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** Note that this information and formatting likely will be put through InDesign for a more formal and attractive presentation with pictures/charts/graphs. **



MAIN TITLE BELOW:

*Wildwood Park District
2026-2031 Strategic Plan and Goal Development*

Approved by the Board of Commissioners: / /2026

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Executive Summary

I am pleased to present our residents the Wildwood Park District Strategic Plan for 2026-2031. On behalf of the Board of Commissioners and our dedicated Staff, we are proud to share a plan that reflects the values, needs, and aspirations of our community. We hope you see your vision for Wildwood represented in this plan and that our future efforts continue to enhance your quality of life. With the Park District celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2026, the time is right to evaluate where we have been, where we are, and where we want to be moving forward. This is an exciting opportunity to set the District on an established path set by the Community and Board.

This Strategic Plan establishes a clear and cohesive vision for the next five years. As community needs, recreation trends, and opportunities evolve over time, this planning horizon allows the Park District to remain responsive, forward-thinking, and aligned with the interests of our residents. Most importantly, this plan provides a shared roadmap that unites the Board and Staff around common priorities and measurable goals.

As you review the plan, you will see it is built upon several interconnected planning priorities that reflect both current conditions and future aspirations for the Wildwood community. These focus areas were identified through thoughtful engagement with residents, stakeholders, and Staff, and they serve as the foundation for guiding decisions, investments, and service delivery. Together, they support the Park District's mission to provide welcoming spaces, meaningful programs, and high-quality experiences for all.

We are grateful to everyone who contributed their time, perspectives, and ideas throughout this process. Your input was essential in shaping a Strategic Plan that not only looks ahead but remains grounded in what matters most to the Wildwood community.

Brandon Magnini

Executive Director

Wildwood Park District

Thank You and Acknowledgements

The successful development of this Strategic Plan would not have been possible without the contributions, leadership, and support of many individuals and organizations.

Wildwood Park District Board of Commissioners

- *President Becky Jante*
- *Vice President Matt Brueck*
- *Treasurer Dan Corrigan*
- *Commissioner Anna Nelson*
- *Commissioner Doug Dietzen*

Wildwood Park District Staff

We extend our sincere appreciation to the Park District staff, whose professionalism, insight, and commitment were instrumental throughout the planning process.

Executive Director - Brandon Magnini

Marketing and Special Events Coordinator - Maggie Woznick

Maintenance Supervisor - Michael Dykes

Office Administrator – Melissa Roman

Guest Services Representative – Meghan Ainscough

Accountant – Kathy Atkins

Resident Volunteers and Advisory Participants

Thank you to the residents and community leaders who served in advisory roles and provided valuable feedback and guidance.

Ben and Siobhan Richards

Rob Flood (Gages Lake Conservation Committee – GLCC)

Harold & Caroll Flood (Gagewood Lions Club)

Mark Harold (Gagewood Lions Club & Scout Troop 672)

Beth Gehring

Mariana Ruano, Sally Mahan, and 'Friends of Valley Lake' resident volunteer advisory group

Planning and Consulting Partners

A special thank you goes out to Rudow Consulting, who facilitated the first community Focus Groups and Board Strategic Planning sessions back in 2022. These exercises helped the District establish an identity and allowed Staff to execute the Board's vision to allow this District to reach the point of being able to develop a Strategic Plan for the next five years.

Community Participants

Most importantly, we thank the many community members who shared their voices through surveys, meetings, focus groups, and public discussions. Your participation helped ensure this plan reflects the diverse needs and priorities of the Wildwood community. The following names represent a cross-section of all who were involved and to whom the District owes immense gratitude.

Elmer Fallos – Warren Township Supervisor and Gagewood Lion

Amy Sarver – Warren Township Highway Department Commissioner

Beckie Korzyniewski – Executive Director, Warren Special Recreation Association (WSRA)

Allan Short and Laura Shamberg of Boy Scout Troop 671 (District-Chartered)

Joe and Rosie Aeberman (Gagewood Lions Club)

A special thank-you to the Gagewood Lions Club for being a steady and community-focused partner throughout the years dating back to the founding of the District. Without their support, the Wildwood Park District would not be able to help fund, promote, engage the community, and seek equitable outcomes for our community through all associated projects and initiatives. Your commitment to the mission and future vision of our District is second to none.

Your collective engagement has shaped a Strategic Plan that will guide the Wildwood Park District forward with clarity, purpose, and shared commitment for the next 5 years.

MISSION, VISION, & CORE VALUES

Our Mission

Option 1 (Concise & Well-Rounded)

Our mission is to care for our parks with excellence, provide essential recreation and community events, build impact through partnerships, and responsibly steward our financial and physical assets.

Option 2 (Even More Streamlined)

We maintain exceptional parks, offer vital recreation and community events, strengthen impact through partnerships, and manage our resources responsibly.

Option 3: *To steward parks and facilities responsibly, deliver essential recreation programs, and foster community engagement through accessible, high-value services.*

Our Vision

Option 1 (Inspirational & Clear)

We envision a community where exceptional parks, meaningful recreation, and strong partnerships enrich every family's quality of life for generations to come.

Option 2 (Future-Focused & Community-Centered)

Our vision is to be a model park district known for outstanding parks, essential recreation, community connection, and responsible stewardship of public resources.

Option 3 (Very Concise)

We strive to create a thriving community enriched by exceptional parks, essential recreation, and sustainable stewardship.

Option 4: *To steward parks and facilities responsibly, deliver core recreation programs, and foster community engagement through accessible, high-value service.*

Core Values

Family-Centric: Our top priority is to welcome children and families into our parks, programs, and events and provide a fun, safe, and family-friendly environment for all to enjoy.

Equal Opportunity: Our goal is to provide excellent recreation opportunities for the entire community. We ensure that every individual is treated fairly and has the opportunity to participate in Wildwood Park District offerings regardless of individual disability or hardship. Therefore, we provide limited and budgeted financial assistance through our Scholarship Program to Wildwood Residents who are interested in participating in select recreation programs but are unable to do so due to financial difficulties. We comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in our program structures along with our current and future park and greenspace planning. We partner with Warren Special Recreation Association (WSRA) to help provide ALL individuals the resources to participate in Park District programming to their full abilities.

Sustainability: We use our capital to renew and maintain infrastructure of current facilities and park equipment, and for the conservation and preservation of our natural resources, parks, and lakes. The Wildwood Park District utilizes our in-house maintenance team for most on-going improvements and upkeep of parks and facilities but will outsource and/or collaborate with district affiliates and outside organizations when needed.

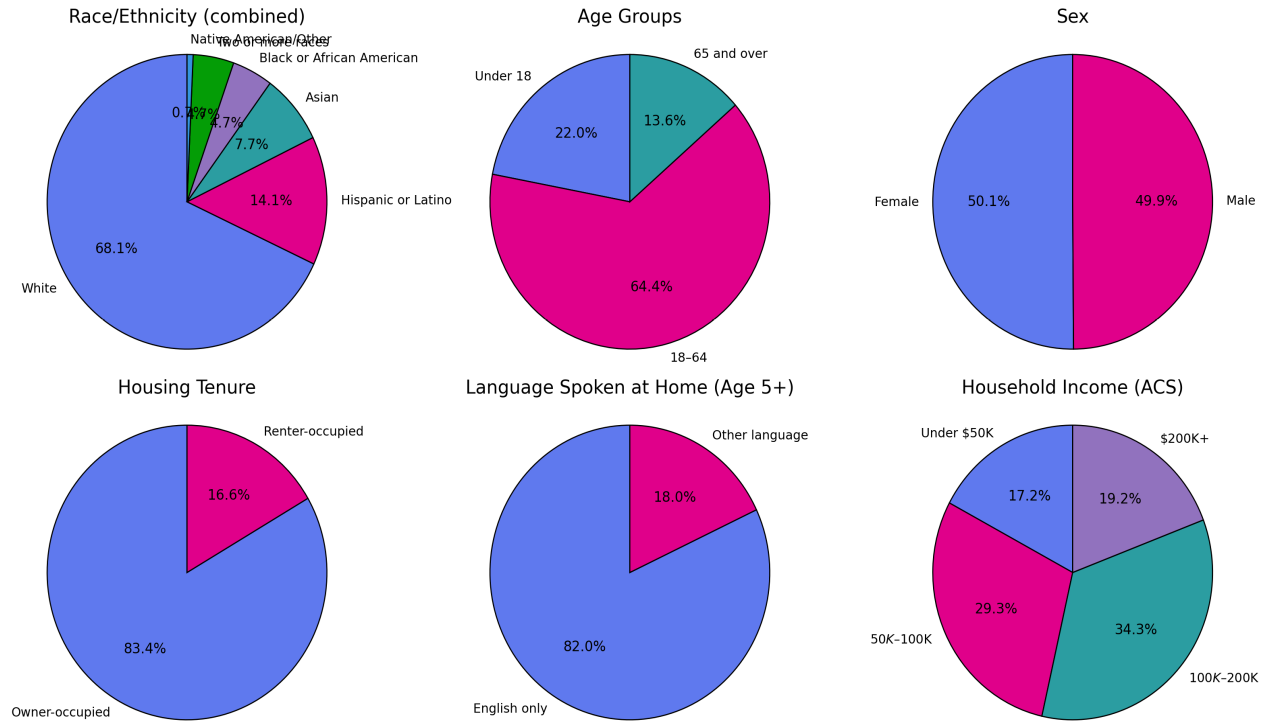
Communication: We are committed to staying connected with our community. We do this through raising public awareness of Park District programs, events, and initiatives. Additionally, we prioritize internal communication best practices to ensure effective information sharing and collaboration between Park District employees and their departments.

Transparency: Transparency with our community is something the Wildwood Park District is passionate about. We comply with mandated transparency laws and ensure Park District matters, information, and initiatives are well communicated and readily available, with an emphasis on accountability, openness, ethics, and fiscal responsibility.

Demographics at a Glance

The Wildwood Park District serves about 9,000 residents in its service area as part of the greater Gages Lake Census Designated Place (CDP) data:

Gages Lake / Wildwood (Lake County, IL) - Key Demographic Pie Charts



Strategic Planning Process and Background (2022–2026)

The Wildwood Park District’s strategic planning process reflects a multi-year, multi-phase effort combining historical data, community feedback, staff and Board engagement, and targeted focus group sessions. Together, these inputs inform a long-term vision and actionable priorities for the District.

1. Historical Input and Foundational Data (2019–2024)

Archived focus group notes and survey results collected between **2019 and 2022** (Appendix E) provide historical context regarding community needs, priorities, and satisfaction trends.

In **2023–2024**, the District conducted a comprehensive **Community Needs Assessment Survey**, gathering feedback from **134 respondents**. The survey included demographic information, park usage trends, and evaluations of park and program quality. A summarized version appears in this plan, with the full report included in **Appendix D**.

2. Accessibility and Inclusion Feedback (2025)

To better understand barriers to participation, the District conducted an **Accessibility Survey** from **October through December 2025**. Community members provided insights into ADA accessibility, mobility challenges, and opportunities to improve inclusivity in parks, facilities, and programs. Questions were developed from resources through the New England ADA Center and sample survey questions through ACTServices, Inc., who conducted the District’s ADA Audit and Transition Plan in April of 2026.

3. Strategic Planning Engagement Cycle (2025–2026)

Staff & Board Interviews (Winter 2025–2026)

During the winter of 2025–2026, staff from all Park District departments—Marketing, Recreation, Administration, Maintenance, and Finance—participated in structured interviews. Members of the Board of Commissioners were also interviewed. All participants responded to a consistent set of strategic planning questions. Summaries of these responses are incorporated throughout this document.

Focus Group: Strategic Planning Analysis

October 30, 2025

Lakeview Room

Participants conducted a guided review of program offerings, operational challenges, park conditions, communications, and partnership opportunities.

Special Board Strategic Planning Session

January 14, 2026

The Board of Commissioners participated in a dedicated planning workshop to review findings collected to date and begin shaping initial strategic priorities.

Focus Group: Mission, Vision, Guided Exercises & Community Partners

March 5, 2026

Lakeview Room

Participants reviewed proposed Mission and Vision options and engaged in guided exercises focused on organizational identity, community partnerships, and long-term direction.

4. Prior Board Strategic Planning Reference (2022)

A previous **Board Strategic Planning Session** was held on **February 16, 2022**. This session provides useful historical context and is referenced to ensure consistency and continuity between earlier goals and the 2025–2026 planning cycle.

Strategic Planning Timeline (Chronological)

Date	Activity
2019–2022	Archived focus groups and surveys (Appendix E)
2023–2024	Community Needs Assessment Survey conducted (134 responses)
Oct 30, 2025	Focus Group – Strategic Planning Analysis
Oct–Dec 2025	Accessibility Survey – Community Feedback
Winter 2025–2026	Staff and Board strategic planning interviews
Jan 14, 2026	Board Strategic Planning Session
Mar 5, 2026	Focus Group – Mission, Vision, Guided Exercise, Community Partners
Feb 16, 2022	Previous Board Strategic Planning Session (historical reference)

WILDWOOD PARK DISTRICT

SWOT ANALYSIS

STRENGTHS

- ✓ Best-in-class park & lake maintenance; visible quality residents notice
- ✓ Mission/values alignment, guides daily decisions (transparency, stewardship, affordability, community)
- ✓ Nimble; small-team culture: close communication, fast decisions; shared accountability
- ✓ Signature programs (Harvest Fest; camps, swim) drive participation & community identity
- ✓ Fiscal stewardship and trusted governance (careful spending, sponsorships & grants)

OPPORTUNITIES

- ✓ Partnerships & co-ops (e.g., WSRA GLCC, community orgs) for teens/tweens/ seniors
- ✓ Storytelling & impact reporting; show outcomes & tax-dollar value with visuals
- ✓ Sponsorships, grants & rentals; leverage bulk purchasing

WEAKNESSES

- Limited indoor facilities & parking/ADA constraints; few year-round spaces
- Staffing capacity: reliance on part-time staff; limited labor hours for planning
- Sponsorships; grants & rentals; leverage bulk purchasing
- Incremental facility upgrades (lighting; Rule House space; distinctive improvements)
- Formalize SOPs & training; onboarding; training matrix, documentation, goal tracking

THREATS

- Environmental; shoreline erosion, drainage issues
- Security concerns within parks
- Competition; larger districts, school activities, digital entertainment
- Capacity constraints limit new initiatives
- Seasonality/weather limit pr

In the winter of 2025-2026, Wildwood Park District Staff across all Departments (Marketing/Recreation/Administration/Maintenance/Finance) and the Board were all interviewed and answered the following Strategic Planning Questions. A summary of these responses can also be found in the following narrative:

Vision and mission

- What does our park district do exceptionally well?
- What is the most critical function of our park district?
- How do you feel our park district's vision and mission align with our daily operations?
- What do you believe the park district's vision should be for the future?

Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT)

- **Strengths:** What are the park district's greatest internal strengths? Think about our staff, facilities, and programs.
- **Weaknesses:** Where do you see the most significant inefficiencies or weaknesses within the district?
- **Opportunities:** What opportunities are we missing or under-utilizing? This could be new programs, partnerships, or funding sources.
- **Threats:** What external factors pose the greatest threat to our park district's success?

Programs and facilities

- Which current programs or facilities do you believe are the most successful? Why?
- Are there any programs that should be eliminated or restructured?
- What improvements would you like to see for existing facilities or parks?
- What new facilities or programs would best serve the community's needs?
- Are we adequately meeting the recreational needs of all demographics within our community?

Internal communication and collaboration

- How would you describe the communication between different departments or teams?
- Do you feel that employees have adequate input into decision-making processes?
- How can we improve internal collaboration to better serve our community?
- Are our internal processes and workflows clear and efficient?

Staff development and culture

- Do you feel you have the resources and training you need to do your job effectively?
- How can the district better support employee growth and development?
- What is the overall morale of the staff, and what factors contribute to it?
- Do you feel your contributions are valued and recognized by the organization?

Fiscal responsibility

- What is your perspective on the park district's current allocation of resources?
- Are there areas where you believe we can increase revenue or reduce costs without sacrificing quality?
- How can we better demonstrate value to the resident taxpayers?

Implementation and accountability

- In your experience, what are the primary obstacles to implementing new initiatives?
- What role do you believe staff should play in holding the organization accountable for achieving its goals?
- How can we best track progress and measure the success of our strategic plan?

Recurring Themes Across All Strategic Planning Interviews

Strategic Plan – Staff and Board Feedback Summary (Condensed Version). The full version can be found in Appendix G

1. Excellence in Core Operations

Staff consistently identified park, lake, and natural area maintenance as the District's strongest asset. High-quality care, visible improvements, and strong stewardship reinforce public trust and clearly demonstrate taxpayer value.

2. Strong Alignment With Mission and Values

Employees agree that the District's mission, vision, and values directly guide daily operations. The current direction is considered appropriate, with a desire to refine execution rather than change course.

3. Benefits and Limits of a Small District

The District's small size provides flexibility, close teamwork, and faster decision-making. At the same time, limited staff, few facilities, and constrained capacity challenge the ability to expand services or compete with larger agencies.

4. Positive Internal Communication and Culture

Staff described internal communication as open, respectful, and collaborative. Opportunities for improvement center on consistency—such as unified scheduling, documentation, and shared file systems—not on addressing major gaps.

5. Strength in Core Programs and Signature Events

High-impact programs such as camps, swim programs, and community events perform strongly and build community identity. Smaller or niche programs often struggle due to enrollment, capacity, or facility limitations. Staff support ongoing evaluation and sunsetting of underperforming programs.

6. Ongoing Challenges Serving Teens and Tweens

Engagement of teens remains a persistent challenge, driven by competing interests, limited facilities, and resource constraints. Staff support partnerships, targeted offerings, and modest experimentation rather than large-scale investment.

7. Facilities as a Key Limitation

Lack of substantial indoor space restricts year-round programming and competitiveness. Staff prioritize maintaining existing outdoor assets, small but meaningful improvements, expanded lighting and security, and improved parking access.

8. Need for Stronger Marketing and Visibility

Staff emphasized the essential role of marketing in a competitive region. Clear storytelling, visuals, and communication of results are needed to maintain public awareness and demonstrate responsible use of tax dollars.

9. Fiscal Stewardship and Responsible Growth

Employees view the District as financially disciplined. They support continued pursuit of grants, sponsorships, efficient purchasing, and cautious, sustainable growth aligned with capacity.

10. High Morale and Accountability

Organizational culture is described as positive, supportive, and motivated by pride in the community. Staff value recognition, opportunities for ongoing training, and clearer tracking of goals and progress.

11. Opportunities to Strengthen Systems and Training

Staff see value in implementing standardized training, improving maintenance documentation, enhancing onboarding, expanding administrative support, and involving maintenance leadership more in planning and budgeting.

12. Facility Maintenance Priorities

Key needs include improvements to pavilions, building exteriors, walkways, lighting, and indoor space at Rule House. Environmental and infrastructure challenges—shoreline erosion, drainage, and safety—remain ongoing concerns.

13. Community Needs and Inclusion

The District serves most demographics effectively but should continue prioritizing ADA accessibility, veteran recognition, and inclusive community engagement.

Overall Strategic Implications

Staff feedback reflects an organization that is:

- Operationally strong and aligned in mission
- Trusted by the community
- Realistic about its limitations
- Committed to responsible stewardship and sustainable growth

A future-focused strategic direction should emphasize:

- Protecting and strengthening core operational excellence
- Focusing programming on high-value offerings
- Enhancing marketing, visibility, and community storytelling
- Supporting staff through training, recognition, and measurable goals
- Maintaining disciplined financial and facility management

Wildwood Park District

Strategic Goals, Objectives, and KPIs (Staff, Board, and Community Informed)

Strategic Goal 1: Maintain Excellence in Parks, Lakes, and Natural Resource Stewardship

Purpose:

Preserve and enhance the high level of park and lake quality that defines the District's reputation and delivers visible taxpayer value.

Key Objectives

1. Maintain parks, lakes, and shoreline conditions at or above current quality standards
2. Continue proactive lake and shoreline management practices
3. Address prioritized infrastructure needs that support access and safety (e.g., parking)
4. Development of 10-year capital replacement plan (playgrounds, HVAC, etc.)

KPIs

- % of parks meeting established maintenance and cleanliness standards (annual audit and review existing ***Maintenance Standards Plan***)
- Number of shoreline stabilization or lake improvement projects completed
- Resident satisfaction rating related to park and lake condition
- Completion of priority capital maintenance projects (e.g., Rule Park parking lot) on schedule
- Reduction in reactive maintenance issues year over year

Strategic Goal 2: Optimize Core Programs and Signature Events for Community Impact

Purpose:

Focus District resources on high-impact programs and events that strengthen community identity and participation.

Key Objectives

1. Preserve and enhance successful core offerings (e.g., Harvest Fest, summer concerts, camps, swim programs)
2. Regularly evaluate program performance to refine or discontinue low-performing offerings
3. Use limited resources efficiently by prioritizing programs with demonstrated demand
4. Add one small-scale, low-cost community event each year (i.e. at Valley Lake – flick and float)

KPIs

- Attendance levels at signature events compared to prior years. Increase core event attendance by 10% each year.
- Program cost-recovery ratios by category
- Number of programs evaluated annually using established performance criteria
- Percentage of programs meeting minimum enrollment thresholds
- Participant satisfaction ratings for core programs and events

Strategic Goal 3: Expand Engagement Through Visibility, Marketing, and Storytelling

Purpose:

Increased awareness of the District's programs, parks, and value through consistent, outcome-focused messaging.

Key Objectives

1. Strengthen marketing and outreach to reinforce the District's presence in the community
2. Improve communication of outcomes, not just activities
3. Use visuals and storytelling to demonstrate value to taxpayers

KPIs

- Growth in program and event awareness metrics (survey-based)
- Website and social media engagement metrics (clicks, shares, impressions). Increase social media engagement by 20% over 2026-2028.

- Number of impact-focused communications published annually (newsletters, articles, posts)
- Resident awareness of programs and services in community surveys
- Frequency of taxpayer-focused reporting on completed projects and outcomes

Strategic Goal 4: Strengthen Organizational Capacity and Staff Support

Purpose:

Maintain a healthy, collaborative workplace while supporting staff effectiveness within the District's size and resources.

Key Objectives

1. Enhance internal communication, documentation, and workflow clarity
2. Support knowledge-sharing and continuity across roles
3. Foster staff morale through recognition and professional development

KPIs

- Number of cross-department or all-staff meetings held annually. Hold at least one per quarter.
- Completion of documented role guides or standard operating procedures
- Staff satisfaction scores related to communication and support
- Training hours completed per staff member annually.
- Implementation of employee recognition or appreciation initiatives

Strategic Goal 5: Ensure Fiscal Stewardship and Long-Term Sustainability

Purpose:

Protect the District's financial health while continuing to provide affordable, high-quality services.

Key Objectives

1. Sustain responsible budgeting and cost control practices
2. Expand supplemental funding through sponsorships and grants. Pursue grants for playgrounds, trails, and accessibility improvements.
3. Align spending decisions with strategic priorities and community value

KPIs

- Grant dollars applied for and secured annually
- Sponsorship revenue generated per year. Incorporate sponsorships from 2-3 new businesses per year to support events or capital projects.

- Percentage of programs/events with sponsorship or cost offset. 25% per year.
 - Budget variance percentage year over year
 - Decreasing maintenance and operating cost trends over time
-

Strategic Goal 6: Strengthen Accountability and Measure Strategic Progress

Purpose:

Ensure the strategic plan remains actionable, transparent, and accountable to staff, leadership, and the community.

Key Objectives

1. Translate strategic goals into SMART objectives with timelines
2. Track and report progress internally and publicly
3. Embed accountability into performance reviews and staff goal-setting

KPIs

- Percentage of strategic initiatives with defined timelines and responsible parties
- Quarterly or annual progress reports completed and shared
- Number of strategic goals integrated into staff work plans or evaluations
- Community satisfaction scores over time
- Completion rate of strategic initiatives by milestone date

Internal Department-Based Goals and Action Items

Board/Administrative Staff Level Goals:

Department(s)	Goals	Preferred Timeline	Notes
Board/Admin	Parks Tour	Summer 2027	
Board/Admin	Parks Tour	Spring 2029	
Board/Admin	Parks Tour	Spring 2031	Primer for next Strategic/Master Planning Process
Board/Admin (Marcom)	Community Needs Assessment	October 2030	Primer for Strategic Planning process with adoption of new Plan in May of 2031.
Board/Admin	Parks Ordinance Book Revamp	December 31 st , 2028	Strategize review and budgetary costs with Counsel. Break up into multiple years if needed.
Board/Admin	Establish working relationship with state representatives and political figures for funding relief	May 2026-May 2031	Attend IAPD Legislative Breakfasts. Attend Parks Day at the Capitol (each May). Conduct outreach.

Administrative Staff Level Goals:

Department(s)	Goals	Preferred Timeline	Notes
Administration	Develop Agency AI Strategy/Plan	Fall 2026	Review with counsel & PDRMA
Administration	Engage with third-party ADA auditor to audit Rule House and 11 parks while developing in-house policy review along with proper procedures and training from third-party.	May 2026 – April 30th, 2027 ending.	Refer to Title II ADA requirements and recommendations from ACT Services.
Administration	Revamp Safety and Crisis Plan	December 2026 and December 2027	Review with PDRMA and break up into one section per year. ED takes lead.
Administration (Board)	Strategic Planning Sessions	November 2030-March 2031	Review mission statement, develop goals, identify District needs, capital projects.
Administration	Further develop completed Valley	April 2026-May 2031	Prioritize initiatives and treatments that address

	Lake Management Plan. Maintain strong water quality.		sediment and nutrient issues, engage community and seek fundraising for these efforts. Explore neighbors developing a "Friends Group" for the lake and/or other fundraising body.
Administration (Board)	Explore creation of Friends of the Wildwood Parks Friends Group	May 2028	Tax-Exempt 501c3 non-profit group to fundraise, advocate, and volunteer for park projects and initiatives

Parks and Maintenance Department Goals:

Department(s)	Goals	Preferred Timeline	Notes
Maintenance	Complete JHA for 10 most hazardous tasks	June 2026 - June 2027	Refer to PDRMA requirements
Maintenance	Complete in-house stump grinding of remaining tree stumps in park system.	Completion August 31st, 2027	Utilize IGA with Warren Township or local Park District/Public Works system. Determine in-house pricing
Maintenance	Create Lakes Management Page on WPD website	Refer to Valley Lake Management Plan	Provide public weekly updates and live information on lake conditions for Gages and Valley
Maintenance	Develop digital new hire training manual	April 2030	
Maintenance	Reassess and review status of 2025-2026 Tree Inventory for future planning	January 2031	Refer to GLUF report, provide GLUF with 2025-2030 tree updates, work with Board and ED.

Marketing and Communication Department Goals:

Department(s)	Goals	Preferred Timeline	Notes
Marcom	Develop and Execute Core Special Events Marketing Plan/Standards	May 1st, 2026	Included in current Strategic Plan. Develops enhanced marketing focus on core programs/events

Marcom	Draft, review, and adopt Communication/PR plan	December 1 st , 2026	Current 2026 Safety Committee Task for Marketing & Events Coordinator
Marcom	Review and come into website ADA accessibility compliance	March 1st, 2027	Per ADA Title II, by April 26, 2027 – websites for public entities serving under 50,000 residents must meet WCAG 2.1 Level AA standards.
Marcom	Obtain sponsorship to break even on 75% of summer concert events	April 1st, 2027	Equivalent of \$2,000.00.
Marcom	Submit marketing publication to be nominated for recognition/award at IPRA Conference	August 31, 2027	To be considered for January 2028 IPRA Conference.

Recreation Department Goals:

Department(s)	Goals	Preferred Timeline	Notes
Recreation/Admin	Submit OSLAD Grant for Willow Point Inclusive Playground and Willow Point Pavilion Replacement with power capability.	April 2027-October 2028	Refer to OSLAD application timeframes. Confer with ADA compliance, inclusive practices, and NRPA standards.
Recreation	Develop consistent commercial revenue stream through rentals of Oak/Maple Rooms between 9:30am-4:00pm	September 2027	Per dissolution of preschool program: Seek out lease of space to commercial renter/program instructor. Maintain consistent rental at a minimum of 50% utilization rate of hours between 9:30am-4:00pm M-F.
Recreation (Marcom assist)	Develop neighborhood volunteer database and retention program	June 1, 2027	Utilize software/free websites, develop volunteer recognition plan/policy.
Recreation	Enhance summer concert events. Improve quality of bands.	June 2026 – May 2031	Utilize Core Program Matrix, Focus Group Feedback, conduct additional Surveys.
Recreation	Identify (June 2027) and implement (June 2028) core program or	June 2027 – June 2028	Utilize Core Program Matrix, Focus Group

	revenue opportunity to utilize open space at Twin Lakes Park		Feedback, conduct additional Surveys.
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Park Safety Department Goals:

Department(s)	Goals	Preferred Timeline	Notes
Park Safety	Secure addition security lighting at Old Plank, Willow Point, and Pebble Beach Parks	April 2028	Partner with ComEd, IGA's, seek additional community Focus Groups and survey on the subject.
Park Safety	Secure solar cameras at Sunset Park	April 2029	Partner with ComEd, IGA's, seek additional community Focus Groups and survey on the subject.

Conclusion

This report's value will be realized if it is used as an active working guide to both the Park District's Leadership Team and Staff as the issues explored during the Strategic Planning process are pursued. These findings are designed to capture the content of the discussions and guide the organization in developing action plans for Committees, Departments, and Elected Commissioners.

Appendix A: Focus Group Results

Wildwood Park District

Focus Group Summary – Strategic Planning Analysis

(October 30, 2025 | Lakeview Room)

Overall Perception of the District

Participants expressed strong overall satisfaction with the Wildwood Park District, describing it as a well-managed, welcoming, and family-oriented organization that provides high-quality parks, facilities, and special events while maintaining relatively low taxes. Signature events such as Harvest Fest were frequently cited as examples of inclusive, community-building programming. Park maintenance and recent capital improvements were generally viewed positively, with particular recognition of improvements to the Valley Lake plunge pool filtration system.

Assets and Strengths

The District's **diverse park system** is considered one of its greatest strengths. Residents value the unique recreational opportunities created by the two lakes, including fishing, swimming, boating, kayaking, waterskiing, skating, and year-round passive and active use. The contrast between the more active Gages Lake and the calmer Valley Lake was seen as an asset that serves varying user preferences. Connectivity between parks, including the ability to bike throughout the system, further enhances the District's appeal. Respondents also highlighted appreciation for traditional communication methods, specifically the continued distribution of a printed program guide.

Community Values and Long-Term Vision

Many participants expressed that they **value the District as it is today** and would not want to see major changes, particularly around Valley Lake. There was a clear desire to preserve the natural character of sensitive park areas rather than introduce significant new development.

Participants acknowledged that some recreational amenities are provided by the Township and therefore do not need to be duplicated by the Park District, reflecting an understanding of the District's size and role. While some residents—particularly those near Valley Lake—were less aware of issues affecting parks around Gages Lake, there was general support for equitable care and attention across the entire park system.

Equity in Maintenance and Improvements

Residents noted a perception that, in the past, some parks—especially around Gages Lake—received more attention than others. Recent improvements at Old Plank Park and increased maintenance efforts at both Valley Parks and Twin Lakes were seen as meaningful progress, and participants encouraged the District to maintain this balanced approach moving forward.

Key Challenges and Areas for Improvement

The most frequently cited challenge was **water quality**, particularly at Valley Lake, which was consistently identified as the District's top concern. Shoreline stabilization—especially at Valley South Park along Greentree Road—was emphasized as a priority, along with continued algae management, weed control, and overall lake health for both Valley and Gages Lakes.

Participants also indicated the need for better **public education and communication** regarding environmentally responsible lawn care practices that affect lake water quality.

Additional areas for improvement included:

- Enhanced **walkability and trail connectivity**, especially near busy roadways and in areas lacking sidewalks
- Potential aesthetic treatment of Twin Lakes ponds
- Continued attention to park safety, with strong support for maintaining current patrol levels and collaboration with the Lake County Sheriff's Office

Programming and Service Delivery

While residents appreciated the District's willingness to offer a variety of programs, there was concern about smaller programs failing to meet minimum registration levels. Participants encouraged greater use of **cooperative programming** with neighboring agencies to improve consistency and participation. Long-standing recreational strengths—such as camps, swim programs, preschool offerings, and special events—were reaffirmed as the most valued services, aligning with findings from previous community engagement efforts.

Opportunities Looking Forward

Participants identified opportunities to:

- Expand intentional programming in underutilized open spaces, such as the former soccer field area at Twin Lakes Park
- Leverage improved lake conditions to introduce future special events (e.g., kayak or sailing races)
- Continue strengthening communication and education efforts to support environmental stewardship and community awareness

Focus Group Summary – Mission/Vision/Guided Exercise/Community Partners

(March 5th, 2026 | Lakeview Room)

Introduction

On March 5, 2026, the Wildwood Park District held a second community focus group to gather resident perspectives to support long-term strategic planning. Many of these residents were contacted by the Park District to participate due to their involvement in key District affiliate groups and partnerships such as WSRA, GLCC, Lions Club, Troop 671/672, Warren Township, and more.

Overall Perception of the District

Participants expressed strong overall satisfaction with the Wildwood Park District, describing it as a well-managed, welcoming, and community/family-oriented organization that provides high-quality parks, facilities, and special events. Many of the participants appreciated the abundance of open space the District has to offer. The participants also felt the neighborhood was relatively diverse across all metrics and that is reflected in how the District operates. One area of perception that was discussed was the attitudes about the District from the homeowners (non-residents) across the lake in the Idlewild neighborhood and other neighborhoods at large. The perception is although some of those homes receive a program guide in the mail and do follow the District on social media; people in those areas believe that the programs and events provided in our program guide are for “Wildwood residents only” and that they cannot attend them. This perhaps may stem historically from how the parks were once “private” prior to the Park District forming and taking ownership to even recent attitudes within Wildwood about “keeping other people out of the parks”. The District has an opportunity to reach those local non-residents and set the narrative straight with facts and an attitude of inclusion in District programs/events while still respecting the Park Ordinances and non-resident requirements for WPD park/facility/program use.

Assets and Strengths

The District’s **diverse park system** is considered one of its greatest strengths. Residents value the unique recreational opportunities created by the two lakes, including fishing, swimming, boating, kayaking, waterskiing, skating, and year-round passive and active use. The participants hoped to see the parks continued to be kept up as they have been in recent years. The District’s core programs are community builders and how many of our residents created long-term friendships. Our Park Maintenance Team and other Front-Line Staff were noted as being extremely kind, talkative, and open to interaction with our residents. In that same vein, District leadership and the Board were perceived as open, easy to talk to, and responsive as well as eager to seek out public opinion. Finally, the community engagement and alliances we have with groups such as the GLCC and Lions Club were applauded and noted as key relationships to manage moving forward.

Community Values and Long-Term Vision

Participants hope to see the parks kept up and functioning well as they have been if they were to leave the area and come back in 10-15 years. In that same respect, consistent healthy water quality, and shoreline cleanup around bodies of water were asked to be maintained. Specific projects such as brush cleanup around the Twin Lakes Park ponds, Valley South shoreline, and Rule Park shoreline were applauded. Park Safety was again reaffirmed as a continued long-term initiative and focus for the District. Accessibility of the parks, programs, and operations with a focus on inclusion was highlighted as a key feature the District should focus on in the next five years. Discussions were had on where our parks and facilities likely currently stand prior to an ADA accessibility audit and how that should be a focus to protect the District long-term and develop plans to improve access for our parks and facilities. It was also noted that certain grants are not considered without the development of accessible features and an attempt at compliance across the board. Finally, a few participants would be happy to see some form of additional expanded space or community center to expand operations and programming long-term.

Key Challenges and Areas for Improvement

The most frequently cited challenge was **water quality**, which was consistently identified as one of the District's top concerns. Shoreline stabilization was once again emphasized as a priority on both lakes with the hardscape style (boulders/rip rap) preferred for the remaining lake-facing parks that are facing erosion. Sunset Park seawall improvement was also brought up as a capital improvement in the semi-near future. One participant noted that deferred maintenance is still an issue, but that is common of many parks systems across the country. The WPD was applauded for addressing the majority of this deferred maintenance consistently in recent years. One participant asked if the Maintenance Team could continue to address the overabundance of seaweed at the Sunset Boat Launch even after the first "wave" of the aquatic plants are cleaned up while noting it was difficult job and hard to control. Sunset Park parking was also cited as having limited parking but understanding there was nothing WPD could do to stop people from parking along the road shoulders. Finally, one participant asked why the WPD could not start promoting and opening up camp/swim/core program registration earlier in the winter months as other Districts do. Director Magnini was happy to report the District did just that this winter and has already seen quite a bit of camp enrollment with the early-bird and regular rate registration.

Opportunities Looking Forward and Top Priorities

Participants identified opportunities to:

- Take a vested interest in tree conservation, tracking, and new tree planting.
- Maintain Harvest Fest as the premier District event and use the event to showcase District programs and initiatives.
- Keep taxes low or stagnant, remain fiscally responsible.
- Look into developing and researching what it would take to form a Friends of the Wildwood Park District tax-exempt 501c3 non-profit group to help handle donations and grant funding.
- Pursue grant opportunities (such as OSLAD) and continue to build relationships with local/IL legislators such as Joyce Mason or whomever represents our district at a given time.

Appendix B: Survey Results

Wildwood Park District

The section presents the abbreviated results of the 2023-2024 Wildwood Community Needs Assessment Survey, detailing demographic information and feedback on park usage and quality from 134 respondents. The full Community Needs Assessment Report can be found in Appendix D.

Age Distribution of Respondents

The survey collected responses from a diverse age group, with a notable representation of middle-aged individuals.

- 0% of respondents are under 18 years old.
- 0.8% are aged 18-24 years.
- 9.8% are aged 25-34 years.
- 26.3% are aged 35-44 years.
- 11.3% are aged 45-54 years.
- 27.8% are aged 55-64 years.
- 22.6% are aged 65 and older.
- 1.5% preferred not to answer.

Gender Distribution of Respondents

The majority of respondents identified as female, indicating a gender imbalance in the survey.

- 23.1% identified as male.
- 74.6% identified as female.
- 1.5% identified as other gender identities.
- 0.7% preferred not to answer.

Household Composition Insights

The survey revealed a significant number of respondents living in smaller households.

- 3.7% live alone.
- 42.5% live with 2 people.
- 30.6% live with 3 people.
- 15.7% live with 4 people.
- 5.2% live with 5 people.
- 2.2% live with 6 people.
- No respondents reported living with 7 or more people.
- 0% preferred not to answer.

Age Range of Household Members

Respondents reported a variety of ages among household members, indicating family diversity.

- 16.4% have children aged 0-5 years.
- 14.9% have children aged 6-10 years.
- 14.9% have children aged 11-15 years.
- 13.4% have teenagers aged 16-18 years.
- 7.5% have young adults aged 18-24 years.
- 20.1% have adults aged 25-34 years.
- 26.1% have adults aged 35-44 years.
- 16.4% have adults aged 55-64 years.
- 32.8% have seniors aged 65 and older.
- 25.4% preferred not to answer.

Duration of Residency in Wildwood

The survey indicated a mix of long-term and relatively new residents in the Wildwood area.

- 15.0% have lived in the area for 0-5 years.
- 18.8% have lived there for 6-10 years.
- 3.0% have lived there for 11-15 years.
- 8.3% have lived there for 16-20 years.
- 21.0% have lived there for 21-30 years.
- 21.1% have lived there for over 31 years.
- 33.8% preferred not to answer.

Park Usage Frequency

A significant portion of respondents frequently visit Wildwood Park District parks, indicating high community engagement.

- 43.3% visited more than 25 times in the past year.
- 23.1% visited 11-25 times.
- 17.9% visited 6-10 times.
- 12.7% visited 1-5 times.
- 3.0% did not visit any parks.

Barriers to Park Usage

The survey identified minimal barriers preventing residents from using the parks, with few citing specific reasons.

- 0% were unaware of the parks.
- 0.7% used other parks outside of Wildwood.
- 1.5% were not interested in using the parks.
- 2.2% cited lack of convenient parking.
- 2.2% had safety concerns.
- 0.7% mentioned lack of ADA accessibility.
- 1.5% provided other reasons.

Park Visit Preferences

Respondents indicated a preference for visiting specific parks within the Wildwood Park District.

- 72.4% visited Sunset Park.
- 64.9% visited Rule Park.
- 79.1% visited Twin Lakes Park.
- 14.2% visited Pebble Beach Park.
- 18.7% visited Lake Shore Drive Park.
- 17.9% visited Old Plank Park.
- 14.9% visited Cove Park.
- 32.8% visited Valley North Park.
- 15.7% visited Valley South Park.
- 33.6% visited Willow Point Park.

Quality Ratings of Park Facilities

Overall, respondents rated the quality of parks and facilities positively, reflecting satisfaction with maintenance.

- 52.2% rated the overall quality as excellent.
- 44.3% rated it as good.
- 2.3% rated it as fair.
- 0% rated it as poor.

Playground Equipment Usage and Quality

The survey revealed a high level of engagement with playground equipment, with positive quality ratings.

- 70.1% of respondents used playground equipment in the past year.
- 37.1% rated the quality as excellent.
- 56.5% rated it as good.
- 6.5% rated it as fair.
- 0% rated it as poor.

Beach Usage and Quality Ratings

A majority of respondents utilized the beaches, with generally favorable quality assessments.

- 70.1% have used the beaches in the past year.
- 30.6% rated the beach quality as excellent.
- 55.1% rated it as good.
- 12.2% rated it as fair.
- 2.0% rated it as poor.

Barriers to Beach Usage

A small number of respondents indicated reasons for not using the beaches, with a focus on cleanliness and accessibility.

- 15.7% were not interested in using beaches.
- 3.0% cited lack of ADA accessibility.

- 9.0% mentioned poor lake water quality.
- 9.7% provided other reasons.

Boat Ramp Usage and Quality Ratings

The survey indicated moderate usage of boat ramps, with mixed quality ratings.

- 30.5% have used the boat ramps in the past year.
- 46.3% rated the condition as good.
- 41.5% rated it as fair.
- 12.2% rated it as poor.

Awareness of Maintenance Team

Most respondents were aware of the in-house maintenance team responsible for park upkeep.

- 97.0% were aware of the maintenance team.
- 3.0% were not aware.

Safety Protocols of Maintenance Team

Respondents generally rated the maintenance team's safety protocols positively, indicating effective practices.

- 64.7% rated their safety measures as excellent.
- 32.4% rated them as good.
- 2.9% rated them as fair.
- 0% rated them as poor.

Overall Satisfaction with Maintenance Team

The maintenance team's performance received high satisfaction ratings from respondents.

- 63.0% rated their overall achievement as excellent.
- 34.6% rated it as good.
- 2.4% rated it as fair.
- 0% rated it as poor.

Desired Improvements for Parks in 2024-2025

Respondents at the time expressed various suggestions for park improvements at the time, focusing on cleanliness and amenities.

- Requests for better beach maintenance and cleanliness.
- Suggestions for new amenities like a skate park or pickleball court.
- Interest in improved ADA accessibility and pathways.
- Calls for better management of goose populations and park aesthetics.

Landscaping and Greenspace Ratings

The landscaping and greenspaces in the parks received generally positive feedback from respondents.

- 50.0% rated the landscaping as excellent.
- 44.0% rated it as good.
- 5.2% rated it as fair.
- 0.7% rated it as poor.

Pavilion and Room Rental Insights

A small percentage of respondents utilized pavilion or room rentals, with positive quality ratings.

- 16.0% rented space in the past year.
- 54.5% rated the quality of rented spaces as excellent.
- 31.8% rated it as good.
- 9.1% rated it as fair.
- 4.5% rated it as poor.

Barriers to Pavilion Rentals

The survey identified reasons why many residents did not rent pavilion or room spaces.

- 61.9% were not interested or had no need to rent.
- 2.2% were unaware of rental options.
- 0.7% cited quality concerns.
- 6.0% provided other reasons.

Overall Feedback on Park Facilities

Respondents provided positive feedback on park facilities, with some suggestions for improvements.

- Many praised the maintenance and cleanliness of parks.
- Some expressed concerns about goose droppings and safety issues.
- Suggestions included better enforcement of park rules and improved amenities.

Satisfaction with Park Safety Staff

The Park Safety and Boat Ramp Monitor staff received high satisfaction ratings from respondents.

- 43.8% rated their friendliness and professionalism as excellent.
- 50.9% rated it as good.
- 4.5% rated it as fair.
- 0.9% rated it as poor.

Perceived Safety in Parks

Most respondents felt safe while using the parks, with a small percentage reporting safety concerns.

- 86.0% felt safe.
- 14.0% reported feeling unsafe.

Safety Concerns Reported by Respondents

Respondents who felt unsafe cited various incidents that contributed to their concerns.

- Reports of disruptive behavior from teens and adults.
- Concerns about wobbly docks and safety of park facilities.
- Requests for increased lighting and security presence.

Desired Safety Improvements for Parks

Respondents expressed a desire for enhanced safety measures in the parks.

- 30.6% requested cameras for surveillance.
- 63.0% requested increased lighting.
- 47.0% wanted more Park Safety staff presence.
- 27.6% called for increased law enforcement patrolling.

Overall Satisfaction with Safety Enforcement

Respondents rated the enforcement of safety measures by Park Safety and Boat Ramp Monitor staff positively.

- 43.8% rated their supervision as excellent.
- 50.4% rated it as good.
- 8.5% rated it as fair.
- 2.6% rated it as poor.

Perception of Safety Improvement Over Time

A majority of respondents believe that park safety has improved in recent years.

- 70.5% believe safety has improved.
- 12.3% believe it has not improved.
- 17.2% provided other comments on safety perceptions.

Park Safety Feedback and Concerns

Residents have expressed mixed feelings about park safety, noting improvements but also highlighting ongoing issues.

- Some residents appreciate the increased presence of monitors and law enforcement in parks, especially since COVID-19.
- Concerns include non-residents using park facilities, speeding, and inappropriate behavior by teens.
- Suggestions for improvement include more police presence, better lighting, and stricter enforcement of parking regulations for non-residents.
- Positive feedback indicates that many have noticed significant improvements in park maintenance and safety over the past year.

Participation in Park District Programs

A majority of residents have not participated in Wildwood Park District programs in the past year.

- 32 respondents (24.1%) reported participating in programs, while 101 (75.9%) did not.
- Reasons for non-participation include being too busy (28 responses), lack of interest (23 responses), and inconvenient program times (19 responses).
- Among those who participated, convenience of location (27 responses) and affordable fees (20 responses) were the main reasons for their involvement.

Quality of Programs and Events

Participants generally rate the quality of programs and events positively.

- 43.2% rated the overall quality of programs as excellent, while 45.9% rated it as good.
- 41% of respondents participate in neighboring park district programs, with Grayslake and Gurnee being the most popular choices.
- Feedback indicates a desire for more diverse programming, including adult classes and special events.

Special Events Attendance and Feedback

The majority of residents have attended special events hosted by the Wildwood Park District.

- 76.6% of respondents reported attending events like the Summer Concert Series and Harvest Fest.
- Feedback on special events is largely positive, with many expressing enjoyment of the concerts and community gatherings.
- Suggestions for improvement include better organization of events like the Easter egg hunt and more food truck options.

Customer Service and Communication Satisfaction

Residents express high satisfaction with customer service and communication from the Park District.

- 61.1% of respondents are very satisfied with customer service, while 27.8% are satisfied.

- The ease of registering for programs is rated positively, with 49.3% satisfied and 19.7% dissatisfied.
- Most residents prefer to receive information through the program brochure (104 responses) and social media (103 responses).

Awareness and Understanding of the Board of Commissioners

There is a general awareness of the Board of Commissioners, but understanding of their roles varies.

- 76.9% of respondents are aware of the Board, but only 24.6% feel they understand its duties well.
- 61.2% know that board meetings are open to the public, yet only 20% have attended a meeting.
- Feedback suggested a desire for more transparency and community engagement from the Board.

Interest in Community Engagement and Focus Groups

Residents show interest in participating in focus groups for further community feedback.

- 60.2% of respondents support additional focus groups, while 37.5% are interested in participating.
- Suggestions for focus groups include topics like park safety and early childhood programming.
- Many residents appreciate the efforts of the Park District and express a desire for continued improvement and community involvement.

Accessibility Survey – Summary of Community Feedback

(Responses collected October–December 2025)

Overall Participation Profile

- Most respondents participate in Park District programs or events **less than once a month or once a month**
- The majority live **within walking distance of a park**, with one respondent living within a 5-mile drive
- Respondents included:
 - Community members without disabilities
 - Persons with disabilities
 - Friends or family members of persons with disabilities
- Awareness and participation in **WSRA programs** was limited, with several respondents unsure or indicating no participation

Accessibility Key Issues & Recommended Actions

Key Issue	Evidence from Survey Feedback	Recommended Actions	Strategic Benefit
Inconsistent ADA access across parks	Majority rated accessibility high, but at least one respondent reported significant barriers and one facility not ADA accessible	Conduct a system-wide ADA audit and inventory; prioritize deficiencies in a phased transition plan	Ensures equitable access across all parks and reduces liability
Condition of accessible paths	Paths reported as paved but “in somewhat disrepair” in several parks	Establish routine inspection and repair schedule for ADA routes; integrate into maintenance plans	Maintains accessibility while protecting past capital investments
Limited accessible parking	Minimal handicap parking noted at Pebble Beach Park	Evaluate parking supply at high-use parks; add or re-stripe accessible parking where warranted	Improves access and compliance at key destinations
Lack of adaptive playground equipment	Multiple comments citing non-adaptive playgrounds	Incorporate adaptive and sensory-inclusive equipment into future playground renovations; identify at least one inclusive playground	Expands play opportunities for children of all abilities
Lawn-based event accessibility	Some programs/events primarily occur on grass	Provide temporary pathways, mats, or alternate viewing/participation areas for major events	Allows inclusive participation without limiting event design

ADA accessibility of facilities/buildings	One respondent reported a building not ADA accessible	Perform facility ADA assessments; prioritize entrance, restroom, and interior circulation upgrades	Ensures basic functional access and regulatory compliance
Unclear communication about accommodations	Respondents unsure how individuals with visual, hearing, or language barriers receive assistance	Add a clear accessibility and accommodation request section to website, program guides, and registrations	Improves awareness and self-advocacy for users with disabilities
Website accessibility for diverse users	Website rated highly, but concerns about registration for users with visual or hearing impairments	Review website for WCAG compliance; confirm compatibility with screen readers and captioning	Maintains usability while improving inclusivity
Public meeting accessibility	Questions raised about wheelchair access and hearing-impaired participation	Formalize meeting accommodation procedures (e.g., seating, microphones, assistive listening, interpreters upon request)	Enhances civic engagement and transparency
Limited availability of alternative formats	Respondents unsure how to access alternative print or communication formats	Develop and advertise availability of large-print, digital, and alternate format materials	Removes communication barriers and supports independence
Program accessibility consistency	Some programs rated inaccessible for individuals with mobility challenges	Review program locations and layouts; relocate or adapt select programs to accessible settings	Broadens participation without increasing program volume
Awareness of WSRA offerings	Several respondents unaware of WSRA participation	Strengthen promotion and cross-marketing of WSRA programs	Maximizes regional partnerships and service awareness
Desire for system-wide ADA planning	Request for a clear plan and timeline for ADA improvements	Develop and publish a multi-year ADA Transition Plan with milestones	Builds public trust and accountability
Need for inclusive best-practice models	Round Lake park cited as best practice example	Benchmark inclusive park designs locally and regionally; consult peer agencies	Informs cost-effective, high-impact improvements

Appendix C: Core Program Matrix Classification and Justification

Program	Mission Alignment (1-5)	Community Need (1-5)	Financial Sustainability (1-5)	Uniqueness of Service (1-5)	Average Score	Classification
Camp Rules	5	5	4	3	4.25	CORE
Tot Camp	5	4	4	3	4	CORE
Swim Lessons	5	5	3	5	4.5	CORE
Summer Concerts	5	4	2	4	3.75	ESSENTIAL
Special Events	4	4	2	3	3.25	ESSENTIAL
Harvest Fest	5	5	4	5	4.75	CORE
Adult Programming (Yoga)	4	2	5	5	4	CORE
Adult Programming (Bingo)	5	5	5	5	5	CORE
Schoolhouse Adventures Preschool	4	3	1	1	2.25	STRATEGIC
Active Adult/Senior Programs	4	1	1	1	1.75	NON-CORE

Average Score Range	Category	Meaning
4.0 – 5.0	CORE	High mission impact; protect & invest in
3.0 – 3.9	ESSENTIAL	Important to public benefit; strengthen
2.0 – 2.9	STRATEGIC	Useful but non-critical; evaluate or redesign
1.0 – 1.9	NON-CORE	Consider outsourcing or discontinuing

Wildwood
DISTRICT

THANK YOU!

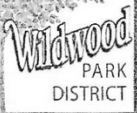
**We care about
what you think.**

WILDWOOD
PARK DISTRICT

**WILDWOOD PARK DISTRICT
COMMUNITY NEEDS
ASSESSMENT REPORT 2024**

APPENDIX D: COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESMENT FULL REPORT

Appendix E: Archived Focus Group and Survey Results (2019-2022)

 WILDWOOD PARK DISTRICT DISTRICT PRIORITIES	
BOARD FEEDBACK	STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK
STRENGTHS <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maintenance standards of parks and lakes• Mature trees and abundant natural resources• Small town feel• Community within a community• Community created by the WPD	STRENGTHS <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Outdoor spaces including parks, lakes, beaches and playgrounds• Variety of socio-economic status within the community• Preschool program• Swim lessons• Mature trees and abundant natural resources• Decades long partnership and cooperation with the Lion's Club• Harvestfest• Community created by the WPD
OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The growth of Harvestfest into an annual event.• Maintenance and improvement of core programs with high participation instead of devoting time and resources to new programs with no documented interest.• Implementation of more, smaller special events• Utilization of Sunset, Willow and Twin Lakes Parks for various programming• Consistent programming for our Active Adults and Seniors• Implement a system to determine if State and Federal grants can be utilized by the WPD while maintaining exclusivity for residents.• Capital improvement projects:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Roof at Rule House• New playground at Pebble• Pebble and Sunset seawall improvements	OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The growth of Harvestfest into an annual event.• Cooperation and communication between each lake community (Gages and Valley) and the stakeholders involved.• Lake safety education• Communication of programs. Specifically, the need for multiple streams of communication including a paper brochure, social media, emails and newsletters• An outdoor ice rink during the winter months• Develop a volunteer database and program.
PRIORITIES <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Communication to the residents• Create opportunities to bring the community together through events and programs• Maintain parks, facilities at the highest standard possible and conserve all natural resources• Dedicate time and resources to maintain high-quality experiences for core programs and offerings• Restore and maintain District assets utilizing a comprehensive capital plan.• Provide safety and security for the parks and natural resources.	PRIORITIES <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Communication to the residents.• Create opportunities to bring the community together through events and programs.• Maintain parks, facilities at the highest standard possible and conserve all natural resources.• Dedicate time and resources to maintain high-quality experiences for core programs and offerings.

Appendix F Archived Board Strategic Planning Sessions

Special Meeting – Board Strategic Planning Session – Wednesday, January 14th, 2026

Agenda: <https://www.wildwoodparkdistrict.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/January-2026-Board-Strategic-Planning-Meeting-Agenda.pdf>

Minutes: <https://www.wildwoodparkdistrict.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/Board-Strategic-Planning-Workshop-1.14.2026-Minutes.pdf>

Packet: <https://www.wildwoodparkdistrict.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/Board-Strategic-Planning-Session-January-2026.pdf>

Special Meeting – Board Strategic Planning Session – Wednesday, February 16th, 2022

Agenda: <https://www.wildwoodparkdistrict.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/EA56FA6A1361CB45.pdf>

Minutes: <https://www.wildwoodparkdistrict.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Minutes-Board-Workshop-2.16.2022.pdf>

Appendix G: Complete Staff and Board Strategic Planning Interview Answer Summary:

1. Strong Confidence in Core Operations and Park Quality

Across all interviews, staff consistently identified **park and lake maintenance** as one of the District's greatest strengths. There was strong pride in the visual quality, cleanliness, and overall condition of parks, lakes, and natural areas. Staff frequently noted that residents provide positive feedback about how well parks are maintained, and that these visible improvements are a primary way taxpayers recognize the District's value.

Shoreline stabilization, mowing, landscaping, and routine maintenance were repeatedly cited as mission-critical services that define the District's identity and reputation.

2. High Alignment Between Mission, Values, and Daily Operations

Staff broadly agreed that the Park District's **vision and mission align well with day-to-day operations**, particularly following recent updates to core values and strategic direction. Transparency, stewardship of natural resources, affordability, and community focus were all described as actively guiding decision-making rather than existing only as aspirational statements.

Several staff expressed that the current vision is **appropriate and timely**, with a strong preference for focusing on execution and refinement rather than revising the vision again in the near term.

3. Small Size Is Both a Strength and a Constraint

A recurring theme was that the District's **small size** creates both advantages and challenges:

Strengths of being small:

- Close working relationships and open communication
- Faster decision-making
- Strong sense of shared ownership and accountability

Challenges of being small:

- Limited staffing and heavy reliance on part-time employees
- Few indoor facilities and limited programming space
- Capacity constraints for new initiatives
- Difficulty competing with larger neighboring park districts

Staff consistently emphasized the need to “do more with what we have” rather than overextend limited resources.

4. Internal Communication and Collaboration Are Strong

Every interview referenced **positive internal communication**. Staff described the culture as open, respectful, and highly collaborative, supported by:

- Open-door leadership
- Informal, face-to-face problem solving
- Feeling heard and included in decisions

Suggestions for improvement were incremental rather than corrective, such as:

- Ensuring meetings are scheduled across all workdays
- Sharing meeting notes across departments
- Improving documentation and file access systems

There was no indication of major breakdowns in internal communication or organizational trust.

5. Programming Success Concentrated in Core and Signature Offerings

Staff consistently identified **signature events and core programs** as the most successful, including:

- Harvest Fest
- Summer camps
- Swim programs
- Key seasonal events

These programs were valued because they:

- Draw large participation
- Foster community identity
- Justify the investment of staff time and resources

Conversely, staff across interviews acknowledged that **smaller, specialty, or niche programs** often struggle due to:

- Low enrollment
- Facility limitations
- Staffing and volunteer constraints

There was broad support for regularly evaluating programs and being willing to restructure or discontinue those that are not viable.

6. Persistent Gaps in Teen and Tween Programming

One of the most consistent themes was difficulty engaging **pre-teens and teens**. Staff cited:

- Low and inconsistent registration
- Competition from school activities, digital entertainment, and neighboring agencies
- Limited facilities and staffing to support teen-focused initiatives

While staff recognized this as an unmet need, they also acknowledged it as a **structural challenge**, suggesting partnerships, digital options, or selective programming rather than large-scale investment.

7. Facilities Are a Limiting Factor

Multiple interviews highlighted the lack of a **sizable indoor community facility** as a key limitation. This restricts:

- Year-round programming
- Expansion of classes and events
- Ability to compete with larger districts

Rather than advocating for immediate large capital projects, staff tended to favor:

- Maintaining existing outdoor spaces at a high level

- Making small, distinctive improvements
- Using partnerships or external venues when possible

Parking needs—particularly ADA and boat-access parking—were also repeatedly mentioned as facility-related challenges.

8. Marketing, Visibility, and Storytelling Are Essential

Staff repeatedly emphasized that, as a small district in a competitive region, **visibility and communication are critical**. While internal communication was seen as strong, staff felt that:

- Marketing and promotion must remain a top priority
- Residents should be reminded that the District exists and what it offers
- Success should be communicated through outcomes, stories, and visuals—not just activity listings

Several staff highlighted the importance of showing **how tax dollars are spent** and the tangible results of District investments.

9. Fiscal Stewardship Is a Point of Pride

Across interviews, staff expressed confidence in the District's **financial management**, noting progress in addressing deferred maintenance and maintaining affordability. Staff described careful spending, sponsorships, and grants as essential tools for sustaining services.

Common suggestions included:

- Expanding sponsorships and grants
- Being intentional with maintenance and supply costs
- Continuing to manage growth cautiously and responsibly

10. Positive Staff Morale and Strong Organizational Culture

Staff morale was consistently described as **positive, low-stress, and supportive**. Employees felt valued, respected, and proud to work for the District. While opportunities for advancement are limited due to organizational size, staff expressed interest in:

- Modest recognition and appreciation initiatives
- Additional training opportunities
- Staying engaged during slower off-seasons

There were no significant concerns regarding workplace culture or employee satisfaction.

11. Accountability and Pride Drive Performance

Staff consistently emphasized **personal investment and accountability** as motivators for success. Many referenced pride in the organization—especially among employees who live within the District—as a powerful driver of quality and commitment.

There was interest in clearer goal tracking, shared accountability, and periodic progress reporting, both internally and publicly.

Strategic Planning Implications

Taken together, recurring staff themes indicate an organization that:

- Is operationally strong and internally aligned
- Understands its limitations and capacity
- Values stewardship, communication, and community trust
- Seeks refinement and sustainability over rapid growth

These themes support a strategic direction that focuses on:

- Protecting core strengths
- Refining rather than expanding programming
- Strengthening visibility and storytelling
- Supporting staff through clarity, recognition, and shared accountability

MAINTENANCE DEPARTMENT HEAD INTERVIEW SUMMARY

Overall Organizational Performance

The park district's greatest strength is its **team cohesion**. Commissioners, office staff, and maintenance teams are described as hardworking, ethical, and community-focused. Interdepartmental communication has improved significantly over the past four years, and employees feel they have a strong voice in decision-making. Morale is reported as very high, driven by improved communication, proper tools, safe facilities, and employee recognition.

Vision & Future Direction

Staff believe the current vision and mission have effectively guided operational improvements and should continue to serve as the district's foundation. Future emphasis should be placed on:

- Building stronger **community relationships**
- Expanding **diverse programming**
- Enhancing **security** through lighting and surveillance

These priorities reflect the district's broader commitment to safety and community engagement.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats

Internally, the district benefits from a balanced and community-driven Board of Commissioners and a dependable staff with strong ethics. Key areas needing improvement include:

- More consistent **safety training**
- Better **maintenance documentation and data collection**
- Increased commissioner engagement with staff and park activities

Significant opportunities exist in new-hire onboarding, expanded administrative support, enhanced training programs, and greater inclusion of maintenance leadership in budget planning. External threats include environmental challenges (shoreline erosion, drainage issues), infrastructure needs, and increasing security concerns within parks.

Facilities & Infrastructure

Facility improvement needs remain a notable focus. Priority areas include the Willow Pavilion, Rule House exterior and decks, beach border frames, walking paths, stump removal, and improved lighting throughout the parks. Staff also identify the need for expanded indoor space—particularly at Rule House—to support larger, year-round community programming.

Staff Development & Culture

While staff feel generally supported, challenges with part-time employee training persist. Employees request more structured training opportunities, both in-house and outsourced, and a stronger effort to solicit staff interests in relevant professional development. Despite these challenges, employees overwhelmingly feel valued and appreciated.

Fiscal Responsibility

The Park District is viewed as financially responsible and aligned with community needs. Opportunities to improve efficiency include expanding rental revenue, reducing purchasing waste, and leveraging bulk purchasing where practical. Continued transparency, communication, and timely execution of commitments are seen as essential to maintaining public trust.

Implementation & Accountability

The greatest obstacle to adopting new initiatives is limited labor hours, which constrains group meetings and planning time. Staff recommend implementing:

- A formal **training matrix**
- Systems for **measurable data collection**
- Structured feedback loops to ensure accountability

These tools would strengthen planning, support employee growth, and improve organizational performance.

Community Needs & Inclusion

The district continues to meet the needs of most demographics but should place stronger focus on **veteran recognition** and ensure **ADA accessibility** remains a top priority across all parks and facilities.



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APPENDIX H: Mission and Vision Revision Exercises

The following was an exercise the Focus Group of 3.5.2026 underwent where they were asked to analyze the following revised Mission and Vision draft examples. The Wildwood Park District Board also reviewed these findings and debated with their stances during the March 16th, 2026 Regular Board Meeting.

MISSION AND VISION EXERCISE

Our Mission

Option 1 (Concise & Well-Rounded)

Our mission is to care for our parks with excellence, provide essential recreation and community events, build impact through partnerships, and responsibly steward our financial and physical assets.

Option 2 (Even More Streamlined)

We maintain exceptional parks, offer vital recreation and community events, strengthen impact through partnerships, and manage our resources responsibly.

Option 3: *To steward parks and facilities responsibly, deliver essential recreation programs, and foster community engagement through accessible, high-value services.*

Our Vision

Option 1 (Inspirational & Clear)

We envision a community where exceptional parks, meaningful recreation, and strong partnerships enrich every family's quality of life for generations to come.

Option 2 (Future-Focused & Community-Centered)

Our vision is to be a model park district known for outstanding parks, essential recreation, community connection, and responsible stewardship of public resources.

Option 3 (Very Concise)

We strive to create a thriving community enriched by exceptional parks, essential recreation, and sustainable stewardship.

Option 4: *To steward parks and facilities responsibly, deliver core recreation programs, and foster community engagement through accessible, high-value service.*

Summary of Attitudes Toward the Mission & Vision Options

Overall Themes

Participants showed a strong preference for mission and vision statements that are:

- **Clear, concise, and well-rounded**
 - **Community-focused**
 - **Values-driven** (accessibility, safety, stewardship)
 - **Future-oriented** while still practical
 - **Reflective of core services** (parks, core recreation, core events, partnerships)
-

Mission Statement Attitudes

Preferred Style

- **Option 1** (“Concise & Well-Rounded”) received the **most support**.
- Participants appreciated its:
 - Balanced tone
 - Strong coverage of responsibilities
 - Professional clarity

Elements They Want Added

- **Accessibility:** Participants want the mission to explicitly mention making services accessible not just physical assets and playgrounds but an underlying commitment to inclusivity and equity with programming, operations, and communications.
- **Safety:** Adding a safety or “Park Safety” component was noted as important.
- **Financial & physical stewardship:** Affirmed as essential but should remain concise.

Option 3 Observations

- Some liked the focus on **responsible stewardship** and **community engagement**.
 - However, it was seen as less preferred overall compared to Option 1.
-

Vision Statement Attitudes

General Preferences

Participants leaned toward vision statements that:

- Inspire
- Describe long-term community benefit
- Highlight the role of parks and recreation in improving quality of life

Option-by-Option Feedback

Option 1 – Inspirational & Clear

- Viewed positively.
- People liked its uplifting, family-focused tone.
- Some recommended incorporating additional elements (likely safety or accessibility).

Option 2 – Future-Focused & Community-Centered

- Considered positive but not as emotionally engaging as Option 1, but a very strong contender.
- Appreciated for being forward-looking.
- Language matters. “Our vision” is more inclusive of the community attitude whereas “We envision” could be seen as this vision is coming only from Park District personnel.
- One commenter stated that “model Park District” could be subjective.

Option 3 – Very Concise

- Also liked; people appreciated the brevity and clarity. People really liked “thriving community” language.
- Strong emphasis on **sustainability** resonated with several participants.

Option 4

- Mirrors the structure of Mission Option 3.
 - Perceived as functional but not as inspiring as Options 1 or 3.
-

Key Takeaways

Mission Preferences

- **Option 1** is the strongest base.
- Add:
 - **Accessibility**
 - **Safety** emphasis

Vision Preferences

- **Option 1** and **Option 2** received the most positive reactions.
- Option 1 is more **inspirational**; Option 2 is more **community centered**.

Shared Values Across Both

- Stewardship
- Community enrichment
- Accessibility
- Responsible use of resources
- High-quality parks and recreation

Here are **fully revised Mission and Vision statements** that incorporate *all* the preferred elements from the focus group:

- Accessibility
 - Safety
 - Core recreation focus
 - Community enrichment
 - Stewardship (financial + physical + environmental)
 - Strong partnerships
 - Clear, concise, and inspirational language
-

Revised Mission Statements

Option A — Concise & Comprehensive

Our mission is to care for our parks with excellence; provide safe, accessible recreation and community events; build meaningful partnerships; and responsibly steward our financial, physical, and natural resources.

Option B — Warm & Community-Centered

Our mission is to maintain exceptional parks, offer safe and accessible recreation opportunities, foster community connection through meaningful events and partnerships, and responsibly manage the resources entrusted to us.

Option C — Highly Streamlined

We deliver safe, accessible recreation, steward parks and resources responsibly, and strengthen community impact through valued partnerships.

Revised Vision Statements

Option A — Inspirational & Future-Focused

Our vision is to be a model Park District within a thriving community where every resident enjoys safe, accessible parks and programs; meaningful recreation; and strong partnerships that enrich quality of life for generations to come.

Option B — Sustainability & Community Emphasis

We envision a community enriched by exceptional parks, inclusive recreation, strong partnerships, and sustainable stewardship that supports well-being today and into the future.

Option C — Very Concise

A thriving community enriched by safe, accessible recreation, exceptional parks, and responsible stewardship.