

Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Plan City of Olney, IL

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Introduction

The Olney City Council commissioned a Parks and Recreation Board in 2014. This board was tasked with putting together a comprehensive plan for parks and recreation within the City of Olney.

The primary purpose of the Olney Comprehensive Parks & Recreation Plan is to establish a planning tool that will serve as a guideline for the development and improvement of the existing park facilities and the creation of new opportunities. This Comprehensive Plan is expected to be an achievable goal that will provide the Olney community with a parks and recreation system that will enhance the quality of the parks and recreation in the City of Olney.

This plan is also designed to be an aid in the development of community awareness with regard to both existing and future amenities within the City's parks.

Finally, the Comprehensive Plan will act as a promotional tool to market park redevelopment to both the business community and the private sector. The Plan will also be used to help aid the city in seeking out and applying for grant funds. The Plan was a collaborative effort on the part of the City of Olney, the Parks and Recreation Board, City Staff, and the Olney community.

The initial step in implementing the Plan was to identify the issues that were critical to the Olney community. From this preliminary analysis, the plan was based on a detailed analysis and evaluation of the existing facilities, specific park issues, goals and opportunities, and possible expansion of the park system.



Park Summaries

Olney City Park

The Olney City Park is one of the largest parks in the city and has a wide variety of opportunities for activities. The City Park has several mature trees which provide homes to many white squirrels, which is what the city is famous for. The City Park is a popular place for tourists to visit to try and catch a glance of a white squirrel. There are also many flower beds scattered throughout the park.

There are several facilities throughout the Olney City Park that host many events during the year. The community building, located in the main circle of the park, is a popular spot for family reunions, birthday parties, and social gatherings. The band shell is also located in the central part of the park. It is used throughout the summer for the community band performances. The City Park also plays host to several events and festivals each year, including the county fair in July and the Olney Art Council Fall Festival in September. There are also three playground areas that are full of children playing during the warmer months of the year. There are a total of six tennis courts located in the northern part of the park that are used for lessons, tournaments, and free play. There are also many pavilions scattered through the park which are popular spots for picnics during the summer.

Musgrove Park

Musgrove Park is a large park on the northern side of Olney that has a wide variety of sporting activities available. Some of the sport areas that are available are: basketball courts, soccer field, multi-purpose field, skateboard park, baseball complex, and the Musgrove Aquatic Center.

Musgrove also maintains a lot of open green space for general activities. There are several flower beds scattered throughout that park to help beautify that park. The sidewalk that surrounds the park is a popular walking path for residents. There are also several pieces of playground equipment that are full of kids playing during warmer weather.

Miller's Grove

Miller's Grove, located on the north side of Olney on North East Street, is a quiet park with lots of trees and great views of East Fork Lake. There are also three pavilions within the park. A playground is located near the pavilions, it makes a great spot for family reunions and picnics. Miller's Grove being located right on East Fork Lake provides a great spot for fishing.

Bird Haven

Located on the eastern side of Miller's Grove, lies Bird Haven. Bird Haven, which consists of 18 acres, was one owned by Robert Ridgway. Robert Ridgway (July 2, 1850 – March 25, 1929) was an American ornithologist specializing in systematics. He developed Bird Haven as a private nature reserve for birds and trees. Bird Haven is still a great place for bird watching and being surrounded by East Fork Lake is another great place to fish.

Rotary Park

Rotary Park is located on the northern shores of East Fork Lake. This park offers lots of open space for several activities. The Rotary Clubs installed a fitness trail that circles the park to help promote health and fitness in the community. They have also installed a Disc Golf Course throughout the park. There are also several pieces of playground equipment within the park. Rotary Park is a great place for a picnic with several pavilions and picnic tables spread throughout the park.

East Fork Lake

East Fork Lake is the largest of the three lakes in the City of Olney. The lake offers residents and tourists a place for boating and fishing. There are many fishing tournaments held on the lake during the year. The public boat launch is located on the northern side of Rotary Park. Also East Fork Lake is the primary water source for the city.

Borah Lake

Borah Lake is the second largest of the three lakes in the City of Olney and is another great place for residents to boat or fish. Near the public boat launch, there is a small playground and pavilion that have been recently constructed. Also Borah has a beach area that is free to the public.

Vernor Lake

Vernor Lake is the smallest of the three Lakes and was the original water source for the city. Vernor Lake is another place for residents and tourists to fish. There is also a small park located on the northern shore, just south of the Richland County Country Club.

East Fork Trails

The East Fork Trails provide the community a place to enjoy nature, only minutes from downtown Olney. There are over 70 acres of wooded area and farm ground with trails throughout. The trails are marked and serve as a great place for hikers, mountain bikers, and horseback riders.

Gassman Park

Gassman Park is a small park located on the western edge of town near the Water Plant on Mack Avenue. It's a quiet park that has several swings and picnic tables to enjoy the park.

Bower Park

Bower Park is situated on Whittle Avenue in downtown Olney, across from the Olney City Hall. It adds a splash of color to Whittle Avenue with its large flower bed that faces the street. It also offers a Free Little Library along with picnic tables and swings to enjoy.



Existing Conditions of Parks & Facilities

The Parks and Recreation Board completed a walk through and assessment form for all parks and recreation spaces owned by the City of Olney. The forms assessed features such as physical condition, cleanliness, security, accessibility, and parking availability.

In general, most parks and facilities were in good condition. Musgrove Park was in the best condition, due to it being the newest park in the city. The Olney City Park was in the worst condition of all the parks, mainly due to its size and age.

The most often cited issues were issues with parking lots, inadequate parking availability during peak use hours, minor cleanliness and repair problems, and lack of handicap accessibility.

Attached to the end of the Plan is a complete list of assessments completed by the members of the Parks and Recreation Board (See appendix 1). The summary following provides an overview of each park and facility condition with a table showing the total score of each park, facility, restroom, and shelter.



Summary of Parks & Facilities

Olney City Park

The Olney City Park is one of the largest parks in the city and therefore has the most issues. The Board found that the community building in the main circle of the park needs a lot of floor tile work done on the interior. Many of the current floor tiles are coming up. Also the kitchen area is considerably outdated and could use an upgrade. The restrooms in the rear of the building are not handicap accessible and need upgrading as well.

Other issues found included the band shell, which also need some repairs and upgrades made to it, horseshoe pits need repaired or removed, multiple picnic tables and benches need repair or replaced, and landscaping improvements are needed.

Musgrove Park

Musgrove Park is the newest and most updated park in the city. However, the park does have some issues with parking, lack of enough restroom facilities, the need for more lighting, and proper use of space. The soccer field located on the northeastern side of the park, experiences drainage issues.

Musgrove Aquatic Center

The Aquatic Center had a few minor issues. The continuous wet conditions have taken a harsh toll on the metal lockers and caused them to begin rusting from the bottom. Also, there are several issues with the toilets not being able to handle significant traffic during peak times. There also is a lack of shade available. Finally, the speaker system in the facility should be replaced.

Miller's Grove

Miller's Grove has a few minor issues. One thing observed is outdated playground equipment. The current equipment that is there meets the needs, but could use an upgrade. There are three pavilions on the grounds and one has been recently renovated. The other two could use minor work that would include cleaning and painting. After fair amounts of rain, water tends to stand around the restroom area and one of the pavilions.

Bird Haven

The first thing noticed upon entering the Bird Haven area is a sign with Robert Ridgway's name misspelled. The trails through Bird Haven are in relatively good shape. Once you get to the east clearing down by the water, the shoreline is continuing to erode past the old sea wall which is creating a dramatic drop. Also, there are remnants of an old concrete picnic table that has been broken near the water's edge. This spot is a popular fishing spot and shows the evidence of it by the piles of cans and trash thrown into the edge of the woods. On the north side of Bird Haven is another clearing that has similar issues with trash. There was recently a concrete picnic table there, but that has recently been destroyed. There are a couple of old bench posts in the tall weeds that have been broken and abandoned.

Rotary Park

The fitness trail at Rotary Park was in poor condition and needed new gravel added and weeds removed. The main pavilion at the end of the drive needs updated electrical work or just replaced altogether. Picnic tables need to be added to the other pavilions around the water. The main parking lot, along with The drive to the pavilions is in need of resurfacing.

East Fork Lake

General – The main parking lot at the boat launch needs to be resurfaced. Many of the buoys that identify the no wake zones have been broken either due to vandalism or weather.

Sail Boat Launch – The sail boat launch area that is on Silver Street can have issues with the parking lot area. During the wetter times of the year, it will form large potholes and becomes a place for local youth to drive trucks through tearing up surrounding grass. The wooden fence around the parking area also could use some minor repairs.

East of St. Marie Rd – On the east side of St. Marie Road there is a lack of accessibility. The southern fork off the lake south of East Branch Wood Lane has a small launch area where the public could launch a small watercraft but very limited parking. On the contrary, the northern fork has virtually no access.

Borah Lake

The problem noticed at the Borah Lake beach area was the overgrown beach front. The grass from the field continues to creep closer to the water, taking up more and more sand square footage. This area sustains many vandalism incidents. The First Aid Kits and throw rings are stolen frequently, along with damage to the pay phone. It was also noticed that the fencing that separates the parking lot from the beach area is severely bent over in places and needs repair. The restroom facilities are in disrepair. One of the outdoor restrooms is missing half of its roof.

Vernor Lake

There is a small park on the north side of the lake that isn't used by many. Also there is virtually no parking available for people using the lake near the boat launch.

East Fork Trails

The biggest issue with the trails is that it is unknown to most residents. There is no main trail head cleared with signage so the general public is unaware where to enter the trails. The trails have been fairly well maintained by the White Squirrel Saddle Club with the trail markings. Another problem is that the trails pass behind the current gun range.

Gassman Park

Gassman Park has very minimal items in the park and therefore has very little issues. The largest issue this park faces is its proximity to Fox Creek. During extremely heaving rain in the spring the park tends to flood.

Bower Park

Bower Park is another small park that has only minor issues. The major issue that was noticed was the fountain is leaking on two different sides, which leaks onto the sidewalks around the fountain. Also, the park could use some minor repairs, painting, and maintenance work.

Type	Name	Score	Primary Issues
Park	City Park – Upper	7	Some bare area exist that could use flowers or trees
Park	City Park – Lower	13	Tennis courts cracks; playground equipment dangerous
Park	Musgrove Park	10	Parking during peak hours; drainage around soccer fields
Park	Miller's Grove	5	Poor drainage; playground equipment is old
Park	Bird Haven	18	Very limited parking; large amounts of litter/ vandalism
Park	Rotary Park	8	Large pavilion electrical issues, fitness trail upkeep
Park	East Fork Lake	10	Limited parking; limited access
Park	Borah Lake	5	Parking lot is mostly grass and very rough; restrooms
Park	Vernor Lake	16	No parking; limited uses
Park	East Fork Trails	14	Safety concern with gun range/ unknown to public
Park	Gassman Park	11	Flooding; not high multi-use
Park	Bower Park	10	Regular maintenance
Facility	Community Building	13	Floors, outdated kitchen, restrooms
Facility	Musgrove Aquatic Center	7	Lockers are rusting, needs upgraded restroom amenities
Facility	Musgrove Concession Stand	2	No issues
Facility	Musgrove House	15	Underused by public; needs regular maintenance
Facility	City Park Office	3	No major issues; requires regular maintenance
Restroom	East Fork Lake Boat Launch	9	Handicap accessibility, maintenance
Restroom	Rotary Park Shelter Area	5	Handicap accessibility, maintenance
Restroom	Miller's Grove	5	Handicap accessibility, update needed
Restroom	Borah Lake Outhouse	10	Handicap accessibility, missing roof
Shelter	Borah Lake Shelter	2	Parking
Shelter	City Park Gazebo	2	Cleanliness from tape
Shelter	City Park Lower Tennis	6	Safety concern
Shelter	City Park Lower East	3	Accessibility, parking
Shelter	City Park Lower Center	4	Accessibility, parking
Shelter	City Park Lower West	3	Accessibility, parking
Shelter	Miller's Grove NW	2	Accessibility, parking
Shelter	Miller's Grove NE	2	Accessibility, parking
Shelter	Miller's Grove South	2	Accessibility, parking
Shelter	Musgrove Ball Park	3	Accessibility, parking
Shelter	Musgrove Playground	0	No Issues
Shelter	Rotary Park # 1	3	Accessibility, parking
Shelter	Rotary Park # 2	4	Accessibility, parking and roof has water damage
Shelter	Rotary Park # 3	3	Accessibility, parking
Shelter	Rotary Park # 4	3	Accessibility, parking
Shelter	Rotary Park # 5	8	Electrical/ structural issues

Needs Analysis

A Needs Analysis is a way of determining what a community, department, or other entity “needs” in order to properly carry out its mission. The Need Analysis for this plan utilized a variety of methods to determine what types of changes, improvements, and additions to the parks and recreation system must undergo to best serve the Olney community. The Needs Analysis process gathered input from the public, city staff, community sports groups, and the public to understand what these groups required in order to gain the most benefit from parks and recreation in the City. This feedback was compared against industry-accepted standards for parks and recreation and the list of currently available amenities to determine where the shortfalls or surpluses existed for park and facilities.

Recommendations for Improvements

This section describes recommendations developed through review of the parks and facilities existing conditions assessments, public and staff feedback, and analysis of parks and recreation standards. Recommendations are made for improvement of existing parks and facilities, addition of new parks and facilities, and improvements to operations. Methods for implementing these recommendations are offered in the Implementation Plan provided in this report.



Existing Parks & Facilities Improvements

It is recommended that the following improvements be made at these parks and areas:

Olney City Park

- Remodeling or replacement of the community building.
- Resurfacing of the northern tennis courts.
- Makeover of landscaping throughout the park.
- Remodel the band shell area and building.
- Replace fence along 130.

Musgrove Park

- Pave parking lots and add curbs, landscaping, and lights.
- Create a new entrance to the parking lot west of the pool and expand the parking toward the east.
- Add lights to the walkway between Silver Street and East Street.
- Add lights, more bleachers, and convert the large soccer field to a multi-use field for both soccer and Jr Pro football.
- Fix drainage issue for athletic field in northeast corner.
- Remove Musgrove House and turn the area into a picnic area if repairs exceed donations.
- Add gate so that Musgrove Lane is not open to through traffic.

Musgrove Aquatic Center

- Replace single sided set of lockers with privacy wall and double sided set with vinyl lockers in both changing areas.
- Update and maintain toilets and bathroom amenities.
- Install new sound system.
- Install two sets of awnings attached to Musgrove Aquatic Center to provide shade.
- Addition of two more gates in the fencing surrounding the pool.
- Reduction of unused grass area east of pool, within the fence.

Miller's Grove

- Finish sidewalk project from Musgrove Park to Miller's Grove.
- Upgrade playground equipment

Bird Haven

- Replace sign with correct spelling of Robert Ridgway's name.
- Install picnic tables and benches.

Rotary Park

- Repave drive to pavilions.
- Replace large pavilion.
- Maintain walking trails yearly by fixing broken equipment, adding gravel, and removing weeds.

East Fork Lake

- Inspect and make necessary replacement of buoys.
- Repave East Fork Lake boat launch parking lot.

Borah Lake

- Inspect and make necessary replacement of buoys.
- Replace restroom roof.
- Close beach area.

East Fork Trails

- Erect a sign and create a trail head at trail entrance.

Bower Park

- Repair or remove fountain, paint signs, and upgrade landscaping.



Recommendations for New Parks & Facilities

City Park

- Build new Pickleball courts where the old pool was located.
- Add walking trails around and through the park.

Musgrove Park

- Add all inclusive playground area just south of existing playground. Add handicap accessible restrooms to the playground area and remove port-a-potties. Funds for project to be raised through donations.
- Add two new basketball courts to the south of current basketball courts.
- Add a new parking lot to the east end of Florence drive with a round-a-bout with 58 parking spots.
- Maintain green space and add trees to the park.
- Create a concession area off the south eastern corner of Musgrove Aquatic Center to serve the entire park all season.
- Construct an indoor athletic facility east of the current Musgrove Aquatic Center.

Miller's Grove

- Build a dog park on the city owned property just south of Miller's Grove.

East Fork Lake

- Add campground area across the cove from the boat ramp.
- Build marina/ restaurant to the area across the cove from the boat ramp.

Miscellaneous

- Restricted funds account for special projects.
- Create a single entity to provide concession services to entire Musgrove Park that is contracted by the City of Olney.
- Adopt-a-Bed Program

Implementation Plan

The Parks and Recreation Board has developed a timeline of improvements and recommendation of new facilities based on several keys points. The Board took feedback from residents at both regular monthly meetings as well as open forums to get a gauge on residents' wants and needs. Also the Board has toured all the parks to help prioritize the most crucial things the parks need. We have divided these items into three categories as follows:

Short-term – Complete within 1 – 5 years

Medium-term – Complete within 5 – 10 years

Long-term – Complete within 10+ years

City Park – CP
Aquatic Center – MAC
Musgrove Park – MP

Rotary Park – RP
East Fork Trails – EFT
Miller's Grove – MG

Bird Haven – BH
Bower Park – BP
Miscellaneous – MISC



Existing Parks & Facilities Improvements Timeline

Short-term (1-5 years)

EFL – Repave East Fork Lake boat launch parking lot.

CP – Makeover landscaping throughout the park

MP – Create a new entrance to the parking lot west of the pool and expand the parking toward the west by one row.

MP – Add lights to the southern sidewalk between Silver Street and East Street.

MP – Add gate so that Musgrove Lane is not open to through traffic.

MAC – Install new sound system.

MAC – Install two sets of awnings attached to Musgrove Aquatic Center to provide shade.

MG – Finish sidewalk project from Musgrove Park to Miller’s Grove.

MG – Upgrade playground equipment

BH – Replace sign with correct spelling of Robert Ridgway’s name.

BH – Add some picnic tables and benches.

RP – Replace large pavilion.

RP – Maintain walking trails yearly by adding gravel and removing weeds.

EFL – Inspect and make necessary replacement of buoys.

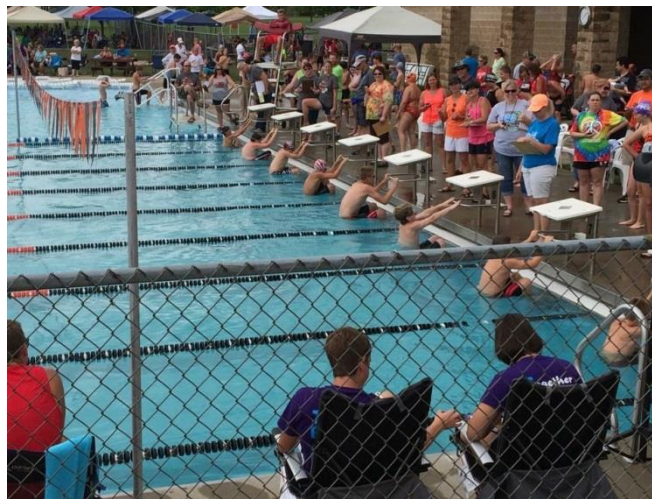
BL – Replace restroom roof.

BL – Inspect and make necessary replacement of buoys.

BL – Close beach.

EFT – Add trail head across from sailboat launch for dam trails.

BP – Repair fountain, paint signs, and upgrade landscaping



Medium-term (5-10 years)

CP – Resurfacing of the courts located at the northeast side of the park.

CP – Remodel the band shell area and building.

CP – Replace fence along Highway 130

MP – Pave parking lots, add curbs, landscaping, and lights

MP – Adding lights, more bleachers, and converting the large soccer field to a multi-use field for both soccer and Jr Pro football.

MP – Remove Musgrove House and turn the area into a picnic area if repairs exceed donations.

MP – Fix drainage issue for athletic field in northeast corner.

MAC – Replace single sided set of lockers with privacy wall and double sided set with vinyl lockers in both changing areas.

MAC – Update toilets and bathroom amenities.

MAC – Install two new gates, one to the East fence and one to the North fence.

MAC – Reduce large grass area to the east of the pool.

Long-Term (10+ years)

CP – Remodeling or replacement of the community building.

RP – Repave drive to pavilions.



Recommendations for New Parks & Facilities Timeline

Short-Term (1-5 years)

MP – Add all-inclusive playground area just south of existing playground. Add handicap assessable restrooms to the playground area and remove port-a-potties with funds for project to be raised through donations.

MP – Maintain green space and add trees to the park.

MG – Build a new dog park at the property just south of Miller’s Grove Park

MISC – Restricted funds accounts for special projects

MISC – Implement Adopt-a-Bed program

MISC – Create a single entity to provide concession services to entire Musgrove Park that is contracted by the City of Olney.

Medium-term (5-10 years)

CP – Build new Pickleball courts where the old pool was located.

CP – Add walking trails around and through the park.

MP – Add two new basketball courts to the south of current basketball courts.

MP – Add a new parking lot to the east end of Florence drive that will be a round-a-bout with 58 parking spots.

Long-term (10+ years)

MP – Create a concession area off the southeastern corner of Musgrove Aquatic Center to serve the entire park all season.

MP – Construct an indoor athletic facility with which include indoor swimming pool.

EFL – Add campground area across the cove from the boat ramp.

EFL – Add marina with convenience store area and fuel access across the cove from the boat ramp.

EFL – Add restaurant to marina area to the northeast side of Rotary Park, across from the boat ramp.

Operations and Management

Funding

To be sure Olney continues to have a wide variety of parks and recreation facilities, it is vitally important that the Park Department remain well funded and staffed. The parks are a source of pride for residents as well as a draw for people outside the city. To continue these trends, it will be important that the Park Department be well equipped to handle the ever growing maintenance of our many parks.

Trends

To be sure the city parks are meeting the needs of residents, it is important that the city knows what the residents are wanting. This could be done through either surveys available to residents or also through open public forums where residents can come and give ideas to the Parks and Recreation Board. This will be important to keep a pulse on the wants and needs of residents and help adjust priorities and funding to certain projects.

Volunteers

As budget dollars continue to be tight, a valuable resource that should be used in the parks is volunteer services from local residents, businesses, and organizations. There are currently several area entities that volunteer time to help keep the parks in top shape and this will be important going forward helping the Parks Department stretch their budget as much as possible. The use of volunteers not only helps save labor costs, but also helps instill a sense of ownership into the parks. There are many local clubs that participate in community service projects and these clubs should be used as often as possible.

Adopt-a-Bed

One project the Parks and Recreation Board has developed to utilize volunteers is the Adopt-a-Bed program. This program has the same concept as Adopt-a-Highway, but for flower beds throughout the city parks. The flower beds through the parks will be put up for adoption by local clubs, businesses, or individuals. Ultimately the volunteer groups will be in charge of the planting, mulching, and maintenance of their flower beds. This will help reduce maintenance of flower beds by the Parks Department, help advertise local businesses/ organizations, and instill ownership into the parks. Each flower bed will have a small sign of who adopted the bed to help give credit to the group maintaining the bed. By labeling the beds, this will also help identify which group is doing a good job and which group is not.

The Park Department Supervisor will determine what flowers are planted in which beds to be sure a central theme is being kept throughout the parks. Also the Park Department Supervisor will provide mulch for the beds to be sure to keep a consistent look.

The local FFA program will grow the flowers for this program. This will reduce costs of landscaping and form a mutually beneficial relationship. These flowers will be grown by high school students as part of their curriculum and then sold at a discounted rate.

Flower beds will be put up for adoption until all beds are adopted. Each group will be given the chance to keep participating in the program year after year with their same bed as long as the Park Department Supervisor, the Parks and Recreation Board, and the City Council agree that a satisfactory job is being done.

New Project Evaluation

As available real estate in the parks diminish over the years, it will be important that all new projects meet a certain criteria before they are implemented. This can be done with a New Project Evaluation. This evaluation is a guide asking the who, what, when, where, why, and how questions of a new project. This will be important to help determine which projects are well planned and deserving to be implemented into the parks system. (See appendix 2)



Restricted Funds Account

In the current economic climate that we are in, funding for future projects will continue to be funded primarily by private individuals. With this in mind, the Parks and Recreation Board recommend that an ordinance be passed to create a restricted funds account for special projects.

Once a project gets approved by the Council, a separate City bank account will be established for that project so that donations can be accepted. The request should include any specific conditions that should be placed on the account such as; the timeframe for the acceptance of the donations, the estimated amount of donations necessary, the date by which the project would begin, and if the project cannot begin by a specific date, the donations would be returned to the respective donors. In order to be able to return the donations to the proper individual or organizations and to provide any required receipts, the City must have the appropriate donor information.

In addition to the restricted funds account, once an individual makes a donation for a special project, this would trigger a thank you letter signed by the mayor to be sent to that individual thanking them for donating to the special project.



Summary

The Park and Recreation Board's goal for the Comprehensive Plan is to serve the citizens of Olney by developing a plan for the parks so that they will be best utilized not only today but for many generations to come. This plan will be used as a guideline for future projects in the parks.

The Board has toured all the parks and facilities to gain an insight on what each park needs. Based on these tours the Board has developed this current plan to benefit as many people with the limited resources that are available. We conclude by presenting the Comprehensive Plan for the City of Olney Parks and Recreation system.