

# Glencoe Park District

(proposed)

## STRATEGIC “ROAD MAP”

August 25, 2011

Special Projects and Facilities Committee  
Public draft for discussion

Note to readers: This draft document was prepared by the Special Projects & Facilities Committee of the Glencoe Park District Board of Commissioners, and through Board approval has been made public and placed on the Glencoe Park District website to encourage public comment. This proposed Strategic Road Map will be discussed at a public meeting of the Special Projects and Facilities Committee currently scheduled for September 19<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 p.m. at the Takiff Center, 999 Green Bay Rd., Glencoe, IL. Please feel free to direct input to [tcornell@glencoe parkdistrict.com](mailto:tcornell@glencoe parkdistrict.com)

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## Dear Friends:

This is a very exciting time for the Glencoe Park District as we approach our Centennial year. As we look forward to our next century, we have engaged in a strategic planning process that has identified things that are working well and things that could work better in our strategic direction, operational model and interactions with the community and our patrons. Change starts as a vision, but to become reality, it needs to be embedded within a plan. This report is a road map for building a better Glencoe Park District to serve the needs of our community and patrons.

We observed operations and various reports, met with Staff, outside stakeholders and service providers, reviewed closely the detailed output from the recent strategic plan process and related community survey, and conferred with leaders of the Glencoe Caucus to identify opportunities for improvements. We worked tirelessly in creating the document you see today to craft the proposals that address the challenges facing the Glencoe Park District: how to better connect with the community and our patrons; how to manage and enhance our parks and facilities to be true stewards of the incredible assets the Park District has; how to develop and manage programs that will successfully appeal to a diverse group of patrons in our community; and how to effectively manage our unit of local government to ensure transparency and accountability by both our Board and Park District Staff. And, perhaps as importantly, how to make sure that the Park District's many strengths are not diluted by unnecessary change.

Building on the broad goals set out in the Strategic Plan document released in February, 2011, this road map outlines major initiatives the Board and Staff will strive to undertake during the next year, and throughout the next term of office. As we enter our centennial year, the ideas within this road map build on the Glencoe Park District's strengths as they lay out a vision that will help our Park District thrive for years to come.

As philosopher S.I. Hayakawa once said, "The map is not the territory." We anticipate that there will be items that come up for Board and Staff attention that may not fit neatly into a road map construct, but we will do our best to address these items based on the principles outlined in this plan. We firmly believe that to improve something, it helps to articulate and communicate an end goal, and then have a map to help guide the way, with detailed action plans, timetables and assigned responsibilities to help you get there. This road map represents our attempt to do just that. We are thankful to all of the Board members (past and present) and Staff for donating their time and energy to this process. And we are also thankful to the many individual Glencoe residents and Park District patrons who contributed by sharing their ideas formally and informally during the past year in the strategic planning process, and in individual discussions.

As you read this plan, we hope that you will visit our website, [www.glencoeParkDistrict.com](http://www.glencoeParkDistrict.com), to share your thoughts for moving the Park District forward. By maintaining and executing on this plan, we will have another successful hundred years of service to our community. On behalf of the Park Board Commissioners and the Staff of the Glencoe Park District, thank you for your interest.

Yours,

Glencoe Park District Board of Commissioners

# Table of Contents

THE GLENCOE PARK DISTRICT TODAY ..... 4

STRATEGIC ROAD MAP INITIATIVES introduction..... 5

OUR GOVERNMENT .....6  
Index of initiatives  
Initiatives (1 - 11)

OUR COMMUNITY ..... 19  
Index of initiatives  
Initiatives (12 - 19)

OUR PARKS AND FACILITIES..... 30  
Index of initiatives  
Initiatives (20 -26)

OUR PROGRAMS..... 40  
Index of initiatives  
Initiatives (27-32)

draft

## THE GLENCOE PARK DISTRICT TODAY

No North Shore suburb can match what Glencoe offers.

A beautiful setting on the shores of Lake Michigan. A “hometown” feel, yet connected to a major city by frequent and reliable public transportation. World class cultural and other opportunities within a short drive. And abundant green space on all sides, including the Chicago Botanic Garden, Cook County Forest Preserves and of course, Lake Michigan. A well educated, well traveled group of residents consisting of both newcomers and long time residents, younger families and empty nesters that are active in Glencoe life, and help create a level of friendly connectedness that is found in few other villages.

It’s no wonder then that our community demands the best from its local units of government, including the Glencoe Park District. Accountability and transparency are important and justifiably expected by our taxpayers. This includes making sure that tax dollars are spent effectively and wisely; developing programs based on a deep understanding of our communities needs; and providing a customer service experience to patrons that will want to make them come back again and again.

There are many strengths within our Park District. We have a loyal and hard working Staff serving patrons and the community at large. We have incredible facilities, including our one of a kind lakefront and beach facility, the newly renovated Takiff Center, Watts Center, and our beautiful string of community and neighborhood parks. We have many programs that are very successful, including a dynamic pre-school program with multiple platforms, day care, and enrichment offerings for children and adults by the Park District and our partner providers.

While leveraging those strengths, we recognize a need to address some of the issues brought up in formal surveys and other community and program participant input to help improve our overall operations model. Key to this is creating more touchpoints for the community to provide meaningful input that is translated into meaningful action along with continued planning and evaluation of our existing programs and facilities to ensure that we can more fully understand the needs and desires of the community to create programs and plans to be aligned with these needs over the short and long term.

***The Glencoe Park District can only succeed if every part of what we do is fully aligned with the needs of our community and patrons.*** Our future depends on input from not only parents of young children who may be in our programs, but also parents with older children and adults from households with no children. The Park District cannot thrive and serve the whole community unless the whole community makes its views known. We also need input from other community organizations, and our employees and independent contractors to ensure that the customer service experience is best in class. We can’t move forward unless we all work to move forward together. And we need your help to achieve these goals.

## STRATEGIC ROAD MAP INITIATIVES

The following pages outline the road map and initiatives we will launch during the coming weeks, months, and years. We have grouped the initiatives into four categories:

- **Our Government.** Our plan to make our unit of government more effective, to deliver better services at a competitive price, and to open government to the public in the spirit of transparency and accountability.
- **Our Community.** Our outline of initiatives that will strengthen opportunities for meaningful community input to ensure that the Glencoe Park District Board and Staff priorities are fully aligned with those we serve.
- **Our Parks and Facilities.** Our strategy to provide a plan to be wise stewards of our strategic assets, with full input from the community to better serve needs of users and patrons. We also want to fully leverage our new Takiff Center to increase usage, and to make it grow into a true community center for Glencoe.
- **Our Programs.** Our plan to leverage successful programs, and to do a critical review of programs that are cancelled, and to develop a model which does a better job in successfully launching programs where there is demonstrated market demand for programs that compete successfully.

These plans are highly interdependent. We cannot even begin to think about the way our unit of government should be structured and run without deep consideration of the supports that the community needs and the best way to deliver those services. Likewise we cannot fully develop and manage our parks, facilities and programs without a deep understanding of what our communities, patrons and target market expect from us.

We will report the status of these plans through direct written communications or through our website, and hope you will provide any input, insight, or suggestions you have over the coming months and years.

## OUR GOVERNMENT

The Glencoe Park District has a long history of admirably serving our community. However there have been some concerns and controversies over the years and we have seen levels of dissatisfaction with the Glencoe Park District rise in surveys. While the surveys also show that more people are happy than not with the Park District, “okay” is not good enough for us or for the community we serve. Without doubt, a high level of community support is critical to any unit of government, and support could certainly be stronger. It is also important to know that many of the items discussed in this report currently take place; our goal is to improve, map, and communicate these items, not reinvent them.

The good news is that the changes needed to address these issues are generally within the control of the Board and Staff. With an enhanced commitment to transparency and accountability, there are concrete actions the Board and Staff can take to accomplish this objective. Indeed, the Village itself was recently recognized with an award for transparency, a benchmark to be sure.

As part of this effort, the Park Board and Staff will set clear service priorities, measure the effectiveness and cost of those services, and seek partnerships with other local governments and nonprofit organizations to improve service quality and reduce costs.

The community, Board, and Staff will be partners in this process and will have timely access to accurate and complete information on the performance of Park District services and programs, and the status of our finances. In addition, we will look closely at any unresolved issues outstanding, and then work hard to explain detail behind these items to community in such a manner to satisfactorily address any such issues in an open forum to interested audiences.

To ensure transparency and accountability, the Glencoe Park District will streamline to the public its long-term financial planning process and explain our budget and budgeting process to increase understanding of the choices the Park District must make to ensure the vitality of our parks, beaches, and programming. Performance measures will be publicly reported and driven by continuous improvement of both service quality and efficiency.

As a result of our efforts, the Glencoe Park District will fully meet its obligations to protect the financial and reputational health of our agency and our dedicated employees – through fiscal responsibility and a structurally balanced budget across all funds.

### What will success look like?

- A more efficient, transparent, and effective unit of government that deploys its resources wisely and equitably for the long-term betterment of the Park District, the patrons and the community
- Programs, services and internal operations that set, achieve, and maintain high standards for performance
- Opportunities and expectations that all Glencoe residents and patrons can be involved in our Park District’s future, with broad access to information, easier ways to give feedback, and able to participate in improvements

## Our Government

### Index of Initiatives

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1. **Create strategic road map and associated action plans including timetables for completion.**
2. **Perform a strategic review of organization structure and staff model to create recommendations that will help further the development of a leadership based culture within the Park District.**
3. **Continuing comprehensive review of facilities/capacity, equipment, and purchasing policies for planning and sustainability purposes.**
4. **Perform strategic review of all vendor and independent contractor agreements to seek opportunities for improved effectiveness and possible efficiencies.**
5. **Seek benchmarking data on operations, financial, salary and benefits information from neighboring Districts to compare performance and set improvement objectives.**
6. **Review and revise program to manage operational and financial risks to the Park District. Streamline financial and operational reporting formats.**
7. **Engage Village of Glencoe and other governmental units to explore opportunities for consolidation of selected operations to seek cost efficiencies.**
8. **Work with Village of Glencoe and other governmental units to seek solutions for issues relating to the beach and lakefront.**
9. **Develop a more formal outreach and recognition program to prospective and existing donors.**
10. **Examine outstanding financial issues to provide assurance to community on past activities and future actions.**
11. **Review and revise the Board Policy manual to best align review and approval processes with strategic objectives of strategic plan and road map.**

## Initiatives

### 1. Create strategic road map and associated action plans including timetables for completion.

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**Why do this?** If you want to get somewhere, you better have a road map to help you guide you there. The Park Board and Staff have laid out a number of proactive objectives as a result of the strategic planning process, but without a more detailed road map, the plan can easily collect dust and not be implemented. Organizations with a strategic plan, but without action steps usually fail to accomplish what they set out to do.

The Board's goal is to link input we have received from community and patrons incorporating the results of our critical thinking based analysis of Park District strengths and weaknesses to a strategic road map that outlines our core objectives and identifies key initiatives for completion within a defined timeframe.

**How will we do this?** We will gather the sum of our community input and our strategic analysis into an assessment component of our Strategic Plan. Then we will organize discussions around setting broad goals and objectives that are aligned with our community, patron and related stakeholders. From there, we will articulate key initiatives that will help us achieve these objectives, organizing the initiatives in logical groupings (such as Our Government, Our Community, Our Parks and Facilities, and Our Programs). Finally we will take each objective and assign it a timeframe driven

priority, and then assign responsibility for completion to a specific Park Board committee and Staff department, for them to jointly develop an action plan that implements the initiative, and defines metrics for success. We will hold the Board and Staff accountable for completing these initiatives successfully within the timeframe defined. These processes will be transparent to stakeholders, and community and patrons will have access to relevant detail, and will be allowed the opportunity to help monitor the process and provide timely feedback.

**What will be different?**

There will be a transparent process for change management based on a process of rigorous thinking and project management discipline that will seek maximum external input so that the outcomes are most beneficial for the Glencoe community and to help meet a goal of enabling the Park District to be more efficient in providing high quality service throughout our core delivery model. Performance goals and objectives for Staff will be fully linked to the strategic road map, and Staff will be accountable for reporting on and supporting implementation of key initiatives within defined timeframes and outcomes will be more easily measurable.

## Initiatives

### **2. Perform a strategic review of organization structure and staff model to create recommendations that will help further the development of a leadership based culture within the Park District.**

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**Why do this?** The organizational model for the Glencoe Park District must be regularly evaluated with a critical eye to make sure that it is in step with current economic conditions, community expectations, and the like. As with any organization, good management practice would recommend a periodic review of the existing operations and staffing model to ensure that the resources of the Park District are aligned, organized and deployed in such a manner to best achieve the goals and objectives of our strategic plan in a cost effective manner.

Further, an organizational model centered around the goals of developing a leadership based culture will reap benefits of higher levels of engagement by employees to foster a continued team environment that will lead to greater employee satisfaction, empowerment, and enhanced customer service outcomes.

**How will we do this?** The Executive Director with input from the Board and Staff will conduct a strategic review of all current job descriptions and evaluate current personnel knowledge, skills and abilities in terms of the current organization structure. The Board will also do a similar assessment of the Executive Director. As part of the process, employees will be given the opportunity to provide feedback of the Board and

Executive Director with results aggregated in a manner to avoid the possibility of identifying any one individual.

Also reviewed will be current policies on work rules, hours, vacation policies, benefits, etc. to ensure that the Park District is competitive and in line with standards at best performing agencies.

The Executive Director, with input from the Board, will develop plans on how to evaluate the efficiency and responsibility of the Park District's organizational structure. As and if necessary, the Executive Director will generate new and/or revised job descriptions in accordance with initial thoughts on organizational culture and report overall findings to the Park Board through an iterative process possibly also involving community input.

**What will be different?** The Park District will have an organizational structure that is appropriate to achieving the goals of the strategic plan in a manner that eliminates possible redundancies and waste, that provides employee empowerment and an optimal level of service at the right cost for taxpayers and patrons. This will help drive development of specific goals, objectives, deliverables and accountabilities consistent with the overall strategic direction given by the Board.

## Initiatives

### 3. Continuing comprehensive review of facilities/capacity, equipment, and purchasing policies for planning and sustainability purposes.

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**Why do this?** It is difficult to make decisions about the needs and demands for facilities, especially during peak periods or times of unexpected needs, if there is no overall capacity map that can be matched against potential demand. And it can be difficult to develop long-range capital and procurement plans without a comprehensive understanding of the useful life of existing equipment, which can then be aligned against current and future needs of the Park District.

The Park District may face peak capacity constraints because the nature of recreational and program facilities require utilization within tight windows of time that may be further impacted by weather constraints. For example, there is a demand by coaches and leagues to schedule multiple games and practices during a tightly defined window of time when weather permits. There also may be capacity limitations for Takiff Center classrooms and or other facilities during peak times.

Finally, policies around usage and stewardship of our facilities, equipment and items purchased impact our environment, and need to be reviewed as to their sustainable impact.

**How will we do this?** The Executive Director will direct Staff to do a comprehensive evaluation of all facilities, the peak capacity of facility categories matched up against anticipated peak demand, and

report on where possible pressure points can be anticipated. Staff will be directed to produce new options and approached to manage peak capacity issues, including developing a better model on scheduling. This report will be presented to the Board for input and comment, and community input from interested parties will also be actively solicited. The report from the facilities/capacity study will be incorporated into the upcoming master planning process.

Staff will also be directed to compile a comprehensive inventory of equipment with estimated useful life, and will also compile a list of new equipment needs against the current list. This information will help provide input into ongoing budget and planning processes to ensure timely replacement, and match procurement processes to needs. This review will then be analyzed from the perspective of sustainability and policies may be modified to achieve positive impact.

**What will be different?** The Park District will have a more detailed and meaningful understanding of operational assets and the need to best manage them in a manner to provide optimal service to the community and patrons, in the most cost effective manner possible. It will also assist the Board in overall community oriented directions that may not be “profitable,” but nevertheless integral to the mission and success of the Park District.

## Initiatives

### 4. Perform continuing strategic reviews of vendor and independent contractor agreements.

**Why do this?** Strategic relationships with vendors and independent contractors are an essential component for the Park District to achieve strategic goals of serving community and patron needs. Many of these relationships are long term and provide much value. As we articulate and implement our strategic road map, good management practice requires the Board and Staff to review each of these arrangements to assure that these selections are in alignment with ongoing objectives.

At the same time, these vendors and independent contractors can sometimes be the “face” of the Park District to patrons and community groups, so it is critically important to align and motivate them to provide their function in such a manner that satisfies users.

**How will we do this?** Outside providers will be evaluated against past performance, costs and capabilities relative to alternatives. Continuity and existing relationships will be highly valued, and will also be among the variables evaluated. This will also be a two-way street. As we evaluate the vendors and other providers, we need to

understand their needs and ways they can improve delivery of services to our community. This must be a team effort to achieve the highest results.

The Executive Director and Staff will provide this critical thinking analysis with input from the community, patrons, affiliate groups and other outside parties as appropriate, and recommend outcomes to the Board, who will evaluate and do its own critical thinking before approving or sending back for more evaluation and/or alternatives.

Concurrently, the Board will solicit input from vendors and independent contractors on their relationship with the Park District, and its senior Staff. It’s important get a clear picture of both sides of the relationship, in order for the Park District to develop and sustain relationships with best in class strategic partners.

**What will be different?** The Park District will have a set of vendors and independent contractors better aligned with goals and objectives of the strategic plan, which will provide value for both taxpayers and patrons.

## Initiatives

### 5. Seek benchmarking information on operations, financial, salary and benefits information from neighboring Districts to compare performance and set improvement objectives.

**Why do this?** In order to fully understand how to measure and evaluate performance, it is helpful to compare metrics and results against a peer group so the Park District can understand where we are performing comparatively well, and where we have room to improve. Peer group benchmarking data provides an objective framework from which to have objectives setting discussions, and to allow the Board and Staff to discuss and determine which measures are most important, and which actions are needed to improve performance to meet these objectives. It also allows Staff to validate any best practice performance the Park District through identifying areas where we perform better than peers. This type of information is helpful for the Board to do its due diligence to assure the community and taxpayers that the Park District is run in accordance with sound management principles and those dollars are well spent.

**How will we do this?** Board and Staff will seek outside sources of information from which to benchmark identified costs and performance results and will then compare to the performance of the Glencoe Park District on these same

measures. Sources will include, but are not limited to surveys by the Illinois Association of Park Districts, surveys from external consultants, information available through scanning peer group websites and other information available through the Freedom of Information Act.

The Board will assess which specific measures are most important and the Staff will compile information and compare results against the benchmarks. Where necessary, Staff will develop recommendations on how to improve performance on specific measures in order to achieve specific benchmark driven standards within a timeframe defined by the Board.

**What will be different?** The Park District will have metrics driven objectives based on achieving peer defined best practices in order to become a more efficient and more effective organization. These results will be monitored on a regular basis, and improvement will be a criterion in evaluation of performance by the Board and the Executive Director.

## Initiatives

### 6. Review and revise program to manage operational and financial risks to the Park District. Streamline the financial and operational reporting format.

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**Why do this?** Oversight responsibility includes a full understanding and management of all risks in order to plan and take appropriate action to identify and anticipate possible risks and to take advance action to minimize the possibility of their actualization. This is a prudent approach to good government as it protects taxpayers from results that could negatively impact the financial condition of the Park District. Consequences of doing a poor job in this objective would result in a diminishment of the strength of the Park District, and possibly its ability to perform some core missions appropriately.

Monitoring potential risks on an ongoing basis also requires streamlining financial and operational reporting so that Board and Staff can regularly monitor key performance indicators to best understand where performance is deviating from target, and then to recommend mid-course corrections, or process improvements to attain realignment.

Key financial and operations information can be formatted into a “strategic dashboard” format that will provide an at a glance viewpoint on how the Park District is performing against key performance indicators.

**How will we do this?** Board and Staff will seek outside sources of information from which to benchmark identified costs and performance

results and will then compare to the performance of the Glencoe Park District on these same measures. Sources will include, but are not limited to surveys by the Illinois Association of Park Districts, surveys from external consultants, information available through scanning peer group websites and other information available through the Freedom of Information Act. Where appropriate, sources may include organizational input that seeks to identify best practices, and may go beyond traditional park district comparatives.

Staff will develop dashboard reports with input from Board members that will be designed to answer high level questions relative to both short term performance, and longer term performance aligned against objectives in the strategic road map.

**What will be different?** The Park District will have metrics driven objectives based on achieving peer defined best practices in order to become a more efficient and more effective organization. These results will be monitored on a regular basis, and improvement will be a criterion in evaluation of performance by the Board and the Executive Director, and Staff.

The Park District will also have a simpler reporting mechanism that focuses attention on the most important indicators of performance, allowing a sharper focus towards the goal of continuous improvement and alignment.

## Initiatives

### **7. Work with Village of Glencoe and other governmental units to explore opportunities for consolidation of selected operations to seek cost efficiencies.**

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**Why do this?** Illinois has perhaps the most units of government on a per capita scale, and the Glencoe Park District is but one of four units within the village, one of many within New Trier Township, and one of a half dozen or more park districts within a short radius. Many of these governmental units perform similar tasks and functions for their respective constituencies, and fail to accomplish efficiencies related to necessary economies of scale in order to rationalize costs in procurement activities. The Park District, for example, trims trees, cuts grass, plows snow, maintains vehicles, purchases equipment and professional services, etc. While there is some consolidation through various Park District related statewide organizations, there may be opportunities to partner with the Village of Glencoe, District 35, and neighboring Park Districts, etc.

**How will we do this?** Board and Staff will seek out peers in other units of government to sound out openness to evaluate and explore opportunities.

Staff will evaluate each specific opportunity for any incremental costs or risks, and the cost and other benefits, and will bring recommendations to the Board for approval. Annual savings will be reported by the Park District, along with any additional benefits including quality improvements and other synergies achieved.

**What will be different?** The Park District will obtain possible cost savings and or increased value for each dollar spent where operations can be consolidated. In some cases, the Park District may be providing services for other units on a contract basis, providing lower unit costs to cover fulfillment of core functions. In other instances, services may become outsourced resulting in savings and/or quality improvement. The financial and operations culture of the Park District will migrate towards a model where Staff is constantly monitoring costs associated with services provided and will seek to optimize value for resources allocated.

## Initiatives

### 8. Continue to work with Village of Glencoe and other governmental units to seek solutions for issues relating to the beach and lakefront.

**Why do this?** The beach and lakefront are valued assets for the entire community of Glencoe. Outcomes regarding decisions around selected operations relating to the beach can be enhanced by dialogue with Village of Glencoe officials.

One of the most important pieces of beach operations is the daily testing for contaminants. The current system employed by the Park District used generally requires a 24 waiting period before results are known. That means that there are times when the beach could potentially be open when contaminants exist, and other days where the beach is closed when, in fact, the water is safe. The Village of Glencoe and/or other governmental units may have expertise and testing facilities available to decrease the time for results, and increase the precision of beach closing decisions.

During periods of heavy rains, storm water in East Glencoe drains directly from Village storm sewers into the Lake, potentially contaminating the water and negatively impacting swimming conditions. It is in the Park District's interests and the community interests that all impacted units of government work together to understand the issues, and develop strategies to minimize lake water contamination.

On sunny and pleasant summer weekends, the neighborhood surrounding the Glencoe Beach can become a sprawling parking lot for residents and nonresident beach patrons. The parking allotment

alongside Lakefront Park fills up quickly, and patrons may end up parking up to a half mile away to find an open parking space. This overflow parking situation can be a nuisance to some neighbors, but it also serves as a disincentive for many Glencoe residents who live beyond walking distance to utilize the Beach facility on weekends, and was referenced in feedback in the strategic plan.

**How will we do this?** Board and staff will work closely with the village and other governmental units on water testing protocols, with officials and the sustainability working group on storm runoff solutions, and will consult with the Village and also solicit input from patrons and neighbors to develop alternatives for busy beach weekend parking. The Park District will reach out to Village of Glencoe officials to understand the degree of willingness to coordinate a process to evaluate the situation and assess possible solutions.

**What will be different?** The Glencoe Beach experience will be enhanced through more precise water safety testing, better management of storm water runoff, and through alternative weekend parking options that make the trip to and from the beach more enjoyable for residents and non-residents alike. Parking overflow may be decreased on weekends, reducing the nuisance to some in the neighborhood. Patron and community satisfaction with The Park District will increase as a result of all these initiatives.

## Initiatives

### 9. Develop a more formal outreach and recognition program to prospective and existing donors.

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**Why do this?** The Glencoe Park District has been fortunate in being a beneficiary of many gifts and endowments that have enabled development of facilities and programs that might not otherwise have been created or developed. The Takiff family's generous donation helped bring our new Takiff Center to reality. The Safran family provided key funding to help a renovation of the beach house. And *countless* others have donated land, money for facilities, classrooms, scholarships, park benches, water fountains, etc. A well thought out and executed donor program is a best practice for non-profits and governmental units, and enhancing how we recognize existing donors will also help the Park District attract new prospective donors.

A proactive and effective donor campaign will enhance what the Park District can offer and

leverage tax and program revenues to deliver value to the community and Park District patrons.

**How will we do this?** Board and Staff will seek best practices to develop an outline for an effective donor program, which will include recognition opportunities, and development of a donor advisory group that will assist in guidance and support. The Park District will set formal objectives for donor outreach and will monitor results with the advisory group and Board.

**What will be different?** A successful donor program will result in enhanced satisfaction by existing donors, and an increase in the success rate in attracting needed funds for defined objectives, providing value to taxpayers and patrons.

## Initiatives

### 10. Examine financial issues to provide assurance to community on past activities and future actions.

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**Why do this?** Questions persist among taxpayer advocates within Glencoe and many other communities regarding financial liabilities, accountability, and transparency. Time and again it has been proven in Glencoe and elsewhere that slow reactions to community concerns can prove devastating to trust—and sometimes it can create issues where none really may exist. We must stay ahead of any issues and explain decisions before and after they are made in a clear, concise, and open manner.

**How will we do this?** Board and Staff will undertake an evaluation of outstanding liabilities in light of the overall short and long term financial impact of such potential issues. They will also evaluate current situations including pension liability projections, etc. to understand, identify, and explain to the community possible future

risks and decisions. Finally, they will also examine construction accounting practices to learn from past experience in the spirit of improving future performance.

**What will be different?** The Park District will have a more open and timely dialogue with taxpayer advocates to shine a constructive light on financial decisions and will outline a comprehensive approach to provide assurance that risks will be identified, monitored, and proactive corrective action in the spirit of taxpayer accountability will be taken to avoid unnecessary or unexpected situations. The goal is to have the Glencoe Park District adopt best practices in terms of managing these types of risks, and to have an open and targeted two way dialogue with taxpayer advocates and the community in order to enhance confidence in our future financial decisions.

## Initiatives

### 11. Review and revise the Board Policy manual to best align review and approval processes with strategic objectives of strategic plan and road map.

**Why do this?** In order to systematize and institutionalize best management and governance practices, we look to revise the Board policy manual to help codify an approach that is consistent with the goals of taxpayer accountability and transparency. The policy manual spells out how the Board regulates itself and conducts its business within the construct of the Illinois Park District Code, which is the governing state law within which the Glencoe Park District and all Illinois Park Districts operate.

An effective policy manual will set guidelines and thresholds for community and patron input, for processes and procedures for accountability and transparency. It can be a guidebook on how to ensure that the spirit of the strategic road map stays alive in the actions of the Board and Staff now and into the future.

The policy manual can outline the approach of how the Board develops and articulates the mission, vision, and core values of the Park District, how issues are evaluated in committee and formally brought to the Board for consideration. Transparency principles would encourage a well

organized process of how the Board performs this function, in order to encourage and solicit maximum and relevant community input as issues are raised and discussed.

**How will we do this?** Board will work with Staff and counsel to edit and revise the current outdated policy manual to reflect the goals and objectives of transparency and accountability. The policy manual will articulate a process on how the Board reviews and revises or reaffirms the Park District's mission, vision and core values at least once every two years. Input will be sought, and discussions will take place in Board and committee meetings to refine and sharpen our policy document so that it will hold Board and Staff accountable to all of our constituents.

**What will be different?** Board and Staff will be approaching topics and issues identified within the road map utilizing a process that ensures openness, thoroughness, inclusion, critical thinking, all in the name of enhancing The Park District's ability to serve its mission.

## OUR COMMUNITY

Looking at the Glencoe community with a broad view masks the strengths and richness of our many virtues: a wealth of engaged and energized citizens living in a vibrant neighborhood community that supports parks and recreation activities actively. A broad view also masks the different interests and constituencies that the Park District needs to serve to fully achieve its mission. It is critically important that the Board and Staff proactively seek out input if we are to accomplish the strategic goal to “Put Community First.”

There are many constituencies to take into account. First and foremost, the Park District as a unit of local government with taxing power needs to be accountable to the Glencoe taxpayers. Taxpayers want and deserve to be assured that these dollars are well spent, and that they are being appropriately utilized to serve the long term needs of the community.

As the “owner” of park green space, the Park District serves as a direct neighbor to residents with parks that abut or are near their homes and properties. Discussions regarding the parks that would impact immediate neighbors require a high level of sensitivity to the needs the homeowners and neighbors to ensure that we are enhancing their property values, not detracting from them. Issues related to unwanted enhancements, but also noise, parking, and other nuisances need to be addressed by the Park District in a manner satisfactory to our fellow neighbors.

The Park District also functions as a service provider to various interest groups that have an active stake in the success of our delivery model. According to our 2010 survey, the highest activity and interaction with the Glencoe Park District was “walking through the parks.” Users of our parks have an active interest in ensuring that we continue to have attractive parks, walkways, gardens, and green space. And there have been stated desires for enhanced amenities, such as a dog park, a community garden, and other requests. Users expect to have a say in development and enhancement discussions.

Our beach and Lakefront Park, perhaps the nicest, most family friendly in Illinois, has long been considered a “crown jewel” of our properties. Swimmers, boaters and beachgoers look forward to summer days enjoying the unique amenities in an environment that feels far away from the day-to-day routine. Operations management and stewardship of this key asset is of keen interest to users and nearby residents, and their input to decisions impacting the beach and Lakefront Park is highly desired on an ongoing basis.

Parents of pre-school and school aged children are a very important stakeholder group and are key decision makers in determining which programming choices they select from a variety of competitive offerings. As a result, a significant component of our fee based revenue stream is based on attracting these parents to select Glencoe Park District programs, and this makes them an important target market and customer base to attract. As a service provider, it is critically important for us to fully understand the needs, wants and desires of this group to be able to design and deliver high quality programs that exceeds their expectations, drives high levels of customer satisfaction which should help increase attraction and enrollment, and support our fee based revenue model while serving the needs of the community.

Adults and Seniors have lots of recreational and program options beyond the Glencoe Park District, and there have been comments in our survey that the Park District could do a better job understanding the needs of the demographic group within our community, and design and operate programs at convenient times that competitively fill unmet needs at a cost competitive price point. The Board and Staff are committed to developing processes to better understand the recreational and programming needs of this group within our community, understand the competitive landscape of other service providers, and then to define a successful group of niche offerings that the Park District is uniquely positioned to provide.

Community groups and renters of space also have many options for selecting venues for their gatherings. The Park District will need to continue to focus on effective marketing and outreach programs to this group to position our facilities as a desirable option, at price points reasonable and appropriate. In addition, there are specific community gatherings unique to Glencoe such as Town Hall meetings, Caucus selection meetings, etc. where the desired state would be to have as many of these meetings as possible in the Community Room and the Board and Staff need to focus energies to achieve this outcome.

Formal and informal affiliate groups and user groups of Park District facilities organize to develop communities to participate in specific activities and often play advocacy roles in soliciting Board and Staff to implement policies for the benefit of their members. These groups focus around areas such as Baseball, Football, Soccer, Boating, and many others.

Employees and independent contractors are also a key component of the community we serve, and are often times overlooked as stakeholders. The overall customer service experience received by patrons and community members is directly driven by interactions with full time and seasonal employees and independent contractors who support programs and in many instances are the face of the Park District to the general public. It's vitally important that members of this group feel that the Board and Staff care about the best interests of employees and independent contractors and are motivated to deliver service that delights patrons. We need to actively understand how this stakeholder group perceives their roles, and the support they receive from Board and Staff, and then develop and implement strategies to engage this group and treat them with utmost respect befitting of their important role as the face of the Park District.

There are other stakeholders to consider as well, including community partners, park partners, community business and clergy groups and leaders, community organizations, social service providers and more. All of these people have an interest in the programs, facilities and operations of our Park District, and we need to engage them at the appropriate time on topics relevant to them.

#### What will success look like?

- Increased patron satisfaction
- Increased stakeholder input through advisory councils
- Critical thinking based Board and Staff evaluation based on community and stakeholder input
- Key decisions based on timely and comprehensive input, leading to better outcomes
- Increased levels of overall satisfaction with the Glencoe Park District and increased support within our community.

## Our community

### Index of Initiatives

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- 12. Explore creation of interest group based advisory councils and focus groups. Support Park District participation in key community and needs based initiatives, groups and commissions.**
- 13. Develop an enhanced District wide Customer Service initiative focused on training and feedback.**
- 14. Develop a dynamic patron satisfaction vehicle to solicit input for review and action to measure results**
- 15. Adopt a policy to have an open and transparent process to fill Board vacancies if and when they occur.**
- 16. Develop a new Park District Board and Staff communications model to enhance transparency and accountability to taxpayers and the community.**
- 17. Host an annual “State of the Park District” town hall meeting with the community.**
- 18. Enhance the marketing capabilities of the Park District.**
- 19. Develop model to leverage community and patron input for evaluating Board performance.**

## Initiatives

### **12. Explore creation of interest group based advisory groups and focus groups. Support Park District participation in key community and needs based initiatives, groups and commissions.**

**Why do this?** Our 2010 survey within the Strategic Plan document indicated that there is a perception and communications gap between the Park District and the Glencoe community. Park District Board and Staff need to do more listening about wants and needs of the community, and these discussions may be segmented in various categories representing specific interest groups: Pre-School Programs, Child and Teen programs, Adult programs, Special needs populations, Parks and Botanic interests, Watts Ice Center and The Beach/Lakefront, for example.

In addition, there are organized groups such as the Caucus that formally review the District from the perspective of both interests of Glencoe Taxpayers and residents.

Finally, there are a number of existing community based councils, commissions and groups such as the Glencoe Plan Commission, the Sustainability Working group and NSSRA that are actively pursuing broader community objectives that require active participation by representatives of the Glencoe Park District.

Engaging interested parties to create real two way dialogue about specific areas of interest is one way to get continual and real time feedback to help Board and Staff gather and test ideas, and to help set priorities. It creates an ongoing channel to narrow the perception and communications gap that may exist today.

**How will we do this?** First, the Board will scope out a clear definition of which organizations already exist which can serve as de-facto advisory groups or focus groups and which groups need to be created from scratch. They will publicize these discussions and engage in discussions with interested parties to help frame the structure and organization of these groups.

The success of this goal can only be achieved with the time and investment of the community at large. While the Park District will do its best to formalize input structures, the community and service users will have to be willing to share thoughts and ideas if this goal has any chance of success.

Where these groups already may exist independently (the Plan Commission, Caucus, Glencoe Jr. Kindergarten Board, for example) we will develop a relevant model to facilitate ongoing two way communications, and participate where appropriate.

#### **What will be different?**

Regular two-way dialogue focused on specific areas of interest between the Park District Staff and Board and individuals who speak for users and patrons in specific areas of service provided. This will result in a much higher level of sensitivity to the community and patrons by the Park District when developing or enhancing programs or planning initiatives. The Park District will also actively partner with existing groups to jointly participate in broader community initiatives, such as sustainability, so that solutions are community wide, and not siloed within specific governmental entities.

## Initiatives

### 13. Develop an enhanced District wide Customer Service initiative focused on training and feedback.

**Why do this?** Interactions between the Park District and the community and patrons take place through experiences with full time staff, part time staff and independent contractors and vendors who offer services and programs to patrons on behalf of the Park District.

These interactions determine the level of satisfaction that the community and our patrons have with the Park District. Professionalism, responsiveness, and helpful attitude all create positive impressions that help build the Park District brand. It's important to keep a consistently high level of customer service over time to support of objective of delighting our customers, and it can be difficult when many of our staff is seasonal, and/or part time or working for an outside entity as a contractor or vendor.

As with any customer service focused organization, the Glencoe Park District needs to keep working at a program to systematically support excellence in customer service in order to ensure that each interaction with the Park District is a positive one.

**How will we do this?** The Board has recommended creation of a Customer Service Committee headed by senior Staff that will be tasked with developing a comprehensive program to attain superior customer service by all who provide services to the public and patrons on behalf of the Park District. The program will include, but not be limited to: training, feedback and monitoring, patron surveys,

enrichment programs for Staff, engagement with independent contractors to require customer service as a core component of their service delivery model. High levels of employee satisfaction are important to customer service, but only if based on job meaning, empowerment, and respect for leadership. As part of the customer service initiative, a key objective will be to enhance a mission based approach to employee satisfaction and as key stakeholders, to also monitor job meaning based employee satisfaction as a key metric that drives improvement in customer service.

Senior Staff will also develop a tracking mechanism for monitoring questions and complaints, and will also organize an approach to deal with gaps in excellent customer service leveraging recovery models to deal with specific situations.

**What will be different?** The Park District senior Staff will be deeply involved with improving the customer service culture within the Park District, and community members and Park District patrons will be more satisfied with the Park District overall and will experience more situations of delight in dealing with the Park District. Through the enrichment programs, Park District employees will become more motivated and empowered to provide excellent customer service in the field on a day to day basis.

## Initiatives

### 14. Develop a dynamic patron satisfaction vehicle to solicit input for review and action to measure results.

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**Why do this?** Excellent customer service driven organizations have regular opportunities for their patrons to provide valuable feedback to help calibrate future service delivery. In some organizations, results of customer satisfaction surveys and input can count for as much as 25% towards a manager's performance rating. The Glencoe Park District is by definition a customer service agency, and has the opportunity to proactively solicit the input of patrons as part of its management and operations model.

Patron satisfaction processes can strengthen the level of engagement between patrons the Park District as a service provider, providing and the opportunity to develop extra bond that can lead to increased customer loyalty. In addition, the results from satisfaction are another factor to help the Park District better calibrate service and facilities offerings to be more aligned with stakeholders and users.

**How will we do this?** Staff will assess current patron satisfaction vehicles in terms of cost, ease of use, frequency, confidentiality (where appropriate) and ability to gather critical mass of useful information that can be effectively used as a valid data point from which to base decisions. Staff will explore use of collecting relevant e-mail addresses that can be segmented in a database by demographic and program and facility use. Patrons who enroll in programs and/or buy season facility passes will be systematically surveyed so that Board and Staff can get meaningful information on how well the Park District is serving the needs of its demographically diverse target market by segment

**What will be different?** The Park District Board and Staff will have much better information from which to evaluate levels of satisfaction by program, facility, by demographic, and will also have better insight into understanding what is driving patron satisfaction, and where efforts must be made to improve outcomes.

## Initiatives

### 15. Adopt a policy to have an open and transparent process to fill Board vacancies if when they vacancies occur.

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**Why do this?** With the current six year term of office for Board Commissioners, vacancies have historically occurred with some regularity for many good reasons.

In order to achieve the goal of transparency and accountability, selection of replacement commissioners should allow for due diligence processes similar to those prospective commissioners usually go through in the process of becoming elected. No matter how strong the credentials, how much previous experience a potential replacement commissioner may have, there is no substitute for leveraging an open process to give opportunity to anyone who feels the desire to serve.

**How will we do this?** According to the Illinois Park District Code, it is within the direct power of a majority of the Board to select replacement commissioners when a vacancy occurs. Any process will require this final step to legally appoint a replacement commissioner. However, each Board can choose the process for which it will

accept recommendations for appointment. The Glencoe Caucus Party has traditionally operated as such a screening vehicle for prospective candidates in the bi-annual general election, and has within its charter, the mission to assist local units of government to evaluate and recommend replacement candidates. Certainly, the Park Board is not bound by the selection of the Caucus party, but is free to adopt a policy to create an open process to actively seek a recommendation, and can choose other approaches that attain the objective of transparency and accountability as appropriate.

**What will be different?** The Park District Board will have Commissioners that reflect the current sentiment of the community, leveraging the existing Caucus Party vehicle as a possible selection and vetting process as part of its recommendation in replacing Commissioners who resign in mid-term. This will help the Board focus on policies that are in tune with community sentiment, and will help avoid the appearance of any insider process to select replacements, in the name of transparency.

## Initiatives

### **16. Develop a new Park District Board and Staff communications model to enhance transparency and accountability to taxpayers and the community.**

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**Why do this?** Board and Staff communications regarding financial actions can have a huge impact on how the Park District is perceived within the community. Timely, upfront, open and honest communications that seek out key stakeholders by topic can help improve perceptions. This communication model involves a combination of disclosure, context setting, articulation of input received reflecting all sides of each issue, and then a straightforward explanation of actions taken, with extra effort given to communicate to anyone impacted in one way or another. Generally, the Board President and/or the Executive Director will be the spokesman for the Park District on broad issues, but occasionally, there may be other Staff or Board members who will be asked to play this role.

In situations regarding potential controversy, the Board needs to be open to address underlying issues and concerns to assure the community that we stand committed to taxpayer accountability and transparency.

**How will we do this?** Board and Staff will develop a communications policy aligned with the goal of transparency and accountability, leveraging best practices, and continually seeking input from key stakeholders to help resolve potential conflicting situations in such a manner that all parties come away with increased levels of satisfaction with the Park District.

**What will be different?** The Park District will work hard to avoid confusing or controversial situations through active good governance, processes for transparency and accountability and high levels of connectivity with stakeholders. However, in the event that we face such a situation, the communications model will be upfront, timely, and open to provide maximum assurance to the community that the Park District has the community interest at heart and that Board and Staff are utilizing best practices to inform and educate to the best of its ability.

## Initiatives

### 17. Host an annual “State of the Park District” town hall meeting with the community.

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**Why do this?** As part of providing a steady two way communication stream to stakeholders and the community, the Park Board and Staff seek to invite all community members to an annual town hall meeting to provide a progress report and to seek additional input. Certainly, Park Board and committee meeting are “Open Meetings” and with few exceptions, the public has the opportunity to attend all deliberations as they wish.

In addition to the regular normal invitation to attend our meetings, it may be helpful to provide an overall state of the park district presentation, covering a broad range of topics, so that our stakeholders can have a high level, big picture view of what’s working, what’s not working, and what the Board and Staff are working on, and what is the long term vision.

**How will we do this?** Board and Staff will organize and publicize an annual town hall meeting, at a time and date convenient to the community. We will also provide written reports and other information, and will build in a social component to allow for informal one on one engagement with Board and Staff members, and other community leaders and influencers.

**What will be different?** The Park District will provide a comprehensive annual report presentation to the community which will showcase progress the Board and Staff have made against the strategic plan and road map, and this will be an opportunity to discuss any thoughts and suggestions from the community.

## Initiatives

### 18. Enhance the marketing capabilities of the Park District.

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**Why do this?** A key component of growing enrollment in programs, enhancing satisfaction with the processes of getting value added and timely information, increasing connectedness between the community the Park District and our patrons is our desire to enhance our core marketing capabilities. Members of our community are inundated with marketing messages from all corners. Demands on time to focus on marketing communications seem endless. In order to the Park District to be able to successfully break through the clutter and meaningfully connect with stakeholders and our target market, we need to be increasingly effective in how we apply best practices in applied marketing strategy and marketing communication techniques.

Each program and facility need a strategic marketing plan to identify our desired audience, and to help us craft a strategy to competitively attract the right amount of participants to support the activities. We need to have a customer relationship management style database to keep tabs of our patrons and prospects, in order to continue the loyalty and outreach process to ensure that we stay in touch with buyers of our services. The tone and style of communications need to be clear and concise so there is an ease of understanding about the topic and value proposition. Our website needs to be easy to navigate, comprehensive, and with survey capabilities for patron surveys. On line registration

functionality needs to include information about progress with available slots by program. Our printed materials need to be reviewed to effectively promote the plethora of programs offered.

**How will we do this?** Staff will leverage Board and community volunteer expertise as needed to develop strategic marketing plans for core programs and facilities, to the extent that they do not currently exist. Each component of the Park District's marketing capabilities will be examined and cost effective plans will be put in place to utilize best practices within the constraints of existing budgets. The Board will review and make additional recommendations on how to continually improve these competencies in order to help achieve objectives.

**What will be different?** Park District programs and facilities will be more competitively positioned within our target market, effective outreach programs will help attract additional registrants reducing the need for cancellations, and enhancing revenue opportunities while balancing the need to support community needs. An enhanced systematic approach marketing communication will enable a more consistent and meaningful dialogue with potential patrons in order to build our brand and strengthen loyalty from existing patrons through more one to one messaging.

## Initiatives

### 19. Develop a model to leverage community and patron input for evaluating Board performance.

**Why do this?** As the Park District successfully identifies and/or creates key stakeholder groups, we have the opportunity to utilize these resources as another source of input for Board evaluation. Each specific stakeholder group represents an important constituency. This could mean a core group of facility users who act as a center of influence to encourage participants to join in the activities. It could mean a parent group organized around a particular program or age group or special needs group. Perhaps this could be a group of school age or teen users, themselves a center of influence to help attract additional participants to programs. Adults and seniors who have interests in specific programs or facility usage. Or, taxpayer advocates, such as the Caucus Party, who act as watchdogs for enduring good governance, community input, taxpayer accountability and transparency.

Each of these groups has an important point of view, and the Park District is interested in knowing how members of these respective groups perceive we are doing overall, and with regards to their specific areas of interest. It may not be possible to please all of the people all of the time, but we do want to actively solicit diverse input from our

various interest groups on a regular basis to really understand needs, perceptions, and unserved gaps. This helps our thinking and planning, and is useful input into evaluations.

**How will we do this?** Board and Staff will identify specific interest groups, whether they currently exist independently of the Park District, or are an advisory or like group organized by the Park District. Staff will develop a customized survey addressing specific areas of interest for that group, in addition to general questions, and results will be tallied and used as input in annual evaluation sessions.

**What will be different?** The Park District will now proactively be collecting diverse interest group survey metrics on a regular basis, which will help Staff better understand needs, and perception of service levels, providing the opportunity for both better dialogue and course corrections as necessary. Feedback will serve as a benchmark for the Board to evaluate its performance against expectations. Community and patron input to the Board can also serve as input for the Board's annual evaluation of the Executive Director as appropriate.

## OUR PARKS AND FACILITIES

The Glencoe Park District is blessed with many fine assets including our lovely parks and green space, beachfront recreation facilities, the Takiff Center, the Watts Ice Rink, etc. These assets have been donated and/or acquired by the Park District, and developed and improved by the taxpayer funds and individual donations. The Board and Staff have two clear missions relating to our Park District assets: (1) to serve as responsible stewards in preserving, protecting and enhancing these assets for the long term betterment of the community; and to develop and (2) to utilize these assets in a manner to bring the maximum benefit to the community and patrons.

The Takiff Center, developed through an adaptive re-use development of the previous North School, was designed to serve at the “Community House” for Glencoe, and as an anchor for pre-school and other program and recreation activity. Utilization of the facility is increasing, but there is still additional capacity to be filled by creative development of programs and innovative marketing for the facility.

Watts Center, our ice skating facility and building provides a unique “ski town like” outdoor skating atmosphere for patrons. Recently renovated, with cooling systems updated, the facility continues to experience strong bookings from December through early March.

Our Lakefront Park and bluff overlooking the beach is located on prime real estate, with a clear view overlooking the lake thanks to a naturalization project that cleared non-native vegetation and replaced with native species that provide a natural wildflower environment throughout the summer and fall.

The Glencoe swim beach provides an extended strand of wide beach sand which is possible thanks to a landfill and jetty project long ago that extended the beach dimensions far beyond natural shoreline limitations, providing significant additional square footage to accommodate demand for beach space on our busiest days. The newly renovated Safran beach house provides updated shower and changing facilities, and the trellis and sun shelters are spaces available for group rental. The sailing beach provides rack and sand spaces for monohull and beach catamaran boats, and the Staff provides value added rescue service to boaters during the season.

Our baseball, soccer, football and other recreational playfields are located at multiple locations including Central School Park and Watts Park and others, and our maintenance staff ensures that the fields are ready for play weather permitting. And, we also maintain a variety of well maintained outdoor tennis facilities in convenient locations within Glencoe.

Kalk Park and Veterans Memorial Park are Glencoe’s “front lawn”, and a gathering place on summer holidays and on special occasions, and Lisa’s Gazebo is a favorite spot for wedding pictures on a bright sunny days. Our specialty parks and playground parks, such Friends Park and Shelton Park are a gathering place for families with young children, providing opportunities for special playtime that remain in memories for a lifetime.

Our string of neighborhood parks and green spaces and nature sanctuaries, located around Glencoe, but particularly adjacent to both sides of the Union Pacific train tracks, enhances the bucolic environment that attracts us to Glencoe, and provides natural green space to maintain density levels acceptable to our community.

Finally, we should incorporate in our thinking about parks and facilities, those recreational facilities and green space within the Glencoe community not owned or controlled by the Park District, such as the Chicago Botanic Garden, the Glencoe Golf Club and the adjacent Cook County Forest Preserves.

In addition to doing a great job with day to day cost efficient and effective operations and also delighting our community of users and patrons, the Board and Staff need to develop and articulate a long view of how to develop these assets to serve the evolving needs of the community. A master plan is required every ten years, and during the upcoming year, the Park District will engage the community and park experts to put forward a plan that earns the support of our broad community. Ideas such as enhanced walking and biking paths, fitness center, a dog park, an aquatics facility or option, a community garden, woodland restoration, additional landscaping, playground equipment, tennis courts, picnic shelters and outdoor fitness stations were highlighted in the survey results by 20% or more of respondents, and the Board and Staff need to establish a transparent process to evaluate each of these options against budget limitations and other competing priorities and recommend the right course of action.

### What will success look like?

- A comprehensive master plan for parks and facilities based on a thoughtful review of parks and recreation best practices and with much input from community and patron stakeholders.
- A transparent process to evaluate items that scored high in our strategic plan survey process, including a Fitness Center, Dog Park, Aquatics option, community garden and others.
- Perform a strategic review of all key facilities to ensure that the Park District is preserving, managing, and developing (where appropriate) each facility, and providing appropriate services connected to each relevant facility that managed in a professional manner meeting high standards that delight patrons and users.
- Seek partnering opportunities with non-Park District owners of parks and recreational facilities in Glencoe, to add opportunities for additional enrichment and value to the Glencoe community as part of the Board and Staff's planning.

## Our parks and facilities

### Index of Initiatives

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- 20. Develop a new long term master plan for all parks and facilities, including a lakefront plan and a plan for preserving and enhancing green space.**
- 21. Develop a comprehensive plan to help the Takiff Center evolve to become the true community center for Glencoe.**
- 22. Evaluate and consider plans to create a fitness center in the Takiff Center.**
- 23. Perform a strategic review of all Beach and Watts related programs and facilities.**
- 24. Evaluate the option of an intergovernmental arrangement with another Park District enabling Glencoe resident's use of their swimming pool(s) at resident rates.**
- 25. Evaluate options for a park development, including a dog park, community gardens, and enhanced walking paths.**
- 26. Review updated ADA compliance plan for all facilities.**

## Initiatives

### **20. Develop a new long term master plan for all parks and facilities, including a lakefront plan and a plan for preserving and enhancing green space.**

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**Why do this?** The Glencoe Park District completes and updates a comprehensive master park and facilities plan every ten years to assess the current state of our assets, match that against community input of prioritized needs wants and desires of the Park District, best practices in the Parks and Recreation community, all against a funding and budgetary backdrop from which to make choices.

The master plan process is iterative by design, and involves much community input from all sectors, much input from Staff, and insight from consultants who all provide ideas and constructs from which to evaluate.

It will provide a facilities development and budgetary long-term road map that will help the planning process for the next ten years, and will be a rudder to help focus community discussion on needs and priorities.

**How will we do this?** Our Board and Staff will work

closely together to outline a transparent process to gather many inputs, allow for much critical thinking, aligning priorities against possible budgets, and then hold additional hearings and provide effective communication to all stakeholders and segments of the community to finalize a plan that is accepted and well received as a statement of community desire and Park District intention.

#### **What will be different?**

We will have a document that has broad ownership that will help the Park District set development and budget priorities for the next decade. The outcome may be development of new and innovative facilities, parks, etc. that will enhance the user experience, and/or perhaps a plan to preserve and be responsible stewards of the assets we have. Whatever the outcome, we expect it can lead to greater levels of satisfaction with the Glencoe Park District from our stakeholders.

## Initiatives

### 21. Develop a comprehensive plan to help the Takiff Center evolve to become the true community center for Glencoe.

**Why do this?** As the Takiff Center was conceived and supported by the community in referenda, one of the core value propositions was that this building would serve as a true community center for the people of the Village of Glencoe. A community center is a hub of important activity in the life of the community, and helps provide an identity for the community and its citizens. Done right, residents of the community feel proud about where they live every time they enter their community center.

However, constructing a building, and installing the heart and soul of a true community center are two different endeavors. While usage of the Takiff Center keeps increasing, our 2010 survey noted that a significant portion of the community does not use the Takiff Center, and by inference, would not consider the building as their community center.

Proactive steps will need to be taken to achieve this objective, to bring to life the concept of a place that

is a center of community life.

**How will we do this?** Board and Staff will learn best practices from neighboring “Community Houses” and Community Centers” and will develop a detailed plan to first attract as many core Glencoe community meetings to the Takiff Center as possible. Community groups, civic groups, user groups all will be encouraged to use our space, to build the Takiff Center’s brand as the place that Glencoe comes together to get things done. We will also develop a strategic marketing plan to promote use of the rooms and facilities for social and other functions. We will explore options for the entry way, perhaps a coffee nook with wi fi, or other uses to create a common space for people to gather and congregate.

**What will be different?** The Takiff Center will come to be known as a central place in the life of the Glencoe community, not merely a building where Park District programs are housed.

## Initiatives

### 22. Explore and consider plans to create a fitness center in the Takiff Center.

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**Why do this?** One of the most popular requests within our Strategic Plan survey was around the topic of creating some sort of fitness center within the Takiff Center. Even though many Glencoe residents currently belong to one or more fitness facilities, there was an expressed desire by many to also have access to fitness facilities which may include resistant weights, stationary bikes and running stations. As part of the original design approved by the community, there was no space or utility design to locker room facilities with shower. Yet, many in the survey expressed an interest in a simple facility in Glencoe without shower facilities.

**How will we do this?** Board and Staff will evaluate various options of a simple fitness center, including

space and reconfiguration needs, staffing needs, equipment needs, and pricing strategies, in line with competitive offerings, knowing we may have to provide some initial incentive to get new users to try out the facility, and develop some loyalty upon which to build a long term business model. This plan would probably require more community input and value testing prior to Board and Staff commitment.

**What will be different?** The Park District may create a fitness center convenient to Glencoe residents or we will fully explain to the community why the Board believes it is not viable and seek full community opinion.

## Initiatives

### 23. Perform strategic review of all Beach and Watts related programs and facilities.

**Why do this?** The Glencoe Beach is perhaps the one Park District facility that touches a broader cross section of the community than any other. It experiences relatively high usage in season, with a core group of patrons using the beach multiple times per week. Watts Center, a smaller facility also attracts a steady core of regular users throughout the winter season. In many ways, these facilities are the “front door” for the Park District, and we need to make sure that they are run right. There are strong constituencies for both the Beach and Watts, and it is important to seek patron input on performance versus desired results.

These key recreational facilities are managed under respective operations plans that leverage seasonal employees, and host organized programs and competitions. It’s important that these key facilities are managed professionally, with organized approaches for each core component of operations, that the seasonal employees are trained in customer service best practice and have a sense of connectedness and loyalty the Park District and its senior Staff. And, it’s important that

the various skill based instructors are competent in their area of instruction and that courses are taught based on a rigorous curriculum, with flexibility in case of inclement weather.

**How will we do this?** Board and Staff will perform a comprehensive review against high operational standards, and assess where gaps exist and then identify corrective action. Stakeholder input will be actively sought to help Staff fine tune operations and to make sure that seasonal staff is fully trained and ready, and that programs are well thought out. Patron satisfaction surveys will be conducted to determine perceptions, and Park District senior Staff will be highly visible and seeking ongoing input from patrons.

**What will be different?** The Beach and Watts Center will be perceived as high performing facilities, professionally run, considered best in class within their respective category. Patron satisfaction scores will be high; there will be a culture of continual improvement.

## Initiatives

### 24. Explore the option of an intergovernmental arrangement with another Park District enabling Glencoe resident's use of their swimming pool(s) at local resident rates.

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**Why do this?** In our strategic plan survey, respondents expressed a desire for an aquatics facility of some sort among the offerings from the Park District. What is interesting is that in referenda prior to the one approving funding the Takiff Center construction, the community voted down an expanded plan for this facility that would have included a swimming pool.

Nevertheless, there seems to be a desire by residents to have access to a swimming facility. Some respondents noted that access to such a facility nearby but outside Glencoe might be acceptable. In previous years, Glencoe had a intergovernmental arrangement with the Northbrook Park District, and most recently various Park Districts in the New Trier High School District banded together to offer a shared swimming facility at New Trier West before the current Freshman campus in Northfield was opened.

There appears to be a need to have access to aquatics facilities as an alternative to swim options at the Glencoe Beach in summertime, and perhaps an indoor 12 month option as well.

**How will we do this?** The Board and Staff can engage in discussion with neighboring Park Districts to offer resident rates for swimming pool and other available facilities through an intergovernmental arrangement in exchange for resident beach rates, and perhaps other Glencoe programs. Much input would be sought for those most interested in aquatics facilities.

**What will be different?** The Park District will evaluate options and communicate costs, benefits, and likelihood of implementation within near and medium term time horizons. If seeking an intergovernmental arrangement, driving time and convenience will be considerations.

## Initiatives

### 25. Evaluate options for a park development, including a dog park, community gardens, and enhanced walking paths.

**Why do this?** Development of our parks was also an item that scored high on our survey instrument. With the recent focus on the Takiff Center construction, the area of park development may have been on the proverbial back burner, but as construction is now complete, this may be the time to focus on enhancements desired by segments of the community.

Key items that scored high on the 2010 community survey include a “Dog Park”; a “Community Garden”; and an initiative to “enhance walking paths” which would include better signage, and others. Sustainability and green initiatives were also mentioned. Walking in the parks is the activity that scored the highest in terms of community participation, no surprise given the interrelated string of community parks that intersperse our neighborhoods. In a community like Glencoe, many residents expect park development to keep pace with peer communities, and some may desire extra touches and finishes to raise the park standards to that of a destination park for a greater percentage of our current green space.

**How will we do this?** Many of the longer term items will be covered in our Master Planning process. However, some of the items mentioned at the top of the wish list may require a quicker and separate evaluation track and will require looking at costs, options, and further testing of real input from stakeholders in the community. Physical locations will need to be developed and formal designs developed by consultants. Board action will be required and funding secured. Options for funding may include donor outreach, if possible.

**What will be different?** The Park District will evaluate options that could lead to enhanced park development, new and improved walking paths, with possibilities of special purpose parks, community gardens, etc. The park specific facilities will continue to evolve and develop to ever higher standards that match community desires. In order to minimize incremental costs to taxpayers, opportunities for donor funding will be sought to support these initiatives.

## Initiatives

### 26. Review updated ADA compliance plan at all facilities.

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**Why do this?** Federal law requires compliance to terms of the American Disabilities Act, including bathroom facilities for special needs populations. Glencoe has its share of special needs individuals, and the Park District is very sensitive to providing high quality programs and facilities to serve this very important stakeholder group. We partner with the NSSRA to serve this population and received an award as partner of the year in 2011.

As a service provider to this group, the Park District will need to make sure that all facilities can accommodate them physically, including bathroom facilities.

**How will we do this?** Staff will perform a

comprehensive review of facilities, including bathroom facilities to determine ADA compliance at our facilities through a gap analysis. Facilities will be matched up against compliance. Any needs for refitting, special construction or other accommodations will be identified and costs associated will be earmarked in future budget amounts.

**What will be different?** The Park District will have an updated plan to conform with ADA requirements at facilities throughout our system, and our facilities Staff will monitor continual compliance. Where we are not in compliance, we will put plans in place to develop necessary adaptations to meet requirements.

## OUR PROGRAMS

Park District programs are a core component of how we serve the needs of the community, and we have a tradition of providing a diverse group of programs for all age groups and interests. Our programs also are a driver of fee revenue, which is a source that helps offset tax revenue to help fund operations and activities. As a provider of programs, we compete actively with other vendors to attract patrons to Glencoe Park District programs, and our success in building an attractive business model brings benefit to patrons, and the community at large. Our overall goal is to continually improve our competencies in managing a portfolio of programs to add value to all of our stakeholders.

A core component of our program portfolio is the rich array of full day and partial day early learning and pre-school classes offered through the Park District. Our Early Learning Center, and Children's Circle courses are very popular, and we have strong enrollment year after year. The Glencoe Jr. Kindergarten program, offered through the Park District is a program driven by very high levels of parent participation is highly popular with parents and is accredited by the prestigious National Association of Education of Young Children. These three programs are all strong and thriving, and we want to continue the success model, and help develop synergies amongst these programs, as we do compete for enrollment with other pre-school providers.

Recreational and enrichment activities for school age enrollees are a second core component for our program portfolio. These programs are typically geared for after-school, weekend, days-off, school holiday and vacation time windows. Park District summer camps are popular for younger children within this demographic. Course offerings need to be well designed in order to attract participants, as the variety of enrichment and recreation interests and choices available to potential enrollees expand geometrically as age groups get progressively older. Coordination with District 35 is a must, for scheduling, logistics and other purposes. We also need to coordinate with other schools from which we attract enrollees. In order for the business model to exceed expectations and compete effectively, the Park District needs to utilize good business judgment to develop and launch the kind of programs that will be popular with both child participants and their parents. Offering generic programs is not good enough anymore, as experience has shown that parents may drive a little farther to school age programs they consider superior.

Adult enrichment and recreational programming can be a more competitive environment than serving the Children program market. Programs serving younger parents, empty nesters and seniors compete with an even broader array of options public and private. There are many private health clubs, fitness centers, enrichment providers and the like who provide excellent offerings at various price points in and around the North Shore community. Developing successful clientele for strong programs requires a combination of strong brand identity, and program design and marketing that satisfies a demand and reaches a target market. The Park District has a number of core adult programs that are successful, including some of our special interest classes where we partnered with groups of people in the community who expressed a desire to enroll for a particular program if created, recreational programs that leverage our gym and tennis courts, and branded programs run through independent contractors such as Helen's Fitness and our Karate programs. Succeeding here will require lots of energy on the part of Staff, market testing of ideas, and effective marketing to build a sustainable enrollment model.

We also offer programs at our Beach and Watts Center facilities that are seasonal, by definition. Beach programming is built around sailing instruction using our fleet for training on Lake Michigan. Classes are offered in specific sailing modules, and also as a component of school age summer camps. Popularity of sailing programs has dramatically increased in recent years. Watts Ice Center programs are built around skating and hockey related programs. Competition comes from neighboring programs held at indoor rinks, giving them advantages related to a longer season and insulation from weather extremes. Each of these facilities based

programs feed off the draw of their respective facility, and effective marketing and creative program development leveraging the strengths of the Park District is key to competing here.

Finally, the Park District special events are signature moments in the life of the Glencoe community and their value goes far beyond the dollars and cents associated with their production. We believe no village does the 4<sup>th</sup> of July holiday better than Glencoe. Our beachfront fireworks program, and the organization surrounding this event is truly a delight, and a special draw from families and friends, and even people who have moved away make extra efforts to come back to Glencoe to bask in the community spirit and celebration of this day. The Park District is very proud of the impact of our evening beach fireworks event, and enjoys its planning and preparation each year. We also offer an array of smaller, special events, targeted at selected audience, such as concerts at the beach, movies on the green, special Watts Ice Center events, the Family Beach Campout, Indoor Garage Sale and the Glencoe Plant Sale, and others. These events help in our mission to bring the community closer together in order to make us feel good about living in Glencoe. Key to the success of any of these is involvement with community members and participants in the planning and execution, and we hope to encourage Staff to work with the community to develop even more of these events in the future.

#### What will success look like?

- An integrated program to leverage synergies among our pre-school platforms.
- Better coordination with District 35 and other schools where we draw enrollees
- Creation of program development methodology to help the Park District successfully launch new programs and reduces likelihood of needing to cancel a class.
- A protocol to do a better job marketing programs, communicating to potential participants, also reducing need for cancellations
- Elimination of programs that have not demonstrated ability to attract consistent audience.
- A plan to reduce the reliance on tax revenue as a funding source, and to increase program fee revenue as a percentage of Park District overall revenue.

## Our programs

### Index of Initiatives

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- 27. Perform integrative review among all pre-school programs to better develop synergies among them where possible.**
- 28. Coordinate more closely with District 35 and other school programs in the area to solicit input into school age program development, and to enhance coordinated transportation with start times of programs.**
- 29. Perform a strategic review of all programs, to evaluate patron satisfaction, long term viability, and a full understanding of which programs have been cancelled and why they were cancelled.**
- 30. Work with formal and informal advisory groups and seek community input in developing and creating new programs where there is a market demand, and where the Park District can produce a competitive program.**
- 31. In depth analysis of days off and day care programs to ensure affordable options to working parents and/or parents with active schedules.**
- 32. Develop financial plan to increase program participation, keeping program fees competitive, with a goal of increasing program fees as a total percentage of Park District revenue.**

## Initiatives

### 27. Perform integrative review among all pre-school programs to better develop synergies among them where possible.

**Why do this?** Perhaps the most popular programs offered through the Glencoe Park District in terms of enrollment and revenue is our comprehensive array of pre-school programs. These programs are offered through three platforms: two programs that are actively managed by Park District Staff and a program run through the Glencoe Junior Kindergarten (GJK) as an independent contractor. These platforms all operate high quality, value added programs. There is much opportunity to better coordinate planning and logistics of these programs as one program can be a feeder into another, particularly since the Park District benefits financially from all programs being as strong as possible. In addition, there is a wonderful opportunity to tap into the active parents of both programs to become a focus group or advisory group to Park District Staff to help create and structure successful programs that are competitive with any other on the North Shore.

**How will we do this?** First, our Board's recreation committee and Staff will review all the pre-school programs offered, looking at enrollment rates, patron satisfaction, comparative activities and

curriculum, and at costs. Then they will engage parents of both programs to solicit input, feedback and a wish list of ideas worth pursuing. The Park District will then work closely with these parent groups to develop a plan to find synergies between programs, making both programs stronger, and better serving the needs of the community and our patrons. With the parent's support, we will hopefully gain positive "word of mouth" which will help us be more competitive during the enrollment season.

#### **What will be different?**

We will hopefully be able to better promote a comprehensive package of pre-school, kindergarten, and enhancement programs from multiple platforms that will enhance the options available to parents in the market for pre-school services. This will also help enhance the experience for the pre-school participants, allowing them the opportunity to grow and develop, and to make childhood friends that will stick through life.

## Initiatives

### **28. Coordinate more closely with District 35 and other school programs in the area to solicit input into school age program development, and to enhance coordinated transportation with start times of programs.**

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**Why do this?** As the Park District develops programs for grade school and Jr. High aged participants, coordination with District 35 and other local School Districts is critical at a minimum to ensure that basic things like setting schedules and logistics around for the timing of Park District programs. In addition, program development could significantly benefit by collaborating with teachers and administrators to develop enrichment and recreation programs after school, weekends, holidays and days off that build off curriculum and school interests.

Collaboration with the school system can help create an integrated program environment whereby programs that school aged participants enroll in are somehow connected to activities at school. From the participant's perspective, such an integrated approach may heighten motivation, both at school and within the respective Park District program, enhancing the overall experience of both.

**How will we do this?** Staff will outreach to school administration and selected teachers for different age groups to gain ideas to develop more holistic and integrated programs, which are more likely to add to demand for these programs, ensuring their success.

In terms of basic logistics, schedules will be tightly coordinated, so that start and end times allow for adequate transportation, and that shifts in the school calendar are taken into consideration in Park District program scheduling.

**What will be different?** The Park District will have better school-aged programs that are more integrated with school logistics and topics of interest by the participant at school. Enrichment and recreational programs are an extension of school programs, and interest is higher by school age participants. Transportation and start times of programs will be highly calibrated to create a greater parent and child satisfaction.

## Initiatives

**29. Perform a strategic review of all programs, to evaluate patron satisfaction, long term viability, and a full understanding of which programs have been cancelled and why they were cancelled.**

**Why do this?** Last year, approximately one out of every four classes offered by the Park District was cancelled for reasons usually associated with lack of sufficient enrollment. Cancellations of programs at this high a level can cause frustration with parents of enrollees and from adult enrollees where applicable, as the cancellations upset time commitments related to class participation, or lack thereof. When a parent signs up their child for a two week summer program for example, complex family schedules are coordinated and aligned accordingly. Cancellation can blow a hole in the family system schedule, and may require other alterations to provide supervision for the suddenly free child.

Repeated stories around Park District cancellations reverberate in the community and diminish the Park District brand, and may encourage parents of potential enrollees and other potential patrons to seek enrollment in programs from sources other than the Glencoe Park District. At some point, this trend can impact the core business fee related programming model which could lead to increasing amounts of cancellations.

**How will we do this?** Board and staff will review reports on all programs that were cancelled in the

past year, to determine the circumstances surrounding cancellation, number of people impacted, and if possible, will seek input from those who were enrolled (or had children) enrolled in programs that subsequently were cancelled.

The Board will attempt to identify patterns of root causes and then work closely with Staff to develop alternative strategies to minimize cancellations on a go forward basis.

Strategies may include better development and design of programs, including input and collaboration with users and potential users, better marketing of programs, and/or streamlining total program offerings, deleting programs that have marginal chance of success based on the critical thinking analysis applied to the pattern of cancelled classes

**What will be different?** The Park District will have a more well thought out array and schedule of programs (which may mean fewer offerings in the short term); better marketing including leverage of centers of influence that could help spread the word on a particular program.

## Initiatives

### **30. Work with advisory and related groups and seek community input in developing and creating new programs where there is a market demand, and where the Park District can produce a competitive program.**

**Why do this?** Each program concept by design targets a specific demographic and interest group for potential enrollees. Glencoe is not exactly a large city, and with a little due diligence, it can be fairly easy to have Staff personally connect with specific potential enrollees and possible centers of influence. The value of creating an ad hoc focus group in new program design and development is even more important when considering that these same people may be the core enrollees to do a successful launch.

Thus, it is of critical importance that these ad hoc advisors are sought out for each newly designed program, and curriculum and concepts are stress tested against the group. This helps improve the odds that the new program launch will be successful.

**How will we do this?** Staff will carefully review opportunities to launch new programs, and then

will seek out core focus and advisory groups to test concepts, messaging, curriculum and activities against market need desire and interest. Programs will not proceed to launch status until they receive the requisite green light from their associated focus group, and a core initial group of enrollees are identified to seed the process. New program concepts are arrayed against competitive offerings to determine the competitiveness of the proposed Park District program. Careful evaluation is made and careful execution it carried out to ensure success the first time.

**What will be different?** The Park District will have a methodology to successfully launch new programs that will be successful, minimizing the risk of cancellations. These programs will be designed with relevant input, and they will serve an unmet need on a cost competitive basis to attract enrollees. Patron satisfaction scores will be higher.

## Initiatives

### 31. Perform in-depth analysis of days off and day care programs to ensure affordable options to working parents and/or parents with active schedules.

**Why do this?** Two very important programs provided by the Park District designed to help working parents and/or parents with active schedules are our day care program and the “days off” program.

Our highly successful day care programs highlight an emerging need within the community to continue to strive to improve options for parents of pre-school aged children.

And parents of school aged children seek affordable options that provide enrichment to enrollees, and keep their interest and motivation.

**How will we do this?** Board and Staff will review history and programming of past Days Off programs, and solicit satisfaction and qualitative input from parents who enrolled their children, and also seek input from other parents so utilize non Park District options. Using best practice methodology in developing new programs (and in revamping old ones) Staff will utilize the ad hoc focus group and enhance current concepts and develop new ones to improve the program. As part of the process, Staff will study successful Days Off

models at other Districts, and explore importing best practices into the Glencoe Park District program.

Board and Staff will also review our day care programs to understand success drivers, and to seek input from parents about continuing improvements in the program. They will also attempt to better understand the demographic demands on our day care program, to better predict future demands based on population changes within the community.

**What will be different?** The Park District will have Days Off program that is best in class, attracting a sizeable number of school age children in peer environments from the same school and classrooms. Patron satisfaction will be very high for these programs.

Our Board and Staff will have greater input from day care parents and will be better able to adjust programs accordingly, and will be better able to forecast future demand as demographic shifts occur.

## Initiatives

### **32. Develop a financial plan to increase program participation, keeping program fees competitive, with a goal of increasing program fees as a total percentage of Park District revenue.**

**Why do this?** As part of a long range financial and strategic planning process, one of the Park District's long term goals is to have fee revenue and taxpayer revenue closer to equal proportions in order to get the most value from taxpayer dollars. This goal will be evaluated against both the long term plan and recognition that the Park District is funded by the community with an expectation of certain services through their taxes. Staff will work collaboratively to develop assumptions and scenarios to bring levels of both sources of revenue closer to equal. Board will want to know how many years this may take, and what are the key programming and pricing assumptions taken into account.

This analysis will help Staff focus on a longer range goal of rebalancing the revenue model, requiring the Park District to provide a much more complete program offering to increase fee revenue proportions while serving community needs and keeping programs affordable and competitively priced. The relative percentage trend

will be easy to track, as is the opportunity to benchmark percentages at other Park Districts.

**How will we do this?** Staff will develop a financial model and will articulate assumptions of program and facility fee growth over time. Faulty and unrealistic assumptions will be thrown out, and critical thinking based dialogue will take place between Board and Staff to challenge the Staff to take strategic steps to move towards our long term goals.

**What will be different?** The Park District will meet benchmarks that will move to best in class, reflecting a much more market driven approach to developing fee revenue, and at the same time demonstrating the financial discipline to keep tax revenue in check on a proportional level. This target helps us achieve the dual goal of successful community and patron driven programs and taxpayer accountability.