

Parks and Recreation

# COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN

Spring 2023

  
**Gahanna**  
PARKS & RECREATION

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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# INTRODUCTION



*"The Master Planning process was truly comprehensive including everything from maintenance operations and staffing structure to capital improvements. The plan creates logical and attainable strategies to achieve the mission and vision of the Department of Parks & Recreation and meet the wants and needs of the Gahanna residents."*

**Stephania Bernard-Ferrell**  
Director - Parks & Recreation

## Project Goals

**01**

Engage the community, leadership, and stakeholders through innovative public input meant to build a shared vision for the Parks and Recreation Department to ensure there is an appropriate balance of programs, facilities, and services.

**02**

Utilize a wide variety of data sources and best practices, including a statistically valid survey to predict trends and patterns of use as well as address unmet needs in the community.

**03**

Determine unique level of service standards to develop appropriate actions regarding parks, recreation, facilities, and trails that reflect the Department's strong commitment to providing high quality parks and recreational activities for the community.

**04**

Shape financial and operational preparedness through innovative and pioneering practices to achieve the strategic objectives and recommended actions.

**05**

Develop a dynamic and realistic action plan that creates a road map to ensure long-term success and financial sustainability for the Department's parks, recreation programs, and trails, as well as action steps to support the family-oriented community and businesses that call the City of Gahanna home.

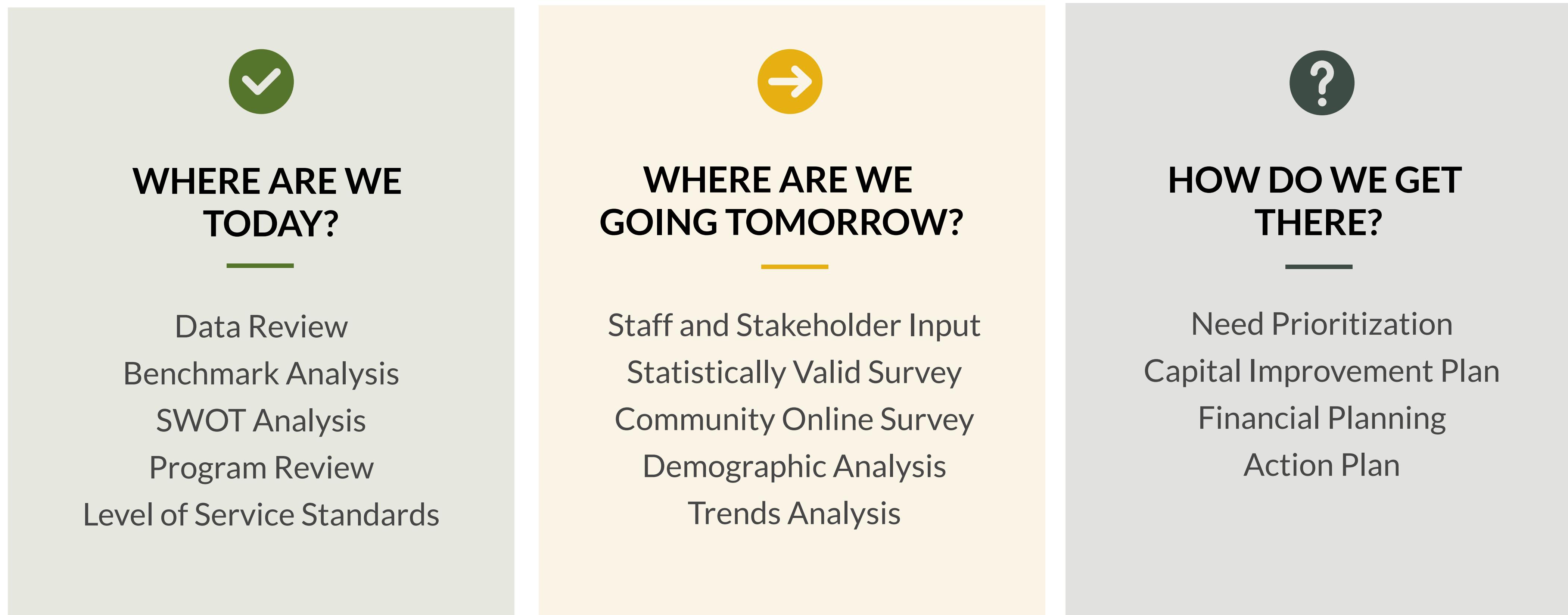
## Purpose

The purpose of a Comprehensive Master Plan is to provide the City of Gahanna with a roadmap to guide them in implementing their mission & vision and key recommendations. These goals and recommendations are focused on achieving what the community desires for their parks and recreation facilities and programs over the next ten years.

The plan provides goals, recommendations, and implementation strategies for each component of the park system that includes parkland, trails, facilities, programs, operations, staffing, financial and capital needs.

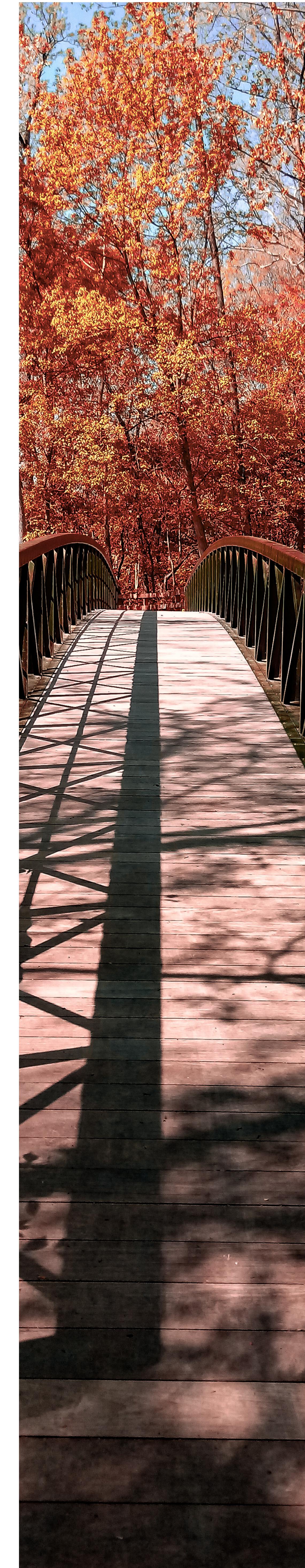
# PROCESS OVERVIEW

The plan followed a process of data collection, public input, on-site ground study, assessment of existing conditions, market research, and open dialogue with local leadership and key stakeholders.



# Summary of Key Findings

A variety of key findings were identified to support the implementation of the plan. These key findings help to guide decision-making for the next ten years.



## Population

- 35,782 residents in 2021
- 39,414 projected residents in 2036



## Age

- Median age 41.8
- Largest age segment 55-74
- Continued growth of 55+ through 2036



## Race

- 75% White
- 15% Black
- 5% Asian
- 4% Hispanic/Latino



## Income

- Median household income \$89,808
- Per capita income \$44,867
- City income levels higher than state and national averages

# Summary of Key Findings

## Community Engagement



**“Please they are pursuing this process to recognize what are the community needs for the parks and recreation system.”**

Stakeholder Interviewee



**“A community or recreation center would be good as well as expanding the trails.”**

Focus Group Participant

### Stakeholder Interviews

- Sixteen (16) interviews were conducted over the phone by the Consulting Team
- Each interviewee was asked the same series of 10 questions about the parks and recreation system

### Focus Group Interviews

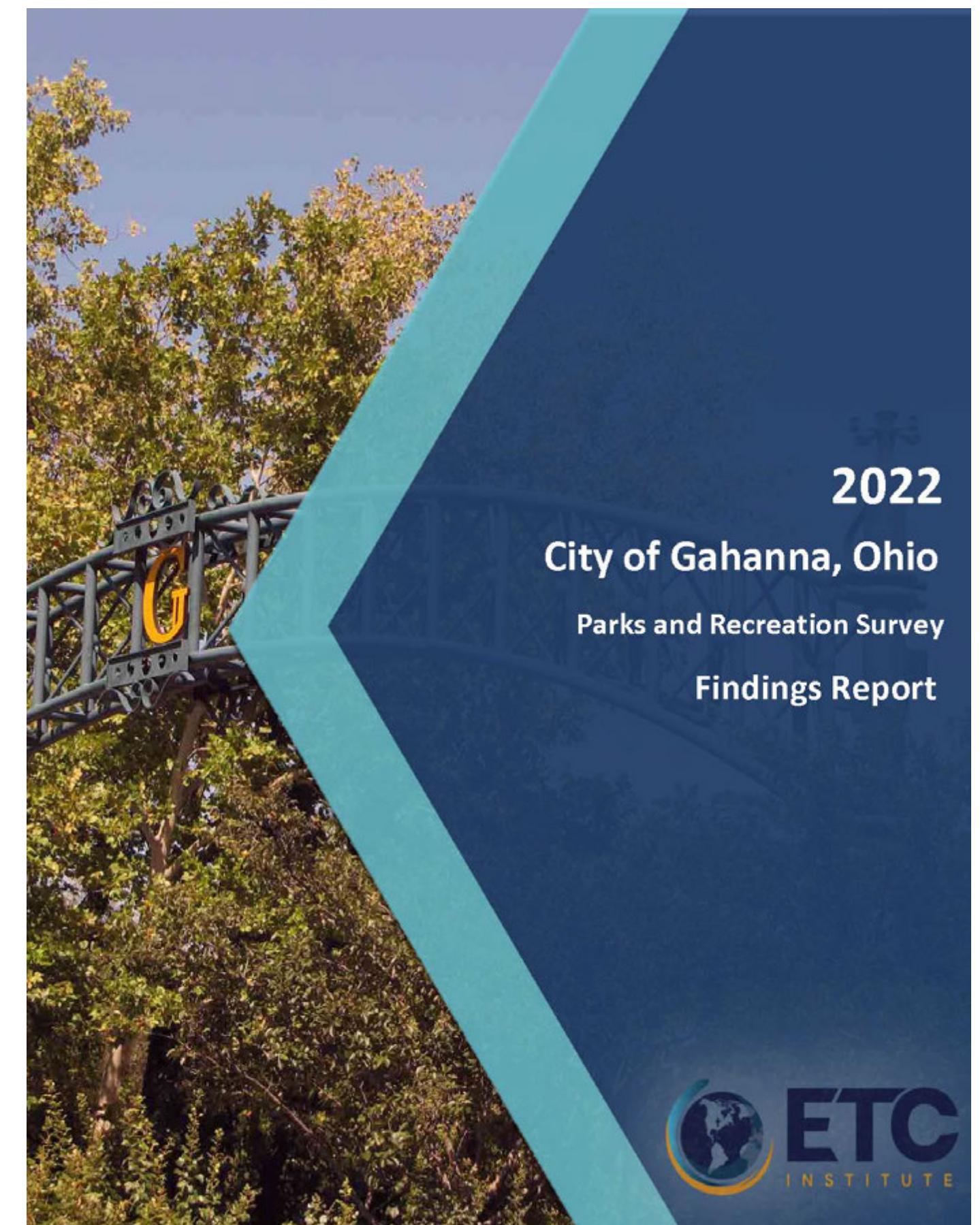
- Forty-three (43) individuals participated and were divided into eight groups that were interviewed separately
- Each focus group was asked the same series of 10 questions about the parks and recreation system

# Summary of Key Findings

## Statistically Valid Survey

ETC Institute administered a Community Needs Assessment Survey for the City of Gahanna Parks and Recreation Department during the months of summer 2022. The survey will help the Gahanna Parks and Recreation Department plan for future recreation programs and facilities that meet the community's needs and preferences. 615 completed surveys were collected.

- **Level of Satisfaction:** Respondents were asked to indicate their level of satisfaction with overall value from Gahanna Parks and Recreation. Eighty percent (80%) of respondents said they were either very satisfied (31%) or somewhat satisfied (49%).
- **Funding allocation:** Respondents were asked to choose how they would allocate funds for Parks and Recreation improvements if provided a \$100 budget. By average allocated, improvements and maintenance to existing outdoor parks and facilities received the highest amount of funding (\$31.26), followed by new walking and bike trails (\$24.18) and new indoor recreation facilities (\$23.24).
- **Barriers to Use:** The top reasons respondents did not utilize Gahanna parks and facilities during the past year is because they were not aware of parks' or trails' locations (38%), lack of features respondents wanted to use (22%), and lack of restrooms (20%).



### Top Priorities for Investment for Facilities and Amenities

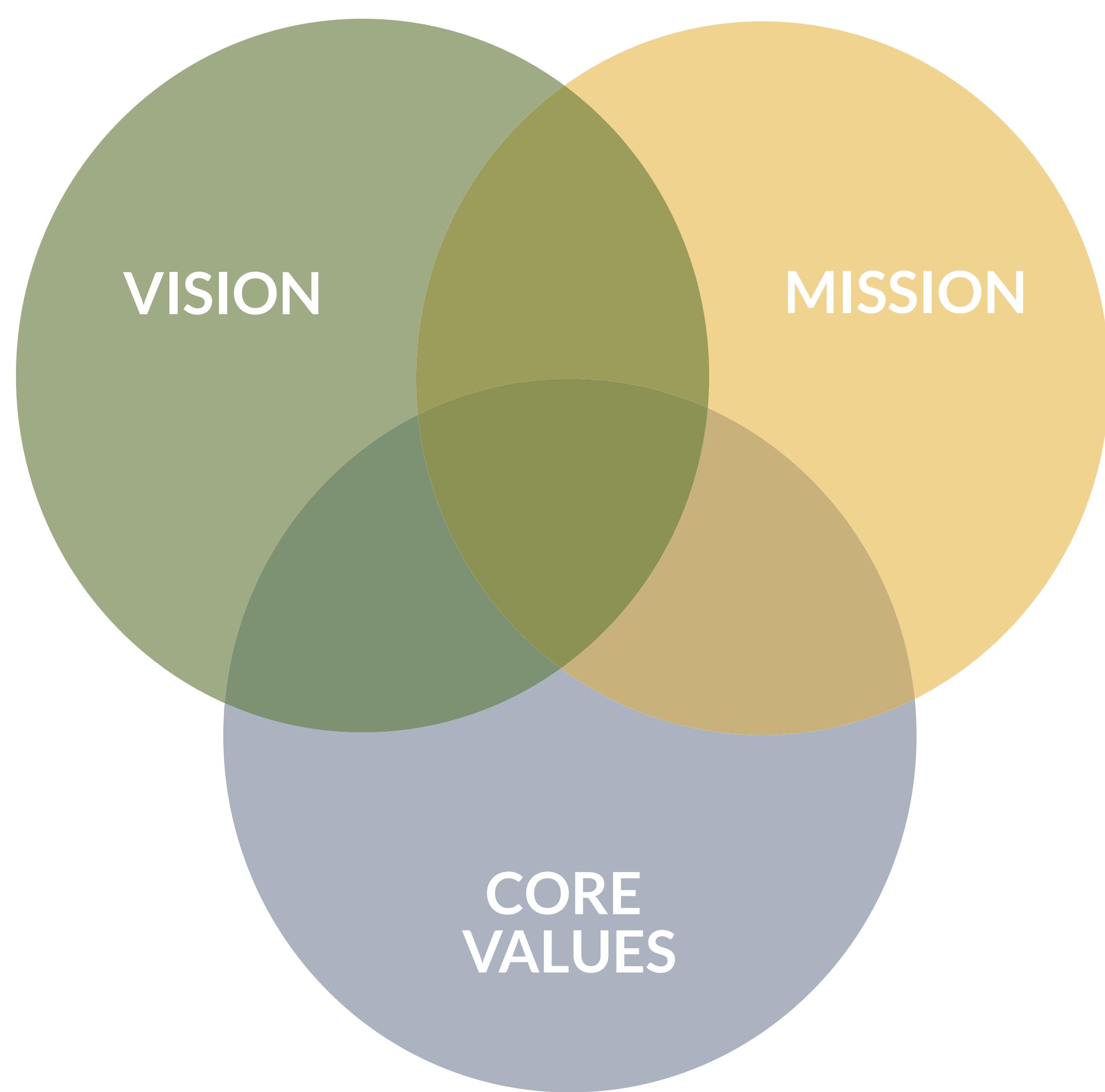
- 1 Multi-Use Paved Trails
- 2 Indoor Aquatic Center
- 3 Restrooms
- 4 Farmer's Market
- 5 Indoor Walking/Jogging Track
- 6 Outdoor Amphitheater
- 7 Trails
- 8 Outdoor Adventure Park

### Top Priorities for Investment for Programs

- 1 Farmer's Market
- 2 Adult Fitness and Wellness Programs
- 3 Community Special Events

# VISION, MISSION AND CORE VALUES

Based on the visioning process with staff using community input, demographics and trends and an analysis of the City's programs, maintenance and operations and levels of service; the following recommendations were developed.



## VISION

"To enhance and preserve parks and recreation services, lands and facilities through high standards and innovation that positions Gahanna as a leading community and a great place to live, work and play."

## MISSION

"Provide parks, trails and recreational opportunities to all people of Gahanna so they can be healthy and well while they explore and learn in the community."

## CORE VALUES

Integrity - Safety - Respect - Teamwork - Exploration - Sustainability



# RECOMMENDATIONS



COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN THEME

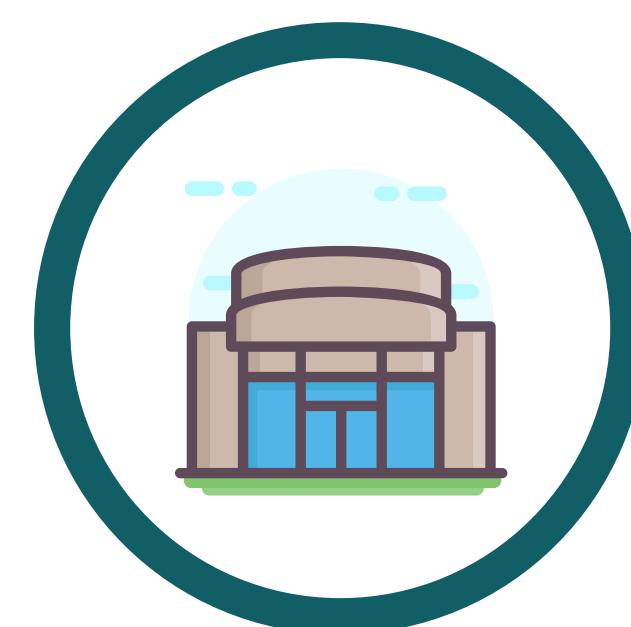
*“Explore and grow with  
Gahanna Parks & Recreation.”*

## GAHANNA PARKS & RECREATION TOP 5 PRIORITIES



### PRIORITY 1

Update and add existing parks, trails, and amenities across the City.



### PRIORITY 2

Replace or build new recreation facilities and attractions in the City to support all age groups.



### PRIORITY 3

Seek a dedicated funding source for operations and capital improvement needs to meet the community's needs and expectations via a combination of funding sources to support the department for the next 20 years.



### PRIORITY 4

Develop an indoor community center to house senior services, aquatics, sports, fitness, and youth programs to meet the community's expectations for quality of life in the City.



### PRIORITY 5

Maximize program options to activate parks, increase use of recreation facilities and generate more earned income to support operational costs.

# ACTION PLAN

The action plan is an execution of Gahanna Parks & Recreation priorities:

## Parkland and Trails

**“The vision for park land and trails is to create exceptional experiences for all age segments in every park and on every trail in the City.”**

### Goal for Parkland and Trails

“Enhance existing parks and trails to maximize enjoyment for fun, safe and memorable experiences for all users.”



- Continue to update neighborhood and community parks when needed with updated design standards and new park amenities that create a strong sense of place in the City for all residents to enjoy.
- Finish development of Big Walnut Creek Trail throughout the City.
- Maximize the use of existing sports complexes in the City through effective design and drainage.
- Remove unused or outdated park amenities and provide new amenities that meet the park user needs for people of all ages to experience Gahanna's Parks.
- Incorporate updated design standards for sports fields, playgrounds, trails, specialty amenities, and group gathering spaces in the parks for the future.
- Follow through on the updating and relocating the Parks Maintenance Shop Operations at Friendship Park with a new location and site plan for indoor workspace and outdoor covered space as well as at the Golf Course to maximize efficiency and productivity of all maintenance staff in the system.
- Adopt a land management plan for park natural areas in the system to manage them properly.
- Complete a Forestry master plan and expand the street tree program.
- Develop an activation plan for waterway access for kayakers in the City to enjoy the resources available, while also protecting and restoring the Big Walnut Watershed including the streams feeding into the creek way.
- Establish a snow removal priority program for park roads, parking lots and trails across the system.

## Facilities

“The **vision** for recreation facilities is to maximize the outdoor and indoor use of these facilities to meet the needs of residents in the Gahanna City.”

### Goal for Facilities

“Recreation facilities will be updated, replaced, or built new to serve year-round use of the park system for the next 50 years.”



- Create an indoor recreation facilities feasibility study and business plan for a potential new community center to house indoor programs spaces for seniors, youth, teens, adults in aquatics, sports, fitness, arts, teens, and for people with disabilities.
- Establish an updated school use agreement for indoor and outdoor space to work together to support the needs of the whole community.
- Update the Gahanna Swimming Pool and site with a replacement aquatic center and improved site amenities.
- Develop an outdoor learning center in Gahanna Woods.
- Complete the renovation of the Price Roadhouse for recreational programming.

## Programming

**“The vision for programming is to increase parks and recreation program offerings for all demographic groups that unites the community and creates a lifetime user of the park and recreation system.”**

### Goal for Programming

“Activate the indoor and outdoor park spaces through inviting residents to participate in programs that meet their needs and builds a sense of community.”



- Incorporate more unique events in the City during the spring, summer and fall as a core service of the Department and to promote cultural enrichment in the City.
- Develop an adult sports program for people of all ages to provide organized sports for young and older adults in tennis, golf, pickleball, softball, flag football, basketball, cycling, running events and soccer.
- Develop events for the community that helps them understand the strengths and limitations of the park system so they can advocate for improvements in the department.
- Continue to grow the existing core programs in the City as it applies to senior services, youth sports, arts and education, special events, aquatics, day camps, nature education programs, golf, fitness, outdoor education programs and paddling programs.
- Develop an updated pricing policy to support cost recovery goals for program services to meet the budget expectations for each core program area.
- Incorporate partnership policies for public/public partners, public/not-for-profit partners, and public/private partners to maximize the value and fairness across the system.

## Administration and Operations

“The **vision** for administration and operations is to operate their parks system with the right mix of full-time, part-time and seasonal staff to meet the public’s expectation for delivery of safe, clean, and inviting recreation experiences.”

### Goal for Administration and Operations

“Create the right balance between operational dollars and capital needs to support the community’s expectation for parks and recreation in the City.”



- Develop a functional organizational structure to maximize every position’s value and responsibility in the system.
- Develop a stronger volunteer program to supplement staff costs to deliver services and build advocacy for the Department.
- Hire program contractors to teach recreation program classes to build a strong program base.
- Create a customized Gahanna Parks and Recreation Training program for people in the City that can work on a part-time and seasonal basis especially in key positions like lifeguards and maintenance staff.
- Build efficiency and effectiveness in all full-time and part-time positions through effective training.
- Develop an operational proforma for all revenue producing facilities so that the staffing expectations are determined in advance of the facility opening in a given year so that the facility can operate in the most efficient manner.

## Finance

“The **vision** for financing is to adequately support the park and recreation system with operational and capital dollars to meet the public’s expectations of providing a first-class park and recreation system.”

### Goal for Finance

“Achieve a per capita spending level for parks and recreation in the City that is within 20% of the best practice parks and recreation agencies in the Columbus region for comparable size cities.”



- Seek a goal to support the park system with at least the Ohio Park and Recreation per capita spending from \$56 to \$82 per person for parks and recreation services in the city for operational costs based on the local comparative market for comparable size cities.
- Work with the finance director of the city to evaluate all the funding options for developing a community center in the city.
- Determine new funding sources for the Department to draw from the community to build the park and recreation system forward.
- Continue to develop a capital improvement plan that the City Council can support for the park system to move the agency forward for the next 20 years.
- Seek, evaluate, and incorporate other local jurisdiction and non-profit organizations to become financial partners.

The Gahanna Parks and Recreation Department has made significant strides in updating the parks and recreation system from the previous recommendations in the 2015 Parks and Recreation Master Plan. Parks related improvements were made along with expanding the trail system and adding additional programs. The Department has done an excellent job listening to the community and investing in their needs and desires.

The Department continues to struggle with the ability to enhance existing infrastructure and the ability to add new recreation facilities desired by the community to the system because of a lack of significant financial dollars available. The existing partnership with the Parks Foundation has helped to support the needed financial requirements of the system but additional is needed.

The current weakness of the system is the lack of indoor space to provide year-round recreation pursuits for youth and adults which is a major theme of this master plan. The leadership of the Department has done an excellent job in planning for updating parks, creating new, exciting programs, and building a strong advocacy base for the system.

The Master Plan sets forward a plan for the next ten years and will require the same level of leadership that is in place now for achieving the recommendations. With continued support from the Mayor and elected officials the opportunity to achieve the goals outlined in this plan can be accomplished if everyone works together. The PROS team would like to thank the Gahanna Park and Recreation leadership team for all their efforts in working with us to develop the Master Plan, as well as the Steering Committee, Park and Recreation Advisory Board, the Mayor, City Council and the community for their comments and recommendations. This collaboration truly helped to make the Parks and Recreation Master Plan worth investing in. Let the implementation process begin!



**CITY OF GAHANNA**  
PARKS & RECREATION  
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