicate a need for high quality recreation facilities and services to compete with surrounding communities.*
- *Efforts to provide quality services and programming at a lower fee level than surrounding communities should continue.*

Public Input

Citizen participation in crafting a vision for the future of the Beech Grove park system is an important goal of the Parks Board. Several methods were employed in order to gain an accurate and instructive cross-section of the public attitude regarding local parks and recreation issues. These methods included a Community Preference Survey, open public meetings, public presentation of the final plan draft, and a three-week period for further public comment..

Community Preference Survey

A community preference survey was utilized to balance the interests of the constituency groups and interested citizens with a random sampling of the overall Beech Grove population.

Community survey forms were available to the community from November 25, 2014 - January 10, 2015. Surveys were available for completion through a web link on the City of Beech Grove website, as well as through the Beech Grove Parks Department Facebook page. Using social media to advertise and promote the survey

proved very successful and participation increased by 62.7% over the previous five-year plan survey. Survey links were also emailed to all elected city officials and appointed boards and commission as individuals who represent all residents of the city. A total of 96 responses were collected, representing at least 264 individual residents in all age groups. Overall, the majority of participating residents were enthusiastic about parks and recreation issues and were willing to provide written comments in addition to answering the prepared survey questions.

Several methods were built into the survey to ensure that the survey responses represented an accurate cross-section of the Beech Grove population.

Chart 1: Public Input Schedule

Milestone	Date
Community Survey	Nov. 25, 2014 - Jan. 10, 2015
Open Public Meetings	Continuous/Monthly
Public Comment Period	March 21, 2016 - April 8, 2016
Final Public Meeting	April 5, 2016
Plan Approval	April 13, 2016

Community Survey Results

The following summarizes survey responses. See Appendix D for a full copy of the survey and responses.

- Participants were asked to provide their opinion about the quality of various aspects of the park system. Regarding the maintenance of Beech Grove parks, 93.6% of respondents indicated that they were either “very well maintained “ or “somewhat well maintained.” The percentage of respondents indicating that they believe the parks feel safe and secure dropped from 85% to 75.6%, a statistic which requires further scrutiny.
- The survey also asked residents to provide their opinion regarding the sensitivity of the park

facilities towards the special needs of the disabled. Forty-eight percent believe that the Department of Parks and Recreation has been sensitive to the needs of the disabled, while 16.89% disagreed and 35% had no opinion.

- The most visited park is Sarah T. Bolton Park, followed by Don Challis Park, Hornet Park/Community Center, Hartman Park, and Centennial Park. The most popular park activities identified by respondents include use of playground equipment (57.5%), Community Events (49.4%), Exercise (48.3%) , Enjoying Nature (44.8%), Picnicking (42.5%) and Sports (35.6%). Lack of Time was cited most often as the single most important thing that prevented respondents from using the parks more.
- When asked what other activities or features would enhance the Beech Grove Parks, the top responses included more cultural opportunities (concerts, theater, art fairs), family-oriented activities and events, more opportunities for exercise, preservation of natural areas, and youth-oriented programs.
- Regarding areas in need of improvement, facilities (shelters, etc.) was the top response with 51.9%, followed by playgrounds (37.0%), and natural areas (35.2%). Nearly 60% of respondents indicated greenways and trails are important to the park system.
- A number of respondents commented on concerns regarding cleanliness of our city parks. While our parks staff works diligently to maintain our parklands, these concerns indicate an increased effort is needed to also encourage our patrons to pick up after themselves and to work on improving the public’s perception of our city parks.

Open Public Meetings

All regular monthly meetings of the Beech Grove Board of Parks and Recreation are open to the public and community members in attendance are always invited to ask questions, share concerns, and offer suggestions. This ongoing dialogue with the community is an important tool in shaping policies and work plans for our city parks. Beech Grove residents also benefit from living in a small community, where Parks Board members and park staff are easily accessible. Suggestions presented over the past year all referenced Sarah T. Bolton Park and included adding more swings at the Main Shelter playground, putting a sandbox back in the park, adding more play equipment for preschool age children, and cutting back trees for better viewing of the July 3rd Fireworks.

The first draft of the plan and a summary of survey results were presented for review at the January 12, 2015 Parks Board meeting. No members of the public attended the meeting.

Comment Period and Final Public Meeting

A Final Comment Period began on March 21 and continued through April 8, 2016, with a public meeting held on Tuesday, April 5th. This was advertised on the city website, the Park's Department and City of Beech Grove Facebook pages, and in local newspapers. Additionally, all city employees, elected and appointed officials, and local partnering organizations were notified and invited to comment via email. The Plan and comment form for online submission was available through the city website, with hard copies available upon request at the Hornet Park Community Center and City Hall.

The City Web Administrator tracked 162 pageviews for the Plan page and 45 pageviews for the comment form. Five comments were received; two positive comments for the parks in general, one suggestion to build an additional baseball diamond for rental use, corrections of spelling and grammar, and a suggestion to clear a path through the wooded area on the south end of Sarah. T. Bolton Park.

Attendance at the final meeting and presentation was very low, with two members of the general public present in addition to Mayor Dennis Buckley, the Park's Director, Facility Manager and members of the Parks Board. The only comment made was recognition of and appreciation for the growing schedule of parks programs and activities.

While past experience indicates the community is generally quiet when all is well and vocal when there is a perceived problem or gap in services, the number of comments received during this final period was disappointing. It is recommended that additional means of soliciting responses be employed for the next five year plan.

(See Appendix D: Community Participation for survey questions and responses, public comments and related documents)

Conclusions

The community preference survey, public meetings, and individual comments, in conjunction with the results of the park system inventory and analysis, were used to develop a base set of community needs and desires.

Serving as the Planning Committee is a worthwhile investment of time and energy for the Beech Grove Park Board. The work involved affords all members the opportunity to more closely examine existing facilities and their use, as well as learn more about what park features and amenities the community desires.

4-Park System Evaluation

Management Structure

A six-person Board of Park Commissioners, four appointed by the Mayor, along with one member of the Board of School Trustees ex-officio and one member of the Library Board ex-officio, oversee the Beech Grove Department of Parks and Recreation. All terms are for four years. The Board of Parks and Recreation is an independent policy-making body, with a bipartisan appointment process for Mayoral appointees. It was established in 1977.

The Beech Grove Board of Parks and Recreation conducts public meetings on the second Wednesday of each month. It is at these meetings that policies, financial allocations, and special projects are discussed. Additional public hearings and special task force committees are utilized to receive public input on specific projects and community needs. The Board has a generous policy regarding public comment at these meetings as well as addressing questions or concerns.

Chart 2: Park Board Membership

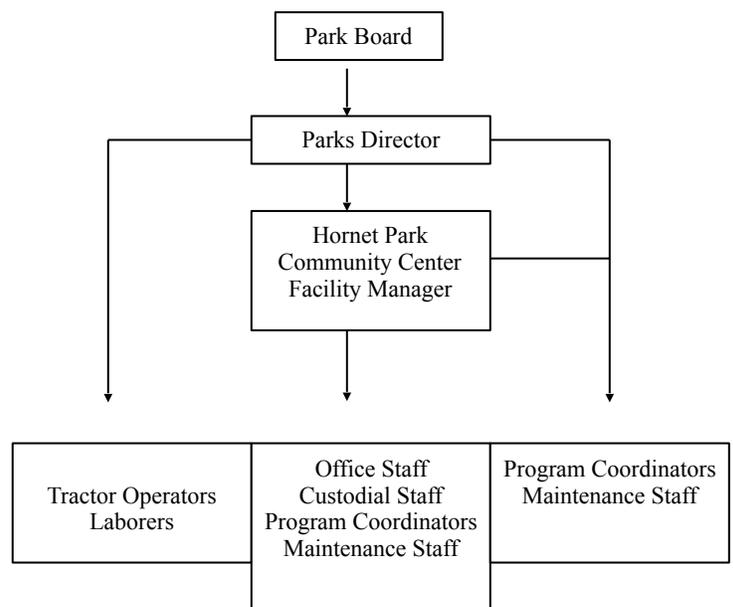
Member	Position	Appointment	Term Expires
Dan Norris	Member	Mayor	12/31/16
Kim White	Member	Library Board	12/31/16
Bruce Bye	Secretary	Mayor	12/31/17
Rick Skirvin	President	School Board	12/31/18
John Parks	Member	Mayor	12/31/18
Cindy Montgomery	Vice President	Mayor	12/31/19

Parks and Recreation Staff

At this time of this printing the Department of Parks and Recreation has one full-time staff member, the Parks Director. Additional staffing includes a part-time maintenance crew of four persons. The Community Center's Facility Manager is responsible for developing, managing and marketing programs and facilities at the

Center. The Center also has five part-time employees who staff the front desk and several contracted instructors for various fitness classes. All parks-related tasks are carried out as a function of the Parks Department. The Parks Director is responsible for the management, maintenance and programming of parks facilities within the city. The Parks Department also uses private contractors to mow and maintain numerous greenspace areas around the city.

Chart 3: Existing Management Structure



Parks Funding

All parks fees are receipted into the city general fund. In addition to the Parks and Community Center budgets, the City Council has created a parks non-reverting fund to collect approximately \$9,400 in annual revenues from the cell tower at Hartman Park to be used for capital improvements. The Parks Department also has a non-reverting donation fund.

Parks Budget increases over the four year period of 2012-2016 are due to 2% raises for the full-time employee, moving a \$5,000 fuel expense from the Public Works budget, adding one part-time employee, increases for utilities and employee benefits, and in 2016, additional appropriations of \$6,000 for parks programs and \$15,000 for the lease/purchase of two trucks. The Community Center Budget saw a decrease in 2013 and

2014 due to the retirement of the full-time Facility Manager who was replaced with a part-time employee. While the Parks Department and Parks Board submits a requested budget proposal to the city, they must work within the the confines of available monies, which are weighed against the needs of all city departments.

Comparing the 2016 Parks appropriations with 2012, Parks Improvements (Building/Equipment) remains the same at \$10,000, Equipment decreased from \$12,000 to \$11,000, and Repairs and Maintenance decreased from \$15,000 to \$12,000, Parks Programs increased from \$3,200 to \$9,200, and \$15,000 was added for the lease/purchase of two new trucks. For the Community Center, Capital Improvements decreased from \$2,500 to \$0.00, while Repairs and Maintenance increased from \$1,000 to \$2,000. As noted in the first draft of this plan, \$2,000 is not sufficient to address the needs of an aging building and some tough decisions needed to be made if the city did not commit to supporting and upgrading the center. The city has since made that commitment. In 2015, the Redevelopment Commission appropriated \$26,000 in their budget for new carpeting and parking lot improvements.

Chart 4: Parks and Community Center Budgets

Year	Parks Budget	HPCC Budget
2016	234,717	112,061
2015	209,981	112,061
2014	195,014	112,050
2013	180,613	126,850
2012	180,400	143,920

Monies appropriated from the proceeds of the city’s 2012 Bond Issue (approximately \$472,000) and from the Redevelopment Commission budget in 2014 and 2015 (\$119,900) have had a significant impact on the improvements made in the parks over the last few years. However, the bond in particular is a one-time infusion and neither is an ongoing source of funding.

The Parks Department has taken great care to replace facilities with low-maintenance structures to reduce future repair and maintenance costs.

Full-Time Facility Manager/Special Events Coordinator

As noted under Parks Funding, this position was reclassified as part-time in 2013 as part of a new city policy to replace full-time employees with part-time employees as a cost-saving measure. The Parks Board agreed to the change with a “wait and see” attitude for how it would work. Since that time, hours for permanent part-time employees have been reduced from 32 to 29 hours per week while the responsibilities of this position have increased. The Parks Department program schedule was expanded in 2015 in response to the community’s desire for more programs and activities and the Parks Programs budget was increased by \$6,000 for 2016. It is recommended this position be re-established as full-time to effectively develop, manage and market a growing schedule of community programming, activities and events.

This recommendation replaces one from previous plans for a New Programming Director, and is a more realistic and economically feasible means of achieving the same goals.

Existing Park and Recreation Facilities Inventory

The NRPA Classification System for Parks and recreation facilities categorizes park facilities according to size and the population that is served by the facility.

Neighborhood Parks/Playgrounds

The City of Beech Grove contains four facilities classified as neighborhood parks, ranging in size from 11.2 acres to nearly 32 acres. According to the NRPA Classification System, neighborhood parks may include recreational facilities, such as field games, court games, crafts, picnicking, and playgrounds. The desirable size for a neighborhood park is 15 acres, though these parks can come in a variety of sizes.

Neighborhood parks in Beech Grove include:

Sarah T. Bolton Park: 1300 Churchman Avenue
 This nearly 32-acre park facility can be accessed from the intersection of Churchman and South 13th Avenues, from 17th Street, and from Main Street. Park features include picnic areas, rolling topography, a creek that winds through the property, athletic courts and fields, a one-acre Dog Park, and play equipment with nearby shelters. This is the most used and could be best described as Beech Grove’s most traditional park.

Don Challis Park: 1100 South 9th Avenue

Don Challis Park, a 14.31 acre facility, is located south of South Grove Intermediate School and is accessible from 9th Avenue. Park features include picnic shelters, play equipment, a volleyball court, and open lawn with mature trees.

Hartman Park: 700 South 9th Avenue

Hartman Park, just north and west of Don Challis Park on the west side of 9th Avenue, covers 11.2 acres and is the smallest city park. The park is used primarily for Little League Baseball with five diamonds, a restroom building, and concessions.

Hornet Park: 5425 Hornet Avenue

Harman Park is a 14.492-acre park with a picnic area and open lawn. It is adjacent to Beech Grove High School. Primarily, this park is the site of the Hornet Park Community Center where the Parks Office is located. The center also houses meeting rooms, banquet rooms and workout rooms with fitness equipment. The community center building connects with Hornet Park Elementary School. Several acres of woods are on the site. A walking path and bridge have been built through part of the woods, but they remain mostly undeveloped for recreation.

The Hornet Park Fitness Center offers workout rooms and equipment as well as a variety of group exercise classes. The center faces stiff competition from private fitness centers in the area which can offer a larger space with more equipment and services. The center still provides a convenient and affordable fitness option for the community, and a benefit for city employees, city retirees, school employees, seniors and other constituencies who can take advantage of a reduced fees schedule or free memberships. Beech Grove High School brings students over for fitness classes, utilizing the aerobics room which is typically not used during school hours.

Centennial Park: Corner of Garstang & Emerson

This small pocket park features plaques dedicated to our city's veterans and public safety heroes. The small trees, flowers, and ornamental plantings offer a bit of nature at the southwest corner of the Beech Grove Amtrak Facility. Centennial Park was created as part of the Emerson Avenue Project, completed in 2007. It also has space for bench seating that may be used as a rest area for a later phase of the Beech Grove Greenway system. Centennial Park is not a park property, but is maintained by the Parks Department.

Undeveloped Parks

The Beech Grove Department of Parks and Recreation does not have any wholly undeveloped park properties.

The City of Beech Grove annexed 36 acres of land at the northwest corner of Subway Street and Emerson Avenue and a Youth Sports and Recreation Complex was planned for this site. However, the property sits on top of a former landfill and is currently vacant. Due to environmental issues, restrictions on building and installing utilities at the site and the inability to provide adequate parking, the City has withdrawn its support for developing the area. The property remains under the control of the City and efforts have focused on improving the appearance of this parcel.

The City also maintains a soccer field on the grounds of the Public Works Department. While it was developed primarily as a practice field, it is now used by the Beech Grove Soccer Club as a secondary site for practices and games during their seasons. This use alleviates some of the wear and tear on open lawn areas at Sarah T. Bolton Park, which has served as temporary location for the Club while they seek a permanent home field.

See Appendix A for inventory of features and amenities found in each park facility and park site maps.

Inventory of Existing Parks and Recreation Programming

The Department of Parks and Recreation serve a variety of users and programs within the Beech Grove community. The following chart highlights the various recreational programs that take place in Department of Parks and Recreation facilities. The majority of these programs are sponsored and managed by organizations other than the Parks Board. The Department of Parks and Recreation organizes weekly programs during the summer as well as several seasonal parties within the community.

The focus of summer programs has been upgraded over the last several years and now features several entertaining and educational programs with live animals, birds of prey, creatures of the rain forest, snakes and reptiles, and Campfire Stories in the fall, as well as physical activities such as a rock climbing wall. Parks Director Tom Hannan is always looking for new ideas that will instill a greater appreciation for nature and has attended a seminar on Outdoor Education activities that may incorporated into the program series. All summer programs are free and open to the public.

In 2015, the program schedule expanded to provide year-round classes and activities for youth, families and adults, and to offer these additional programs during the evenings and on weekends to better serve working families. Earth-friendly nature crafts, Safe Sitter classes, CPR/AED Certification, Family Game Nights, Foreign Language classes, ESL classes, Preschool Play Dates and seminars on a variety of topics are just some of the new additions to the program schedule. Attendance is being tracked to help determine interest and the direction of future programming.

In 2015 the Parks Board approved student memberships for the Hornet Park Fitness Center. Youth aged 10 - 17 are now allowed to use all fitness equipment and attend any group exercise classes provided both they and a parent or guardian hold a current membership. Students age 10 - 15 must be accompanied by a parent or guardian for each visit. This change provides a healthy lifestyle activity for youth and their families

Chart 5: Recreational Programming

Park	Program
Sarah T. Bolton Park	High School Baseball Youth Soccer Summer Programs Community Activities Walk/Run Events Strawberry Festival July 3rd Fireworks
Don Challis Park	Cross Country Youth Baseball
Hartman Park	Youth Baseball
Hornet Park	Tennis Soccer Community Center Fitness Center BGHS Fitness Classes Community Meetings Summer Programs Year-round Classes/Activites

Analysis of Existing Facilities & Programming

Since the approval of the 2010-2014 Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan, the Beech Grove Parks

Department has worked to implement many of the items included in the Action Plan, as well as other improvements. These include:

Sarah T. Bolton Park:

- Replacement and re-opening of the vehicular bridge.
- Repair of the pedestrian bridge.
- Relocation and replacement of the Main Shelter restroom facility with an ADA Accessible CXT Restroom Building.
- Installation of a walkway connecting the Main Shelters with the playground area and restroom building.
- Landscape enhancements
- Installation of fence cap at Dick Templin Field.
- Replacement of swing sets with the addition therapeutic swing seats.
- Replacement of Hilltop play structure.
- Completion of Lick Creek Bank Stabilization Project south of the vehicular bridge.
- Replacement of the Hilltop Shelter.
- Renovation of the Elton H. Geshwiler Fountain, with installation of lighting and removal of the concrete pump structure.
- Repaving of the 17th Avenue park entrance road.
- Installation of outdoor lights at the shelters and maintenance building for increased security.
- Replacement of the roof, HVAC system, garage ceiling and lighting at the maintenance building.
- Painting of all buildings.
- Roof replacement and updated electrical service at the Sycamore, Tulip and Beech shelters.
- New entrance and other signage.
- New ADA Accessible CXT restroom building at Hilltop picnic area.
- Repair of vehicular bridge to Hilltop area.
- New ADA compliant toilets, partitions and paint in the restrooms at the Park Office.
- Addition of Friendly Turtle play structure in the main shelter area
- Extension of water line to the main shelter area.
- Removal of tennis court pavement and restoration of lawn area.
- New flags, poles and landscaping installed at the Veteran’s Memorial.
- Security cameras installed.

Don Challis Park:

- Replacement of the shelter structure.
- Addition of a therapeutic swing seat.
- Roof replacement and painting of the restroom building.
- New entrance and other signage.

- two swing bay installed in safe play area.
- Security cameras installed

Hartman Park:

- Asphalt pathways added to connect all areas of the facility; parking lot, bleachers, ball diamonds, concessions, restrooms and picnic area.
- Concrete pads added for wheel chair setting near the bleachers.
- New bleachers installed.
- Flagpole at the main diamond replaced.
- New entrance and other signage.
- New parking lot installed including storm water drainage improvements, removal of gravel areas and new bike rack.
- Two-Hundred feet of water line replaced.
- Security cameras installed.
- ADA wheelchair/handicap accessible portable restroom installed.

Hornet Park

- Aerobics room painted; large screen tv and dvd player installed.
- New carpeting in the Banquet Room and office.
- New window shades in the Banquet Room.
- Two meeting rooms painted and whiteboard installed.
- Flat Screen TV installed in the Fitness room.
- New landscaping at entrance.

Analysis

There are several standard, nationally accredited planning models for determining the parks and recreation needs of the community. Regardless of the method chosen, it must combine the supply and demand components of the plan to determine what additional open space and recreational opportunities should be provided.

This analysis was based upon a combination of national supply standards and a thorough issues analysis. Although a level of service (LOS) standards analysis would have provided additional insight, the lack of staffing at local parks facilities made this type of analysis difficult.

The City of Beech Grove is below average when examining an overall park system, but exceeding National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) standards for physical recreation and open space supply with neighborhood parks. City of Indianapolis/Marion County, Regional and Metropolitan level parks were not analyzed, because it is assumed that these types of

facilities are outside the scope of the city’s Park Board and are provided by larger bodies, such as county, state, or federal parks.

This type of supply standard does not, however, take into account whether parks and recreational facilities are meeting the needs of the community. The issues analysis, in combination with the park system inventory/analysis process, was the basis for this insight. Using the results of the survey, public meetings, and experiences of the Parks Board and Parks Department, it was possible to determine potential areas of improvement, expansion, or notable success within the system.

Recurring themes included:

- **Connectivity between parks and community**
Continue to develop features that make the parks easier to access, such as bicycle and walking paths, open space corridors and greenways.
- **More cultural opportunities**
Create more opportunities for cultural and community-based events through park facilities.
- **More recreational programming**
Expand recreational programs for all age groups.
- **More activities and programs for families**
Offer programming on weeknights and weekends.

Accessibility and Universal Design

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements took effect on January 26, 1992. All new facilities designed and constructed for occupancy later than that date must be accessible to persons with a handicap. Further, physical barriers in existing public accommodations must be removed if readily achievable. If not, alternative methods of providing services or equivalent experiences must be offered if those methods are readily achievable.

The City has been working since late 2009 to identify areas in the City that are out of compliance with ADA standards and address deficiencies. The City has examined its parks, city buildings, infrastructure, programs, and procedures. In 2012, by Resolution, the Beech Grove Common Council adopted the American Disabilities Act (ADA), ADA Coordinator, and Grievance Procedures giving Beech Grove residents a process to follow when they have ADA concerns. The City also contracted with CrossRoad Engineers to prepare an ADA Transition Plan, ADA TRANSITION PLAN: Pedestrian Network.

The City of Beech Grove will provide, upon request, appropriate aids and services leading to effective communication for qualified persons with disabilities so they can participate equally in programs, services and activities, including qualified sign language interpreters, documents in Braille, and other ways of making information and communications accessible to people who have speech, hearing or vision impairments. Reasonable modifications of policies and programs will be made to ensure people with disabilities have an equal opportunity to enjoy all programs, services and activities. For example, service animals will be welcomed, even where pets are generally prohibited.

ADA Coordinator contact information, Notice under the Americans with Disabilities Act, ADA Grievance Procedure and Form, ADA Request for Reasonable Accommodation Form, ADA Transition Plan: Pedestrian Network, City of Beech Grove ADA Resolutions, and 2010 ADA Standards are all published on the City website in both .html and .pdf formats. Forms are also available at the Community Center and City Hall.

See Appendix C: ADA Transition Plan

The Beech Grove Parks Department and Parks Board are pleased to have resolved a number of ADA compliance issues during the last five years. Joe Prindle was designated as the City's ADA Compliance Coordinator in 2012. In 2014 the ADA Compliance Director conducted an ADA Compliance Review for all four parks. For this Plan, that review was revised to remove issues addressed by parks improvements made in 2015.

ADA Review of City Parks Summary:

All four parks:

- All parks parking lots have designated handicap parking spaces.
- All parking areas are paved. The parking lot at Hartman Park was redone in 2015 to address drainage issues and to remove graveled areas that impeded handicap accessibility.
- Most of the walkways are the appropriate width and length, have adequate maneuvering space, no grade issues, and are made of concrete or asphalt.
- All restroom buildings in the shelter and playground areas are ADA accessible.
- All picnic tables are ADA accessible.
- Restroom signs are mounted on the latch side of the doors, not above, and signs are being replaced with ones that have Braille markings.
- All playground areas feature at least one Therapeutic Swing Seat to accommodate special needs users.

- The exercise room at the Hornet Park Community Center is handicap accessible.
- Through the City's ADA Coordinator's Office, patrons may request communication aids such as sign language interpreters, documents in Braille, or other aids and services to effectively communicate and participate in programs.

There are two main concerns present at the parks. The first issue is accessibility to the playground equipment and lack of handicap accessible ground level and elevated play components. Most of the play areas are enclosed by wood planks and many of the play components are not handicap accessible because of their design, the lack of ramps, or inadequate spacing between the equipment. The second issue is the park benches. Most are accessible, but they have inadequate seat depth and back support height.

Sarah T. Bolton Park:

There are three other concerns at Sarah T. Bolton that should be addressed. First, the Hilltop playground needs to be connected to the shelter with a walkway. Second, the sidewalk from the Geshwiler fountain to the Maintenance Building/Restrooms is too steep and the sidewalk from the parking lot to the Maintenance Building needs to be replaced. It should be noted there are two other restroom buildings in the park, both ADA accessible and conveniently located at the playground/picnic areas. The third concern would be installing a walkway from the parking lot to the basketball court. Currently, the court is surrounded by grass, with no pathway from it to the parking lot.

Don Challis Park:

The only concern specific to this park is that there is no walkway from the picnic shelter to the playground area.

Hartman Park:

The only concern specific to this park is the restrooms are not ADA accessible. A wheelchair/handicap accessible portable restroom was installed for use in 2015 and will be utilized until the restroom building can be renovated.

Hornet Park:

The only concern specific to this park is the need for automated doors at the main entrance to the Community Center building.

The City also maintains Centennial Park. This Pocket Park is the most accessible park to the public because of its location along one of Beech Grove's major streets. There is no ramp in the curb; a resident would have to step onto the sidewalk surrounding the park to access it.

Additionally, the City maintains a soccer field at the Department of Public Works building. A paved sidewalk is needed from the parking lot to the field along with a paved spectator area to accommodate wheelchairs.

5-Vision Plan

The Vision Plan portion of the Parks and Open Space Master Plan provides an overall vision for the future of the Beech Grove Park System. It includes recommendations for physical improvements, development of additional programs, and strengthening communication with the public. Many of these recommendations can be achieved in the short-term, using funds that are readily available, while implementation of others will require finding innovative sources and crafting of partnerships.

Vision Plan Initiatives

- **Integrate the Park System into the City Greenway System**

The city recognized the need for a greenways system over fifteen years ago and began preparing for the development of a greenway system that would connect city parks and schools. Support was demonstrated in both the City's 2000-2004 and 2005-2009 Parks and Recreation Master Plans, where the construction of a greenway trail was the number one priority for new facilities. This continues to be a top priority for the city's park system. Exercise (walking, jogging, hiking and biking) is a leading survey response as to what activities bring residents to the city parks. Seventy-five point six percent of survey respondents believe greenways and trails are important to the Beech Grove park system. Trail use is often cited as a reason for visits to parks outside of the city.

In 2007, the Beech Grove Redevelopment Commission was successful in securing a \$1,000,000 Transportation Enhancement Grant for the greenway. Matching funds for the grant were still not available in 2013, and the grant money was released to be used in another community. In 2015, the city and the Redevelopment Commission worked with CrossRoad Engineers to redesign the Greenway Trail plans and submit a grant application to the Metropolitan Planning Organization. The city anticipates grant awards will be announced in

May of 2016. If successful, work on the Greenway Trail would likely begin in 2020.

The proposed greenway not only provides a linear park for recreation and exercise, but is also part of an alternative transportation system for the community. As such, the Indianapolis Pedestrian Plan has incorporated the proposed Beech Grove greenway trail as part of the plan that includes a complete system of walk-able routes throughout the Indianapolis Metropolitan Area. The trail will ultimately connect all four parks to one another as well as to Historic Main Street, several neighborhoods, and the primary commercial corridor (Emerson Avenue).

See Appendix E: Greenway Trail Preliminary Exhibit

- **Natural Water Resources Improvements**

The primary stream corridor through Beech Grove is Lick Creek. Protecting the creek, which runs through Sarah T. Bolton Park and through the heart of the city, is an important priority. Enhancing the stream corridors will increase its recreational, aesthetic and environmental value.

- **Park Property Enhancement/ Beautification**

To meet the needs of the public, and to provide excellent parks and recreation services, it is recommended that the Parks Department continue efforts to beautify the facilities and enhance the qualities the community cares about. Enjoying nature is a top survey response to what activities bring residents to the city's parks.

As part of the beautification, the natural corridors and streams should continue to be protected and enhanced through stream bank stabilization and naturalized plantings.

Maintenance work on existing facilities and the replacement of aging structures in poor repair have contributed to the attractiveness of the parks. The development of greenways and trails will enhance access and use of the parks.

- **Development of Cultural Activities**

As in the past, through survey responses and public meetings, the community continues to express its desire for the parks system to offer more cultural

opportunities, such as concerts and theater, as well as family oriented activities.

As the largest city park property, Sarah T. Bolton Park is a hub of community activity and hosts events such as Community Day, the July 3rd Fireworks, family picnics and reunions, and summer concerts.

- **Recreational Programming**
The community has a strong interest in youth athletics and activities. Beech Grove City Schools is an excellent partner for developing programs and recreational activities for the city's youth.
- **Marketing and Public Information**
Providing information to the public is important to ensure residents and other potential visitors are aware of parks programs and facilities and are able to take full advantage of city park offerings. The Parks Department currently maintains web pages on the city's website with information on parks, events, programs and facilities. The Parks Board regularly post meeting times, location, agendas and minutes. This effort helps disseminate information previously available through the broadcast of meetings on the Beech Grove Cable Channel.

In 2014 the Parks Department created a Facebook page and an Instagram account. The use of social media to announce programs and events has significantly increased awareness and participation. Many people use Facebook as their "go to" place for information and it will be important to keep it up-to-date.

Creation of a logo/graphic would be useful in identifying, or branding, parks department publications.

- **Park Recommendations**

Remaining ADA Compliance issues at all parks should be prioritized and addressed as funding allows.

Sarah T. Bolton Park

Under a previous administration, the parks maintenance building was under consideration for demolition and relocation to clear the way for construction of an outdoor amphitheater. The

building has since been renovated. It is recommended that when the Main Shelters are replaced, a structure which would accommodate bands and other performers, but still be usable as a picnic shelter be considered.

Don Challis Park

This park supports similar uses as Sarah T. Bolton and has similar features, but lacks development. Its location adjacent to the creek, topography and mature trees suggest a more traditional park setting. Development of the Greenway through the park will complement its natural character and not detract from its use. The proposed trail will directly connect the park to both Sarah T. Bolton Park and Hornet Park. Existing sidewalks provide a short walk to Hartman Park.

The basketball court is no longer in use. The remaining asphalt should be removed and the lawn area restored.

Hornet Park

The wooded area of this park should be preserved.

Hartman Park

Demand is great for use of the baseball fields and focusing its development as a premier Little League Park could be an asset to the city. One diamond is being renovated in 2016 to allow for multi-level play.

- **Master Planning for All Parks**

The Parks Board and staff should work with community members to develop individual master plans and design guidelines for each park facility, based upon the input of park users and neighbors. In this manner, the park users will be more excited about their neighborhood parks and be willing to support that park's development.

- **Management Training and Education**

It is recommended that the Parks Board members and Department of Parks and Recreation staff join the Indiana Park and Recreation Association (IRPA). The IRPA is a non-profit organization composed of park and recreational professionals, individuals, and groups dedicated to the promotion of worthy leisure time and a quality environment through research, education, and

service. The IRPA is an affiliate of the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA).

The City of Beech Grove can utilize a variety of sources of funding from within the city budget.

- **Bonds**
The city may wish to initiate a bond issue to pay for large improvements that could not be covered using existing funds. This funding option is not under consideration at this time as the city does not anticipate issuing debt for parks projects through 2020.

- **Redevelopment Commission Budget/TIF Funds**

The Redevelopment Commission appropriated funds for parks improvements in 2015. This option is not a regular source of funding for parks projects, but may continue to benefit the proposed Greenway Trail.

- **User Fees**
Fees for shelter reservations, Dog Park memberships, Community Center room rental, and Fitness Center classes and memberships are an important source of revenue to defray the costs of programs and maintenance of facilities. Beech Grove residents and other patrons currently enjoy fees that are consistently less than those charged by surrounding communities. The Parks Board believes it is important to continue to provide programs and facilities use at an affordable cost.

- **Private Donations/Organizations**
The Department of Parks and Recreation should seek out private donations of materials and funds to aid in the maintenance and improvement of the parks system. In addition, local organizations can become an integral part of the park system by organizing fund-raisers, park maintenance outings, or by helping to sponsor new park features. Corporate sponsorships are another avenue to pursue for needed improvements.

- **Grants**
Grants are available from the State of Indiana and the Federal Government, along with private organizations. Most parks and recreation grants are highly competitive and require the receiving agency to secure matching funds to prove that they are capable of undertaking the project. Listed below are some of the relevant grants that are available to projects recommended in this report. The split between percentages of grant

6-Implementation & Action Plan

The priority issues facing the Beech Grove Parks Board have been identified and the long-range vision developed. The Action Plan section of this report establishes the manner in which priority issues will be resolved in the next five years, taking into account considerations of revenue, funding, and timing. The Beech Grove Parks Board and City Council are committed to finding grant, foundation and other funding sources for parks improvement projects.

Prioritizing & Phasing

Vision Plan recommendations and action items have been prioritized according to need and available resources.

- Items in the **5-year phase** of the plan are of immediate need and can be accomplished using available or projected resources. These items are included in the action plan, which identifies specific projects, estimated costs, and potential funding sources.

Funding Considerations

Funding for Action Plan items will be primarily dependent upon local revenue, grants, bonds, and cost sharing through strategic partnerships. Other activities may be funded through private sponsorship and donations.

As is true for government entities across the state and the nation, reduced revenues and budgets challenge the Beech Grove Parks Department to maintain appropriate staffing levels, perform routine maintenance, replace aging equipment, and provide new programming and amenities. Increased efforts to secure funds will be critical to accomplishing all the projects identified in our Action Plan.

Potential Funding Sources/Mechanisms

Potential sources of funding for action plan items include:

- **General Revenue**

provided/percentage of required matching funds is illustrated in parentheses.

- **Land and Water Conservation Fund (50/50)**
- **Urban Forestry Assistance Grant (50/50)**
- **Indiana Heritage Trust Recreational Trails Program (80/20)**
- **Indianapolis Parks Foundation**

Action Plan

The Action Plan, Chart 6, is organized according to year, facility, planned improvement, estimated cost, and potential funding source(s).

- **Landscape Development**

It is recommended that the annual Parks and Community Center budgets include funding for continued installation or upgrading of landscape features in existing parks and facilities, and for the planting and care of both new and existing trees.

- **Equipment Maintenance & Replacement**

It is recommended that the annual Parks and Community Center budgets include funding for the maintenance and replacement of equipment to insure that existing facilities, equipment, and amenities can be properly maintained.

- **Facility Manager/Special Events Coordinator**

It is recommended the annual Community Center budget include funding for the salary and benefits to reclassify this position as full-time.

See next page for *Chart 6: Action Plan*

Chart 6: Action Plan

Year	Park	Project	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding Sources
2016	Hartman Park	Renovate one diamond for multi-level league use	\$21,000	Parks Non-Reverting Fund BG Little League Funds
2016	Sarah T. Bolton Park	New trees along the road at new lawn area	\$1,000	Parks Donations Fund (Trees)
2016-2020	All Parks	Address remaining ADA Compliance issues as funds are available.	\$75,000	Parks Budget In-Kind Labor/Materials Donations
2017	Sarah T. Bolton Park	Develop Outdoor Education Classroom	\$10,000	Parks Budget Parks Non-Reverting Fund Grant In-Kind Labor/Materials Donations
2017-2020	Sarah T. Bolton Park	Pave roads (through streets and access roads) and parking lots	\$250,000	Local Roads and Street Funds Parks Budget
2018-2019	Don Challis Park Sarah T. Bolton Park (Main Shelter Area)	Replace Playground Equipment (Play Structures)	\$80,000 (\$40,000 each)	Parks Budget Parks Non-Reverting Fund Community Donations/Fundraising
2019-2020	All Parks	Greenway Trail	\$3,300,000	MPO Transportation Alternative Fund City Budget TIF Funds
2020-2021	Sarah T. Bolton Park	Creek bank stabilization, north of pedestrian bridge	\$500,000	Grant Other City Funds