



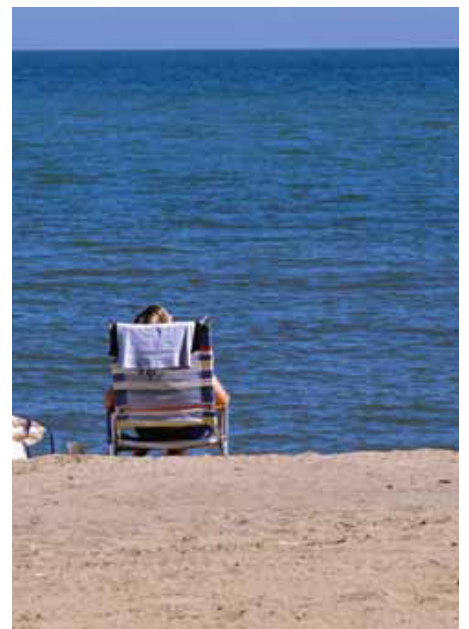
**Cleveland
Metroparks**



CLEVELAND METROPARKS 2020: THE EMERALD NECKLACE CENTENNIAL PLAN

Executive Summary

prepared by: The EDGE Group | PROS Consulting, Inc. | Wallace Roberts & Todd, LLC



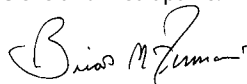


TO THE CITIZENS OF CUYAHOGA COUNTY AND HINCKLEY TOWNSHIP IN MEDINA COUNTY

Looking forward to a second century of stewardship and service, we are pleased to present **Cleveland Metroparks 2020: The Emerald Necklace Centennial Plan**. Thank you for your continuing passion for the sustainability of Cleveland Metroparks and the significant input you provided in developing this strategic plan. Operational assessments and community input confirmed that Cleveland Metroparks is well-managed and enjoys an excellent reputation in Northeast Ohio. The Strategic Plan aims to **leverage this strength for greater community benefit** within the following **key directions**:

- **Green Infrastructure:** Embrace a broader perspective of system benefits that result from “green infrastructure,” including essential environmental, economic and community health benefits.
- **Scale:** Consistent with the green infrastructure perspective, extend organizational thinking beyond the reservation scale to more deliberately address the interaction with the surrounding community in the Northeast Ohio region.
- **Cleveland and Inner Ring Suburbs:** Strengthen Cleveland Metroparks role in the City of Cleveland and the inner ring suburbs. Include land acquisition; restoration; management for conservation; and expansion of outdoor education and recreation programs for underserved populations.
- **Outdoor Recreation:** Expand and strengthen natural resource-based outdoor recreation services, consistent with the organization vision and mission that supports community health and wellness, connects people to nature, keeps pace with market trends, and contributes to Northeast Ohio’s attractiveness as a place to live, work and play.
- **Regional Greenway System:** Focus land acquisition and trail development on filling gaps within the “Emerald Necklace,” providing regional links that connect to adjacent systems, and/or provide open space and recreational resources to underserved areas.
- **Lakefront:** Work with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, City of Cleveland, Cleveland-Cuyahoga County Port Authority and Cuyahoga County to determine an appropriate role for Cleveland Metroparks to play in improving and managing Cleveland Lakefront State Parks and Wendy Park. Develop a business plan addressing sustainable funding, security, etc. prior to finalizing the role of each agency.
- **Financial Sustainability:** Establish a sustainable business/funding plan to support Cleveland Metroparks capital, operations and maintenance needs over the next ten-year levy cycle and beyond. Diversify funding beyond current sources and levels, including a pricing policy based on cost recovery targets for programs, attractions and destinations.

We are excited by the opportunities the following Policy Framework and Action Plan lay out for implementing these key directions. We look forward to working with the citizens of Greater Cleveland, community partners and key stakeholders in stewarding the legacy and future of Cleveland Metroparks.

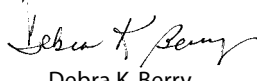


Brian M. Zimmerman
Executive Director-Secretary

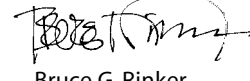
Board of Park Commissioners:



Dan T. Moore
President



Debra K. Berry
Vice President



Bruce G. Rinker
Vice President



Policy Framework

Cleveland Metroparks enjoys an outstanding reputation for its quality. Input during the strategic planning process suggests that environmental, economic and community health challenges in Northeast Ohio compel the organization to deepen its scope of influence. Historically, resources of Cleveland Metroparks were devoted to preserving and enhancing facilities and programs within its boundaries and

serving established constituencies. **This plan outlines how the Park District can have greater impact by addressing different levels of concern, including the surrounding communities, the core service area (Cuyahoga County and Hinckley Township in Medina County), and the larger region.**

Vision

Cleveland Metroparks will be a national leader for sustainable green infrastructure that provides essential environmental, economic, and community benefits for people in its core service area, the surrounding region, and the global reach of Cleveland Metroparks Zoo.

Conservation Policy:

Conservation of natural resources is the primary responsibility of Cleveland Metroparks both within its local region and globally.

Education Policy:

Cleveland Metroparks will foster awareness, appreciation, and understanding of natural resources so that we may all become better stewards of the environment.

Recreation Policy:

Cleveland Metroparks will provide recreation opportunities that connect people to nature and promote community health and well-being consistent with the goals of conservation and education.

Mission

Cleveland Metroparks will conserve significant natural resources and enhance people's lives by integrating high-quality outdoor education, recreation, and zoological opportunities into people's lives.



Guiding Principles for the Next Century

Green Infrastructure

As the region's natural life support system, Cleveland Metroparks is a network of parks and greenways that provide essential environmental, economic and community services. Recognizing these services, Cleveland Metroparks will manage park assets to optimize the following green infrastructure benefits:

Environmental Benefits:

- Conserves natural resources (wildlife and wild places)
- Maintains/restores habitat
- Mitigates stormwater/flooding
- Improves watershed health and water quality
- Improves air quality
- Regulates local climate
- Sequesters carbon

Economic Benefits:

- Attracts businesses and workers
- Generates revenue
- Improves access
- Increases property values
- Provides employment opportunities
- Lowers energy costs
- Lowers healthcare costs

Community Benefits:

- Enables outdoor recreation
- Improves public health
- Promotes equity and access
- Fosters community
- Provides gathering spaces
- Connects people with nature
- Provides educational opportunities
- Conserves cultural resources

Sustainability

Environmental Sustainability:

Manage operations, maintenance, and facility development to reduce environmental footprint and improve ecological functions.

- Reduce consumption of energy, water, and material resources.
- Limit use of hazardous substances.
- Minimize impacts on natural resources.
- Restore ecological functions of damaged landscapes.

Financial Sustainability:

Maintain long-term fiscal strength in order to carry out Cleveland Metroparks mission while reducing reliance on taxes.

- Base financial planning on cost-benefit analysis using triple-bottom line accounting (economic, ecological, and social).
- Increase earned income by setting cost recovery goals based on classification of service provided to users (core essential, important, or value-added).
- Diversify sources of revenue used to fund operations and capital investments.

Social Sustainability:

Foster an organizational culture that maximizes the relevance and benefits of Cleveland Metroparks for its users and the greater community.

- Enable staff to fulfill the Cleveland Metroparks mission through leadership development, training, and a supportive functional structure.
- Build relationships with surrounding communities and constituent groups to increase appreciation of Cleveland Metroparks reservations.
- Actively participate in regional initiatives suited to Cleveland Metroparks mission and capabilities.



ACTION PLAN

The Action Plan defines specific goals and strategies that Cleveland Metroparks will use to implement its vision within focal areas of program services, facilities, natural resources, greenway and trail network, park expansion, marketing, reservations and Zoo.

Program Services

Cleveland Metroparks education and recreation services contribute to a strong user base and an appreciation for the outdoors and nature. Current program activities attract a variety of users and are often in high demand. Although many activities enjoy high participation rates, service inequities remain in geographic distribution and demographic groups, such as urban populations and young adults. Pressure from local communities for additional recreational opportunities continues to increase. Organizational support for program services is dispersed throughout the organization and lacks a cohesive coordinated delivery plan.

Goal

Enhance the impact of program services offered by Cleveland Metroparks by fulfilling the integrated education, conservation, and recreation mission and reaching a wider audience, reflective of the service area.

Strategies

- Develop a system-wide Program Delivery Plan that aligns activities with market demand, meets the needs of underserved populations, and integrates education and recreation objectives.
- Coordinate Zoo, Outdoor Education, Outdoor Recreation, and general recreation services to increase their positive impact and effectiveness.
- Establish stronger organizational support for outdoor recreation and expand to include health and wellness programs and outdoor adventure activities.
- Target offerings to attract underserved populations.
- Develop a pricing policy based on cost recovery goals.
- Initiate selected special events and modify existing events for regional economic impact.





Facilities

The quality and level of development, management and maintenance of Cleveland Metroparks facilities is viewed positively by its constituents. The built infrastructure was constructed largely within the same time frame and is now collectively reaching a period of increasing maintenance and repair requirements. Many needs will have to be addressed in the next 10 years.

In addition, Cleveland Metroparks is exploring new land management and development opportunities that will require significant capital expenditures. Consequently, the balance between existing needs and future opportunities will need to be carefully considered and balanced. Commitment to principles of sustainability, offers a unique opportunity for Cleveland Metroparks to set an example with the design and management of physical assets (land and facilities) for the region.

Goal

Manage facilities to uphold Cleveland Metroparks high standard for providing well maintained facilities, public service and stewardship.

Strategies

- Develop an asset management plan with a life cycle replacement schedule to govern capital investment in existing facility infrastructure.
- Provide upgraded or new facilities to meet changing user needs, service distribution objectives, increase the contributions of Cleveland Metroparks to regional green infrastructure, and support financial sustainability.
- Develop a business plan and pricing policy based on cost recovery goals for Cleveland Metroparks facilities.
- Determine existing and potential capacity levels for facilities to utilize in cost benefit evaluations and identification of facility needs.
- Establish facility/infrastructure standards to uphold the quality of user experiences as well as the fiscal sustainability of Cleveland Metroparks.





Natural Resources

Cleveland Metroparks mission was built on the foundation of conserving natural resources. Yet these resources are under increasing pressure as a result of human impacts within reservations and from off-site development influences. Recognizing that land, water, and living systems are all interconnected, Cleveland Metroparks must use an integrated ecosystem approach to manage its assets. This approach applies not only to the management of the existing resources within reservation boundaries, but also to proactive engagement of partners throughout the region.

Goal

Use and advocate for an ecosystem approach to natural resource management as part of a regional green infrastructure strategy.

Strategies

- Use a holistic approach to managing natural resources within the reservations that takes into account impacts from the surrounding watersheds (stormwater runoff, invasive species, etc.) and the impacts of projected climate changes.
- Take a leadership role in enhancing regional green infrastructure by focusing on preserving, restoring, and managing natural resources in urban areas.
- Develop and implement a land acquisition program based on optimizing regional green infrastructure benefits.



Park Expansion

Cleveland Metroparks has grown since its founding in 1917 to encompass 16 reservations and the Zoo with over 22,000 acres of land. The pace of expansion slowed as the system matured, Cuyahoga County became built out, and the price of land increased. Today the Park District's land acquisition is targeted towards augmenting and connecting existing reservations in places such as the East Branch of the Rocky River. Urban areas will be a strategic focus of land conservation efforts moving forward. Lakefront parks provide a major opportunity to impact environmental, economic, and social sustainability at a regional scale.

The Lake Erie waterfront is the region's defining asset and a key natural resource. The desirability and value of waterfront property makes the lakefront a key attractor for development and a pillar of Cleveland's revitalization. Currently, lakefront parks are suffering from underuse, lack of connectivity, and insufficient public amenities. Revitalized parks could be a centerpiece of an integrated public realm that links the lakefront and riverfronts and is leveraged for economic, environmental, and cultural benefits. This is particularly timely given the momentum of development in downtown Cleveland with a new casino, medical mart, and Flat's east bank projects underway. The community recognizes these opportunities and has called for a cohesive plan to transform the lakefront into an iconic and vibrant public amenity.

Goal

Play a foundational role in transforming the Cleveland Lakefront to an icon of urban vitality, healthy urban ecology and active outdoor lifestyles.

Strategies

- Partner with community organizations to complete the Towpath Trail and Lake Link Trail to Lake Erie (as extensions of the Ohio & Erie Canalway Reservation) and assume operational responsibilities.
- Partner with community organizations to improve Wendy Park as a regional destination on Cleveland's lakefront and connect to Lake Link Trail and Towpath Trail.
- Seek ways to expand outdoor recreation and education opportunities within the downtown waterfront.
- Continue working with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Cuyahoga County, and the City of Cleveland to incorporate regional lakefront parks into Cleveland Metroparks as appropriate.
- Initiate a collaborative effort to develop a comprehensive green infrastructure plan for the Lake Erie waterfront, focusing on Cleveland with connections to the remainder of the Cuyahoga County lakefront.



Marketing

Marketing reservations, programs, and facilities, including the Zoo, has been a priority for Cleveland Metroparks although resources dedicated to the effort have been minimal. Cleveland Metroparks brand is well recognized and valued within the community. Current marketing efforts are primarily focused on providing information about activities and increasing event and program participation. Marketing functions within the organization are split between Cleveland Metroparks and the Zoo and staff are often tasked with additional operational responsibilities.

With a desire for greater cost recovery and revenue producing programs, the current level of marketing expenditure is not sufficient. Additionally, expanding Cleveland Metroparks marketing efforts will be an essential tool in leveraging the organization brand and assets for greater community benefits.

Goal

Increase the awareness and appreciation of Cleveland Metroparks at the local, regional, and national levels through expanded marketing and informational campaigns.

Strategies

- Develop a plan to guide all marketing-related services within the Cleveland Metroparks organization.
- Develop new marketing and informational materials that highlight the benefits of using Cleveland Metroparks programs, facilities, and services and inspire users to participate more often.
- Continue to conduct on-going marketing research of Cleveland Metroparks users and non-users to understand desired services and outcomes.
- Work with regional attractions, tourism, and economic development organizations to market Cleveland Metroparks as a destination for visitors from the region and beyond.





Greenway and Trail Network

Greenway and trail networks are core physical assets of the Cleveland Metroparks and a primary vehicle for fulfilling the organization's three-part mission. Trails provide opportunities for recreation and education while immersing participants in the out-of-doors. They provide a venue for a wide range of hands-on activities and programs. Beyond these functions, trails supplement the region's transportation network by providing safe routes for walking and biking. Greenways are conservation areas intended to protect ecologically significant land and water features as well as provide valuable environmental services.

Goal

Provide environmental, economic, and community benefits for the people of Northeast Ohio through an accessible, regional greenway and trail network structured around the "Emerald Necklace" and other greenway corridors.

Strategies

- Expand recreational experiences and the range of users in Cleveland Metroparks reservations by introducing and supporting new trail uses compatible with the mission.
- Connect Cleveland Metroparks to the urban core and regional recreation and transportation networks.
- Partner with communities to improve connections and promote alternative transportation as means to access Cleveland Metroparks and reduce vehicle congestion.
- Increase community appreciation for the value of trails and greenways including health, wellness, community identity, and environmental services.



Reservation Plans

Goal

Develop and implement reservation plans that incorporate the physical, programmatic, and business strategies of the Strategic Plan.

Strategies

- Designate sensitive, contiguous natural resource areas as core zones for priority conservation attention.
- Support local community trail connections and public transportation to the reservations to increase bike/pedestrian access, wellness activities and reduce vehicular congestion.
- As a programmatic expansion, identify opportunities for additional outdoor recreation, health and wellness activities.
- Physical improvements within Cleveland Metroparks are approaching the targeted threshold of maintaining a 80/20 ratio between natural areas and development. Future improvements should seek to consolidate and reduce the development footprint and obsolete facilities should be decommissioned and removed.
- Define and evaluate high activity areas for design modifications to simplify circulation, improve visitor experience, reduce environmental impacts and increase synergy between activities.
- Existing facility capacities will be determined based on criteria such as access, floor space, site and facility sensitivity, and other spatial, operational and scheduling requirements. Capacity determinations will be used to improve operational efficiencies.
- Circulation patterns will be evaluated to ensure high-quality visitor experiences, reduce user conflicts, ease congestion, and facilitate wayfinding. Natural surface trails will be upgraded to simplify the system, improve visitor experience, and reduce impacts. Mountain bike trails will be introduced and equestrian trails will be reduced in areas where use has declined. Unsanctioned trails will be removed and restored to natural condition. In general, trail changes will be in quality rather than quantity.



CLEVELAND METROPARKS ZOO & ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY



Mission

Cleveland Metroparks Zoo creates compelling experiences that connect people and wildlife and inspire personal responsibility for conserving the natural world.

Vision

By being regularly engaged in the Zoo's programs and activities to conserve wildlife and wild places, the people of Northeast Ohio will demonstrate their love for the natural world and be the most informed and enlightened conservationists in the United States.

Focusing on the Future

With the strategic plan as the guide the Zoo will engage the community and continue to build a vibrant and thriving Zoo for the region. Working together, the Zoo and Zoo Society will:

- Evaluate opportunities to increase earned revenue to invest back into the Zoo and create a long-term sustainable business model.
- Continually seek ways to strengthen the public/partnership to maximize effectiveness and grow support.
- Identify a combination of short-term facility improvements and longer-term projects which appeal to visitors, the community and donors.
- Build on the momentum, energy and excitement created with the opening of African Elephant Crossing.
- Increase current levels of capital spending-both for new projects and to enhance facilities.



Strategic Focus Areas

Animal Care and Exhibition

Exceed industry standards and guidelines for species care; adopt a program for continual improvement; and be recognized as leaders in creating high-quality, innovative animal exhibits.

Wildlife conservation

Capitalize on the unique role of zoos in saving critically endangered species through ex situ (in zoo) conservation efforts. Build in situ (in the wild) partnerships and forge strong links between the Zoo and programs around the world.

Sustainability

Be a model in sustainability by developing and implementing Zoo-wide green practices and promoting sustainability throughout Northeast Ohio.

Conservation Education

Be the foremost provider of lifelong learning experiences in Northeast Ohio, a trusted voice for wildlife conservation and an inspiration for conservation action.

Guest Experience

Exceed guest expectations for service and amenities.

Community Leadership

Be a greater civic priority for Northeast Ohio and strengthen the Zoo's leadership role as one of the top destinations in the area; as a regional economic development driver; and as the wildlife, conservation and sustainability expert.

Management

Be robust, fiscally sustainable organization modeling best business practices with a culture of collaboration, partnership and continual professional development.





ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Citizens of Cuyahoga County and Hinckley Township in Medina County

Appointing Authority, Honorable Judge Anthony J. Russo

Board of Park Commissioners:
Dan T. Moore, President
Debra K. Berry, Vice President
Bruce G. Rinker, Vice President

Executive Director, Secretary: Brian M. Zimmerman

The Cleveland Zoological Society

Consultant Teams:
The EDGE Group
PROs Consulting
Wallace Roberts & Todd
Schultz & Williams
CLR Design
Leisure Vision
Triad Research Group

Peer Review Panel:

John Dargle, Jr., Director, Fairfax County Park Authority
Jack Kardys, Director, Miami-Dade County Parks & Recreation
John O'Meara, Director, Franklin County Metro Parks
Jack Wilson, Director, Tacoma Metro Parks

Interview & Focus Group Participants

Cleveland Metroparks Directors and Staff

Cleveland Metroparks Affiliates

Financial support provided by the Cleveland Foundation



Cleveland Metroparks was established in 1917 to provide open space for the people of Greater Cleveland and conserve the natural valleys of the area. The first Board of Park Commissioners created a comprehensive plan for the acquisition of park land, envisioning a system of connected parkways encircling the city of Cleveland. Today, this vision is largely realized as over 22,000 acres of green infrastructure, within 16 reservations and Cleveland Metroparks Zoo. With over 16 million recreational visits a year, Cleveland's "Emerald Necklace" has matured to a highly valued community asset providing essential environmental and quality of life services for Northeast Ohio.

Administrative Offices
4101 Fulton Parkway
Cleveland, Ohio 44144-1923
216-635-3200
clevelandmetroparks.com

